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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020, NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 14 PAGES

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Cox and Kings:

**Audit uncovers** 

and bogus sales

THE Cox &

KINGS DOSSIER

AN EXPRESS SERIES PART 1

KHUSHBOO NARAYAN

Rs 21,000 crore over four years (2015-2019) done mainly to siphon off funds; falsifying

records; a Rs 1,100-crore loan

from a "brother to a brother" that

violated basic fiduciary norms; sales worth Rs 9,000 crore to

over 160 customers who are bo-

gus or do not exist, inflated bank

balances and a string of defaults

leged irregularities highlighted

in the forensic audit of bankrupt

travel firm Cox and Kings, The

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC)

at the behest of lender Yes Bank,

and official records accessed by

The Indian Express detail how the

company allegedly fudged

records and window-dressed its

Cox and Kings, promoted and

controlled by Ajay Ajit Peter

Kerkar and his family, was sent to

bankruptcy court in October

2019, after it defaulted on pay-

ments. While the promoter

group owns 12.20 per cent shares

in the company, the public owns

The travel and tour company

Congress tells Govt

to ease 'devastating'

owes Rs 5,500 crore to banks and

financial institutions and was

one of the top borrowers of Yes

the remaining 87.80 per cent.

figures.

Records of the audit, done in

Indian Express has learnt.

these are among a slew of al-

MUMBAI, APRIL 23

TRANSACTIONS

siphoning of crores,

fudging of records

78 DISTRICTS HAVE HAD NO NEW CASE IN LAST 14 DAYS: GOVT

# One month of lockdown: Covid spread widens, but concentrated in same areas



Top expert issues appeal: Remove stigma, all with flu symptoms must come for tests

**ABANTIKA GHOSH** & KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

ONE MONTH into the national lockdown, the coronavirus outbreak has spread to more than half the total number of districts across the country, but remains concentrated in the same areas.

an analysis of official figures show. The figures show that while districts on the COVID-19 map have more than doubled in the last three weeks - from 211 districts on April 1 to 429 on April 22 – the heavy load remains confined to 12 administrative districts that recorded over 200

In fact, these 12 accounted for over 50 per cent of the 18,985 cases for which district-wise statistics have been made available by the Union Health Ministry.

The data also shows that only 24 districts have recorded more than 100 positive cases each. Signalling the thin spread in other areas, 223 districts have recorded less than 10 cases each while 182 others recorded double digits.

When it comes to urban centres, at least 13 accounted for well over half the number of cases: Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Indore, Pune, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Thane, Surat, Chennai, Bhopal, Agra, Jaipur and Delhi.

Meanwhile, NITI Aayog CEO mitabh Kant revealed that the



Forty-five recovered patients leave the Covid care centre at Ajwa ITI institute in Vadodara. Bhupendra Rana

### Centre freezes DA/DR increase for staff till July 2021, states may follow

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

DETERIORATING REVENUE position in the backdrop of the pandemic-induced economic shutdown has forced the central government to put on hold increment in dearness allowance (DA) for 48 lakh central government employees and 65 lakh pensioners till July 2021.

The Finance Ministry Thursday said it has decided that additional instalment of DA payable to central government employees and dearness relief (DR) to central government pensioners due from January 1, 2020, shall not be paid. While the increase is being held back, DA and DR at curre **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** continue to be paid.



Creates more elbow room

GIVEN THAT the pandemic is straining government finances, this freeze will lead to an estimated saving of Rs 37.530 crore in the current financial year and 2021-22 - creating room for stepping up expenditure on health and welfare measures. If states follow the Centre, which they do, the savings will be Rs 82,566 crore.

Government sources said the CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### Maharashtra sees highest daily jump, Minister tests positive

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

MAHARASHTRA THURSDAY registered 778 new COVID-19 cases, the highest single-day jump in numbers since the first coronavirus case in the state in the first week of March. Over the last four days alone, the state has registered 2,000 new cases, taking its total to 6.427. The state has seen 283 deaths, 14 of them over the past 24 hours.

Mumbai continued to add the highest number of cases to the state's tally, registering 522 more over the past 24 hours – also its highest number for a day. The total COVID-19 count in the city now is 4,205, or 65% of Maharashtra's total, while six more deaths on Thursday took its toll to 137 BMC officials said that included in Thursday's

**AFTER U.S. FREEZES** 

WHO FUNDS, CHINA

STEPS IN - \$30 MN

**LET'S NOT SQUANDER** 

WHAT WE ACHIEVED,

**SAYS MERKEL** 

**WORLD** 



A queue for food near Katraj in Pune. Pavan Khengre

count were 297 cases diagnosed by private labs between April 20

The previous largest singleday jump for Mumbai was on April 19, with 456 cases.

positive was Maharashtra

Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad. He was admitted to hospital on Tuesday night, 10 days after he had put himself under home quarantine after coming in contact with a person who tested positive for coronavirus

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

## lockdown, let states plan own roadmaps

MANOJCG NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

AHEAD OF Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with chief ministers, the Congress on Thursday said a lockdown of "the present nature" was unsustainable and cannot continue. Asking the government to come out with a "detailed exit strategy" in the 10 days left for this phase of the lockdown to end on May 3, the main opposition party accused it of not taking any concrete steps to revive the economy.

The party's stance, formulated at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), is expected to be articulated by its chief ministers during their interaction with the PM on Monday. With the Centre sending teams to several Oppositionruled states, apart from Madhya Pradesh, to check alleged viola-



BUSINESS AS USUAL

From top: Anil Khandelwal,

Bank Ltd when co-founder Rana

more than Rs 2,267 crore to Cox

& Kings Group, Last month, Ajay

Aiit Peter Kerkar was summoned

for questioning by the

Enforcement Directorate (ED) in

connection with the money

aundering case against Kapoor.

jail, is accused of taking kick-

backs in lieu of granting loans to

several companies that have

now defaulted on repayments.

that most of the related party

transactions of Cox & Kings were

executed without "proper ap-

provals" from its board and with-

The investigation has found

out any loan agreement.

The forensic audit has alleged

Kapoor, currently lodged in

Yes Bank has an exposure of

Peter Kerkar and

Kapoor was heading it.

Rana Kapoor

Congress also urged that states be allowed to devise their own plans and argued against a "oneize-fits-all policy".

Many leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, stressed at the CWC that the government must

### Mamata hits the streets, speaks directly to locked-down Kolkata

**RAVIK BHATTACHARYA** & ATRI MITRA KOLKATA, APRIL 23

IT'S 4 PM on Thursday, and a white SUV is parked at Moulali in central Kolkata – normally one of the city's busiest street junctions, now deserted. A familiar voice rings through the neighbourhood, amplified by loudspeakers perched on lamp posts up to a radius of perhaps half a kilometre.

"Aami Mamata Banerjee (I am Mamata Banerjee)," it echoes in the silence of the lockdown. "Aapnader kaachhe eshechhi; aamay khoma korun aapnader saathe dekha korte parchhina, gaadi theke naamte parchhi na (I have come to you; forgive me for not being able to get out of the car to meet you).

The Chief Minister of West



Mamata Banerjee at Moulali, Kolkata, Thursday. Partha Paul

Bengal is inside the SUV. "Barite thakun, shustho thakun (stay indoors, stay healthy)," she says into a mic in her hand, speaking through a cloth mask that covers her face. "The lockdown is on. Your shops are shut, you have no

work. You are suffering, but you are cooperating with us. Aarkota din korun, jotodin na aamra shokole mile corona ke taracchi (Please endure for a few more days, until we are able to **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

THE EDITORIAL PAGE **FARMERS ARE THE UNSUNG WARRIORS** 

> **BY HARISH DAMODARAN** PAGE 8

### **Complaints against PDS** dealers in Jharkhand, Bihar amid food crisis

ABHISHEK ANGAD & SANTOSH SINGH RANCHI, PATNA, APRIL 23

EARLIER THIS week, Jharkhand's grievance helpline 181 received four calls from Palamu on a single day. All the callers had a similar complaint: though the state had promised 70 kg rice in April, their ration dealer in  $Medininagar\,wasn't\,giving\,them$ the entire amount and had, in fact, confiscated the ration cards of 50 others. The details were forwarded to the district supply officer, who suspended the licence of the dealer and attached

the customers to another dealer. In Jharkhand and Bihar, the food crisis triggered by the lockdown has put a spotlight on an old problem - leakages and corruption in the the Public

Almost a month into the

Distribution System.

lockdown that began on March 25, 865 PDS dealers find themselves in the dock in Iharkhand - 297 have had their licences suspended, nine have had their dealerships cancelled, 524 have been issued show-cause notices, and 44 face FIRs. The numbers are going up daily in the state

for 2.63 crore families. To help people tide over the lockdown, the Jharkhand government had announced double ration - 70 kg rice - for card holders and 10 kg of rice to 7 lakh people whose application for ration cards are pending.

which has 25,445 PDS dealers

Bihar, where the government decided to give 5 kg rice and 1 kg CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



tions of lockdown norms, the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

won't take risks. But as a govern-

ing body, we have to take all pre-

cautions. There are a couple of

checking tools - one which flags

a move if the software suggests

the player's analysis could be en-

gine-aided. No one is naive to

#### Chess greats face off online, webcams, arbiters to watch moves PAGE 1 **ANCHOR**

SHIVANINAIK&SANDIPG MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

A WELL-LIT room, smartly placed roving webcams, a screen-share setting on Skype, an arbiter sitting remotely who can alert to any out-of-place ambient sound, and oodles of trust. These are the logistics of the Online Nations Cup, a chess tournament that's perhaps the highest profile sporting action at a time when global travel is at a standstill and all sporting action has paused due to the coron-

avirus pandemic. Between May 5 and 10, six teams — Russia, USA, China, India, best of Europe and Rest of the World – with four players in each, will go up against each other in a double round-robin, 25-minute team event. With a line-up of greats such as Gary Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Viswanathan Anand, the online tournament will play out in what's among the sport's most famous residential addresses. Magnus Carlsen, the biggest name in chess, is, however, hosting another online tournament and will skip the Nations Cup.

While players and fans are happy that at least chess can stay afloat, the biggest test for the organisers and those overseeing the competition will be to ensure that the online setting leaves no doubts about fair play, and cheating is completely ruled out. For which, the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE), the governing body of international chess competitions, is banking on reputations. "It is an elite event. Only the

best players in the world. They would never risk their reputation," said David Llada of FIDE, adding that the world body would do everything technology permits to guarantee that conditions for the event are not corrupted by those participating.



Viswanathan Anand, Gary Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik are set to play in the Online Nations Cup

will keep everyone on their toes, given the sheer scope for manipulation. "The players will be playing from home. They are required to have a couple of webcams, so the arbiters can see their room and their computer screen. These will be rapid games, so there are no toilet breaks. Chess.com also has some anti-cheating systems that are able to track, with a high degree of reliability, when

a player is making too may

moves that coincide with the

engine's recommendations. All

things combined, we can guar-

antee the conditions for the

However, the online setting

down began. But this will be the biggest event to take off on an online platform. R Anantharam, one of India's leading chess arbiters who is also on the FIDE panel, said backroom work for them will now include monitoring every move for speed of reactions and patterns

event to be considered safe,"

and, according to FIDE, an esti-

mated 16 million games were

played online since the lock-

Online chess is not a novelty

Llada said.

and vetting them on anti-cheating software to check for engineaided moves. "At this high level, players think cheating doesn't happen in online chess; just that technolcatches it," Anantharam, adding there have been instances of cash prizes being withdrawn after amateurs were found cheating. Anantharam, one of the

sharpest arbiters in the country, said he once caught a player in Kochi using "some kind of CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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#### DELHI ORPHANAGES WELL-STOCKED FOR NOW, BUT FALL IN DONATIONS A WORRY

Due to the lockdown, the flow of donors who regularly visited the orphanage to give funds and essential items has completely stopped for most orphanages.

#### VIDEO OF THE DAY



**HEADACHE FOR AMRITSAR FARMERS** 

**Amritsar farmers are** facing hardship selling grains amid curbs

#### **ENTERTAINMENT**



**BEST BOOK ADAPTATIONS** On World Book Day, here are the 10 best film

and TV adaptations

### **EXPRESS** AUDIO

### Frontline workers are at risk, and it's not just from COVID-19

**NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY** 

Detailing the pressures frontline workers are facing—being attacked, mental distress, working while sick—and how a new ordinance is meant to protect them

### **FROM PAGE ONE**

#### Cox and Kings

that Cox and Kings gave Rs 1,100 crore to Alok Industries, a stressed firm that went bankrupt in 2017, even as the travel firm did not have any business relationship with the company.

Significantly, when the loan was given, the Chief Financial Officer of Alok Industries was Sunil Khandelwal, who is also brother of Cox & Kings CFO Anil Khandelwal.

Apart from this, in financial year 2019 alone, Cox & Kings loaned Rs 589 crore to at least 11 related parties "without executing loan agreements".

"Prima facie it appears that these loans have been granted to related parties without obrequisite approvals/documentation, which raises a suspicion that

these transactions have been done with the intent of siphoning off funds," said the investi-

Detailed emails with questions to Ajay Ajit Peter Kerkar, Anil Khandelwal and Cox & Kings did not elicit any response.

In 2017, Alok Industries was sent to the bankruptcy court after it failed to repay Rs 29,500 crore to banks and financial institutions, including the State Bank of India. The company was acquired by JM Financial and Reliance Industries Ltd for Rs 5,050 crore in 2019 through the corporate insolvency resolution process.

The audit report on Cox & Kings has alleged that the company indulged in "falsification" of its financial statements between 2014 and 2019 by "overstating its sales figures and understating its debt". It has also highlighted several "fictitious" transactions of the firms.

Consider its key findings: \* Between 2014 and 2019 the company made sales of Rs 5.278 crore to 147 bogus customers. Of these, at least 141 are not registered with the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department. At least six customers have listed the GST registration number for Cox and Kings as

their own registration number.

<sup>•</sup> Between 2016 and 2019, Cox & Kings made a substantial portion of its Rs 3,908 crore sales from 15 customers, who allegedly are non-existent. A physical verification of the addresses of these customers found that these were residential addresses and no travel agencies ever operated from these places.

While the ledgers of Cox & Kings have recorded collections of Rs 2,548 crore from these 15 customers, the money was not traced in its bank accounts as no actual funds were received by Cox & Kings, Between April 2014 and June 2015, Cox & Kings recorded sales of Rs 250-Rs 260 crore against each of these 15 customers. All these transactions were "curiously" recorded only on the last day of the

\* For FY 2019, the company disclosed cash and bank balances of Rs 723 crore and Rs 1,830 crore on standalone and consolidated levels respectively. Despite this, the company kept on defaulting on loan repayment since June 2019, indicating that it had inflated its cash and bank balances, which led to manipulation of its financial statements.

\* For FY 2019, Cox & Kings reported the total debt of the company at Rs 2000 crore, whereas the standalone debt of the company was Rs 3600 crore. Apart from this, a credit card debt of Rs 750 crore was not disclosed to lenders, in violation of the dis-

In January, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), that hears insolvency cases, restricted Ajay Ajit Peter Kerkar, Urshila Kerkar, Anil Khandelwal, three other directors of the company and 16 employees from leaving the country without the

permission of the court. (Tomorrow: How a Cox and

Kings firm diverted loans to a front company run by its own

### Cong to Govt allow economic activities to re-

sume in non-hot stop zones. Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan), Amarinder Singh (Punjab), Bhupesh Baghel (Chhattisgarh) and Narayanasamy (Puducherry) pointed out the financial distress being faced by states and the shortage of testing kits.

In a statement, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said any extension of the kind of lockdown in place now would be "even more devastating". "The lockdown continues. all sections of our society continue to face acute hardship and distress — particularly our farmers, farm workers, migrant and construction workers. Trade, commerce and industry have come to a virtual halt and crores of livelihoods destroyed."

Former PM Manmohan Singh said the success of the lockdown will be judged finally on the ability to tackle the epidemic, and that cooperation between the Centre and states was key.

Rahul said it was time to think of transition from a complete lockdown to lockdown only in hot zones and commencement of activities in green

The resolution adopted by the CWC said states must be empowered to "devise solutions tailored to their unique situations and challenges" and argued that "the fight must be bottom-up instead of the top-down, one-size-fits-all policy currently on display".

The resolution also asked why the Economic Task Force announced by the PM a month ago does not appear to have come out with a plan yet. It asked the government to utilise the remaining lockdown period for "preparation and publication of a detailed exit strategy and a comprehensive road map for the future to substantially increase health infrastructure capacity to deal with the pandemic and to revive the economy and protect current levels of employment and wages/income".

The CWC also reiterated many of the demands made earlier — like giving states adequate financial support, releasing their full share of the GST collected so far, allowing them greater fiscal space to borrow, providing direct cash transfer and food grains to the poor, complete moratorium on agricultural and other loans for at least one year along with complete interest subvention and a sector-specific package for MSMEs.

The party asked the government to frame a policy to ensure return of migrant workers to their home states and the Indians stranded abroad, while taking adequate precautions. Baghel, among others, raised this issue. Rahul said the government should accord first priority to this, while PChidambaram called for a humane policy keeping the migrants in mind.

The Congress felt that India was lagging in establishing a robust and accurate testing regime.

The party resolution as well as Sonia's statement also accused the BJP of spreading "the virus of communal prejudice and hatred" and "seeking to inflame communal divisions", using the pandemic.

Sources said the Congress leadership is worried over the political fallout of the attempts at communal polarisation — be it over the Palghar lynchings or the Tablighi Jamaat links to

many of the coronavirus cases. Many leaders, both young and old, expressed dismay to The Indian Express over the

weekly doubling rate — the time taken for the cases to double — has shifted from a low of 3.54 days a month ago to 10.13 days now. In other words. while the numbers have mounted since the lockdown came into force on March 24, the pace of the outbreak appears to have moderated.

The government said that 78 districts on the virus map did not record any fresh case in the last 14 days — of these, it said, 12 districts reported no new case in the last 28 days. A majority of these, however, appear to be low case-load districts. For instance, a comparison of the Health Ministry's district-wise data with that of April 6 shows that at least 54 districts did not see any jump in cases — of these, 49 had less than 10 cases

With India's case count reaching 21,700 Thursday, with a recovery rate of about 19.8%, AIIMS director and top pulmonologist Dr Randeep Guleria called for voluntary testing by all those with flu-like symptoms to prevent unnecessary delays in treatment.

Guleria's call to those with "ILI (influenza-like illness)" symptoms signals a shift in the

government's focus, which so far has been on those who displayed COVID-19 symptoms, and had travel and contact history with positive cases.

One month of lockdown: Spread

widens but case load on same areas

Currently, the ICMR's strategy focusses on testing of those with ILI symptoms - fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose - only in hotspots or clusters and in large migration or evacuee centres.

Guleria, who is a member of the empowered group on medical facilities and strategy for COVID-19, also appealed against stigmatisation so that people with such symptoms can get tested. "We have to work on this

strategy... If you test early, treatment is started early and that can save your life. If you come gasping for breath, it will lead to higher mortality. It is important to encourage everyone to seek medical attention, get themselves tested. We have ramped up testing to a large extent, there is no shortage... we should be able to support all those people who need to be tested," Guleria said at the government's media briefing.

"The stigma is not justified. It is causing increased mortality and morbidity. Many patients who have flu-like symptoms are not coming to health facilities or are coming late with breathlessness, leading to higher mortality when many could have been saved by oxygen," he said.

Speaking to The Indian Express later, Guleria said, "We are advocating voluntary testing for all those with ILIs. The experience from Mumbai shows that many of the patients came to the hospital late. That is why it is important that the stigma is removed."

The Indian Express had reported on April 15 that an analysis of the first 50 COVID-19 deaths in Mumbai showed that just over half of them died within hours or a day of hospitalisation. In almost half of these cases that led to deaths, the patients tested positive after or just before their death.

According to the Health Ministry's latest figures, India reported 1,229 new cases and 34 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the overall toll to 686. About 19.8% patients -4,324 — have recovered from the disease.

At the media briefing earlier, C K Mishra, environment secretary who heads the empowered group on medical infrastructure, made a global comparison of where countries stood by the time they had conducted 5 lakh tests. He said that the US reached

the mark on March 26 with 80,000 cases, Italy on March 31 with 100,000 cases, UK on April 20 with 120,000 cases and Turkey on April 16 with 80,000 cases.

India had tested 5,00,542 samples by Thursday morning, he said, from just 14,915 tests on March 23.

"If we make a comparison, we seem to be doing well with our strategy, which is intensely focussed on areas of high positivity – of course, countries like South Korea have done better. This shows that our testing strategy has been targeted and continues to expand. It's an evolving strategy, we are learning every day and as we are learning we are expanding...we will expand it again in future as the scale of the challenge keeps changing," Mishra said.

He said that India's positivity percentage has remained constant at around 4%. "Which shows we are on the right track but we are conscious that we need to ramp up testing and will continue to do that," he said.

everyday problems.

"Ramzan is here. I wish you well for the month of Ramzan (which began on Thursday evening)," she says. "I also wish everyone a happy Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Year, which was on April 14). Our homes are now our temple, our mosque, our church and our gurdwara. We cannot celebrate any festivals now. Let us celebrate in our homes," she says.

"Do you have any problems? Do you have enough food? Is anyone in your family sick? Please contact the local police; they will help you. We are giving free rations. But please maintain social distancing when you go to get your rations. And when you return, wash your clothes, and even your chappals."

Over the past three days, the Chief Minister has visited Rajabazar, Park Circus, Kidderpore, Ballygunge Phanri. In sealed-off areas like Rajabazar, her car stood outside the barricades, while she spoke to the people.

Mamata's outreach to the people has been criticised by the Opposition, including the BJP.

hoods, speaking into a microphone. This proves that the administration and her party have no one else to do the job. It is only her. This is also her votebank politics, a political gimmick. She and her administration have not only failed to combat COVID. they have actually made it worse by suppressing facts and trying to resist central teams," Rahul Sinha, national secretary of the BJP, told The Indian Express.

But Mamata continues to play to her strength. Long after she has left for her Kalighat residence, her message continues to echo in the locked down city a recording of her speeches is played by the Kolkata Police over loudspeakers.

### Centre freezes DA/DR hike for staff till July 2021 Since states generally fol- there are demands of eco- MPs, including the Prime

be Rs 37,530 crore in the current financial year and 2021-

"The unprecedented situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has placed huge additional demands on government finances. There is need for major increase in the expenditure on health as well as on welfare measures for various affected sections of society including the poor and vulnerable," the sources said, justifying the decision.

CWC's inability to come out with

a "credible political line" to

counter the BIP and felt the party

should resume normal political

activity. Some of the leaders felt

the Congress should focus on the

plight of migrant workers as a

counter to the communal prop-

PDS complaints

pulses for three months as lock-

down relief, too, has received

several complaints of dealers

shortchanging PDS beneficiar-

Sushil Kumar Modi told The

*Indian Express* that the state has

so far suspended licences of

about 200 dealers. "We have

been receiving complaints from

panchayats and have formed in-

spection teams. E-PoS machines

have minimised corruption in

Santosh Rai of Sarra pan-

PDS, but we are alert," he said.

chayat in Madhubani said, "All

of us got 4 kg rice instead of 5 kg.

The dealer collected our cards

and made an entry of 5 kg in

each card." He said several peo-

ple had complained against the

dealer but no action was taken

Jharkhand Arun Singh said ac-

tion was being taken against the

dealers. "We cannot simply can-

cel the dealership at this point -

that will lead to a bigger crisis.

Wherever we get any complaint

we are acting against the deal-

Additional Chief Secretary of

against him.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister

pected that states may announce similar decisions. It is estimated that the savings on suspension of these instalments of DA and DR of state government employees and pensioners will be Rs 82,566 crore, the sources said. The 4 per cent DA hike for central government employees was announced last month effective from January 1, 2020.

Slowing tax and non-tax revenues have strained government finances, even as

a kg of rice, which means I get a

commission of Rs 10,000 a

month. But it is only on paper. I

have to pay the transporters

around Rs 1,000. I employ three

labourers for distribution and I

pay them Rs 5,000-6,000. I am

left with less 3,000 for a month."

commission for distributing free

ration. For the regular stock, a

dealer gets a commission of 70

paise per kg of grain and Re 1 per

Jharkhand

Commission suggested to the

government to emulate

Chhattisgarh and Odisha where

the ration is distributed by pan-

chayats. In Odisha, around 75%

of fair price shops are managed

by Gram Panchayats and

Panchayat Executive Officer.

litre kerosene of oil.

In Bihar, dealers don't get

ers," he said.

recession. While there are doubts on aggressive stake sale plans given the slump in stock markets, net direct tax collections had contracted after 20 years in 2019-20. During 2019-20, the government faced a shortfall of Rs 1.42 lakh crore from the downward revised target at Rs 10.27 lakh crore, a decline of 9.6 per cent from previous year's collections.

Earlier this month, the Union Cabinet had cleared a 30 per cent salary cut for all

DR to central government em- low the central government on nomic stimulus to protect the Minister and Union Ministers, ployees and pensioners would DA and DR decisions, it is ex- economy from entering into for a year. It also decided to suspend all **MPLADS** (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) funds - under which each elected MP gets Rs 5 crore annually for development work in his/her constituency - for two financial years starting April 1. The money from the MPLADS funds - nearly Rs 8,000 crore - will go to theConsolidated Fund of India which, the government had said, will be used in the battle against COVID-19.

> who has even made allegations Admitting to "problems", about a "PDS scam", and teams Israil Ansari, who owns a PDS sent by the Centre are checking shop in Ranchi's Kanke block, on her government's handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Baneriee said dealers should be given a "fixed compensation". "Every has decided to do what she does month, I gets 100 quintals of ration. The Jharkhand government has asked me to charge Re 1 for

best — hit the streets. Every day for the past several days, she has been out in the city travelling its length and breadth, visiting neighbourhoods, especially those near the coronavirus hotspots that have been sealed. She has been speaking into the mic, directly to the people — asking them to stay in, advising them to reach out to the police if needed, and underlining the do's and dont's that are essential to check the spread

of the disease. She has been hands-on, personally drawing circles on the road to ensure people follow the norms of social distancing in markets, visiting ration shops, and speaking to conservancy

"We have never seen a lockdown like this, and we are grateful to you for your cooperation as you face hardships," she says repeatedly. "Please wear a mask and maintain social distancing. Wash your hands frequently. If you have symptoms like fever or respiratory problems, do not hide them. Contact the police."

She is accompanied by the Mayor of Kolkata, Firhad Hakim, of vehicles was restricted, and policemen were stationed in the neighbourhood lanes and streets. A vehicle mounted with a board displaying COVID do's and don'ts and a picture of the Chief Minister was parked to one side of the crossing.

"Leave all your worries to us," Banerjee says, first in Bengali and then in Hindi. "If you have symptoms, visit MR Bangur, our special COVID hospital. You will be treated there and you will get well. So many people have recovered. Those with critical ailments like a heart or kidney condition are at greater risk. If you think you have been in touch with an infected person, alert the authorities and stay at home or at our quarantine centre for 14 days. So far, it is mostly family members who have been infected. So you have to take care.'

After about 45 minutes at Moulali, she is ready to move. She lowers her windowpane and asks mediapersons not to stand close to each other. "Keep some space between yourselves," she says, as the convoy of over a dozen vehicles, including those belonging to the media, starts moving. She heads towards South Kolkata, through Theatre Road, Alipore, to Behala

By the time she reaches her destination, a light rain has started to fall. She begins speaking, about the virus and the need to take the right precautions, but also about festivals and people's Tiljala, and

"She is visiting neighbour-

### Chess greats

transmissions through a Bluetooth device". International Master is known to have once used the pretext of a weak bladder to take help from his phone hidden in a dustbin.

'It'll be best if cameras used for the FIDE event have audio feeds. As an arbiter of online games, one would need to observe players' movements to see if they are checking tools as well as their computer screens to make it foolproof," he said.

While stressing that no top players will attempt cheating, GM Dibyendu Barua added that safety measures were important so that "no one can blame anyone later".

"Keeping the webcam on for the whole duration, a well-lit room and supervision will happen, of course," he said, adding that he has heard of mobile devices being used for cheating at lower rungs.

Chennai-based R B Ramesh. a former player and current coach, said the shorter time controls (25-minute rapid) don't lend themselves to any hankypanky. "With technology, cheating can be curtailed in blitz games. But if it's longer formats, with 300-400 playing, it's tough to monitor. But that's why online tournaments are not rated officially and FIDE has software like the plagiarism tracker, so to some extent you can mitigate

cheating," he said. He insisted that both video and audio cameras need to be live, to erase suspicion of someone standing off camera and suggesting moves. "One can't obviously say definitively that cheating doesn't happen online, iust the chances here are very low," he said.

The last word of wisdom is reserved for multiple world champion Viswanathan Anand. Offering an insight into the future, he said while online chess simplifies a lot of things for the organisers — travel and venue and other minor practical aspects - he hoped the virtual version wouldn't become the norm. "It has turned out very useful in this situation. Having said that, the whole world hopes that we are not living with corona for the next 10 years. Hope it would not become necessary to play online all the time. For the moment, it keeps us going."

#### Maharashtra

Sources close to the NCP leader said he was moved to a private hospital after developing fever. A hospital spokesperson said his condition was stable.

After Mumbai, Pune, which remains the second worst-hit in the state, saw five deaths while one death each occurred in Nandurbar, Navi Mumbai and Dhule, In Nandurbar, a 32-yearold trader died on Wednesday night, within a day of testing positive. Of the state's 6,427 cases, over 120, or around 2%, are critical.

Of the 14 who died on Thursday, three were under 40 years of age, nine between 40-59, and two above 60. Seven of them also had diabetes, hypertension, asthma or heart disease.

The Inter-Ministerial Central Team, dispatched by the Centre to assess the efforts being taken by Mumbai to fight COVID-19, told the government on Thursday to take measures to reduce the doubling rate and mortality rate. The doubling rate in Maharashtra is at present 7 days, and the death rate 4.5%. In Mumbai, the death rate is 4%. The team said efforts should be made to increase the doubling time to 10 days, according to a senior state government official present at meetings with the

At a video conference with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, the Central team asked the state government to create quarantine facilities away from slums for people living in those areas, citing the threat posed by the use of same

Central officials.

public toilets. According to a statement issued by the CM's office, the Central team led by Additional Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing Industry, Manoj Joshi specifically talked about Dharavi. The statement said Joshi also told the state government to increase its capacity of institutional quarantine and

carry out more focused tests. The five-member Central team that has been in Mumbai for the past three days also said private hospitals and nursing homes should not refuse treatment to non-COVID patients.

Thackeray asked the state administration to implement the suggestions immediately, and told BMC to publicise information regarding COVID and non-COVID hospitals and fever clinics.

Maharashtra has collected over 96,000 samples for testing, while over a lakh people are under quarantine. Of them, 8,702 remain in institutional quarantine. The government said it had streamlined its treatment protocol to keep beds for critical patients free. While the state has 2,509 ventilators, it has placed orders for 2.000 more.

Officials said Maharashtra is running 944 camps for migrant labourers, providing them food, shelter and mental counselling. A state official said 46,436 labourers had been counselled about coronavirus, "Those who have serious mental illnesses are being admitted for treatment,"

Among those who present at the video conference with the Central team were Public Health Minister Rajesh Tope, Chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta and the municipal commissioners of Mumbai and Pune.

### Mamata

together chase away corona)." "It will only be possible with your cooperation," she pleads. Sarkar aapnar paashe aachhe (The government stands with

At a time when she faces criticism from both the Opposition and the Governor of her state

and Police Commissioner Anuj Sharma. About an hour before she arrived in Moulali, arrangements were put in place. The movement

# THE OUTBREAK THE CITY



WATCH

#### 'Missing' man from Spain traced

New Delhi: Days after the Lok Nayak Hospital administration reported a Spanish COVID-19 patient missing, he was found at a quarantine centre in Dwarka, police said on Thursday. According to police, the man was shifted to the quarantine centre by the hospital and the confusion was the result of missing paperwork.

### 'Report if landlords forcing rent'

New Delhi: Citing reports of landlords allegedly forcing tenants to pay rent or face eviction, the Delhi government has directed aggrieved residents, including workers, migrant labourers and students, to report such instances to

#### 3 arrested for ferrying 76 migrants

Gurgaon: Three people have been arrested by Gurgaon Police for trying to transport 76 people, including women and children, from Ludhiana to UP in a truck.

#### Hospital mess shut down

New Delhi: The main kitchen of Lok Nayak hospital has been temporarily shut after the mess dietician tested positive for coronavirus Wednesday.

#### 2 patients on plasma therapy improving

New Delhi: Two patients at Lok Nayak hospital who have been administered ing improvement and doctors are continuously monitoring their condi-

#### 2 more cases in Gurgaon

Gurgaon: Two more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Gurgaon Thursday, bringing the total cases to 47. ENS

### Police raid Maulana Saad's **UP** farmhouse

New Delhi: Delhi Police's Crime Branch raided a farmhouse of Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad Kandhalvi in UP's Shamli. Kandhalvi has been booked for organising a religious congregation in the capital last month, in violation of COVID-19 lockdown orders. Police have named six others associated with the management committee of the Alami Markaz Banglewali Masjid, headquarters of the Jamaat. ENS

#### FRISKING, SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS PROPOSED FOR AIRPORT TOO

# CISF's Metro proposal: Mandatory Aarogya Setu app, barring people with flu symptoms

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

TO ENSURE social distancing at Metro stations and airports once the lockdown is lifted, the CISF has proposed frisking of passengers using a metal detector from a distance of 2.5 metres, barring people with flulike symptoms from the premises, and mandatory installation of Aarogya Setu app on phones of commuters.

A senior CISF official said they have prepared a proposal

Compulsory face masks and

handwash points at the entry

are also among the recommen-

after discussing with various stakeholders, and will implement it only after receiving the consent of the ministries con-

"We have decided that our security personnel will frisk using hand metal detectors after maintaining a distance of 2.5 metres. And distance of a metre will be maintained between passengers waiting for screening. They will first ask them to take out all their accessories and will not touch them physically. If they find anything suspicious during frisking, they will again ask the person concerned to take out that specific material. They will be allowed inside only after proper frisking," said CISF



The CISF has proposed frisking of passengers using a metal detector from a distance of 2.5 metres. Renuka Puri

Officials said all Metro passengers will have to take out metallic items such as belts and buckles before frisking and keep them in their bags, which will go through an X-ray scanner. Those without bags will be allowed to put metallic items in trays, as in the case of airport se-

Singh also said they will conduct thermal screening of all passengers at entry points of airports and Metro stations. "After screening, those found with abnormal temperatures and having a cold, cough and other flu-like symptoms will not be allowed to enter," he said.

As of now, CISF personnel

social elements, but the proposals suggests keeping a tab on those found sneezing or cough-

CISF officials have also insisted on mandatory use of the Aarogya Setu app by commuters. "Aarogya Setu app, with inbuilt e-pass feature, could be employed for identification of suspected persons (having COVID-19 infection). Persons with high risks for both spreading as well as contracting infections should be discouraged from using the Metro," a senior official said.

"We will ask our staff to sanitise every two hours and all persons entering airport/Metro wearing masks. Hand sanitisation or washing facility will also be available at the entry points," Singh said.

CISF has also proposed keeping at least four personal protective equipment (PPE) suits at all Metro stations to handle a suspected passenger or baggage. "Four PPE suits will be kept as standby. CISF personnel will wear regular uniforms with full sleeves, gloves and masks covering nose and mouth. Friskers and X-ray baggage screeners will wear additional face shields or visors to protect their face, especially the eyes, from exposure," an official

### **Another Asha** worker is beaten while at work

**SAKSHI DAYAL** 

GURGAON, APRIL 23

AFTER AN Asha worker was beaten up in Faridabad while conducting a door-to-door coronavirus-related survey, a similar incident was reported in Nuh on Wednesday. This time, Asha worker Sajeeda and her husband, the ward panch, were allegedly beaten up by a man and his three sons. The anganwadi worker accompanying them managed to escape by hiding inside a resident's home.

Police said the accused, Jaan Mohammad and his sons, are absconding. The alleged incident took place around 1 pm at Luhinga Kalan village.

An FIR has been registered at Punhana police station under several IPC sections. "We are conducting investigations to arrest the accused. We expect to nab them within a day or two," said ASI Devi Singh, the investi-

Speaking to The Indian Express, Sajeeda alleged that the men accused her and her team of collecting data for the National Register of Citizens and beat them with sticks.

"Teams of three people have been formed for the survey -the ward panch, anganwadi worker, and an Asha worker, I had gone there with my team. However, members of one family refused to give us the information," said Sajeeda.

She alleged the men first argued with them and then grabbed their papers, "They beat us up... the anganwadi worker managed to sneak into another resident's house moments before they became violent... my husband and I were both beaten up," alleged Sajeeda.

"My father-in-law owns a hotel in the area. He came running on hearing the commotion, but the men beat him up as well... We managed to run and hide inside the house of another person. I called my supervisor who alerted police," she

Sajeeda, who has been an Asha worker for two years, claimed confrontations with people during surveys are a regular occurrence, and have become even more common since the virus outbreak.

"People often become angry even when we go for normal surveys. They are very suspicious, especially since the NRC and CAA... Coronavirus has made it even tougher because everyone is on edge. Usually we manage to explain things to them calmly and get the information, but it was impossible this time," she said.

On Wednesday, Faridabad Police Commissioner K K Rao had warned that strict action will be taken against anyone found misbehaving with ASHA workers

The Asha Workers' Union in Faridabad meanwhile submitted a letter to the health department requesting that teams be deployed to accompany them.

"We all go to the field on our own every day... Things have changed with coronavirus... people are more frustrated and tend to take out their aggression against the government on our workers," said Hemlata Goval. district president of the Asha Workers' Union. She has been an Asha worker since 2003, first in rural areas and since 2014 in ur-

ban areas. Sushila Chaudhary, an Asha worker in the district, said, "We leave our homes each day and risk our health, roaming around in the heat... we are doing it for the benefit of the country and the people we survey. Our families are concerned but I con-

A team accompanying workers, Chaudhary said, will make things easier.

sider this my duty.'

Officials from the health department said it is unlikely they will be able to deploy teams to accompany the workers. "Doorto-door surveys are something the Asha workers carry out anyway. If there is any issue on any day, our officials and their supervisors are always available and supportive, but we lack the manpower to send them out with a team," said an official from the health department.



### LONG WAIT

Children from a makeshift camp by the Yamuna receive food for their families from civil defence volunteers on Thursday. Tashi Tobgyal

### Don't embarass govt on social media: GTB to staff

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

GURU TEGH Bahadur Hospital has directed heads of various departments to ensure that healthcare staff on coronavirus duty do not embarass the government by highlighting on social media some inevitable difficulties they may face while carrying out their "national duty".

In an order on Tuesday, the GTB hospital medical director Dr Sunil Kumar directed officials from various departments at the hospital to ensure problems faced by staff on COVID-19 duty are quickly resolved.

He also directed the staff on COVID-19 duty that to report any problems they face during work to their duty roster controlling

officer. "(The staff) shall be further advised to refrain from talking to the media or use social media platforms to make their complaints public without first bringing it to the knowledge of their concerned duty-roster controlling officer as the same is against the CCS (CCA) Conduct Rules, 1965," the MD said.

"The staff of COVID-19 duty must also be reminded that they are doing a national duty and some difficulties are inevitable, which should not be highlighted in various social media as the same may be very embarrassing for the government," he added.

Speaking to The Indian Express Dr Kumar said, "The staff should first try and exhaust all official channels (of help)... and after that they are free to approach anyone.

### DSCI's troubles continue as one more staffer tests positive

**SOMYA LAKHANI** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

A DAY after Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) restarted its OPD services after being shut for three weeks as 31 staffers and patients had tested positive for coronavirus, a housekeeping supervisor at the hospital tested positive on Wednesday.

Of the 32 cases at the hospital, 27 are staffers, four are patients, and one is a child of a nursing officer. DSCI does not have a COVID-19 ward. Two patients from the hospital had died after contracting the virus.

Dr Pragya Shukla, nodal officer at DSCI, told The Indian Express, "The housekeeping supervisor

gave his sample on April 19 and his result came on April 22. He is asymptomatic, and is in a quar-

antine facility in Mandoli." On Thursday, 17 staffers of DSCI who came in contact with the housekeeping supervisor were tested for coronavirus and sent on quarantine. A hospital source said, "The housekeeping supervisor, who is in his 30s, gave his sample on April 19 and was asked to go for quarantine, but he still reported for duty on April 20 and set up the OPD, which the hospital restarted on April 21. CCTV footage has been examined and so far 17 people at the hospital have been identified to have

come in contact with him." Early this month, The Indian Express had reported how the cancer institute had reported the highest number of coronavirus positive cases among healthcare workers, even though it was not a COVID-19 hospital. Several nursing officers and nursing orderlies had alleged "carelessness by authorities" and that "no PPEs or N95 masks were provided to the

On Thursday, a DSCI nursing officer on condition of anonymity, said, "I joined work on Thursday and was a bit nervous, especially since Wednesday we found out that a housekeeping supervisor had tested positive. Thankfully we were all provided PPEs and arrangements have been made at the entrance to divert patients with coronavirus symptoms to another hospital.'

### **CORONA WARRIORS**

### Covid suspect needed surgery, AIIMS docs decided not to wait for result

**ASTHA SAXENA** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

AT MIDNIGHT on Thursday, doctors at AIIMS received a message from the emergency department about a 35-year-old farmer from Bihar — a suspected coronavirus patient – who needed

The man, who had a lifethreatening disease, was brought to the hospital by his brother at 10.30 pm. He was in acute pain and his condition was deteriorating with each passing

Within an hour, a team was formed to operate on the patient. By 6 am on Thursday, the operation had been conducted successfully.

A team comprising two anesthetists, three doctors from the department of surgery, a nursing staff, an OT technician, and a floor orderly was formed to treat the patient.

The man was suffering from peritonitis – caused by a leakage or hole in the intestines, such as from a burst appendix. Instead of waiting for the coronavirus

test result, the medical team decided to operate on him first as his condition was critical. The patient tested on negative Thursday evening.

"His condition was extremely serious. We had to give him inotropic support to maintain BP levels. He had cough, fever, and breathlessness - all symptoms hinting towards COVID-19. But waiting for the result would have put his life at risk as he was already terminally ill." said Dr Abhishek Singh from the department of anesthesia, who was part of the



A team was formed to operate on the patient within an hour

team. The patient was shifted to the main OT COVID-19 complex for surgery. The entire team donned PPE gear. The operation lasted five hours and he was shifted to the suspected COVID-

19 patients' ward. Peritonitis is usually infectious and often life-threatening. Symptoms usually include pain, tenderness, rigid abdominal muscles, fever, nausea and vomiting. Antibiotics are almost always required, along with surgery or drainage

"In the first hour of surgery, the anaesthesia team readied the pa-

New Delhi

tient. The surgical team entered around 2 am. The surgery was completed around 4.30 am, and he was taken out of the OT at 6 am after completing the remaining formalities," added the doctor.

Doctors across the city have their hands full - addressing concerns related to COVID-19, following up with admitted patients and providing medical assistance to non-COVID patients, apart from double shifts and an imbalanced work-life schedules.

Many say wearing PPEs, masks, gumboots and goggles for several hours has left many

the foot, and pain behind the ear. "When you wear an N95 mask, it takes far more energy to

with blurred vision, injuries to

breathe in. Also, after you wear goggles along with the mask, humidity from breathing condenses on the goggles... which leads to blurry vision. Similarly, after wearing gumboots for several hours, your legs start to hurt as it has an extremely hard sole. However, in the end, we want our patients to be healthy," said Dr Abhishek Singh. Senior Resident. Department of Anesthesiology,

#### **GRAVE LAPSES, SAYS MINISTER**

### Il juveniles beat up guards, flee correction home

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

THE DELHI government Thursday alleged "grave lapses" on part of the staff and management of an NGO-run correction home, after 11 juveniles, who had been moved there from other correction homes, allegedly injured private security guards and fled Wednesday night. One of them was caught later. The 11 have been consvicted on serious charges ranging from robbery to murder and rape, said police.

Delhi Women and Child Development Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam made the observation after inspecting the facility along with the secretary and director of the department. The government has initiated an inquiry into the case. The founder of NGO Prayas, which runs the home, said the juveniles had serious allegations against them, and the director of the home had written to the government over housing them at the facility.

The juveniles are in the 16-18 age group, said police. "We received a call about the incident at 7.15 pm. While escaping from the correction home, the juveniles attacked the security incharge with an iron rod. They also injured three police personnel deployed at the home and broke open the main gate to escape," said a senior police officer.

Police said parents of the absconding juveniles were contacted immediately, and one of them, who went back to his home, was caught. He was brought back to the correction home. Efforts are on to trace the others, police said.

Asenior officer in the Central District said all 11 juveniles were brought to the home over last few days to maintain social distancing among inmates and ensure correction homes are not crowded. They were kept separately, away from the other inmates, under guidelines put in place following the COVID-19 outbreak in the city.

"Under the new norms, juveniles in conflict with the law brought to our homes are quarantined for two weeks. They are kept in separate rooms within the same premises as a precautionary measure. Accordingly, these 11 juveniles were also kept

CORP. /AUTH

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The 11 have been convicted on serious charges ranging from robbery to murder and rape, said police. One of them was nabbed later

separately," said Gautam.

According to the management of the home, around 7 pm last night, the juveniles allegedly managed to overpower the private security guards using a metal rod and four wooden sticks extracted from a carrom board.

"Ifind it a little difficult to believe that 11 juveniles could flee using one iron rod and a few pieces of wooden sticks. Prima facie, there appears to have been grave lapses on the part of the staff and management of the home. How did they manage to break open the lock? Three policemen were present at the entrance as well. The NGO has been running the home for about 20 years now," said the minister.

Prayas founder Amod Kanth

told The Indian Express: "The inmates who fled were brought to the home for the purpose of quarantine. They would have been taken back after the completion of the quarantine period. They were accordingly kept separately. This home is actually not suitable for the kind of juveniles who were brought. I would never use the word hardened criminals for juveniles but they have certain serious allegations against them. So they should not have been brought here. The director of the home had in fact written to the government flagging this issue.' Responding to this, Gautam

said: "Iam not aware of any letter from their end. However, the fact remains that the facility is quite spacious and the inmates may have been shifted for quarantine to ease space crunch elsewhere. Also, the home currently has only 11 inmates. So space was more than adequate. We also must keep in mind that the government funds such facilities."

He said a four-member team has been constituted to inquire into the case. It has been asked to submit a report within three

# 128 cases & 2 deaths in fresh spike

**ASTHA SAXENA** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

ONTHURSDAY, 128 fresh COVID-19 cases and two deaths were reported in the capital. The total cases are now at 2,376 while the death toll has touched 50. Around 808 people have recovered. The health department has collected 5,619 samples from 3.41 lakh residents across the 89 containment zones.

Across the capital, the maximum number of cases — over 230 — have been reported from the Central district, said health department officials. This includes 12 people from two families, including a 45-day-old infant, living in the Churiwalan area.

The district administration has started tracing their contacts. "As per initial investigation, we found that both families live in the same house. One person has a history of travel to Russia, but we are gathering more information on this," said District magistrate (Central) Nidhi



The central district has seen the maximum number of cases. Amit Mehra

Shrivastava.

Four of them, including the infant, have been admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital. Doctors said they are asymptomatic and presently stable.

Sources said the fact that

some areas in the district, especially in Old Delhi, are congested is a cause of concern. There are six hotspots in the district — Chandni Mahal, Nabi Karim, Burari, Bara Hindu Rao, Nawab Ganj and Sadar Bazar.

Recently, the first set of rapid testing kits were used in Nabi Karim on 62 people. All of them tested negative. "The area is under close watch. Regular sanitisation is being carried out and healthcare workers are testing

cility in Narela." A new case also also cropped up in Model Town Thursday — a teenage girl with no travel or contact history. She is asymptomatic.

A sanitation worker with the East civic body also tested positive. She hails from Usmanpur and was

A sanitation worker with the East civic body also tested positive. She hails from Usmanpura and was working in Dharampura. A senior official said 20 of her family members and three workers who were in close contact with her have been quarantined. Seven doctors and 14 healthcare workers at Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital have also tested positive.

We are also carrying out random

sampling to see if there is any local transmission," said a senior

official from the health depart-

new positive cases have surfaced.

An official said the area where

the new cases have come up is al-

ready a containment zone:

"Their samples were collected a

few days ago and reports came

out on April 21 and 22. They have

been shifted to a quarantine fa-

At Jahangirpuri's H Block, 46

### 2 men die at shelter home, officials say both had old illnesses

**JIGNASA SINHA** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

TWO MEN who lived in the night shelter on the Yamuna river bank and were moved to a shelter home in Central Delhi's Chabi Ganj have died over the past week.

The dead, Sudhir Prajapati (50) and Jaideep (43), had been living in the night shelter at Yamuna Pushta for several years. They were shifted to a Delhi government-run temporary shelter on April 14 after three porta cabins along the Yamuna were burnt down on April 11. The men, along with other daily wagers, slept near the riverbanks for three days before being shifted to shelters in Central Delhi and Rohini.

Police said the men were migrant workers. They also said both deaths appear to be "natural".

In a video that surfaced online, Prajapati can purportedly be seen at Yamuna Pushta saying: "Someone burnt the night shelter but now they are not giving us food. Please do something. We'll die of starvation. I had my last meal at noon yesterday."

The video was recorded by volunteers from an NGO and posted on April 13.

N H Sharma, director (night shelter) at the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, denied the allegations made in the video. He said, "The DUSIB and the DM office provided food to over 4,000 men. We didn't stop serving food when the cabins were burnt. The men clashed among themselves and fought over food."

DCP (North) Monika Bharadwaj said, "We received calls on Monday and Tuesday about the deaths at the shelter home. We went to the spot. Prima facie, both seem to be natural deaths but we are waiting for post-mortem reports."

A senior police officer said the bodies are still at the mortuary and efforts are on to trace their families. Authorities said both men did not have COVID-19 as everyone was screened be-

fore they were shifted.

At the shelter home, caretakers and volunteers said the two men had been unwell for a while.

"We think Prajapati had TB. We used to send them to the hospital for check-ups. Both men, along with other migrant workers from Pushta, were shifted here on April 14 and 15," said Vinod Bhargava, one of the caretakers.

District Magistrate (Central) Nidhi Srivastava also said the men died natural deaths.

पश्चिमांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम

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दिनांक: 23.04.2020

# Yemen man found abandoned, doc helps reunite him with kin

SOMYA LAKHANI GURGAON, APRIL 23

GURGAUN, APRIL 2

SEVERAL CUPS of chai, Google Translate, and a doctor's resolve are what helped a 22-year-old Yemen national reunite with his brother late Wednesday night in Gurgaon — five days after he was found lying unconscious on the roadside in Gurgaon's Kadarpur.

"Yusuf, Yemen, India treatment, lost passport" — these are the words he furiously typed in Google Translate on Dr Yogender Singh's phone on April 21 as they sat down for tea at Gurgaon's Civil Hospital, where Singh is the casualty in-charge. "This was a breakthrough after four days of not understanding a word of what he said. I then wrote to the Yemen embassy," said Dr Singh.

It was on April 18 afternoon when Yusuf was brought to the hospital after being found unconscious on the street. Singh said, "He had no coronavirus symptoms... He was running around and didn't obey any orders. Some staffers thought he had psychiatric issues, but when I met him, I realised that was not the case. It was just a language barrier. He had a scar on his head, so I knew he had undergone neurosurgery."

Singh asked various patients

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HARYANA GOVERNMENT

to try and converse with him — in Tamil, Bengali, Kannada, and so on. "It was a failure. Then my assistant told me he only drinks tea and eats biscuits. So I started drinking tea with him several times a day. In three days we became friends. He would give me a thumbs up every time he wanted tea," said Singh.

Singh eventually gave a pen and paper to him, and asked him to write something, which the doctor photographed. "I thought it was Urdu, so I sent it to my friends who understand, and he told me it was Arabic. So I went back to him and opened Google Translate on my phone. He suddenly took it and typed his name and the name of his country," said Singh.

But emails to the Yemen Embassy went unanswered. It was then that Singh asked his wife, Dr Saroj Yadav, who works at the CGHS dispensary, about seeking help from police personnel who come to her for treatment for help with reaching out to the embassy.

Somnath Paruthi, SHO of Greater Kailash police station, who had visited the dispensary, promptly decided to help. "If a doctor can go out of his way to help someone, what excuse do I have? I was amazed by the docman to the embassy in Vasant Vihar, only to realise it had shifted to Anand Niketan," said Paruthi.

Constable Hawa Singh then visited the embassy's new address to find only a guard there, who helped him with an official's number. "The SHO put me in touch with the official who told me they had received a complaint about a missing Yemen national from Delhi. I sent them a picture of the patient, which was then sent to the complainant," said Singh.

On Wednesday night, when Singh left the hospital, he got a call that the complaint was about Yusuf, and that his brother and translator would pick him up.

"They said they only know Medanta hospital in Gurgaon, so dropped Yusuf off there. I had to find his family; he is a guest in our country who needed help," said Singh. In broken English, the translator told Singh that Yusuf and his brother had come to India for his treatment in February. He was operated on a few months ago and was prone to blackouts.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said, "The family and the embassy officials have expressed appreciation for the efforts by the doctor couple and Delhi Police. They have gone beyond their call of duty."

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# 60-yr-old dead at care centre: Doctors say he was asymptomatic

ABHINAV RAJPUT & ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

A DAY after a 60-year-old man from Tamil Nadu, Mohamed Mustafa, died at a COVID care centre in Sultanpuri, officials said doctors were always present at the centre, and the man had been shifted from Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital because he was asymptomatic. The man was diabetic, doctors at the hospital said.

"He was shifted as per proto-

col as he was asymptomatic. The government has ordered that only patients who are severely ill should be kept at hospitals. As per rules, patients who are shifted to quarantine centers are monitored by a team of doctors there," said a doctor at the hospital. The man had been brought to the centre on April 19 after spending 21 days at the hospital.

Fathima Muzaffer, a member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board who lives in Chennai and is coordinating with the family, has alleged that he was diabetic but was not given medicines and food on time. The government has ordered an enquiry into the

antine ward. "He did not die because of negligence. Five doctors were on duty at the time of incident and the patient was attended to. He succumbed before

tent and the patient was attended to. He succumbed before he could be shifted to a hospital. Food is being served regularly four times a day to everyone in the centre. All necessary steps as per prescribed protocol are being taken," he said. Around 700 people, officials said, mostly those who had been to the Nizamuddin Markaz, have

District Magistrate Sandeep

Mishra denied the allegations

and said that the centre was a

care centre and not just a quar-

cludes 104 people who are COVID-19 positive. Mustafa was taken to Lok Nayak Hospital after he collapsed at the centre, but he died before reaching the hospital.

been kept at the centre. This in-

Fathima, meanwhile, said some activists are planning to go to court to demand that people from Tamil Nadu who are found negative and are stranded in Delhi due to the lockdown be transferred to their home state.

'There is a language barrier. We will keep them in quarantine and follow all rules," she said.

#### TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD oviding Combined Water Supply Scheme to Royakottai and 28 other habitation in Kelamangalam union of Krishnagiri District with openwell - 2 Nos as source Execution period - 9 months, Trial run period - 6 months and maintenance of th scheme -12 months. The Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, Vellore - 632 006. 27.04.2020 to 26.05.2020 Bid document may be purchased by remitting an amoun of Rs. 1000 + GST from the Executive Engineer, TWAD Board, Project Division, No. 7/2 3" cross street, Co-operative colony, Krishnagiri. -635001. If bid documents are required by post an amount of Rs.500/- to be paid additionally. Nebsite downloading www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.twadboard.tn.gov.in (free of cost) 08.05.2020 at 11.00 AM 1. Date and time of Pre bid meeting 26.05.2020 upto 5.45 PN 2. Last date and time of downloading bid documents 3. Last date and time for receipt of bid document 28.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM 28.05.2020 at 3.30 PM DIPR/1670 /TENDER/2020 SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS Chief Engineer (i/c), TWAD Board, Vellore-6.



पत्रांकः ८०५

#### पश्चिमांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि. विक्टोरिया पार्क, मेरठ

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

क्षितिग्रस्त परिवर्तकों की मरम्मत हेतु निम्नानुसार सामग्री की आपूर्ति को कराये जाने हेतु निम्न निविदायें ई—टेन्डरिंग के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

अल्पकालीन निविदा संख्या-07/वि.कार्यशाला मं. /मेरट/ 2020-21 (नि.मू. रु. 3,540 (जी.एस.टी. सहित)। धरो. रा. रु. 21,000) के द्वारा L.T. Bushing Rod made of brass for 250-400 KVA T/F मात्रा-3500 नग, अ.नि.सं.- 08: (नि.मू. रु. 1,180 (जी.एस.टी. सहित)। धरो. रा. रु. 2,500) के द्वारा L.T. Bushing Rod made of brass (i) for 630 KVA T/F मात्रा-100 नग व (ii) for 1000 KVA T/F मात्रा-25 नग की आपूर्ति।

निविदा खुलने की दिनांक:— दि. 11.05.2020 निविदा हेर्नु वांछित धरोहर राशि एवं निविदा शुल्क अलग अलग (18% जी एस.टी. सहित) (अप्रतिदेय), आर.टी.जी.एस./एन.ई.एफ.टी. के माध्यम से अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत कार्यशाला खण्ड, मेरठ के नाम से सैन्ट्रल बैंक ऑफ इण्डिया की जेल चुँगी, मेरठ स्थित बैंक शाखा में संचालित चालू बैंक खाता सं. 1403900519 (IFSC Code CBIN0282337) में जमा कराया जायेगा। आई.एम.पी.एस. द्वारा जमा की गई धनराशि मान्य नही होगी तथा आई.एम.पी.एस. द्वारा जमा की गई धनराशि एवं सयुक्त रूप से जमा की गई (निविदा शुल्क एवं धरोहर राशि) राशि को निविदा शुल्क मानते हुये उक्त जमा राशि को जब्त कर लिया जायेगा। निविदा भाग 1 एवं 2 (निविदा / धरोहर राशि एवं तकनीकी बिड), निविदा भाग–3 (प्राइजबिड) निविदा खुलने की तिथि को 14.00 बजे तक ई–टेण्डरिंग वेबसाईट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जायेगी। निविदा भाग 1 व 2 (निविदा शुल्क एवं धरोहर राशि) उसी दिन 16:30 बजे के बाद ऑनलाईन खोला जायेगा। कृपया वैबसाईट www.etender.up.nic.in पर विस्तार मे सभी जानकारी, विवरण/डाउनलोड तथा अन्य किसी भी प्रकार वे संशोधन/विस्तार के लिये निविदा खुलने की दिनांक से पहले तक लॉग इन करें। निविदा प्रपत्र खोलने वाले दिवस को अवकाश होता है तो उक्त कार्य के लिए अगला कार्य दिवस माना जायेगा। अधोहस्ताक्षरी द्वारा किसी भी निविदा को स्वीकार/अस्वीकार या समस्त निविदाओं को या उसके किसी भाग को और अपूर्ण निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का अधिकार बिना कारण बतायें सुरक्षित हैं। विद्युत सम्बन्धी शिकायतों की सूचना "1912" पर

राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें

New Delhi

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत कार्यशाला मण्डल, मेरठ पश्चिमांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लिमिटेड दिनांकः 23.04.2020

पश्चिमांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि., विक्टोरिया पार्क मेरठ रिटैण्डरिंग एवं तिथि विस्तारित सूचना इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित की गयी अल्पकालीन ई—निविदा संख्या 15 व 16/वि० कार्यशाला ख0 / मेरट / कार्य / 2019—20, जो दिनांक 28.03.2020 को खोली जानी प्रस्तावित थी, को किन्हीं अपरिहार्य कारणों से रिटैण्डरिंग करते हुए, निविदा के खुलने की तिथि को दिनांक 30.04.2020 तक विस्तारित किया जाता है। निविदा विज्ञिप्त की अन्य नियम एवं शर्ते अपरिवर्तनीय रहेगी। **अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत** कार्यशाला खण्ड, प०वि०वि०नि०लि०, मेरठ पत्रांक 217 दिनांक 22.04.2020

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

NOTICE OF INVITING TENDER

Tender Notice No. SNT-JP-44R-2020-2 DRM (S&T)/North Western Railway Jaipur, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites Sealed oper tenders from Established and Reliable contractors for the following work. 1 Name of work with its location Provision of telecom facilities for nev Cyber Cell for RPF (Security Department at DRM Office Jaipur in Jaipur division. 2. Estimated Tende Value (Rs): 4427625.64/-, 3. Earnest Money to be deposited(Rs) 88600/-4. Date & Time for Submission of Tender and opening of **tender:** 15.05.2020 Up to 15.00 hrs., 15.05.2020 Up to 15.30 hrs. 5 Website Particulars & Notice board location: www.ireps.gov.in, Notice board location Divisional Rail Manager office/NWR/Jaipur. 405-DT/20 Please join us on 📗 /NWRailways

**TENDER NOTICE OPENING** AMOUNT) (APPROX.) WEBSITE OF THE BOARD NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER SR. No. CLOSING BOARD/CORP./AUTH CORP./AUTH DETAILS/EMAIL DATE RUPEES (TIME) CONST. OF STREET FROM H/O AMARDEEP TO PALA RARJAPAT etenders.bry.ric.in IN WARD NO. 12 + 25 OTHER WORKS INDRU 07.05.2020 secymc.indri@gnsal.com 2 H.F.D.C. YAMUNA NAGAR 271 LACS General Hanager https://etenders.hry.nic.in FURNITURE + 4 OTHER WORKS 27.04.2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR SELECTION OF CONSULTANT CONSULTANCY SERVICE FOR PREPARATION OF CLOSING DATE https://etenders.hry.nic.in MC SONIPAT FEASIBILITY, DESIGN AND PINC SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT semcsonepab@gmail.com 20.05.2020 OF MULTILEVEL PARKING FACILITY (MLPF) AT MASHAD MOHALLA SONIPAT CONSTRUCTION OF 12166 MTS CAPACITY GODOWN WITH ARCH-SHAPED GALVALUME SHEET ROOFING ROAD HARYANA STATE WAREHOUSING INDEVIDUA etenders hry nic in secretary INCLUDING E.I. WORK AT SWH NASIRPUR (DISTT, AMBALA ) 06.05.2020 CORPORATION TENDER + 46 OTHER WORKS CONSTRUCTION OF 2 NOS 33KV LINE BAYS ODSG DUOSING DATE 5 HVPNL, HESAR FOUNDATION & ODCT AT 220KV S.STN. RANGALA RAPPUR (R-3.49 LACS https://www.hvpn.org.in. 12 05 2020 pro@hypn.org.in E) CONSTRUCTION OF 2 NOS. 220 KV BREAKERS CGL NAKE CLOSING DATE 0172-2583789 6 HVPNL HISAR 998017https://www.hvpn.org.in. FOUNDATIONS AT 400 KV S/STN, NAVIADA, CONSTRUCTION OF 1 NO. 66 KV LINE BAYS, FOR 66 KV SUB 12.05.2020 pro@hvpn.org.in CLOSING DATE 0172-2583789 7 HVPNL, HESAR STATION PUNHANA AT 220 KV SUB STATION RANGALA 3.69 LACS https://www.hvpn.org.in. 12.05.2020 pro@hvpn.org.in RAPUR (R-7) CONSTRUCTION OF 66 KV LINE BAYS FROM 220 KV SUB CLOSING DATE 0172-2583789 8 HVPNL HESAR https://www.fvpn.org.in. STATION RANGALA RAIPUR AT 66 KV SUB STATION PUNHANA. 12,05,2020 produtypn.org.kt CLOSING DATE 0172-2583789 9 HVPNL HESAR FOUNDATION, OSDG FOUNDATIONS, ODCT, FIRE WALL & U/C 15.98 LACS https://www.hypn.org.in. 12.05.2020 pro@hypn.org.in PROCUREMENT OF 400KV SILICON COMPOSITE POLYMER. 22.04.2020 0172-2583789 HVPNL, PANCHKULA 1.57 CRORE 10 RUBBER INSULATOR (LONG ROD) STRING 03.05.2020 pro@hypn.org.in 25.04.2020 0172-2583789 11 66 KV CAPACITIVE VOLTAGE TRANSFORMER HVPNL, PANCHKULA https://www.hvpn.org.in. 01.06.2020 1.29 LACS pro@hypn.org.in DETAILED IN THE 27.04.2020 9996532800 12 CAD DIVISION KAITHAL LINING OF WATERCOURSES 17 NOS. https://etenders.hry.nic.in 04.05.2020 xenkaimakad@gmail.com PUBLISHED CHLINE MAINTENANCE OF STREET LIGHT POINTS AT MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, AMBALA CITY (JHJOA AREA IN SECTOR-MUNICIPAL CORPORATION EMD https://etenders.hry.nic.in 13 D171-2443747 1.78 LACS AHBALA 1,7,8,9610.) + 2 OTHER WORKS ENGAGING OF PERSONS AGAINST VARIOUS ACTIVITIES 24.04.2020 www.dhbvn.org.in UNDER DHBVN (HISAR ZONE) UNDER PART-LOF OUTSOURCING POLICY, NIT NO-DI/CE/OP / HSR / 2020-21 14 DHEWN, HISAR 1583 LACS 01662-223302, ceophsidhbyn org in NCING WORK COMPLETE IN ALL RESPECTS (DIGGING OF PITS FOR FIXING OF POST, CARRIAGE OF RCC PILLARS AND 21:04:2020 H.F.D.C., HISAR BARBED WIRE FROM WORKSHOP TO PIT TO PIT, LOADING B 18 LACS 9416067122 15 hrdc.gov.in 03.05.2020 UNLOADING, CONCRETE LIME MORTAR, FIXING OF FENCING POST, STRETCHING AND FIXING OF BARBED WIRE) 5 NOS. OF DRIVER FOR ONE YEAR IN MUNICIPAL 27,04,2020 AS PER DO MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE. 9996199405 https://etenders.hry.nic.in 16 04.05.2020 secymc.shahabad@hry.nic.in SIR OF VARIOUS LINK ROADS IN NO THANESAR, SHAHABAD 27.04.2020 04.05.2020 01744-231420 AND ISPAILABAD URDER WORK PLAN 2020-21 (GROUP NO.1) HSAMB, PIPLI (KKR) menkkr2019@gmail.com + 6 OTHER WORKS

> 24,04,2020 14,05,2020

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT: www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

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### **DELHI CONFIDENTIAL**



### REPORTING DIGITALLY

THE PARLIAMENTARY Standing Committee on Labour presented its report on 'The Industrial Relations Code, 2019' to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday. The committee, headed by senior BJD member Bhartruhari Mahtab, digitally adopted the report as no sitting is held in the middle of the pandemic. Mahtab, it is learnt, wanted to call a meeting of the committee after April 14, but with the lockdown extended until May 3 he asked committee members to digitally adopt the report. This was the committee's eighth report in less than a year since it was formed under Mahtab's chairmanship. The committee has so far presented two reports on Bills.

### FIGHTING ON

HEALTH SECRETARY Preeti Sudan, who has been the bedrock of India's battle against coronavirus, is due to retire at the end of this month. While there are expectations that she will get an extension, and an OSD posted in the ministry given the present crisis, there is no clarity yet.

### GUARDING ROLE

SPEAKER OM Birla on Thursday appreciated efforts of different state governments in making arrangements to take students stranded in Kota due the lockdown to their homes. Birla, who represents Kota in Lok Sabha, also assured that he would take care of students still stuck in the town. He tweeted, "Thanks to the state governments who made arrangements to take the students, who were attending coaching classes in Kota, to their home.... I assure the parents of children who are still in Kota that as a local guardian, I am with each child at all times."

### FLOODED WITH CALLS

NEW DELHI may not be evacuating Indians stranded overseas yet, but the Ministry Of External Affairs (MEA) is facing barrage of questions from them and their families. The MEA's COVID-19 control room, manned 24x7 since March 16, has received more than 3,000 calls and 25,000 emails until Thursday morning.

### **CMs' MEET WITH PM**

## Baghel to seek end to curbs in some districts

**DIPANKAR GHOSE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

FOUR DAYS before Chief Ministers from across the country meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to talk about the lockdown, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has indicated that he will push for lifting of the lockdown in districts that have no COVID cases.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Baghel said while larger decisions on plane, train and inter-state bus travel should be  $taken\,by\,the\,Centre, the\,decision$ to open up the economy should be left to states, and that while "maybe inter-district travel could be stopped", activities within a district should see resumption.

Baghel reiterated that Chhattisgarh has had a total of 36 cases, of whom 28 have returned home after being treated, and the eight others are in good



**Bhupesh Baghel** 

health. In the last meeting of the PM with Chief Ministers on April 11, Baghel had asked for decisions on opening up the economy within states to be left to the respective state governments.

Baghel said, "The Centre can take a decision on planes, trains, inter-state buses. But within state boundaries, the state governments should be left to decide. The straightforward thing is that of 28 districts, there are 23 which are in the green zone and don't have even one case. There are four districts which, if you count where there are no new cases. Korba district was in the red zone, but where for one week there has been no new case."

"Barring that one district,  $normal cy should \, return \, in \, the \, 27$ other districts. Maybe there should be no permission to go from one district to another, but activities should be conducted within districts... If products are sold, businesses function, that will propel industry. We will have to start this one by one," the Chief Minister said.

Chief Minister Baghel also said there was not enough financial assistance coming in from the Centre. He said he had written to the Prime Minister, asking for Rs 30,000 crore to restart the economy. "There is the disaster fund that comes every year, which we have received. We have got some GST compensation. Some kits have come. What else has the Centre given..." he said.

### Paying workers during natural calamity may be unjustifiable: House panel report

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

AMID THE coronavirus lockdown, a parliamentary standing committee has said that during closure of establishments due to natural calamities like earthquake, flood and super cyclone, the payment of wages to workers until the re-establishment of the industry may be "unjustifiable".

The Standing Committee on Labour, which is headed by BJD member Bhartruhari Mahtab, submitted its report on 'The Industrial Relations Code, 2019' to Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla on Thursday under Rule 280.

Centre had on November 28 last year introduced the Industrial Relations Code in Lok Sabha. It was referred to the Standing Committee in December. Examining the provisions re-

lated to "lay-off, retrenchment and closure", it was learnt, the report said. "The Committee agree with the Ministry's contention that since shortage of power, coal etc. does not happen because of the worker, but due to their non-availability, the workers ought to be paid compensation. The Committee have, however, reservations for payment of the prescribed percentage of wages to the workers in the event of closure of an establishment due to natural calamity."

"The Committee are of the considered opinion that payment of fifty percent wages to the workers for 45 days, which can be extended following an agreement between the employer and employees, in case of shortage of power, breakdown of machinery may be justified. But in case of natural calamities... which often result in closure of establishments for a considerably longer period without the employer's fault, payment of wages to the workers until the re-establishment of the industry may be unjustifiable," it stated.

The report also said, "The Committee, therefore, desire that clarity to the above extent be brought in the relevant clauses...' Mahtab told The Indian

Express, "The law has to be fair and just for everyone, and in that respect of something which is beyond the control of the employer, he should not be forced to provide that much of salary because it affects not only employees but also the employers.'

### on lockdown guidelines for industries

**DEEPTIMANTIWARY** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

A DAY after issuing a clarification that its lockdown guidelines have been "misinterpreted" to suggest there would be punitive action against industries if anyone was found COVID-19 positive on their premises, the Centre on Thursday wrote to all states, further clarifying there are no such provisions in the guidelines.

It has also told the states that no fresh permissions are required for industries which were granted exemption in the March 24 lockdown guidelines.

In a letter sent to states, Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has said, "Some apprehensions, based on wrong interpretation of the guidelines, have been raised in the media and by some companies having manufacturing facilities... I would like to clarify that there is no such clause in the consolidated revised guidelines and therefore there is no basis for such misplaced apprehensions.'

The MHA has listed apprehensions as: "States may take legal action, including imprisonment of CEO, in case a COVID-19 positive employee is found in the factory; In such a situation, the premises of the factory would be sealed for 3 months: In case of non-compliance of precautionary measures, the factory may be closed down for 2 days and may be allowed to restart after full compliance." With reports of some state

authorities seeking fresh permission from certain industrial units after extended lockdown guidelines kicked in, MHA has said since the March 24 guidelines have been subsumed in the April 15 guidelines, exemptions granted in the former would hold true.

It has cautioned that "it is important that all workplaces take measures to ensure social distancing and follow standard health protocols as notified by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare." It has, however, said this should not be misused to "harass" industrial units.

New Delhi

### MHA clears air Two govt officials to camp in each of UP's 14 worst-hit districts

**MAULSHREE SETH** LUCKNOW, APRIL 23

THE UTTAR Pradesh government on Thursday decided to deploy one senior administrative official and one health official to 14 of the 15 districts that have recorded 20 or more coronavirus cases. These officials will review the lockdown, healthcare facilities and camps.

The officials will not be sent to Noida district as the situation there is being reviewed.

Uttar Pradesh has 15 districts, including Noida, with 20 or more cases.

"A senior administration official and an official from the Health Department would be sent to camp in each of the 14 districts for at least a week. They would oversee the entire handling of coronavirus right from lockdown measures, health facilities, sanitation to quarantine camps," said Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Home).

He further said during a review meeting on Thursday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed that vehicles that were found illegally carrying passengers should be seized. District Magistrates and other officials

have been asked to personally monitor quarantine centres and food arrangements there.

Claiming that Uttar Pradesh had become the third state in the country to test 3,000 samples a day, Awasthi said that despite being the most populous state,

Uttar Pradesh ranked seventh in

the list of total COVID cases. The CM also instructed the State Home Ministry to deploy one deputy inspector general rank officer in districts where there was no inspector general rank or DIG rank officer at the divisional level.

In the meeting, he ordered poice to seize vehicles coming from Yamuna Expressway, National Highway-2 or from Madhya Pradesh border and immediately quarantine their occupants.

While foodgrain distribution for Antyodaya card holders will resume from May, Adityanath said labourers registered under MGNREGA, street vendors, erickshaw drivers and other daily wagers be given 3 kg of wheat and 2 kg of rice.

Meanwhile, the Public Works Department, Irrigation Department, Uttar Pradesh Expressway Development Authority and others resumed some of their projects

#### **EPIDEMIC DISEASES ORDINANCE. 2020**

### Man held for assaulting **ASHA** worker in Gujarat

Gandhinagar: A man was arrested for allegedly assaulting an ASHA worker in Mehsana district on Thursday.

The accused, Kamlesh Patel, was booked under Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020, which was passed by the Centre Wednesday to check attacks on healthcare personnel deployed in fighting COVID-19.

The ASHA worker was on duty, checking symptoms of COVID-19 among residents of Balol village. Mehsana SP Manish Singh said the accused stopped her and asked her why she did not give him any medicine. She asked him if he had any illness. During this time, the accused indulged in a scuffle with her and tried to push her in his car, the SP said.

The accused also allegedly used casteist abuses against the worker. He is also booked under provisions of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocity) Act. ENS

### To help India bounce back, **BJP** suggests manufacturing policy changes

**LIZ MATHEW** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

IN ORDER to help India to bounce back from the economic slump in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown, the ruling BJP has suggested major longterm changes in the country's manufacturing policy. These include proposals to lower the cost of production, land price, easing of labour laws and simplifying contract enforcement provisions.

The suggestions, based on consultations with economists, industrialists, representatives from MSME sector and representatives from digital platforms, have been submitted to the government, said Gopal Krishna Agarwal, BJP spokesperson for economic affairs. The consultations were coordinated by Agarwal, as directed by BIP president J P Nadda and general secretary(organisation)BLSantosh.

"The consultations concluded that there is an opportunity for India in the post COVID-19 world as many countries would prefer to see India as a manufacturing hub. All the stakeholders were of the view that India should utilise the opportunity effectively," Agarwal told The Indian Express.

"There needs to be long-term changes in the manufacturing policy. Cost of production should be brought down for which there has to be changes in the power rates and tax compliance laws. Cost of the land should be brought down for the manufacturing units, labour issues including laws should be tweaked, changes in the contract enforcement costs, etc are some of the suggestions," the BIP leader said.

According to Agarwal, the government's response has been positive and it is expected to take proactive measures.

Addressing his council of ministers earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said "there could be a plan to open up the districts which are not identified as hotspots". The Prime Minister also wanted "resumption of activities in the manufacturing sector, especially those for export".

**FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

### NGT asks CPCB to ensure compliance of biomedical waste management rules

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

THE NATIONAL Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to take steps to ensure compliance of Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016.

"There appears to be need for further revision of the guidelines

to cover all aspects covering not merely institutions but also individual households and dealing with situations where scientific disposal facilities like incinerators are not available and any unmindful deep burial without adequate safeguards can adversely affect the groundwater and pose danger to the health and safety of people,"

the tribunal has said in an order. The CPCB has issued detailed guidelines on handling, treatment and disposal of waste generated during treatment, diagnosis and quarantine of COVID-19 patients.

The NGT headed by its chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel took cognizance of the issue based on an April 19 report in The Indian Express which red-flagged the lack of Common Bio-Medical Waste Treatment Facilities tasked with the disposal of biomedical waste.

#### मुख्यमंत्री निःशुल्क दवा योजना Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Government of Rajasthan RMSCL

"Mukhyamantri Nishulak DavaYojana' Gandhi Block, Swasthya Bhawan, Tilak Marg, Jaipur – 302005, India one No: 0141-2228066, 2228064 Fax No. 0141-2228065 Website: http://rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov. CIN:U24232RJ2011SGC035067 E\_mail:<u>edprocurement@gmail.com</u>, and rmsc.health.rajasthan.gov.in Ref. No.: F.02(281)/RMSC/Procurement/Item-CV/06/2020/801 Dated:-22.04.2021

Notice inviting short-term bids for procurement of VTM kit and N-95 mask Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation Limited intends to procure following items as per the quantities given below-S. N. Name of Items Estimated Qty.

 VTM Kits
 N-95 mask detailed proposal / offers through e-mail on the following e-mail id edprocurement@gmail.com.contact.no. 9829170424 latest.by 27th April 2020, 09,00 hrs.

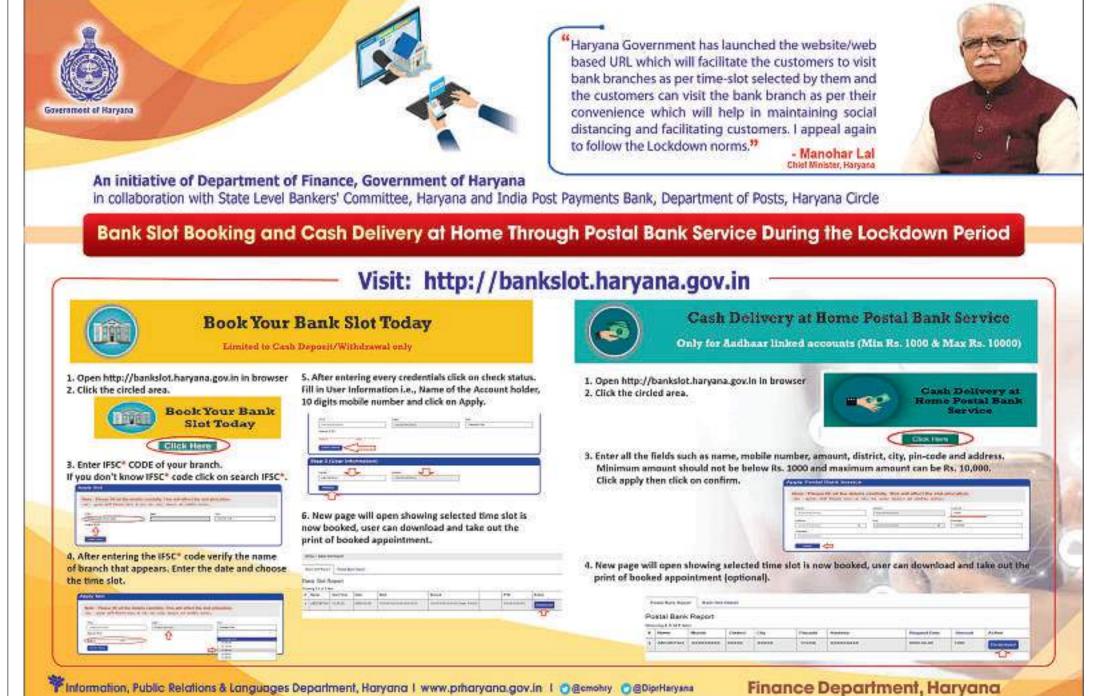
Detailed guidelines and specifications may be seen on the website of RMSC which is Managing Director, RMSCL Raj.Samwad/C/20/41

#### **GUJARAT MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LIMITED** (A Government of Gujarat Undertaking)

Regd. Office: Block No. 14/1, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Sector-10, Gandhinagar **2** 079-23250767, 23250766, 23257696

**COVID-19 URGENT PURCHASE NOTICE:** DRUG/01/2020-21

Quotations are invited for Tablet & Capsules, Injections and Miscellaneous products through E-mail. Interested Manufacturer/company/Authorized dealer are invited to send Quotations of items along with their drug license, Name of manufacturer for particular drug and copy of WHOGMP certificate of manufacturer through e-mail on mdgmscl@gujarat.gov.in. till 27/04/2020, 16:00 Hrs. Detailed Notice is available on website http://gmscl.gujarat.gov.in and this office notice board. INF/34/19-20



# 6 THE OUTBREAK NATION





At an engineering unit at Sanand Industrial Estate, near Ahmedabad. Javed Raja

#### **ODISHA** Complete shutdown in three districts

Bhubaneswar: Odisha announced a curfew-like shutdown in hotspot districts of Balasore, Bhadrak and Jajpur from 10 pm on Thursday to conduct surveillance and contact tracing. Chief Secretary A K Tripathy said all activities will be suspended till 10 am on April 26. Shops dealing in essentials will be closed, barring select pharmacies. "We took the step after detecting 29 cases in 5 days in these districts," he said. Odisha has reported 87 cases so far.

### Quarantined man is first Ramban case

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district Thursday reported its first COVID-19 case after a person at a quarantine facility tested positive. He was among a group of 10 people hiding in a truck to clandestinely reach their homes in Kashmir from Delhi. Police, however, had intercepted the truck on the Jammu-Srinagar highway and sent them to a quarantine facility. Their ing, and the other reports are awaited, sources said.

### **PUNJAB**

### 6-month-old girl dies, had heart defect

Chandigarh: A six-monthold Phagwara girl, who had tested positive for the coronavirus, died at Chandigarh's PGIMER on Thursday. The child was admitted to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research for a corrective heart surgery. The infant, who was on ventilator support, had tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday. She had a congenital heart defect, offi-

### SCHEME TO DISTRIBUTE 1 KG PULSES PER FAMILY TO NFSA BENEFICIARIES

# Only 10% free pulses under govt scheme distributed to poor so far

HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

ANNOUNCED AS part of the COVID-19 relief package about a month ago, free pulses -1 kgper family — to beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) are yet to reach many households in the economically poor strata.

Out of the total monthly allocation of 1.95 lakh metric ton (LMT) pulses under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY), barely 19,496 ton have been distributed by the states till Wednesday, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, which is monitoring supply of essential items during the nationwide lockdown.

According to sources, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED), which comes under administrative control of the Agriculture

**ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF PULSES** UNDER PM GARIB KALYAN ANN YOJANA

Total monthly allocation of pulses Quantity issued to states

1,22,312 metric ton

Quantity dispatched to destination 44.932 metricton Quantity received by states

34.768 metric ton Quantity distributed by states 19.496 metric ton

Ministry, has been tasked with ensuring supply of pulses from the buffer stocks it maintains.

In a statement on "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Progress So Far", the Finance Ministry on Thursday stated that "1,09,227 MT of Pulses have also been dispatched" to various states and Union Territories

However, the Food Ministry's

data shows that against a monthly allocation of 1,95,531 MT pulses under PMGKAY to provide pulses free of cost to 19.55 crore families under NFSA, 1,22,312 MT have been issued to states. Out of this, 44,932 MT have been sent to "destination" states, 34,768 MT received by

these states, and only 19,496 MT

distributed to the beneficiaries,

ministry data shows.

A worker at a fruit shop at the Naveen Galla Mandi in Lucknow on Thursday, after the UP government changed the limited

sale timings — from day to late night hours — in order to discourage large gatherings of general buyers. Vishal Srivastan

method developed by IIT-Delhi

ICMR nod to COVID-19 test

diagnostic assay," the institute

analyses, the IIT Delhi team iden-

tified unique regions (short

stretches of RNA sequences) in

the COVID-19 /SARS COV-2

genome. These regions are not

present in other human corona

viruses providing an opportunity

to specifically detect COVID-19.

This method uses primers target-

ing unique regions of COVID-19

that were designed and tested

using real time PCR. These

primers specifically bind to re-

gions conserved in over 400 fully

"Using comparative sequence

said in a statement.

Number of

beneficiaries

19.55 crore

Sources in the Food Ministry said sluggishness in distribution is due to a late start of the milling process by NAFED despite announcement of PMGKAY on March 26, a day after the country went into lockdown.

A senior official of NAFED told The Indian Express, "We have to distribute free pulses to 19.55 crore families for three months across all 36 states and UTs. In big states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the number of eligible beneficiaries is quite high and, therefore, the allocation is high, (so) we are taking some time."

But NAFED is sending pulses to these states, he added.

The official said pulses in quantity have been sent to UTs such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry and Chandigarh, and smaller states such as Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura. "Buffer stock of pulses is always kept un-milled (whole), and the milling process takes some time," the official said.

NAFED is the central nodal agency for procurement of notified agricultural commodities, including pulses, under the Price Support Scheme run by the Agriculture Ministry. It also maintains a buffer stock of pulses under the Price Stabilisation Fund Scheme administered by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

After Food Ministry officials flagged a sluggish response in supply of pulses to the states, the Cabinet Secretary is learnt to have asked officials concerned in the Agriculture Ministry and NAFED to ramp up

In a statement issued on March 26, the government had said, "To ensure adequate availability of protein to all the abovementioned individuals, 1 kg pulses per family would be provided according to regional preferences for next three months. These pulses would be provided free of cost by the Government of India."

### Days after girl dies walking home, 2 booked for trafficking

**GARGIVERMA** RAIPUR, APRIL 23

DAYS AFTER a 12-year-old girl died while walking back to her home in Chhattisgarh, Bijapur police lodged an FIR against two persons for taking the minor to work on a chilli farm in Telangana. The labour department filed a complaint against the accused stating they were involved in human trafficking, sources said

The FIR was lodged on Wednesday at Bijapur Kotwali under Sections 370 (trafficking of persons), 34 (Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the IPC and 79 (exploitation of a child employee) of the Juvenile Justice Act.

"In our inquiry, we found that a woman from Aded village had taken five underage girls, including Jamali, to work on a chilli farm in Telangana without informing anyone. We have registered an FIR against her and the contractor, Santosh Manchal. who is a resident of Kannaiguda village in Telangana for human trafficking and under Juvenile Justice Act," Sonmani Borah, Secretary (Labour), said.

Jamalo Madkami (12) died on April 18 while walking from Peruru in Telangana to her home in Aded village of Bijapur, just 10 km short of her village. She died due to electrolyte imbalance and exhaustion, according to the postmortem. However. labour officials claim that she fell while walking and hurt herself, causing her death.

She had gone to work in Telangana for the first time two months ago along with Sunita Markami and 11 others. They were all walking back as they did not have food where they were staying, sources said.

### mortality, Punjab CM orders audit of each COVID death **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** CHANDIGARH, APRIL 23

To understand high

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday said that he has ordered a team of health experts to carry out a detailed audit of every COVID-19 death in Punjab in order to understand the alarmingly high death rate in the state due to coronavirus infections.

The CM was speaking during a CWC meet chaired by Congress chief Sonia Gandhi via video conferencing.

He informed party leaders that his government was strengthening its pandemic containment measures under guidance of this expert team which includes Dr K K Talwar, former Director PGI, Dr Raj Bahadur, V-C of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Dr Rajesh Kumar, former head, School of Public Health, PGI, among others.

Amarinder added that COVID-19 mortality in the state was high largely due to co-morbidity and lack of health-seeking behaviour (patients come late to hospital).

But he argued that despite the high mortality rate of 6.2 per cent, the rate of growth of COVID-19 in Punjab was lower than India, with the cases doubling in 16 days against the national average of nine days. Amarinder also pointed out

Nawanshahr's success in containing the spread of the disease and said that the effort has been appreciated by the Centre as well as the media.

Nawanshahr, which was one of the first hotspots in the country, now has zero coronavirus cases under treatment. After recording its first and only death



**Amarinder Singh** 

due to COVID-19, the district has managed to stage recoveries in rest of the 18 cases in four weeks.

The CM said that Punjab's performance in fighting the pandemic had to be compared with Kerala and Gujarat, which were also states with high NRI population. He said that Punjab was doing significantly better than Guiarat, About Kerala, he said that while the southern state had 12 cases per million population, Punjab only had 9.

Punjab currently has 257 positive cases, with 16 deaths. While two patients are critical, 53 have recovered. The state has 3 Containment Zones (where there are more than 15 cases) -Jawaharpur, Safabadi Gate-Patiala, Budhlada. Three of the state's districts - Ferozepur, Fazilka and Bathinda – are Green Zones with no cases.

Hitting out at the Centre, Amarinder claimed that resources of Rs 4,400 crore of GST have not yet been released by the Central government.

Giving details of the state's efforts to ramp up testing, he said: "In place of 1 lakh rapid testing kits, we have received only 10,000 China-made testing kits and their authenticity is yet to be

### **ISLAMOPHOBIA ROW**

### Voices in govt blame fake accounts, regret **OIC** statement

**SHUBHAJITROY** 

POINTING TO fake accounts posing as Arab royal family members and criticising India over "Islamophobia", government sources in New Delhi on Thursday said it is an "attempt to sow discord" between India and Arab countries. Sources also called the recent

statement by Organisation of Islamic Cooperation "deeply regrettable" and that they should not "communalise the fight against COVID-19 pandemic".

After Indian envoy to the UAE, Indian embassies in Oman and Oatar have come out to douse the controversy.

In Oman, a social media post by a fake account purportedly belonging to one of Oman's princesses stirred the hornet's nest, After Oman's Princess Mona Al Said clarified it was a fake account, Indian envoy Munu Mahawar tweeted, "I thank HH @MonaFahad13 for clarification on fake social media posts attributed to her. India values its friendly relations with Oman and will con-Government and people of Oman to further strengthen our special relationship."

The Indian Embassy tweeted Wednesday, "The friendly relations between India and Oman are underpinned by our shared values of tolerance and pluralism. Let us all commit to maintaining unity and social harmony at this critical juncture. As PM @narendramodi said: We are in this together."

The Indian embassy in Qatar on Tuesday posted screenshots of two Twitter accounts, which had the same display picture, but had different names - one claimed to be based in the Gulf. Both of them had posted anti-Muslim comments, linking the spread of coronavirus to the community.

Asserting that fake Twitter accounts were being used to "create divisions within our community", the embassy in Doha posted, "Please understand the reality and do not get swayed by these malicious attempts to sow discord.'

### Pune institute to launch human trials to test new BCG vaccine against virus

Waiting Hours

**ARANYA SHANKAR** 

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

more affordable.

THE INDIAN Council of Medical

Research (ICMR) has approved a

COVID-19 test method devel-

oped by the Indian Institute of

Technology (IIT) Delhi, which

will make detection of the virus

validated at ICMR with a sensi-

tivity and specificity of 100%. This

makes IIT-D the first academic in-

stitute to have obtained ICMR ap-

proval for a real-time PCR-based

"The detection assay has been

ANURADHA **MASCARENHAS** PUNE, APRIL 23

A BCG vaccine, which is primarily used against tuberculosis and given to newborns, has been improved by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII). It will be used in human clinical trials soon to test its efficacy in improving overall immunity against COVID-19.

SII, the largest manufacturer of vaccines against polio and diphtheria, has received a goahead from the Drug Controller General of India to start human clinical trials. Some sites have been identified, where 6,000-7,000 participants will undergo

"The new and improved re-



distributed by the local corporator and NGOs. Pavan Khengre

(VPM combinant one 1002)...will be used in the clinical trial. Many believe that countries where the BCG vaccine has been given have fewer COVID-19 fa-

talities and lesser severity of cases. Hence, testing the BCG vaccine's ability in improving overall immunity is crucial before we prescribe and recom-

mend the same. A clinical trial will be launched soon and it should be over within two months," said Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India.

sequenced COVID-19 genomes.

This highly sensitive assay was

developed by extensive optimi-

sation using synthetic DNA con-

structs followed by in vitro gen-

erated RNA fragments," it added.

"the first probe-free assay for

COVID-19 approved by ICMR"

and it will be useful for specific

and affordable high throughput

scaled up as it does not require

fluorescent probes. The team is

targeting large scale deployment

of the kit at affordable prices

"This assay can be easily

testing.

The institute said this was

"... we cannot arrive at any conclusion before the clinical study is over, nor do we want to make any claims," he added.

Researchers say the vaccine will be initially given to two groups – healthcare workers and family contacts of patients with COVID-19. Swab samples will be taken from all of them to check if they are negative for the disease before the BCG shots are given.

Dr Sanjay Lalwani, medical director of Bharati Hospital, Pune, said there will be stimulation of the immunological system, which may help prevent the person from getting complications related to the disease.

### Clinical trials may be conducted on anti-viral drug Favipiravir

**ANURADHA MASCARENHAS** PUNE, APRIL 23

with suitable industrial partners

as soon as possible," the IIT said.

oped by a team of nine teachers

and students at Kusuma School

of Biological Science, including

PhD scholars Prashant Pradhan.

Ashutosh Pandey and Praveen

Tripathi, post-doctoral fellows

Parul Gupta and Akhilesh Mishra

and professors Vivekanandan

Perumal, Manoj B Menon, James

house assay is comparable to

that of commercially available

kits." researchers said.

"The sensitivity of this in-

Gomes and Bishwajit Kundu.

The assay has been devel-

KEEN ON rapid research examination of promising drugs, officials at the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) said that Favipiravir, an anti-viral drug used for certain influenza viruses, looks promising as a drug against COVID-19 due to invitro results. "We will allow clinical trials to test this drug," highly placed officials at DCGI told The Indian Express.

Favipiravir has shown some good results against certain influenza viruses, and other countries like China and Japan are testing it as a potential treatment against the coronavirus disease, officials said.

At the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Director General Dr Shekhar Mande said work is underway on repurposing different drugs that could be used as a line of treatment for COVID-19.

"The pharmaceutical company has completed the synthesis of Favipiravir, and once approved by DCGI, we can go ahead with limited clinical trials," Dr Mande told The Indian

According to European Pharmaceutical Review (April 17), the drug - approved in Japan for manufacture and sale as an anti-viral — is an investigational product being administered to COVID-19 patients in clinical studies. It is thought that it may combat COVID-19 as it inhibits the RNA polymerase required for viral replication, the Review said.

Several drugs such as Chloroquine, Arbidol. Remdesivir and Favipiravir are undergoing clinical studies to test their efficacy and safety in the treatment of coronavirus

According to reports, Japanese company Fujifilm sells the drug Favipiravir under the brand Avigan, which has been approved in Japan to treat influenza. The drug was also used to treat Ebola.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council of Medical Research has advised the use of HCQ (Hydroxychloroquine) for prevention among high-risk categories like healthcare workers and high-risk contacts of positive patients.

New Delhi

### Kottayam, Idukki moved to orange zone

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government on Thursday rejigged districts into red and orange zones as part of its coronavirus containment plan during the lockdown period. After two new confirmed cases were reported, the status of Kottayam and Idukki districts was changed from green to orange zone.

The classification of districts into red, orange-A, orange-B and green had created some confusion, and people had come out in large numbers earlier this week.

Several relaxations have been announced in orange-B and -A zones beginning April 20 and 24, respectively. As per the new categorisation, 10 districts in central and south Kerala have been put into orange category, while four northern districts remain in red zone.

# THE OUTBREAK NATION



WATCH



Wheat being unloaded in Mohali, Punjab. Jasbir Malhi

### **MADHYA PRADESH** 34 policemen in Bhopal infected so far

Bhopal: As many as 34 police personnel, posted in eight out of 40 police stations in Bhopal, and their 30 family members have been infected with the novel coronavirus. While infection in some police personnel was traced to Tablighi Jamat members who arrived in Bhopal afvisiting Nizamuddin congregation, some got infected because they were posted in areas like Jahangirabad that reported many cases, ADG Upendra Jain said. ENS

#### **ASSAM** Man walking home from Nagaland dies

Guwahati: A 45-year-old labourer from Assam's district Golaghat Wednesday died after he fell sick while walking home from a neighbouring district in Nagaland where he worked, officials said, Nagen Rabha of No 2 Lakhipur village had walked around 80 km as part of a group of workers before the police found him in Jorhat. "He seemed to be weak. Police took him to Bhogamukh hospital where he died," said Jorhat DC Roshni Aparanji

### **GUJARAT** RAF man gets virus, showed no symptoms

New Delhi: About 130 CRPF personnel have been quarantined after their colleague, an RAF jawan, positive Ahmedabad, officials said Thursday. They said the infected jawan is a head constable-rank official and works as a driver for the 100th battalion of the Rapid Action Force, the blue dungaree donning anti-riot unit of the paramilitary force. The RAF jawan was asymptomatic and had himself gone for testing.

## Heart attack or coronavirus death: No autopsy, Karnataka experts suggest study

**JOHNSONTA** 

BENGALURU, APRIL 23

WITH AT least two recent deaths in Karnataka due to heart attacks later registered as COVID-19 fatalities, one of the advisors to the state government on coronavirus has proposed a study on the co-relation between heart ailments and the infection.

According to Dr C N Manjunath, Director of the Staterun Jayadeva Institute of Cardiac Sciences and a COVID-19 advisor to the Karnataka government, what is complicating matters is the lack of autopsy in case of coronavirus cases. "Rather than COVID-19 causing a heart attack, people with pre-existing heart diseases are getting infected. There are a couple of patients I

years earlier for heart attack and then they succumbed to COVID," Dr Manjunath said.

On April 16, a 42-year-old driver from Vijayapura region died of suspected cardiac arrest after reportedly learning that two persons he was in contact with had tested positive. Two days later, a test result showed he had COVID-19, with Karnataka Education Minister S Suresh Kumar saying the shock at the possibility of being infected had brought on the heart

The other person who died of a heart attack and later tested positive was a 65-year-old, who had a history of heart ailments and collapsed in his hospital

ward in Bengaluru on April 13. Despite the two cases suspected to be deaths due to heart attacks, they are part of the 17 coronavirus deaths in the official records of the state government.

In normal course, an autopsy would have settled the matter. However, coronavirus cases are not being subjected to one due to fear of infection, and the bodies of the two were disposed of without post-mortem. International medical re-

search - including in Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the pandemic - has found a link between COVID-19 and accentuation of pre-existing heart conditions, especially among the elderly.

"COVID by itself can rarely cause a heart attack - maybe in some 5% cases because it causes thrombosis formation both in the lungs and sometimes arteries. But it could be a precipitat-

The Jayadeva Institute has proposed to examine the co-relation in a study along with the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases, which is one of the centres treating COVID-19 in the state. "Since COVID-19 is a viral infection, it will have a precipitating role. We are drawing up a study to be conducted if cleared by an ethics committee," said Dr C Nagaraj, the Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute.

The study would look at whether persons with predisposition to heart ailments - with habits like smoking - or a history of it, are more susceptible to the infection.

While there is no written order in Karnataka regarding postmortem in case of coronavirus deaths, doctors are following

forensic experts. "For the exact cause of death, a post-mortem would be required, but in such cases, an autopsy will be difficult because people who are doing it will be exposed to very high risk," Dr Manjunath said.

A forensic doctor said, "What

is happening is that doctors are not touching bodies in natural death cases but classifying them all as suspected COVID-19 cases and sending them for swab tests. If the tests are positive, the body is disposed of. Only if test reports are negative are autopsies being considered."

The Journal of American Medical Association Cardiology (Jama Cardiology), in an editorial on March 27, had referred to two papers published in the journal by researchers from academic

**KAMAAL SAIYED** 

WITH 14 staff members—a resi-

dent medical officer, 12 nurses

and a computer operator—testing

positive for COVID-19 in the last

few days, the 550-bed Kiran

Super Multispeciality Hospital in

Surat has been temporarily shut

tients, nobody had shown any

symptoms. We don't want to take

any risks. we have decided to shut

down. Once the hospital is fully

sanitised, it will start functioning

again," said Mathur Sawani, chair-

found that many of the staff

members who tested positive had

the nearby districts of Dang and

went to her home in Dang district

on April 18, had even started

working at the civil hospital in

Ahwa from Tuesday. She is the

first COVID-19 patient in Dang

leave four days ago to go to her vil-

lage in Navsari district. She tested

positive on Wednesday night, and

was admitted to the civil hospital

while her family members were

went home (in Navsari district) on

A 27-year-old doctor also

A 24-year-old nurse had taken

A 23-year-old nurse, who

Navsari - in the last few days.

During contact tracing, it was

man of Kiran Hospital.

"We have talked to all the pa-

SURAT, APRIL 23

down till May 1.

cated higher death rates among persons with heart ailments who were infected by coronavirus. One of the studies involving 416 patients found that 19.7% of patients developed myocardial infarction after hospitalisation and had a death rate of 51.2%, compared to 4.5% among people with no myocardial infarction. A second study among 187 patients found 27.8% COVID-19 patients developed myocardial infarction in hospital with a death rate of 59.6%, compared to

8.9% among other patients. Any link between COVID-19 and heart complications has, however, been refuted by medical researchers like Prof Alida Caforio of the University of Padova, Italy, who is part of the European Society of Cardiology.

'We had a shortage of nurses

in the isolation ward, so we hired

six nurses through an agency. We

got them medically examined

and put them on duty from April

21. On April 22, a source in Surat

said some nurses and doctors

from Kiran Hospital had tested

positive. We sent the samples of

all the newly appointed nurses for

testing. On Thursday afternoon,

we got the test reports - one of the

nurses, who was earlier at Kiran

Hospital, tested positive," said Dr

Rashmikant Kokni, Chief Medical

along with her family members.

She was asymptomatic. There

was no patient in the isolation

ward (where the nurse was on

duty) so there is nothing to worry

tion ward; 20 staff members, in-

cluding doctors, nursing and cler-

ical staff, have been quarantined.

Their samples have been sent for

testing. The infected nurse's vil-

lage has been quarantined. We

have deployed police personnel

outside the village so that nobody

can enter or leave," said Dang

District Collector N K Damor.

about," he said.

"We have sanitise

"We have quarantined her

Officer, Ahwa Civil Hospital.

**Surat hospital** 

closed after

14 staffers

test positive

### Amid doubts over test kits, India to get more supplies from China

**SHUBHAJIT ROY** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

country.

THE GOVERNMENT on Thursday made it clear that it will get around 20 more flights full of medical supplies from China in the coming days, despite questions being raised on the quality of testing kits imported from that

Over the last two weeks, India has received about 400 tonnes of medical supplies, including RT-PCR test kits, Rapid Antibody Tests, PPE kits and thermometers in almost two dozen flights from five cities in China, the government

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "Around 20 more flights are expected to bring supplies from China in the coming days, and this is likely to be stepped up considerably in the next few months as our procurement efforts gain mo-

Sources said the "quality assurance" of the kits was being done by the Indian embassies, and did not make any judgement on the testing kits from China. The sources said that they are being procured from "qualified and approved suppliers", they meet "certain basic standards", and "thirdparty inspection" is done.

On the recent kits procured by the ICMR which are under scanner, sources said the body is "still looking into" it and they will "make a judgement".

The MEA spokesperson also said that "six SUV-sized high speed testing machines, which are in high demand, are being sourced from Roche in USA. Our R&D labs are in touch with labs in Israel and Germany which are un-

dertaking cutting edge work." As reported by The Indian Express, Srivastava said a significant development has been that through coordination with concerned agencies in India, arrangements were enabled whereby the Indian subsidiary of a South Korean firm has commenced production of COVID-19 rapid antibody testing kits in its plant in Manesar, Haryana, with a capacity of 5 lakh tests per week. "The first batch rolled out on April 19. This is an excellent example of our

'Make in India for world' "he said "Our embassy has also signed a contract on behalf of ICMR with another South Korean company to procure and supply 5 lakh co-

rona testing kits," he said. As part of the government's response to the COVID-19 situation, 11 empowered groups have been set up for an "integrated allof-government" approach. "MEA has been playing a key role in the empowered group that deals with ensuring availability of essential medical equipment and supplies," he said. "We are also facilitating collaboration between Indian and foreign agencies in research and development efforts (such as on Remdesivir, PLX Cells etc.) related

He also said that in keeping with India's standing as a major and responsible supplier of pharma products to the world. 'we have been providing humanitarian aid and commercial supplies including HCQs and



the city — on Thursday. Bengal has 334 active COVID-19 cases. Partha Paul

# Amid corona crisis, call for halt on organ transplants

**ABANTIKA GHOSH** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

THE NATIONAL Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) has called for suspension of all cadaver transplants in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

The NOTTO, the apex organi-

sation for all activities of coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of organs and tissues, has also said that no transplant should be undertaken without a "rigorous epidemiological survey among potential donors and their families".

In a guidance document, NOTTO, which also functions as a registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in the country, has stated, "Individuals who have been exposed to a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patient within

the last 14 days, who have returned from nations with more than 10 infected patients and those whose cause of death was unexplained respiratory failure should not be accepted as deceased donors. PCR of airways specimens of donors with suspicion of COVID-19 should be undertaken. The deceased donor programme may be temporarily

At about 0.34 per million deaths, the cadaver donation rate in India is extremely low. This means that in a year just about 1,000 transplants take place in the country of all organs taken from brain dead persons. However, transplant surgeons say that with living donors staying away because of coronavirus, for many patients cadaver donation is their only hope until things return to

suspended..."

Dr Vasanthi Ramesh, who

heads NOTTO, said the guidance was issued based on the experience of many other countries. "However you have to understand that this is not a 100-per cent ban," Dr Ramesh said. "In emergencies, if a patient needs it to survive, committees in NOTTO will take a call on whether to allow it. Even earlier, the committee decided for urgent cases now all cadaver cases will go

Transplant surgeons, however, are not happy.

Dr Subhash Gupta, chairman, Max Centre for Liver and Billiary Sciences, said, "Deceased donor transplant should continue, obviously after proper testing. Many people have expressed a desire to donate. Why should we disrespect their last wishes when there are many patients who are waiting for organs?"

One surgeon, speaking on

the condition of anonymity, asked who gave the advice for this proposal. "In the US, Spain, Italy - (which are) some of the countries worst hit (by the virus) - transplants are continuing. Are they implying doctors here do not know how to differentiate between a COVID patient and a non-COVID patient? This is a disservice to both patients and

Dr Sanjay Nagral, transplant surgeon at Jaslok Hospital, said, This idea of screening the family sounds a bit over the top because it is very difficult to convince families for cadaver donation. They are grieving and you ask for screening...as it is live donors will get increasingly scarce until the COVID crisis blows over. We should decide who organs go to by how sick the patient is. Internationally, something called the MELD score is used."

#### was shifted to the isolation ward at the civil hospital in Navsari. Another 21-year-old nurse, from Surat itself, had gone home on a five-day leave. She tested positive on Tuesday.

quarantined at home.

Two of the nurses who tested positive are from Navsari district Dr Dilip Bhaysar, Chief District Health Officer, Navsari, said the district now has three positive The Kiran Hospital reported its first case last week, when a nurse tested positive. Since then, all its

leave four days ago. She was on duty in the same ward where two patients have been shifted to nurses tested positive. The doctor other hospitals. The hospital, which is run by the Samast tested positive on Thursday, and Patidar Arogya Trust, was not among those treating COVID-19 patients. Earlier, the Lokhat Hospital in Surat was shut down after some of its staff members

### After 40-day wait, 147 seafarers disembark

**SRINATH RAO** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

VIDYADHAR POL still can't believe how close he came to sailing the other way on Thursday instead of returning home. But for a last-minute decision

by the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday evening, the cruise ship Marella Discovery would have refuelled at Mumbai Port on Thursday morning and set sail towards Europe after a 40-day-long wait in Indian waters. Instead, 147 Indian crew members disembarked and were whisked away to a hotel after being tested for COVID-19.

Pol. who works as an assistant cook onboard the cruise liner, said that its captain, Chris Dodds, told his crew on Tuesday that after spending 15 days in the waters off Kochi and another 25 days off Mumbai, he could wait



The Marella Discovery docked at the Mumbai Port. Express

no longer for the Indian government to make up its mind.

"Unfortunately, despite everything we have done, the Indian government has not delivered on its promises. I spoke to the head office yesterday and told them that we have to draw a line. We're hanging around here with no direction. I can see

people's smiles going and its not good for us. Nothing is going to happen in the next few days. It wasn't a decision that was easy to make," Dodds had said.

India had closed its borders last month in a bid to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pol and his compatriots had dreaded heading to Europe,

which has been severely ravaged by the pandemic. "We knew returning to India would be impossible from Europe. If one of us died, even our bodies would not be sent back," he said. The recent passing away of

an infected Goan sailor aboard another Marella cruise ship docked in Europe had also spooked the stranded sailor. "His body has been kept on the ship because the Indian government refused to accept it and no European country is ready to allow it into its territory," said Pol.

Following Dodds' announcement, the desperate sailors and their families ramped up their appeals and posted videos on social media pleading with the government to repatriate them without delay.

"We did not receive any response to our earlier petition. It was only after we shot videos and shared them widely that the government woke up to our plight. We also reached out to (NCP MP) Supriya Sule, who helped us a lot," Pol said.

On shore, the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) lobbied with the Ministry of Shipping and the MHA to issue a sign-on and sign-off order allowing several thousand Indian sailors stranded in vessels across the world to return home by sea.

Abdul Ghani Serang, NUSI general secretary, said ensuring the safety of Indian sailors should be among the government's top priorities.

On Thursday, the sailors disembarked at Mumbai Port and were allowed to leave for Andheri after undergoing tests and completing formalities. The sailors will remain in the hotel until the results of their tests are known. The Marella Discovery set sail for Europe after refuelling, said Serang.

### Gujarat govt hires cargo ships to send Andhra fishermen home

Andhra Pradesh Information

**SREENIVAS JANYALA** HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

THE GUJARAT government has hired three cargo ships to evacuate around 2.700 fishermen from Andhra Pradesh, who have been stranded at the Veraval fishing harbour since the nationwide lockdown began.

The fishermen, who hail from Andhra's coastal districts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram, had been working on fishing boats in Gujarat's Veraval, Mangrol and Porbandar as well as Diu since July 2019. Usually, they return home every June - the end of the fishing season.

However, due to the lockdown, all fishing activity has ceased and the fishermen are stranded on their boats anchored at Veraval harbour.

New Delhi

and Public Relations Minister P Venkataramaiah said that 8-10 fishermen are living in each boat. "The harbour is closed and they cannot go out... After living (on the boat) for nearly one month they are all very eager to return home. After the lockdown was extended on April 14, they approached the CMs of Andhra Pradesh and Guiarat to allow them to return home," he said

The owners of the boats and the fishermen's association have pooled money to provide food to the fishermen. "Most of them are very poor and they come this far to earn their livelihood. In this crisis, it is our duty to take care of them... We have sent letters to the Gujarat CM as well as the Centre to help them go home," said Kishorebhai Kuhada, president of Veraval Fishermen's Association.

to COVID-19."

After several rounds of talks between Andhra Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his Guiarat counterpart Viiav Rupani. it was decided Thursday morning to evacuate the fishermen by sea route using three cargo ships.

"As they cannot come by land or air routes, we thought we should evacuate them by sea route. They may not even get their wages because the boat owners suffered losses too. CM has directed officials here to provide Rs 2,000 per fisherman as immediate relief to them.... Venkataramaiah said.

The Gujarat government has hired three cargo ships from Salaya port near Jamnagar to accommodate the fishermen and sail them to Andhra Pradesh, Each ship can accommodate 900-1000 persons.

#### WORDLY WISE

THEY MAY FORGET YOUR NAME, BUT THEY WILL NEVER FORGET HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

- MAYA ANGELOU

### The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED By ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### A BIG DEAL

Jio-Facebook alliance can reshape the retail landscape in India. Partnership raises concerns about data privacy, net neutrality

N WEDNESDAY, RELIANCE Industries and Facebook announced that the California-based social media giant will acquire a 9.99 per cent stake in Jio Platforms limited, the holding company of Reliance Jio, for \$5.7 billion (Rs 43,574 crore). The deal which pegs the value of Jio platforms at Rs 4.62 lakh crore will help the Reliance group to reduce its debt burden, something the oil-to-telecom conglomerate has been actively working towards. The two companies expect to benefit from the synergies created by partnerships between the various arms of Reliance retail and telecom — and Facebook's platforms such as WhatsApp. At its core, the idea is to create an ecosystem around JioMart, enabling customers to access the local kirana stores using WhatsApp, combining both offline and online retail. This ability to connect millions of local businesses with end consumers, and provide them a seamless online transaction experience could radically alter the country's retail landscape.

Both firms have stressed on the new opportunities for businesses of all sizes, and especially for the millions of small businesses across the country. With the ongoing lockdown in the country only reaffirming the importance of the local kirana store — major online delivery channels have struggled to reach consumers during this period — integration is bound to be an enticing proposition. A scaling up of this model will also provide opportunities for cross-selling - significantly increasing the upside for firms and increasing the valuation of its retail arms. At present, though, the reach of WhatsApp Pay is limited — just over a million Indians are reported to currently have access to the pay feature. But this sort of model is popular in other Asian economies such as China, Korea and Japan where apps like WeChat have a wide range of product offerings, which induces consumer stickiness. This arrangement also allows Jio to greatly expand its product offering to its more than 370 million-odd  $subscriber \, base. \, The \, deal \, may \, also \, open \, up \, the \, entire \, Whats App \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \, base \, - \, the \, near \, consumer \,$ ubiquitous chatting app has a consumer base of around 400 million — to Reliance, including those on other telecom platforms such as Airtel and Vodafone.

Yet there are concerns regarding this arrangement. For one, given the dominant market position of the players, concerns over the market structure and its implications for consumer welfare are bound to arise. Second, the tie-up also raises questions on net neutrality with the possibility of preferential treatment being granted. Third, given the data privacy issues highlighted in the past by the Cambridge Analytica episode, for instance, there are apprehensions over the enormous amounts of data that will be collected by these entities, especially when India still does not have a personal data protection law.

### SECURING THE FIGHTERS

Violence against doctors cannot be tolerated. Government must find ways to persuade society to rally around medical workers

IMON HERCULES SUCCUMBED to COVID-19 on Sunday after battling the infection for two weeks. A neurosurgeon based in Chennai, Hercules had reportedly contracted the disease from a patient — a hazard medical professionals mentally brace themselves for when called to the frontlines of the battle against the coronavirus. But increasingly, during the course of this battle, healthcare workers have become vulnerable to dangers they did not sign up for — stigmatisation and violence. On Tuesday, this paper reported that a mob attacked the Chennai doctor's family members when they were performing his last rites. Elsewhere in the country, medical workers have faced physical threats while doing their work. The Union government has done well to acknowledge this situation. On Thursday, it approved an ordinance to make violence against medical professionals "a cognisable and non-bailable offence". The penal provisions include jail terms ranging from three months to seven years and fines ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh. These measures will, no doubt, boost the morale of healthcare workers, who put in gruelling hours at great personal risk. But at the same time, the government shouldn't lose sight of the need to create awareness about the disease and the strategies to combat it, which can help counter the spread of fear and prejudice.

History shows that during pandemics the fear of contracting infections can bring out the worst in human beings. Last month, some Air India staffers were asked to vacate their homes because they crewed flights to evacuate Indians from hot zones. There have been disturbing reports of Muslims and people from the Northeast being targeteded. And in a country where people do not have adequate faith in the public health system, the medical professional's work has been made more arduous, even dangerous. For instance, last month this paper reported that fear of "being injected by the virus" was one of the reasons for people attacking a team of doctors in Indore. Tempers calmed, somewhat, after local religious leaders intervened, but these matters have not always been resolved amicably. In the second week of April, the police had to step in after a doctor was accused of "spreading the virus" and assaulted while buying groceries in a South Delhi locality.

Combating a pandemic requires forging of social solidarities. Reaching out to people with timely and clear communication — even when it is about risks and uncertainties holds the key. It's well-known now that communication and community participation played a decisive role in Kerala's relative success against the coronavirus. Even as it frames strategies of deterrence to curb violence against medical professionals, the government should explore means to nudge society towards developing empathy for their work.

### ACTION REPLAY

The sporting weekend isn't intoxicating anymore, but it's not colourless either

PORTS FANS, THESE days, live in the past. They are in a time-warp, sating their craving with replays of old matches. The stadiums are locked and that gnawing match-day anticipation is a forgotten emotion. Catering to the needs of those forced behind closed doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic are websites, television channels and social media posts that generate a steady stream of nostalgia-tinted content. The keyboard, or the remote control, is a time machine.

Though nothing can replace the suspense and thrill of live sports, in these times of economic slump and mounting death, sporting expectations too have been downsized. Edge-of-the-seat excitement is no longer part of the sporting experience. For the sports watcher, the couch isn't a hot seat, it's an easy chair now. The fear of Messi wasting a free kick in injury time or Roger Federer missing his first serve in a fifth set tie-breaker no longer grips the mind. Compensating for this unmatched rush are the less intoxicating options available in the archives. The web has footage of matches that even pre-date videography. There's Ferenc Puskas scoring goals in the 1954 World Cup, Angelo Schiavio netting an injury-time winner to help Italy win the 1934 World Cup final, Jesse Owens's magical runs and Donald Bradman's unputdownable innings.

Revisiting the classics can be akin to rereading a mystery novel. One might discover a quirk that evaded the eye back then. You might end up discovering some unsung heroes or suddenly begin to appreciate a player previously disliked. It could be perception-altering, image-changing, even pacifying in these troubled times. While the sporting weekend would never be as intoxicating as it used to be, it's not that colourless either.

# The unsung corona warriors



Despite odds and amid crises, farmers deliver produce. Today, farmers need government

Harish Damodaran

"BURN DOWN YOUR cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city".

William Jennings Bryan, 'Cross of Gold' Speech (1896)

COVID-19 may go down as India's first ever natural disaster not to register widespread starvation in terms of a total collapse in food consumption levels. About three million people perished in the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. The 1966-67 Bihar famine led to the state's daily per capita calorie intake dropping from 2,200 to nearly 1,200 in several regions. Maharashtra's drought of 1972-73 caused an estimated 1,33,000-plus "excess deaths".

The novel coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lockdown have had a far wider, nationwide impact. Yet, they haven't produced the severe food deprivation, soaring prices and hoarding that defined the previous great calamities. We have had reports of stranded migrant workers not getting enough cooked food or dry rations. But these are largely stories of localised administrative neglect, and not comparable to the general lack of access to food seen in past catastrophes.

This time, not only is there no food crisis, the problem has been more about demand than supply. Panic buying of milk, atta, dal, sugar or cooking oil in the initial period of lockdown has given way to demand destruction from the closure of hotels, restaurants, tea stalls, caterers, sweetmeat shops and other business consumers. As a result, producers are the ones really suffering. Even with all the supply chain disruptions, there aren't too many cases of food not being available in markets or at ration shops, community kitchens and relief camps. People may be hungry, but not starving.

The credit for this not-small transformation goes partly to the much-derided government foodgrain procurement and distribution system. India entered the lockdown with roughly 77 million tonnes (mt) of rice and wheat, plus another 2.25 mt of pulses, in public godowns. But the unsung heroes - without whom all this grain, now being distributed or cooked in food camps, wouldn't have been produced at all - are the country's farmGovernment agencies have begun procuring the rabi crop, but in the name of maintaining social distancing, only few farmers are being allowed to come to the mandis every day. They are being issued coupons or SMSs to bring quantities as low as 5-10 quintals, similar to women Jan Dhan bank

Why not open purchase centres at rice and dal mills or even schools, colleges, panchayat offices, cooperative societies, district courts and other public places shut during the

lockdown?

ers. These women and men have kept supplies going, even without being designated Frontline Corona Warriors.

The abundance of produce that farmers have delivered comes in spite of the many "coronas" faced by them in recent times from droughts in 2014 and 2015, growing stray cattle menace, an anti-producer inflation-targeting policy and the demonetisation-induced crash in crop realisations. Each time, they have risen, phoenix-like, from the ashes. They weathered the DeMo storm by simply replacing cash with deferred payments for farm inputs. Currently, they are harvesting wheat and sugarcane using whatever labour is available, whether of family members or non-farm workers rendered iobless by the lockdown. Theirs is a tale of resilience and human endurance.

What is it that makes our true Corona Warriors carry on, come rain or shine, drought or flood?

One is, of course, the nature of their work that allows little rest or procrastination. The period from about mid-February to mid-July is the busiest for farmers, when they are harvesting wheat, mustard, chana, potato, onion or sugarcane and then preparing the field to sow paddy, cotton, soyabean, maize or bajra. The workload reduces somewhat subsequently till around mid-September, being limited to dayto-day monitoring of the crop and giving water, fertilisers and pesticides or removing weeds. From mid-September till end-December, it's back to harvesting and marketing the kharif crop and planting for the rabi season. For dairy farmers, even the 3-3.5 months of relative relaxation is ruled out, as their animals have to be fed, cleaned and milked daily.

This full-time activity — which involves following the dictates of nature and managing production as well as price risks — breeds toughness and equanimity in the face of adversity. Last year, when auto companies were announcing factory shutdowns amid a pileup of inventories, a plain message circulated in a farmers' WhatsApp group: "Why can't they slash car prices from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2 lakh, if we can sell Rs 20 onions for Rs 22 If we can bear losses and continue to farm, what stops them from running their plants?" Survival against all odds is hardwired into their genes.

A second reason why farmers are able to

account-holders having to queue up for hours to withdraw a measly Rs 500. soldier on may have to do with their not having a narrow accountant's approach to profits. Operating income, return on capital employed or earnings per share are all alien concepts; the key metric for them is bhaav (price). So long as it covers costs, not the most rigidly defined, and generates cash flows to

run the home and finance the next crop cycle,

they will keep producing. How should we express gratitude to this

farm produce lies on the state.

Frontline Corona Warrior? Farmers don't need our thalis and taalis (beating of plates or clapping of hands). They have filled our stomachs even in this hour of crisis. The least we can do is return the favour. As mentioned earlier, the problem now isn't supply, but demand. With private trade practically non-existent and nobody apart from households buying, the onus to guarantee a market for

Government agencies have begun procuring the rabi crop, but in the name of maintaining social distancing, only few farmers are being allowed to come to the mandis every day. They are being issued coupons or SMSs to bring quantities as low as 5-10 quintals, similar to women Jan Dhan bank accountholders having to queue up for hours to withdraw a measly Rs 500. Why not open purchase centres at rice and dal mills or even schools, colleges, panchayat offices, cooperative societies, district courts and other public places shut during the lockdown? Wheat just has to be unloaded, cleaned, weighed, bagged and reloaded for dispatch to Food Corporation of India warehouses. If overcrowding is to be avoided, the best way is to spread out buying beyond the mandis.

Tailpiece: My friend and editor of Outlook Hindi magazine, Harvir Singh, recalls a doorto-door survey conducted at his village near Uttar Pradesh's Shamli in 1976. The district authorities checked how much freshly-harvested wheat each farm household had stocked. After assessing the self-consumption requirement, they requisitioned the entire balance quantity as levy. Procurement was done without any fuss at the village's junior high school. That was during the Emergency, when the government needed grain. Today, the farmer needs the government.

harish.damodaran@expressindia.com

### How To Find Money In Crisis

Government must save and trim expenditure, rationalise salaries and pensions

Ajay Vir Jakhar

THE COVID-19 CRISIS has precipitated an unprecedented socio-economic calamity. Designing an adequate response has become increasingly complicated. Policy decisions made in the next few weeks will have a profound impact on the future. Notwithstanding the bonanza of low crude prices, India is desperately trying to sell family silver to overcome the revenue collection shortfall and, sadly, seeking foreign institution loans to keep its head above the water. Understandably, borrowing money and giving tax cuts are easy, while spending cuts are the hardest.

Populist governments at the Centre and in the states, having given out handouts, are now collectively reeling under a debt of over Rs 170 lakh crore. Sixty per cent of this debt has been taken in the last six years, amounting to over Rs 1 lakh crore new debt per month.

The question is not only how much money the RBI can print, but also, rather than borrowing indiscriminately, how to save and optimally utilise the scarce, available resources. An economic impetus will definitely be required for recovery, so it is time to rethink issues that were, until now, too sacrosanct to even be contemplated. About two crore state and central government employees covered by the pay commission guidelines, forming only 1.40 per cent of India's population, are paid Rs 12 lakh crore annually. Across India, there is no authentic data on the number of

Now is the time to cut the Gordian knot to rationalise pay structures. It is within the remit of the government to evoke the constitutional provisions of Article 360 to declare a financial emergency. Those holding the government's reins must set aside their pride and reverse the ill-conceived corporate tax-cuts and stall expenditure on statues, memorials, bullet trains etc.

government employees, government-controlled institutions and their debt — to the extent that actual employee expenditure could be 50 per cent higher. This isn't a simple case of governance failure, but a clever attempt to keep the subject under the radar.

Now is the time to cut the Gordian knot to rationalise pay structures. It is within the remit of the government to evoke the constitutional provisions of Article 360 to declare a financial emergency. I am sure that Class A and B employees will agree to a 25 per cent salary deduction for the next three years in the national interest. Class C and D employees, who earn more than Rs 30,000 per month, will also willingly agree to a 10 per cent salary deduction. The deducted amount can be converted into interest-free bonds, redeemable after five years. Deductions should be applicable for all those whose salary is based on the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations and the recommendations should be reversed wherever accepted. All pensioners receiving pensions above Rs 30,000 per month, too, should get a deduction of 25 per cent.

Government employees also receive allowances and perks, comprising about 25 per cent of the government expenditure on employees. The government can take a cue from the early 1990s: When India faced a somewhat similar economic crisis, the National Development Council's Committee on Austerity recommended the freezing of dearness allowance, leave travel allowance, bonus, encashment of earned leave etc. Additionally, the retirement age of government employees should be reduced to 57 years and no more than 1 per cent be allowed retainment beyond that.

Elected representatives (MLA, MP etc.) get pension for each time they are elected to the office. It is time to reduce the outgo on their pensions and limit their pension to one term only. Those holding the government's reins must set aside their pride and reverse the illconceived corporate tax-cuts and stall expenditure on statues, memorials, bullet trains etc. Such steps will release over Rs 4 lakh crore annually to revive the economy. The establishment must not deflect from core issues by merely tinkering with allowances.

There's another fundamental flaw in the process of India's economic recovery. When the first economic package was announced – without consulting those for whom it was intended, the poorest sections of society — it came in for criticism. Now that the new announcements are due for corporate bailouts, the government is talking to the business leaders. This attitude of only deliberating with the affluent sections of society is what got India into a grand mess in the first place.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj



### April 24, 1980, Forty Years Ago

Assam Agitation

A COMPARATIVE LULL prevailed on the agitation front in Assam as the police left the pickets at the government offices to themselves. The All-Assam Students' Union and the Gana Sangram Parishad, which started the picketing of government offices yesterday, did not interfere with the essential services. While air, train and bus services were also normal, work in the state secretariat and the North-East Frontier Railway headquarters was paralysed. As work in government offices and banks was paralysed, the government decided to take action against its officers and employees for absenting themselves from duty. The chief secretary, RS Paramasivam, told UNI that action would be taken against the "ring leaders" of the

BJP AND STATE POLLS

WITH THE BJP national executive's decision favouring to go it alone in the elections to the assemblies in nine states, and to have no truck with the Communist parties, the non-Congress (1) parties' declared objective to put up common candidates to fight authoritarian forces seems to have failed. Even the freedom given to state units — to have local adjustments under pressure from UP and Rajasthan units, for electoral adjustments with the Lok Dal and other parties as the third point of the party's election strategy was made conditional by the hardliners led by S S Bhandari and Jagannath Rao Joshi.

IRAN-MOSCOW TIES

IRAN'S FINANCE AND economy minister, Reza Salimi, said that Iran and the Soviet Union drafted "an important protocol" for economic and industrial cooperation. The announcement came as the EEC was announcing plans to impose economic sanctions on Iran. The permanent commission for cooperation between the two countries. which was formed under the Shah, had met for the first time since Khomeini took over a year ago

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020

# THE IDEAS PAGE

# Don't waste the oil crisis

We cannot leverage low and volatile oil prices to our advantage unless we empower traders, free them of bureaucratic control



VILDAM S MELITA

"THINGS FALL APART; the Centre cannot hold, mere anarchy has been loosed on the world."

I started my last article on oil with this quote from W B Yeats. I do so again because I think it is apposite. The centre of the oil market has collapsed and for those engaged in the oil business, it must seem as if anarchy has indeed been loosed upon them.

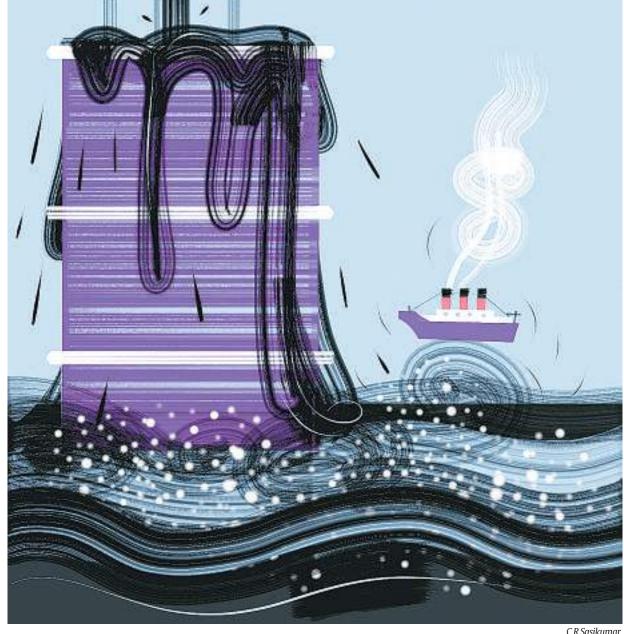
Earlier this week, people woke up to the headline that the price of the benchmark US crude WTI had entered negative territory. For the non-cognoscenti, this was an extraordinary and incomprehensible piece of information. Why would producers "pay" consumers? Why did they not simply leave the stuff in the ground? For the cognoscenti, the information was also dramatic. But the questions were different. Did this herald an irreversible structural change in the oil market? What might be the geopolitical implications? What specifically does this mean for India?

The collapse in the price of WTI reflected a technical peculiarity of futures trading. Paper traders would normally have had two options. To let their contract expire and take physical delivery or to pass on the contract to someone else. But this was not a normal month. The US was running out of crude oil storage capacity and traders knew they could not "risk" taking delivery. There was no physical space to hold the product. So their only option was to sell the contract. This was not easy as everyone faced the same physical constraint. So, on the last day before the contracts expired, the traders in desperation "paid" to offload their risk. There was no physical transaction. The dramatis personae were paper speculators, not oil producers. The current future price is back in positive

That said, the headline did bring into sharp relief a structural reality. The world (and not just the US) was fast running out of storage capacity. This was because oil production was way in excess of demand. The latter had crashed by almost 30 million barrels a day or mbd (the equivalent of OPEC's entire production) because of the COVID-induced lockdown of transportation and industry. The price of the other crude benchmarks had also dropped but not the same extent — the North Sea Brent fell, for instance, to \$15/bbl, a level not seen since 1999. The reason was that unlike the WTI, which is traded in the US and therefore dependent on US inland storage capacity, the other crudes have access to seaborne storage (oil tankers). This latter capacity is, however, fast filling up and the price of these crudes may also hit his-

So, where are we headed? One clear pointer. Oil prices will be volatile downwards until demand picks up and/or supply is further cut

Demand will depend on the curve of post-COVID economic recovery. Which letter of the alphabet will it follow? V, U, W, Lor I? The last "I" (that is, continuing decline) is, of course, the doomsday scenario. Optimists are looking at V or perhaps U. The epidemiologists might suggest W: An initial recovery, reversed by a second wave of infection followed by a strong and enduring upturn as and when a vaccine is developed.



C R Sasikumar

Supply will rest on the outcome of further discussions amongst OPEC, Russia and, ironically, the US. OPEC and Russia had earlier this month agreed to cut production by 10 mbd. But clearly, this is not enough and further cutbacks have to be agreed on. The US, too, will have to reduce production. Its companies are currently producting approximately two mbd more than is required by the refineries. The government cannot mandate such a cutback but the market may force it. At current prices, many companies are barely able to meet their production costs.

Whatever the scenario for economic recovery or supply constraints, there is a slim likelihood of crude oil prices reaching the average price levels of 2019 (\$64) over the next 12 months or so. More likely, they will be volatile downwards with \$50 as the ceiling and with no floor.

This "low for longer" price outlook raises two issues for our policy-makers. One, what are the supply risks? And two, what can they do to maximally leverage the advantages of low prices?

One could provide many answers to these two questions but for lack of space, let me make just two points.

First, every oil producer (with no exception) will face a budgetary crisis. Some, like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait will finance their social and economic commitments by cutting costs, increasing debt and drawing down on their sovereign reserves. Others like Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and Venezuela, who have no such cushion and whose credit ratings are

On the day prices hit negative territory, I wondered whether the trading experts in our oil PSUs had the flexibility to even contemplate 'buying' June, taking delivery, shipping it to India and storing it someplace. I also wondered whether they had the authority to lock in low prices through forward contracts. These were, of course, academic reflections. I know there is a shortage of storage capacity in India and a mismatch between the quality of WTI and the requirements of our refineries.

junk, will confront deepening political and social crises. India should build into its economic plans the possibility that its traditional oil supply routes could get disrupted. And that its diaspora, whose remittances are of significance, could face disproportionate hardship as these economies retrench.

Second, on the day prices hit negative ter-

ritory, I wondered whether the trading experts in our oil PSUs had the flexibility to even contemplate "buying" the WTI futures contract for June, taking delivery, shipping it to India and storing it someplace. I also wondered whether they had the authority to lock in low prices through forward contracts. These were, of course, academic reflections. I know there is a shortage of storage capacity in India and a mismatch between the quality of WTI and the requirements of our refineries. Nevertheless, I had these thoughts because I am clear we cannot leverage the current market conditions of low and volatile oil prices to our national advantage unless we empower the traders and leave them unencumbered from bureaucratic control, And, most importantly, protect them from the three Cs (CVC, CBI and CAG) in case their trade goes awry.

I am not suggesting we ask our traders to emulate Wall Street. I am merely suggesting this oil market crisis could be made to work to our advantage. We must not waste this

The writer is chairman and senior fellow, Brookings India

# Leading from the front

There should be no need to explain why the United States — the dominant and richest member of the WHO and the IMF and a nation to which the world looks up in times of upheaval — should take the lead in assisting countries the

India has played an exemplary role in tackling the Covid-19 crisis



HADIVANCH

TRANSCENDING GEOGRAPHICAL boundaries — and every socio-economic and political demarcation — the COVID-19 outbreak has caused huge disruptions globally. It has substantially punctured mankind's vanity.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

However, the United Nations secretarygeneral, António Guterres, was wide off the mark when he termed the pandemic as the greatest test we have faced since World War II. The scourge of nature is far more serious a threat than man-made wars. It is in this context that I see India's role as exemplary. Among the world leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi seems to be particularly perspicacious — not only did he ascertain the real nature of the crisis, but he helped to prepare a graded response to it.

A timely response mitigates the effects of a disaster and India has been spot-on in this regard. As Modi pointed out in his message to the nation on April 14, India took "quick and decisive action" and adopted a "holistic and integrated approach" in the absence of which the country's situation could have been drastically different from what it is now.

India has shown remarkable perceptiveness and alacrity in tackling the pandemic: From conducting screenings at airports to visa restrictions, India has been scaling up its response well ahead of time. India, under the leadership of PM Modi, has moved with a meticulously planned roadmap in its fight against coronavirus.

Finally, there also came the most difficult decision: Shutting down all movement to stop the spread of the coronavirus. This was an extraordinary decision in many ways. From persuading people to stay at home, to planning for the economic impact of such an unprecedented lockdown — and also implementing it humanely and sensitively. The decision could not have been taken without exceptional leadership skills.

In an appreciable display of democratic ethos, PM Modi directly reached out to the 1.3 billion citizens to seek their mandate. They supported the move and the lockdown has now been extended, again, with full popular support. Further, he also spoke with all the state chief ministers who reciprocated in equal measure, highlighting the cooperative nature of Indian federalism.

Acting in tandem with the Union government, Bihar chief minister and Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar displayed his remarkable aptitude for governance and foresight in educating people about the merits of social distancing. Unlike industrialised states, Bihar is a predominantly rural state with pockets that have some of the highest population density in the world. One misstep could have led to havoc. As of now, the state bears the maximum pressure of migrant labourers from across India and is a veritable communal cauldron. Yet, the behaviour of the people of the state is highly disciplined and admirable. That is an obvi-

ous reflection of the people's trust in the leadership of Nitish Kumar.

I would not hesitate to say that Bihar, with its limited resources and other constraints, is indeed an "outlier state" on most parameters of performance in containing the spread of COVID-19. The recovery rate of patients diagnosed positive is arguably better than many others in the world. The community spread has been effectively contained there, so far. In rural Bihar, a sustained campaign to promote cleanliness and social distancing has made people acutely aware of the pathogen's insidious ways of attacking the human body.

Besides Bihar, other states too have been evolving their response models. We are proud of how the political executive, bureaucracy, medical professionals, health workers, the police and ASHA workers in villages, have combined to do their best in checking the spread of the contagion. The media deserves unreserved appreciation for making people aware of the dangers of the pandemic.

Contrast this with the onslaught of the Spanish flu in 1917-1919 — and the number of deaths then — and you will know the difference. Unlike in the past, India seems to be better placed now and ahead of the curve — not only in evolving a response to the corona menace but to mitigate the plight of its people as compared to Europe, the US, and China. This crisis has foregrounded a unique aspect of PM Modi's humanist approach. His persuading people to remain in sustained lockdown is guided by his impulse of not making human life subservient to economics.

This strategy has been successful so far. The health ministry has estimated that without the timely imposition of the lockdown, COVID-19 cases could have registered a 41 per cent cumulative increase, reaching up to 8.2 lakh cases, by April 15.

The leadership role that India has assumed in dealing with this crisis is now being appreciated across the globe. India has shown the world that it can not only handle this crisis upfront but also provide aid and support to the marginalised sections of society. The government is making all possible efforts to provide relief to the poor and the migrant workers. A relief package of Rs 1.7 lakh crore, aimed at providing a safety net along with insurance cover for frontline medical personnel, is something that is being acknowledged as a template in the collective fight against the virus.

In the true spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means "the world is one family", India has taken the lead in helping the world at this hour of need. India, the largest producer of the drug hydroxychloroquine, has been generously helping many countries with the supplies of this potential cure of COVID-19.

The war against the virus is still raging. But the country has gained great confidence from the exceptional patience of its people, the quick response of public authorities and, above all, from its trust in the leadership. As partial relaxations begin soon, I hope the people embrace more positivity. Amidst all the gloom the world over, this will also not be a small achievement.

The writer is former deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha and JD (U) MP-elect from RS

## Doctors and teachers

They carry on with their duties, no matter what crisis engulfs the world

Krishna Kumar

HOW DOCTORS make sense of their life is hardly a mystery. Their profession gives them a high social status. Regular opportunity to put their knowledge into practice gives them professional satisfaction. In addition, there is personal satisfaction in healing or at least helping people when they are feeling miserable. No matter what branch or type of medical practice they are in, doctors follow a stressed routine and carry on their work, no matter what the circumstances or state of the patient. Surgeons are probably more stressed than general practitioners, but the difference is only of degree. Anyone who sees people in pain and discomfort on a daily basis cannot avoid the feeling that he or she is carrying a burden. The range of human misery a doctor encounters daily and attempts to address by choosing appropriate remedies is vast and therefore, stressful. Doctors who serve in wars are perhaps inspired by the same kind of positive emotions and sense of duty that soldiers have. The injuries suffered by the latter have a rationale the nation and its borders.

No such thing can be said about injuries suffered in a communal riot. It troubles me to think how doctors feel when they face people wounded during a violent riot such as the

one Delhi witnessed in the last days of February. A sense of duty alone cannot explain the relentless effort many doctors made to treat people brought in from riotravaged Northeast Delhi with wounds caused by guns, knives and fire. Surely, these doctors must have wondered whether their long and demanding training in health and medicine deserved to be utilised in this way.

medicine deserved to be utilised in this way.

A riot represents a breakdown of social order. While the police can wait and watch till they are ordered to intervene, doctors and nurses cannot wait. They just get into action when they come across a patient. Nor do they ask anyone why so much violence was unleashed. I am not sure if they have the time, as the rest of us have, to wonder what anyone achieved by letting so much malice get expressed through physical attacks on ordinary people, looting and arson.

riving, one could hardly believe it. My association of February in Delhi is with flower shows. I realise the spring was late this year; nevertheless, I had imagined that there must be a lot of flowers. That a considerable part of Delhi could erupt into bloody fights and arson at this time of the year came as a shock. The other reason why I found the news of ri-

When the news of these riots started ar-

ots in Delhi unbelievable was because in certain matters I trust tradition.

It is a cultural fact that we Indians will do anything we can to put up the best possible front when a guest visits us. That is how we are socialised since childhood. You learn early in life that if a visitor is about to show up, you put out of sight anything that might bring the family a bad name. That the riots could occur when a prized national guest was scheduled to be in Delhi made absolutely no sense. How could this be, you wanted to know. Perhaps it was fake news, I first thought. Soon enough, I had to face reality, and it had many ironies in store. The one found most difficult to digest was the visitor's wife being taken to witness a special class at a government school. While Northeast Delhi was facing raw hatred and violence, the first lady who accompanied the American president was attending a socalled "happiness" class.

Whosoever was teaching in that class probably has the same immunity that doctors have. Teachers carry on with their duties, just like medical staff, no matter what crisis engulfs the world around them. The only difference is that teachers face questions; doctors don't. A number of my former

students who now teach in Delhi's schools have been asking how to address children's queries about the riots. Some of these are: Why did people become so violent? Why couldn't the police stop them? When will normalcy return?

These are all difficult questions to answer. Moreover, no teacher feels comfortable facing such questions. They know that after a riot as violent as this one, one can anticipate a new normal to descend on the social ethos. For children who witness public violence, directly or indirectly through television, there is no easy or quick fix for inner disturbance. Unlike doctors, who succeed in healing the wounded and burnt, teachers can at best engage and relate, hoping that higher understanding will some day take over. The corona virus has denied this opportunity to Delhi's teachers. They are now being asked to inaugurate the new session and cover the expected syllabus for April by giving e-lessons. The riots have lost what relevance and value they might have had as objects of enquiry and contemplation.

> The writer is a former director of NCERT and author of The Child's Language and the Teacher

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WISHFUL THINKING

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The test of a nation' (IE. April 23). Even as the writer commends the PM's farsightedness, the tragic migrant crisis continues to unfold. As for the "timely" lockdown, we know it took nearly two months after the first case was reported to announce it. The almost threatening demand for hydroxvchloroquine from Donald Trump is what the writer calls India's "crucial role" in the changing global order. The "cooperative federalism" alluded to is only a euphemism for the Centre's chauvinism. Finally, given the stress on it, one wonders if gratitude can replace PPEs for our corona warriors.

Muhammad Ghazali, Patna

### RIGHT ORDINANCE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Govt. changing law to stop attacks on health workers: 5-year jail, Rs 5 lakh fine' (IE, April 23). At a time when the country is fighting COVID-19, attacks on doctors and healthcare personnel are unpardonable. The government's decision to make such attacks a cognisable and non-bailable offence is welcome.

e is weicome. **M C Joshi,** Lucknow

### COVID AND CRIME

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Jail terms on hold, convicts to be tracked via WhatsApp, Google Maps' (IE, April 23). The proposal of keeping jail terms on hold in view of the coronavirus is ap-

New Delhi

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

propriate. And, tracking convicts via

WhatsApp and Google Maps is perhaps,

the best use one could make of modern technology.

Melville X D'Souza, Mumbai

### ONLINE LIMITS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Going back to the new school' (IE, April 23). The school post-pandemic will be very different. Students and teachers will have to adapt to many changes, move on to online learning. But this model also has limitations. Online learning can fill some gaps but cannot replicate all the benefits of a good learning environment.

Aamil Lodhi, Gandhinagar

## 2 Youth Cong workers held for targeting Arnab

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** MUMBAI. APRIL 23

Two men were arrested in the early hours of Thursday for allegedly trying to attack Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami and throwing ink on

The incident took place in Lower Parel area of central Mumbai around 12.15 am, when Goswami and wife Samvabrata. also a journalist, were returning home. Both were unhurt, the po-

The assailants were caught by Goswami's security personnel and handed over to police, who said both are affiliated to the Youth Congress.

Mumbai Youth Congress chief Ganesh Yadav confirmed that the two are affiliated to the organisation but refused to comment further. Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said, "They have done it in their individual capacity.'

A case has been registered against the duo — identified as Arun Borade and Prateek Mishra

thereafter restoration

PRO/AAM(M)/2/2020.

DIPR/ 1671 /TENDER/2020

No.: QC2/011998/2020

Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III.

or Registration and further details contact MSTC LIMITED

Last Date for Online Submission: 27.05.2020 up to 2.00 PM

Tender Opening Date & Time : 27.05.2020 at 3.30 PM

(2) 67472, (3) 67566, (4) 67789.

- under IPC Sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and 34 (common intention).

The Indian Newspaper Society (INS), the Editors Guild of India and the Press Council of India (PCI) have condemned the

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad sought action against those involved, while BJP president J P Nadda condemned it and targeted the Congress over

The incident took place hours after at least two FIRs were filed against Goswami by Congress leaders in Raipur, Chhattirgarh, and Nagpur, Maharashtra, accusing him of inciting communal hatred in the Palghar lynching case and making derogatory remarks against Congress president Sonia Gandhi in his TV show.

More cases were filed against Goswami on Thursday by Congress leaders in several states, including Rajasthan, Telangana, Maharashtra, and West Bengal.

Goswami, who was given

**GENERAL MANAGER** 

Extended upto

11.05.2020 upto 5.45 P.M

13.05.2020 upto 3.00 P.M

Chief Engineer (i/c),

TWAD Board, Thanjavu

Dated: 23.03.2020

Revised Deadline

13.05.2020 at 3.30 P.M

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking

TENDER NOTICE

e-tenders are invited for the supply of following items.

(1) Conversion of BEST Passenger Mini AC Buses

(Wet lease, Tray, T2) into Mobile Medical units (MMU) &

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD

ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM Extension of Tender Notice
No. 11-1 / F. CWSS to 134 /2020/ SDO/ CE-TNJ/ dt : 15.04.2020

: 1. This Office IFB No.11 / F. CWSS to 134 /2020 / SDO / CE-TNJ / dt : 13.03.2020

The sale period, Last date of receipt and opening of tender in the reference 1st cited for the above work is here by extended as below in continuation of the Govt. announcement of 144 extension due to prevailing COVID-19 Virus spreading precautionary measures.

Providing Combined Water Supply Scheme to 134 Rural Habitations in Kumbakona

Union of Thanjavur District (Period of completion: 18 months, Trial run: 6 months and Paid

TAMILNADU CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION HO: No.12, THAMBUSAMY ROAD, KILPAUK, CHENNAI-600 010.

E-Tender No.: TNCSC/20-21/ET/03

Online electronic tender for "THE SUPPLY OF DISINFESTATION

CHEMICALS: MALATHION 50% EC AND ALUMINIUM PHOSPHIDE

Complete tender can be viewed, downloaded and uploaded

hrough https://www.mstcecommerce.com/eprochome/tncsc from

The bidders have to participate online bidding only with Digital Signature

hone: 25222842 / 25251910 / 25261005 e-Mail : mstcsro@mstcindia.co.in

H.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED

"CORRIGENDUM NO. 1"

The due date of Tender sale, submission and opening of bids invited for

ender No. DGMC/19/2020 for "Design Engineering, Manufacturing, Testing of Equipment, Delivery, Storage, Erection, Civil Works, Testing and Equipment, Delivery, Storage, Erection, Civil Works, Testing and Commissioning of 132/33 kV, 2x25/31.5 MVA Sub-Station Dharampur District Mandi (H.P.) along with LILO of 132kV Bassi - Hamirpur Transmission Line on

Earlier Deadline

Submission of Bids (Online) 19.04.2020 upto 5.00 P.M. 14.05.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.

Submission of Bids (Offline) 20.04.2020 upto 1.00 P.M. 15.05.2020 upto 1.00 P.M.

Turnkey basis (Complete Package)"has been extended as follows:

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged

0020/HP

80121

(A State Government Undertaking)
HIMFED BHAWAN, PANJARI, SHIMLA-171005

(Telefax: 0177-2632384) CIN: U40101HP2008SGCO30950

13.04.2020 upto 5.00 P.M. 12.05.2020 upto 5.00 P.M.

20.04.2020 upto 3.00 P.M. 15.05.2020 upto 3.00 P.M.

(K.N. Sharma)

**Deputy General Manager (Contracts)** 

HPPTCL, Himfed Bhawan, Panjari,

Shimla-171005

For more details, log on to website https://mahatenders.gov.in.

naintenance: 12 months) – Extension of tender Notice – reg

All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered

Description

The last date for Sale of Tender

The last date for receipt of Tender

Date & Time of opening of Tender

### Arnab moves SC against FIRs

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will on Friday hear a plea by Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami challenging FIRs against him in some states over his remarks on a TV

The matter has been listed before a bench of Justices DY

Y-category security in 2016, is protected by two policemen and a private security guard round the clock. They were following him in another car when the alleged attack took place, the com-

In a written complaint to police, Goswami said two men on a bike blocked his car when he reached Ganpatrao Kadam Marg around 12.15 am. The pillion rider allegedly hit the windowpane on the driver's side several times. Realising that they couldn't break through, the "pillion rider removed a liquid bottle from his pocket and threw liquid all over

the car on driver's side, where I

Ref. No. 04-2021-DAP/02E

published only on above websites.

Chandrachud and MR Shah. The bench will hear it through video conferencing. Advocate Pragya Baghel, through whom the plea was filed, said the car," the officer said. Goswami is seeking protection from any coercive action

was sitting," Goswami stated. He said the duo shouted and abused him in Hindi and made

on the basis of the FIRs.

violent gestures. A police patrolling party reached the spot and took the two to NM Joshi Marg police station.police station. The police said they have obtained CCTV footage from the area and are ex-

amining it. The police said they have obtained CCTV footage from the area and are examining it.

The police said the accused, residents of Sion Koliwada in central Mumbai, are unemployed. During questioning, the duo

allegedly said that they were in-

Date: 23.04.2020

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED

(CIN: L74899DL1974GOI007417)

Notice Inviting Global E-Tender

Bids are invited for SUPPLY OF 40,000MT ± 10% FERTILIZER GRADE BULK

DI-AMMONIUM PHOSPHATE (DAP 18:46:00) at East Coast of India. For

letails, visit websites: www.nationalfertilizers.com, www.eprocure.gov.ln and

enderwizard.com/NFL (E-Tender No. NFL-2053 ). Last date for bid submission

is 30th April, 2020 (1400 hrs. IST). Corrigendum/Addendum, if any, shall be

THE H.P. STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LIMITED

furiated after watching a video clip on social media in which Goswami was seen humiliating Sonia Gandhi and therefore carried out the attack, an officer said. "Mishra was riding the bike. Borade got off and threw ink on

Asked how they learnt about Goswami's movements, an investigator said, "The two claim that they knew it.'

The initial complaint registered by the police does not refer to political links of the accused. DCP (zone-III) Abhinash Kumar said, "We produced them in court today and sought their custody; we want to verify who they are affiliated with..."

Mishra and Borade have been remanded in police custody until April 27.

Nadda tweeted, "Shocking to see Arnab Goswami attacked after Congress CMs publicly threatened him.... Congress shows it is the party that brought Emergency and continues its rich tradition of trampling free sneech." Prasad tweeted, "Deeply condemn the violent physical attack.... State Police must take lawful action against attackers." Information

Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said every attack on journalists is condemnable, as this is against democracy.

The INS said in a statement. "This act shows how goons belonging to political parties have scant respect for freedom of expression. The INS urges Maharashtra government to take strict action against the offenders.'

The Editors Guild of India stated, "Any physical attack, instigation for hate or verbal abuse hurled against any journalist is a reprehensible act.'

The PCI stated, "Every citizen, including a journalist, has the right to express their opinion which may not be palatable to many but this does not give anybody the authority to strangulate such a voice. Violence is not the answer even against bad journalism."

Objecting to Goswami's remarks on Sonia Gandhi, the Congress on Thursday asked the I&B Ministry to take action against the journalist and his TV

### Only one journalist questioned over his work: Kashmir IGP

**BASHAARAT MASOOD** SRINAGAR, APRIL 23

UNDER CRITICISM over "intimidation and harassment" of journalists following police action against three of them this week, IGP, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar on Thursday said that only one of them has been questioned over his work while the others have been booked for "seditious, incendiary and incriminating texts" and use of "provocative

adjectives" on social media. In a release, Kumar, referring to an article in national daily *The* Hindu, said, "Only one journalist has been questioned about a iournalistic work as only one FIR of instigating people for violence has been registered over an encounter in Shopian at PS (Police Station) Ananthag.

Asserting that police have "always maintained the highest regard for freedom of press", the IGP said journalists and "relevant organisations are expected to issue statements only after ascertaining the facts".

About action against photographer Masrat Zahra and journalist-author Gowhar Geelani, the IGP said the charges against them were not related to their professional work. "... But because they have posted explicitly seditious, incendiary and incriminating texts on social media, challenging sovereignty and integrity of India and attempting to instigate people for violence." Zahra has been booked under the stringent The officer said journalists and 'relevant organisations are expected to issue statements only after ascertaining the facts'

Kumar claimed there were written complaints against Geelani "as he has exposed life of some peaceful and law-abiding citizens to grave risk by posting incriminating and provocative adjectives against them on social media platforms like FB (Facebook) and Twitter".

Police, however, have not identified the charges invoked against Geelani.

The IGP also said that one of the journalists had met him and 'accepted mistake".

The FIR was slapped on a story by The Hindu that quoted family members of two militants killed in an encounter as saying the administration had permitted them to exhume their bodies. The encounter was in Shopian and the bodies were buried in Baramulla by police. The story has been denied by police, which said it had only issued the families curfew passes to visit Baramulla for "verification purpose"

On Thursday, Rajya Sabha MP Fayaz Ahmad Mir sent a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking that the charges against the journalists be dropped. The Kashmir Press Club also reiterated its support

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER** 

SI/GD Bhupal Singh (10.08.1968 - 23.04.2009)

Sashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers and cherishes the valiant act of SI/GD Bhupal Singh who made the supreme sacrifice of his life in the line of duty on this day in 2009. While stationed in Assam he was travelling alongwith his troops when his vehicle

came under ambush laid down by insurgents SI/GD Bhupal Singh bravely retaliated and charged upon the insurgents and alongwith troops chased them back. Unfortunately he got hit in the act and succumbed to his injuries and attained martyrdon

In recognition of his heroic deed he was awarded the "Kirti Chakra" on Republic Day 2010, posthumously. His gallant act continues to inspire We salute the valour and supreme sacrifice of brave martyr.

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL

#### Totu, Shimla-171011 Dated: 23.04.2020

Executive Director (Materials)

No.: 427/P&I-8/15-XXIII Dai Short Term Tender Notice H.P. Milkfed invites the online bids on item wise, in electronic

tendering system, in 2 cover system for the following item on FOR 01. Cotton Seed Refined Oil (15 Kg Tin Packaging) = 360 qtls and Cotton Seed Refined Oil (Branded Loose oil in tanks)

The Bid document is available/published online on dt. 24.04.2020 upto 03:00 PM. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission on bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized certifying Authorities (CA). Aspiring bidders should visit website in https://hptenders.gov.in & https://hpmilkfed.org for complete details. Bidders should visit the website from time to time to note the corrigendum, if any.

Managing Director

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

FISHERIES DEPARTMENT

TENDER NOTICE NO. 3 /DB/F, 114 N/2020-21 Dated: 22.04.2020 LS FORM (RATE TENDER SYSTEM) (TWO COVER SYSTEM)

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu sealed binders are invited by the Chief Engineer, Fisheries Department, Integrated office Complex, Animal Husbandry & Fisheries Department, Nandanam, Chennai – 35, for the following work from the

of

Months

Date and Time of Opening of tender : 28.05.2020 at 03.30 p.m.
The other details, terms and conditions may be obtained from the Office of the Chie

Engineer, Fisheries Department, Chennai-600 035 and the tender documents may also

be downloaded at free of cost, through internet at the website "www.tenders.tn.gov.in"

EMD

Amount

(Rs.)

1729.00 8,74,500/-

xorqqA eulsV

Name of work

Construction of of

shore Submerge Dyke for coastal

Bomma yarpalaya

Villupuram District.

Period for Availability of Tender Schedule Last date of receipt of tender

NO.-2, HISAR

rotection at

192013

008195

### TAMILNADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER** Tender No Material Description Sodium Soap Required for Deinking Plant 11.05.2020 Quantity - 360 (MT)

Detailed terms & conditions, Tender Fee, EMD are available in tender document at our websites: www.tnpl.com / www.tenders.tn.gov.in

# GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU FISHERIES DEPARTMENT TENDER NOTICE ND. 4 /DBIF.114 N/2020-21 Dated; 22 .04.2020 LS FORM (RATE TENDER SYSTEM) (TWO COVER SYSTEM) For and on boral of the Soventry of Tamil Nadu secole bridges are livined by the Chef Engineer. Fisheries Department, Imagelete office Complete, Animal Husbardry & Fisheries Department, Nandanam, Chemia - B, for the Ritoving work from the significant Destrict (3) Construction of Pish landing centre of Nikolatini in Ronniyakumani Destrict. (3) Construction of Pish landing centre of Nikolatini in Ronniyakumani Destrict. (3) Construction of Signway of Pazhayari Fishing Harbour in Nagopatinam District. Approx. Value of work in lakes (1) 1460-00, (2) 800-00, (3) 282-00 EMD Amount (Rs.) (1) 7.40.0004, (2) 4.10.0004, (3) 1.51.0004 Period of Completion (1) 9 Montras, (2) 6 Montras, (3) 6 Montras Eligible Contractors as por rules (1) 9 Montras, (2) 6 Montras, (3) 6 Montras Cost of Tender Scheduler OST Rs. 15000+18000-1 (6re seach work) Cost of Tender Scheduler OST Rs. 15000+18000-1 (6re seach work) Cost of Tender Scheduler of Stringmenr, PHP Division, Nagopatitism Period for Annilability of Tender Schedule: upto 5.45 p.m. on 28.05.2020 Last date of receipt of tender 20.05.2020 upto 03.00 p.m. Date and Time of Opening of tender 20.05.2020 upto 03.00 p.m. Date and Time of Opening of tender 20.05.2020 in the National Research of the Nation thousant may also be downloaded at fire of cost, Procept interest of the National Research of Cost, Procept interest of the National Research of Cost, Procept interest of the National Research of Stringmenr, Phenomenry (Chemia) Research (Chemia) (Ch Office of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division (MED), Khellani, Doda

Gist of e-Tender Notice No. MDKD/TS/2020-21/01 For and on behalf of Governor of J&K State. dealers for the below mentioned job:-

Name of Work: Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Medical Oxygen Gas Pipeline System at Associated Hospital of Govt. Medical **e-NIT No. & Date:** MDKD/TS/2020-21/01 Dtd. 21.04.2020 **Due Date:** 28.04.2020

Tenders receiving Authority: Executive Enginee Mechanical Division, Khellani, Doda

For details of work, terms and conditions and any other clarifications, kindly contact the Office of the undersigned on any working day upto 28.04.2020 till 01.00 P.M.

KHELLANI, DODÁ

Sd/- Executive Enginee Mechanical Division (MED

## H.O.: "UJVAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-2 Telephones: 0135-2763808, & Fax- 0135- 2763508

CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025

**Time Extension Notice** Due to unavoidable reasons the Date of Submission & opening of Tende

No. PDD-11/2019-20- Rewiring of residential building at Dakpatha colonies. Tender No. PDD-12/2019-20- Hiring of one no. diesel driver vehicle (Mahindra Bolero Camper/Tata Xenon Crew Cabin with cabin model 2018 or later) or equivalent for one year & 24 hours with driver Tender No. PDD-13/2019-20- 'Hiring of one no. Diesel driven vehicle Non-AC (Mahindra Bolero Plus/TUV-300 or equivalent model 2018 or later) for one year with Driver and Tender No. PDD-14/2019-20 Repairing and overhauling of 33KV Isolators of 33KV Khara feeder # 4 & 5 is being extended as below:-

Last Date for submission of Tender: 08.05.2020 (Up to 16:00 hrs). Date of Opening of Tender: 12.05.2020 (at 11:30 hrs). Other Terms & Condition will remain same

For eligibility criteria and full & further details kindly visit our web site Tenders can only be downloaded from our website

'www:uttarakhandialvidvut.com". Their cost has to be paid at the time पत्राक २३९ दिनाक २२ ०४ २०२०

" Avoid wasteful use of Electricity "

### PMLA case: 7 years in jail, Rs 2 crore fine for Tharkhand ex-minister

**ABHISHEK ANGAD** RANCHI, APRIL 23

A PMLA court on Thursday sentenced former Jharkhand Minister Enos Ekka, who held several portfolios in the Madhu Koda cabinet, to seven years of imprisonment for misusing his official position to acquire a large number of movable and immovable properties. The court also slapped a fine of Rs 2 crore and directed that properties worth Rs 22 crore belonging to the accused be confiscated.

Special Judge Anil Kumar Mishra said that the accused had projected Rs 22 crore "ill-gotten money" as un-

> tainted. "The convict have been given effect to a serious offence being a public servant and in awarding sentence caste, class, sex, age, social status etc. of the convict has got no role to play and it is not consid-ered," the

court said. It was al-

leged that

filed before 2005 polls, had mentioned his total assets as amounting to Rs 10.48 lakh, and acquired "huge movable and immovable properties either in his name or in the name of his family members, relatives and associates" after he became minister.

Ekka, in his nomination papers

The Vigilance Bureau filed a case against Ekka in 2008 under the Prevention of Corruption Act and several other sections.

The court said that "cash deposits of huge amounts" were found to be in several bank and post office accounts linked to Ekka's family members and construction companies and that the account holders failed to cite legal sources of the fund. "It is found that the said accounts were opened and operated by the account holders when the accused became minister and it is found these deposits/transactions are made through ill-gotten/tainted money," the court said.

Probe was also conducted into vehicles Ekka had purchased in his or his relatives'

The Madhu Koda case is the first political case where the ED secured a conviction. In January 2017, a special court convicted Hari Narayan Rai, a former minister, for laundering Rs 3.7 crore earned through corrupt means. The minister was sentenced to seven years of imprisonment.

#### संचालनालय कृषि, छत्तीसगढ कृषि किास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर, अटल नगर 492002 Email Id-pmfbycgraipur@gmail.com/diagricg.cg@nic.in Phone No. 0771-25122345, 2512350

क्रं./प्र.मं.फ.बी.यो./खरीप-रबी/95/2020-21/**Q-6**0 //अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना// (छत्तीसगढ राज्य में प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना क्रियान्वयन हेतु ''क्रियान्वयन एजेंसी'' का चयन-प्रस्ताव प्राप्ति हेतु संक्षिप्त निविदा)

- 4. छ.ग. राज्य में मौसम खरीफ एवं रबी वर्ष 2020-21, 2021-22 एवं 2022-23 में ''प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना'' के क्रियान्वयन हेतु भारत सरकार कृषि सहकारिता एवं किसान कल्याण विभाग द्वारा सूचीबद्ध बीमा कंपनियों से तकनीकी एवं वित्तीय निविदा ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाती है। जिसमें संबंधित समस्त शर्ते एवं जानकारी website-http: //eproc.cgstate.gov.in में दिनांक 21.04.2020 से देखी जा सकती है।
- 5. निविदा प्रपत्र एवं दस्तावेजों में दिये गये समस्त शर्ते बीमा कंपनियों को मान्य किया जाना होगा।
- 6. ई-निविदा दिनांक 06.05.2020 अपरान्ह 03.00 बजे तक इन्द्राज की जा सकेगी।

हस्ता/-संयुक्त संचालक कृषि संचालनालय कृषि

छ.ग. रायपुर

### **TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Schedule and EMD

to be remitted in fevour for

Executive

FHP

Cost of Tender

Rs.15000+

1800/-

upto 5.45 p.m. on 27.05.2020 28.05.2020 upto 03.00 p.m.

Chief Engineer, Fisheries Department, Chennai-35

Eligible

State

SIDDYN BARWALA: + 1 OTHER WORK

OPENING CLOSING / EMD (APPROX WEBSITE OF THE BOARD HODAL OFFICER/CONTACT NAME OF WORK HOTICE TENDER BOARD/CORP./AUTH CORP./AUTH DETAILS/EMAIL DATE (TIME) 9818293113 21.04.202 TRANSPORTATION WORK OF SNP SUPPLY TO AWC'S 5 DACS https://utenders.hry.mic.in DEVELOPMENT PANACHAYATI RAJ, popul wed@gmail.com 0124-2221122 CONST. OF COMMUNITY CENTRE AT VILLAGE 2.85 24.04.2020 2 www.haryarseprocurement.igov.ir WARAMPUR BLOCK GURUGRAM + 2 OTHER WORKS email preseerg grg@fry.nc.in FARBUKHNAGAR 15.05.2020 CRORE SUPPLYING DIG SET OF VARIOUS CAPACITY 62.5 KVA TO PUBLIC HEALTH 82.5 KVA ON HIRE BASIS (FOR 4 MONTHS ONLY DURING BAINY SEASON) AT VARIOUS SEWERAGE DISPOSAL 17.04.2070 ENGINEERING DIVISION NO.1, SHIWANI 1.19 LACS Executive Engineer etenders.hry.nic.in 27.04.2020 BHINWALL TOWN AND ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERETO." + BIOTHER WORKS
ESTIMATE FOR INTERNAL OLEARANCE AND REMOVAL OR HARYANA GRRIGATION AND CLOSING DATE 164.23 http://etenders.hry.nic.in. xemsafidon@yahoo.com BUND OF BUTAVI LINK ORAIN FROM RD 0 TO 13000. + WR DEPIT, SAFIDON 04.05.2020 16 OTHER WORKS
PROVIDING / SUPPLYING JOB AND POCKLANE MACHINE **IRRIGATION & WATER** 30.04.2020 ON PER HOURS BASIS FOR EMERGENT WORK INCLUDING GST AND CARRIAGE OF POCKLANE ONLY SPECIAL REPAIR TO PRIMARY HEALTH CENTER AT www.etenders.hry.nic.in DEPARTMENT DELHI 21.05.2020 LACS sen-wisdel.im@gav.in VILLAGE PILIMANDORI/ DANGAON/ NAGPUR/ PIEYOND III 01662-225651 gwd-eeed-hissar@hry.nic.in DIVISION HISAR DISTT. FATEHABAD (PDG. E.I INTERNAL ONLY) RECALL + 10 OTHER WORKS 1 CONSTRUCTION OF SUMM PROJECT VILLAGE GUIDHA & 11 NO.'S GITHER WORKS DISTT:-SONIPAT 24.04.2020 06.05.2020 PANCHAYAT DEPARTMENT https://etenders.hry.nic.in Executive Engineer SONIPAT BPS GOVT, MEDICAL COLLEGE FOR WOMEN, 22.04.2020 11.05.2020 E-TENDER: FOR CAPETERIA SERVICES soonybpsgmc.purchase@gmail.com etenders. bry, nic. in KHANPUR KALAN, SONIPAT PROTECTION OF THE WALL AND CONTROL EXCESSIVE INDREWS DIVISION. 30.04.2020 SCOURING BOTH SIDES OF THE CANAL BY LAYING STONE https://etenders.hry.nic.in 1112 LACS xerinddivn@yahoo.in KARNAL BOULDER APRON IN REACH RD 145000-162500 WIC MLL 01.05.2020 CANAL + 2 OTHER WORKS 23.04.2025 1.64 01744 230743 POREST KURUKSHETRA NEW EARTH WORK http://ebenders.hry.nic.in CRORE d'akkr-hry@nic.in PUBLIC HEALTH ENGG, DIV A/MTC, VARIOUS W/S SCHEME FALLS UNDER P.H. E. https://etendershary.nic.in 11 7.10 LACS EXECUTIVE ENGINEER 27.04.2020 A/HTC VARIOUS W/S SCHEME FALLS UNDER P.H. E https://etendershary.nic.in EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

27,04,2020

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT: www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

#### NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY द्वितीय शुद्धिपत्र

निविदा संख्याः MKN/Const I/FL-DNA/T-419150415 2 कार्य का नाम स्थान सहितः Construction of 224 nos. .. Type-II ..., 110 no. ... Type-III ... & 18 nos. ... Type-IV quarters .... and other ancillary works at various stations between Phulera to Degana ... Phulera Degana doubling. समापन की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय 08.05.2020 के स्थान पर 27.05.2020 at 15:00 hrs होगी। शेष नियम व शर्ते यथावत रहेंगी | उप मुख्य इंजीनियर (निर्माण)–I

C)lassifieds

### Public Notice

It is hereby informed by this notice to all general public that my client Sh Chander Bhan, aged 66 yrs.[App]S/o Late Sh.Tarlok Chand R/o H.No.B-19-1388/111,Street No.3,DevNagar Near Y Block,Ludhiana Punjab-141001, at present residing at M-8,Sainik Nagar, Uttam Nagar,New Delhi-195, has deb-arred/disowned his wife Smt.Uma Rani and his 4 children namely Ms. Anjali,Mr.Ashish,Mr.Aanchal,Mr. Aavush from bis all moweable & immediate in the second of the Anjali,Mr.Ashish,Mr.Aanchal,Mr. Aayush from his all movable & imn ovable properties & assets with imn ediate effect because of some tempe ramental differences with his wife and as they are already living separ-tely since last 20 years and for their cetain misdeeds causing a lot of pro esponsibilities thereto & my above named client and his family shall no he responsible for any acts, deeds & omissions of above stated persons in uny manner whatsever.

**9 6** @ieExplained #ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & Answer

# How far can someone without symptoms spread the infection?

The signals so far are that some people spread COVID-19 before showing symptoms themselves. Can some also spread the disease without ever showing symptoms? A look at the emerging evidence

**ABANTIKA GHOSH** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

TWO RECENT figures given out on separate days by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) about people without symptoms testing positive for novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created fear about the possibility of unsuspecting individuals suddenly falling very sick, and of their infecting others. A look at the evidence and the guidance on asymptomatic cases of COVID-19:

#### What has the ICMR said on this?

On April 20, Dr R R Gangakhedkar, head of epidemiology and infectious diseases at ICMR, said: "I have explained that 80% people will have infection without symptoms. They will be asymptomatic but if you test them, there is a chance that they will be positive... We need to understand that RT-PCR test comes positive only after a person is symptomatic. People take time to be symptomatic. This means if I test him when asymptomatic, the chances of him/her testing positive are small." This, he said, is a limitation of the test: the closer one is to the point of infection — when the disease is contracted and not manifested - the slimmer are the chances of testing positive. That is also why, he said, India's testing strategy, which banks heavily on whether a person is symptomatic (unless one is in a hotspot with a known history of contact with a confirmed case), does not need any immediate revision.

The following day, after this led to apprehensions, Dr Gangakhedkar clarified that in India, 69% of the people who had tested positive are asymptomatic. "What I said vesterday about 80% people is based just on one study," he said.

#### What is the evidence on this?

139,243

**845,959** US

It is now widely understood that around the world, the bulk of the people who get infected will not show symptoms, and will probably not even know that they have contracted the virus unless they are subjected to a serological test at some point and are found to have developed antibodies. Last week, a study from China concluded that 44% of the cases who had contracted the disease had caught it from an asymptomatic person. They estimated that viral shedding, which is when a person infects



Testing at a facility run by municipal authorities in Mumbai. Ganesh Shirsekar

another, starts happening two to three days before the onset of symptoms.

"We observed the highest viral load in throat swabs at the time of symptom onset, and inferred that infectiousness peaked on or before symptom onset. We estimated that 44% (95% confidence interval, 25-69%) of secondary cases were infected during the index cases' presymptomatic stage, in settings with substantial household clustering, active case finding and quarantine outside the home," reported the researchers, including from Guangzhou Medical University and the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Control, at the University of Hong Kong. The study was published in Nature Medicine.

#### But what is "presymptomatic stage"?

The WHO recognises three stages of COVID-19 transmission — asymptomatic, presymptomatic and symptomatic. "Symptomatic transmission refers to transmission from a person while they are experiencing symptoms. Data from published epidemiology and virologic studies provide evidence that COVID -19 is primarily transmitted from symptomatic people to others who are in close contact through respiratory droplets, by direct contact with infected persons, or by contact with contaminated objects and surfaces," the WHO says. The incubation period of the virus ranges between 5-14 days. Presymptomatic transmission is when a person spreads the disease before symptoms appear, and eventually develops symptoms themselves.

On asymptomatic transmission, the WHO says it "refers to transmission of the virus from a person, who does not develop symptoms. There are few reports of laboratory-confirmed cases who are truly asymptomatic, and to date, there has been no documented asymptomatic transmission. This does not exclude the possibility that it may occur. Asymptomatic cases have been reported as part of contact tracing efforts in some countries.'

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is clear that both presymptomatic and asymptomatic transmission of the virus are possible. "The onset and duration of viral shedding and the period of infectiousness for COVID-19 are not yet known. It is possible that SARS-CoV-2 RNA may be detectable in the upper or lower respiratory tract for weeks after illness onset, similar to infections with MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. However, detection of viral RNA does not necessarily mean that infectious virus is present. There are reports of asymptomatic infections (detection of virus with no development of symptoms) and presymptomatic infections (detection of virus prior to development of symptoms) with SARS-CoV-2, but their role in transmission is not yet known. Based on existing literature, the incubation period (the time from exposure to development of symptoms) of SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses (eg MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV) ranges from 2-14 days," the CDC says.

#### How does one protect oneself from asymptomatic transmission?

There is no alternative to basic safety practices such as hand-washing, wearing a mask, and social distancing, said Dr Randeep Guleria, AIIMS Director and a respiratory medicine specialist. That is, till such time that a vaccine is found. "This is why universal precautions such as social distancing hand washing are so important. Maintaining distance is very important but stigma only ends up increasing mortality and morbidity. You have to understand that many people, especially given how young our country is, would go through a bit of fever and body ache and not even know that it is COVID."

The question of transmission from an individual who does not show symptoms is also important — while evidence on asymptomatic individuals spreading the disease may be divided, it is more or less accepted that people can spread the disease before they show symptoms.

#### For how long can a person spread the disease after being infected by the virus?

The reply to this question is commonly assumed to be 14 days. However, as it is a new disease, knowledge about it is evolving. In Kerala recently, a 54-year-old woman tested positive for the virus almost a month after she arrived from abroad, and had been quarantined at home ever since. Health officials told The Indian Express that there have been at least a dozen cases so far of people testing positive after having been quarantined for 28 days. On Thursday, Telangana decided to increase the home quarantine period to 28 days, from 14 days. The Union Health Ministry has advocated from the very start that patients should be followed up, at least through community surveillance, for 28 days and not 14 days.

This is also in line with some of the global experiences. In a study last month in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, researchers from Imperial College London estimated that in China the "mean duration from onset of symptoms to death to be 17.8 days and to hospital discharge to be 24.7 days." They also pointed out that all cases were hospitalised there, not so much because they needed hospital care, but to "prevent onward transmission".

**21,700** (686 DEATHS)

One of Brazil's many sugar mills, which are seen as producing more sugar and less ethanol than earlier. That would be bad news for India's farmers and mills. Reuters

## How oil price crash impacts sugar, what it means for India

#### **PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS** & HARISH DAMODARAN

PUNE, NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

IT IS not only oil that has tumbled, with prices of West Texas Intermediate grade crude closing at an unprecedented minus \$37.63 per barrel on April 20, before recovering a tad to \$13.78 by Wednesday. On April 21, prices of raw sugar for May delivery at New York crashed to 9.75 cents per pound, the lowest closing for a nearestmonth futures contract since the 9.70 cents recorded on June 9, 2008. Even commodities such as corn and palm oil have seen price declines following the slide in crude. A look at the connection:

#### We know about oil. But why have global sugar prices also collapsed?

All commodities have taken a demand hit from subdued economic activity and lockdowns imposed by many countries to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. But sugar is one commodity that, until quite recently, was on a bull run. Most estimates showed global production in 2019-20 (October-September) to fall short of consumption by 8-9 million tonnes (mt). On February 12, the front-month raw sugar futures contract at New York actually closed 15.78 cents per pound, the highest since May 2017. A drop from that to below 10 cents is rather steep.

One reason for this collapse is the closure of restaurants, weddings and other social functions not taking place, and people avoiding ice-creams and sweetened cold beverages that might cause throat infections. The impact of coronavirus-induced lockdowns on out-of-home consumption and institutional (as opposed to direct household) demand for sugar is obvious. Prakash Naiknavare, managing director of the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories, projects sugar consumption in India alone to dip by 1.5-2 mt in 2019-20, from the normal 25.5-26 mt levels.

#### Is that the only reason? Sinking crude prices appear an even big-

ger factor. The juice from crushing sugarcane can be crystallised into sugar or fermented into alcohol. When oil prices are high, mills - especially in Brazil - tend to divert cane for making ethanol (alcohol of 99%-plus purity) that is used for blending with petrol. In 2019-20 (April-March), only 34.32% of cane crushed by Brazilian mills went for manufacturing 26.73 mt of sugar. The rest was used to produce 31.62 billion litres of ethanol. But with oil prices tanking – WTI crude was quoting at \$53-plus two months ago — mills will not find it attractive to divert cane for ethanol. Brazil's mills, which have started crushing (the Indian season is from October), are seen to produce up to 36 mt of sugar and hardly 26 billion litres of ethanol this year.

### How will this affect India?

Dip in sugar consumption, together

with higher Brazilian output, is bad news for both Indian sugar mills and cane farmers. Before COVID-19 happened, the Indian industry was expecting to export 5.5-6 mt of raw sugar in 2019-20. Mills had already entered into contracts of some 3.8 mt, out of which 3.05 mt have been shipped out so far. With ex-factory realisations from exports at Rs 2,250-2,400 per quintal and the Centre providing a subsidy of Rs 104.48 (it was termed lump-sum assistance towards defraying marketing, internal transport, port handling and ocean freight expenses), the industry's woes from excess stocks were seemingly behind it. This was to be aided both by exports and lower production (26 mt, from 33.2 mt in 2018-19).

The current plunge in world prices, plus Brazil's likely production surge, would upset these calculations. Naiknavare, however, is counting on Indonesia's increased import requirements and its decision last month to slash the duty on Indian raw sugar from 15% to 5%. Indonesian refiners are projected to import 3.3 mt of raws this year, up from 2.6 mt in 2019. "They buy mostly from Thailand, which is experiencing a bad drought that could lead to its production falling from 14.6 mt in 2018-19 to 9 mt. It opens up an opportunity for us," he says.

#### What is the situation with respect to cane farmers?

Exports slowing down and not much domestic lifting of sugar by institutional consumers has significantly undermined the ability of mills to make cane payments. Uttar Pradesh's factories have till now crushed cane worth roughly Rs 32,000 crore in the 2019-20 season, but managed to pay only Rs 16,456 crore. The state government, last week, announced a scheme of mills giving "willing farmers" one quintal each of sugar for the next three months, in lieu of cane payments due to them. Maharashtra mills, too. had paid only Rs 11,310 crore out of their total cane dues of Rs 12,539 crore as on April 15.

Moreover, the industry's problem is not from sugar alone. The lockdown has reduced offtake of alcohol, be it potable liquor or ethanol for blending with petrol. UP mills, according to the state's cane commissioner Sanjay Bhoosreddy, may produce around 100 crore litres (one billion) of ethanol this season, compared to 51.5 crore litres in 2018-19. But with cars and twowheelers not running, oil market companies aren't very keen to procure ethanol.

### Are other agri-commodities impacted?

Prices of corn, which is also used for making ethanol, fell to their lowest since September 2009 at Chicago on April 21. Likewise, palm oil, again a feedstock for biodiesel, ended 7.5% lower at the Bursa Malaysia futures exchange. Corn prices can, in turn, drag down other cereals, just as palm oil could to sovabean and other oilseeds. They are all ultimately linked to oil, whose prices matter as much to petroleum companies as farmers.

### 189,973 98,674 62,773

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

DAILY COUNT OF DEATHS, INFECTIONS

TOTAL CONFIRMED: 2,665,122

**DEATH COUNT: 186,131** 

83,878

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on April 23

### **INDIA COUNT:** TOP 10 STATES

#### Andaman and Nicobar Is Arunachal Pradesh 35 148 Bihar Haryana 1.890 Rajasthan Himachal Pradesh Jammu and Kashmi Jharkhand 2,407 960 Telangana Manipur Meghalay 1.629 Tamil Nadu Punjab Tripura

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, April 23. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states and UTs with the most cases are listed above. 4,325 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 30 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

Have a question on the COVID-19 outbreak and what you should/should not do? Write to explained@indianexpress.com

### AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

# Working with lockdown: create green worker pools, not green zones



BINA AGARWAL

ALL APPROACHES to easing the lockdown carry risks of infection spikes. How can we minimise the risk while allowing work? The government is following a geographic (zonal) approach. This is a high-risk approach which can also prove ineffective.

A more effective, minimal-risk approach would be to create infection-free worker pools, by a strategic combination of antibody and PCR testing of workers in businesses that open up. Let me explain why.

The government has demarcated three zones: green, orange and red. The green zones

are where no new cases were reported over 28 days since the last case tested negative. The orange zones are those with a few cases, and the red ones have a large number of cases.

The government suggests opening up the green zones first. But these zones may have many asymptomatic cases, that is, infected people with no symptoms. The Delhi government found recently that 25% of those who tested positive had no symptoms. China had 44% asymptomatic cases. These are very high figures.

If green zones are opened and 25% people are asymptomatic carriers, infections will spike. If workers are together in factories, even with social distancing a single asymptomatic carrier can infect others, forcing the entire unit into quarantine. The effort of opening up that factory will be wasted. Moreover, many factories are located in red zones, and supply chains often cut across zones.

For example, Baddi town in Himachal Pradesh is India's biggest pharma hub, and home to major companies that produce numerous essential drugs for domestic and export markets. It is in a red zone but is being allowed production, with many workers coming from other states. What if the workers bring infection?

A lower risk method would be to create "pools of green workers" (rather than green zones) who are infection free. Hence, if an industry wants to open (and all should be allowed, whether producing essential or non-essential goods) it should first identify its workers. Those who have already recovered from the virus will have some immunity. Give them a green certificate or stamp their arms. Give antibody tests to the remaining workers in that industry. These are blood tests which can identify in an hour if someone has been infected, even if asymptomatic. Some antibodies (IgM) appear a few days after infection and others (IgG) a little later.

Some of those who test positive may still be infectious, others would have recovered.

To identify the recovered, give a PCR test. Those testing negative can join the green workers. Those testing positive should selfquarantine for say 7-8 more days, and then get PCR tested again and cleared. This procedure will create a worker pool who can work without endangering others or themselves. They will not need on-site lodgings, since they will have some immunity, and can come from any zone, including red.

What about false negatives or false positives in antibody tests?

The false negatives, that is, those showing no antibodies even if infected, would be excluded anyway from the green worker pool. On false positives, that is those showing antibodies without being infected, if the PCR test finds them infection free and they have been in self-isolation for 14 days, including them in the worker pool will carry minimal risk. There will still be some risk, since they will lack immunity, but their co-workers with antibodies will have immunity.

The second issue is identifying services and businesses for antibody testing.

Health service workers are already on the priority list. Another priority is industries manufacturing PPE kits, ventilators, oxygen concentrators and medicines, but they should also create green worker pools. Beyond this, any factory or business that has its requisite number of green workers should be allowed to open, whichever zone it falls in, with minimum red tape in granting permission. Given low consumer demand, rather few may initially come forward in any case.

By focusing on green workers and not green zones, we can also minimise the need for housing in work locations, which most businesses lack. But those who want to provide housing can minimise the chance of cluster infections, if they have pre-tested workers.

The third issue is housing migrant workers who may join the work force later but need accommodation now, given continued lockdowns across states.

For them, large spaces (stadiums, convention centres) should be opened up. These allow for social distancing, showers and toilets, community kitchens or even self-organised cooking, virus testing spaces, and parking for transport buses, etc. Many states are using schools and colleges for migrants, but these will be needed when they open, and seldom have stadium-type facilities for a few thousand people.

Basically, we need an effective but low risk strategy to return to work and ease the lockdown. A zonal approach can prove ineffective and carries high risk. The answer lies in creating green worker pools, not green zones, through targeted antibody plus PCR testing, and a generous plan to house migrant workers. We can thus work with the lockdown with minimum risk and maximum effectiveness

Bina Agarwal is Professor of Development Economics and Environment, University of Manchester



Madagascar soldiers went door-to-door in Antananarivo, doling out sachets of a herbal tea touted by President Andry Rajoelina as a powerful remedy against COVID-19. This herbal tea gives results in seven days," Rajoelina said. "We can change the history of the entire world."



**Daniel Pearl** 

### **PAKISTAN** SC moved over acquittals in Pearl murder

Karachi/Islamabad: The Sindh government has challenged in the Supreme Court the provincial high court's verdict that acquitted British-born top al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three others in the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi in 2002. Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was abducted and beheaded in Pakistan in 2002. The government of Sindh on Wednesday filed the challenge before the Supreme Court against the April 2 order of the Sindh High Court, according to Dawn.

### **AFRICA**

### Worries as cases jump 43 per cent in a week

Cape Town: Africa has registered a 43 per cent jump in reported COVID-19 cases in the last week highlighting a warning from the World Health Organization that the continent of 1.3 billion could become the next epicentre of the global outbreak. Africa also has a "very, very limited" and "very, very strained" testing capacity, John Nkengasong, director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said in his weekly briefing on Thursday. It means that the surge in infections on the continent is likely to be even higher in reality, he said.

#### **BANGLADESH** Shutdown extended as toll rises to 127

Dhaka: Bangladesh has decided to extend the nationwide COVID-19 shutdown for 10 more days until May 5. To curb the spread of the coronavirus, the government initially declared a general holiday on March 26 for 10 days. Later, that was gradually extended till April 25. "The government will extend the nationwide shutdown until May 5," a Cabinet division spokesman told PTI as health-care officials said that the pandemic has spread to the country's 58 of 64 administrative districts, indicating worsening situation of community level infections.

# After US freezes WHO funds, China steps in

Chinese govt said it would donate \$30 million more to the global health body; WHO chief says he hopes Trump administration reconsiders freeze on funds

**AGENCIES** 

BEIJING, APRIL 23

CHINA SAID on Thursday it would donate a further \$30 million to the World Health Organization (WHO), which is seeking more than \$1 billion to fund its battle against the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 180,000 people worldwide.

The pledge comes about a week after US President Donald Trump suspended funding to the WHO and accused the Genevabased organisation of promoting Chinese "disinformation" about the virus, which emerged in the central city of Wuhan last year.

"At this crucial moment, supporting WHO is supporting multilateralism and global solidarity," Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman of China's foreign ministry, said on Twitter.

The donation aimed to support the global fight against COVID-19, in particular strengthening health systems in developing countries, she said, adding that China had already donated \$20 million to the WHO on March 11.

On Wednesday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he hoped the Trump administration would reconsider its decision.

"I hope the US believes that



Chinese President Xi Jinping inspects a primary school in Shaanxi Province. AP

this an important investment, not just to help others, but for the U.S. to stay safe also," Tedros said during a virtual briefing.

China had hinted at stepping up its monetary contribution to the UN health agency on April 15. Beijing's response came a day after Trump announced to put a "very powerful" hold on US' funding to the WHO, accusing the UN agency of being "very China-centric" and criticising it for having "missed the call" in its response to the coronavirus pandemic.

#### 2.32 LAKH CASES IN CHINA BY MID-FEB: STUDY

Beijing: China could have reported over 2.32 lakh COVID-19 cases by mid-February more than four times of what was officially announced — if it had followed a broader criterion to count the total number of infections, a study has said.

"We estimated that there were at least 2.32.000 infections in the first epidemic

wave of coronavirus in mainland China," said University of Hong Kong researchers.

In the study published in The Lancet, researchers said China might have had 2,32,000 cases rather than the official count of about 55,000 by February 20, if a revised definition adopted earlier had been applied throughout. PTI

### Close wildlife wet markets permanently, says Pompeo

**REUTERS** 

WASHINGTON, APRIL 23

US SECRETARY of State Mike Pompeo said that the United States has called on China to permanently close its wildlife wet markets, citing links between those markets and zoonotic diseases.

"Given the strong link between illegal wildlife sold in wet markets and zoonotic diseases, the United States has called on the People's Republic of China to permanently close its wildlife wet markets and all markets that sell illegal wildlife," Pompeo said in a statement late Wednesday.

He had earlier hit out at Beijing again over the outbreak and accused it of taking advantage of the pandemic to bully neighbours. Pompeo repeated allegations that China was exploiting the world's focus on the pandemic with "provocative behaviour" to erode autonomy in Hong Kong, exert military pressure on Taiwan and coerce neighbours in the South China Sea.

"The United States strongly opposes China's bullying, we hope other nations will hold them to account," he said.

### Australia to pursue Covid probe at World Health Assembly

**KIRSTY NEEDHAM** SYDNEY, APRIL 23

AUSTRALIA WILL push for an international investigation into the coronavirus pandemic at next month's annual meeting of the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of the World Health Organisation (WHO), its prime minister said on Thursday.

Australia wants the WHO to be strengthened and is suggesting introducing inspectors with the power to enter a country to respond more quickly to a health crisis. Australia sits on the executive board of the assembly, which determines WHO policies and appoints the director-general. The assembly is due to meet

on May 17. The coronavirus is believed to have emerged in a market selling wildlife in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. It has spread around the world infecting some 2.6 million people and killing more than 183,000 of them, according to Reuters calculations.

The WHO's response to the outbreak has become con-



**Scott Morrison** 

tentious with U.S. President Donald Trump accusing it of being "China-centric" and suspending U.S. funding.

Diplomats believe the May meeting opens the door for discussion of Australia's call for an enquiry because agenda items already include calls for a "lessons learned" review of health emergencies, and urge members to comply with international health regulations introduced after the 2004 SARS outbreak in China.

"The World Health Assembly is coming up in May. There are opportunities to pursue that matter there and that is our first port of call," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. **REUTERS** 

Pak using

ISI's system

to keep track

of suspected

cases: Imran

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan disclosed on Thursday that

his government was using a sys-

tem, originally meant to track

down terrorists by the spy agency

ISI, to trace suspected cases in the

country, as the number of the

COVID-19 patients rose to 10,927.

originally (meant to trace) ter-

rorists but we're using it to tackle corona," Khan said during the

live Ehsaas Telethon to raise

funds to support the people

testing is the only way to reopen businesses". Khan said that effi-

cient tracking and testing of

coronavirus infected persons

was the only way to reopen the

closed businesses in the country.

for indefinite period was not an

option and any decision about

Khan said that a lockdown

He said that "tracking and

worst hit by the pandemic.

"It (tracking system) was

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN** 

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 23

### Hidden outbreaks spread through US far earlier: Estimates

BENEDICT CAREY & **JAMES GLANZ** NEW YORK, APRIL 23

BY THE time New York City confirmed its first case of the coronavirus on March 1, thousands of infections were already silently spreading through the city, a hidden explosion of a disease that many still viewed as a remote threat as the city awaited the first signs of spring.

Hidden outbreaks were also spreading almost completely undetected in Boston, San Francisco, Chicago and Seattle, long before testing showed that each city had a major problem, according to a model of the spread of the disease by researchers at Northeastern University who shared their results with The New York Times.

Even in early February – while the world focused on China the virus was not only likely to be spreading in multiple American cities, but also seeding blooms of infection elsewhere in the US, the researchers found.

In five major US cities, as of March 1, there were only 23 confirmed cases of coronavirus. But according to the Northeastern model, there could have actually been about 28,000 infections in those cities by then.

As political leaders grappled in February with the question of whether the outbreak would become serious enough to order measures like school closures and remote work, little or no systematic testing for the virus was taking place. "Meanwhile, in the background, you have this silent chain of transmission of thousands of people," said Alessandro Vespignani, director of the

#### 4.4 MN MORE FILE **JOBLESS CLAIMS**; **TOTAL NOW 26 MN**

■ More than 26 million people have joined the ranks of the unemployed over the past five weeks. As many as 4.4 million workers filed for jobless benefits last week

■ State agencies have scrambled to handle the flood of filings as well as a set of federal eligibility rules instituted to deal with the crisis. Panic is widespread among

■ With government phones and websites clogged and drop-in lawvers are fielding where else to turn. NYT

no symptoms.

tions are lifted too quickly. **NYT** 



**NEW YORK TIMES** 

NEW YORK, APRIL 23

under control.

CHANCELLOR ANGELA Merkel

of Germany on Thursday

warned the governors of the

country's 16 states against loos-

ening restrictions on public life

too quickly, saying that it could

jeopardise the nation's ability to

keep the spread of coronavirus

we have achieved," she said in an

address to Parliament.

"Let us not squander what

Germany has slowed the pan-

demic's spread since residents

were ordered to largely remain in

their homes starting in mid-

March, The country, which has re-

CHECK-UP QUEUE Drivers wait to be checked amid large-scale social restrictions to prevent the spread of coronavirus in Bandung area of West the most vulnerable Java in Indonesia on Thursday. Reuters

centres closed, legal aid complaints from people who say they don't know

Network Science Institute at Northeastern University in Boston. The model estimates all in-

fections, including those in people who may experience mild or

Other disease researchers said the findings of Dr Vespignani's team were broadly in line with their own analyses. The research offers the first clear accounting of how far behind the United States was in detecting the virus. And the findings provide a warning of what can recur, the researchers say, if social distancing restric-



Merkel warned against false sense of security. Reuters

ported more than 148,000 infections and over 5,000 fatalities, has had a steady decline in the number of new cases since April.

After discussions with the chancellor last week, the states allowed smaller stores and, in some cases, schools to begin reopening on Monday under restrictions. Merkel said she stood by her decisions to impose restrictions. and to allow them to be slowly eased, but cautioned against cre-

ating a false sense of security. "Nobody wants to hear this, but the truth is that we are not living in the final phase of this pandemic, but at the beginning," she said. "We are going to have to live with it for a long time."

But the chancellor also noted that the outbreak and subsequent lockdown was proving challenging. "This pandemic is an imposition on our democracy, because it restricts our existential rights and needs," she said.



Where the limit lies

and for Europe in general, lies in deciding which restrictions are safe to lift. German experts have voiced worries that easing too many measures would result in the country losing the early lead it had gained. For example, while opening of stores, schools and salons has been charted, experts have met with scepticism a push to open restaurants.



the shut down should be for "all Pakistanis and not just the elite". "The government is looking at the option of smart lockdown The concern for Germany, to wisely provide relief to the people badly hit by the closure of the country," he said. PTI



Imran Khan

### 'STOPPING US FROM SEEING OUR CHILDREN IS A CRIME'

### 'We are in prison': Pain in France's nursing homes exposed

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** PARIS, APRIL 23

FOR HER first authorised visit in more than six weeks with her 80-year-old mother, Sabrina Deliry prepared a selection of their favourite tunes, among them Edith Piaf's "La Vie en Rose."

Later, at the Paris nursing home where the mother has been agonising in the solitude of her room, feeling imprisoned and miserable without the sun on her cheeks, the breeze in her hair or her daughter's tender hugs, they listened to the French songbird together.

Even before many businesses rumble back to life or schoolyards bustle again, France started to allow tightly regulated nursing home visits this week, puncturing a strict no-visitors lockdown that still failed to prevent an ongoing tidal wave of coronavirus deaths among elderly nursing home residents.

For some, seeing their parents again brought joy and relief. "I know how important it is her." Christopher

Cronenberger said after seeing his 87-year-old mother. But for others, the visits are



At the Kaisesberg nursing home in eastern France. AP

proving bittersweet: Better than nothing, but nowhere close to being enough. After all, how can a few minutes, sat across a table in face masks, make up for so many days apart? Sabrina and Patricia were on the phone to each other minutes after they said goodbye with blown air kisses and the mother trundled back alone to her room in her motorised wheelchair, giving a final wave.

"Stopping us from seeing our children is a crime," she said. "They wait for us to die before sending our children to us." The visit, she said, "makes me want to live again." But the next cannot come soon enough. "We are in prison," Patricia said. Sabrina is among those who

believes that nursing homes were sealed off not to protect residents but to prevent families from knowing what was happening inside. "It sickens me," she said.

"Those are our parents behind those walls, my mother, our fathers. They have no right to deprive us of them like that." She worries that Patricia, a retired hairdresser who has suffered a stroke, will be even more diminished physically by weeks of being confined to her room.

### Covid 100 years after Spanish flu kills twin

WWII veteran dies of

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW YORK, APRIL 23

A 100-YEAR-OLD World War-II veteran has died of the new coronavirus a century after his twin brother was killed in the 1918-19 Spanish flu pandemic, US media reports said.

Philip Kahn fought at the Battle of Iwo Jima and helped with aerial surveys after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Newsday said on Wednesday in its online edition.

Kahn and his twin Samuel were born in December 1919

New Delhi

and Samuel died of the Spanish flu not long after.

His grandson Warren Zysman said Kahn had been afraid of another pandemic coming along during his lifetime. "It was something he brought up quite frequently," Zysman told CNN. "I would have conversations with him, he would say to me, 'I told you history repeats itself, 100 years is not that long of a period of time." Kahn experienced coron-

avirus symptoms such as coughing before his death on April 17. "He talked about his brother

a lot in the last few days,' Zysman said.

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### -Tracking COVID-19-**Cybersecurity**

### After Aarogya Setu, tender for wristband to track patients by **CPSE** causes concern

**AASHISHARYAN& PRANAV MUKUL** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

EVEN AS privacy concerns for COVID-19 tracking app Aarogya Setu remain, the Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited (BECIL) — a central public sector enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting - has floated a tender inviting companies to supply devices such as COVID-19 patient tracking tool, online high fever scanning tools and handheld

thermal imaging systems. The requirements and functionalities sought by the CPSE in the three tools raise red flags of surveillance and "severe breach" of personal sensitive data, cybersecurity and legal experts said.

BECIL undertakes supply of specialised communication, monitoring, security and surveillance systems to defense, police and para-military departments, according to the tender document.

The last date of opening of the bids for the three was fixed for April 20.

BECIL did not respond to emailed queries on privacy concerns. Another email which sought to know whether the CPSE had so far received any responses from the bidder and whether it had selected a vendor for these tools did not elicit a response either. Of the three tools sought by BECIL, the most controversial is the COVID-19 patient tracking tool, which could be in the form of a wristband, experts said.

There are 33 requirements that the government mandates the tool must have. The first among them says that it must be an "intelligence investigation platform & tactical tool to detect, prevent and investigate threats to national security," using call data ternet protocol detail record, tower and mobile

phone forensics data. "Reading through the specifications of the tracking tool, it is evident that the item, presumably a comprehensive software, goes beyond a healthcare tool and opens up the possibility of mass surveillance," policy group Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC)

said in a statement. The tracking tool should, among other things, be "advanced analytics and intelligence software that uses telecom & internet data to identify suspect locations, associations & behaviour". The first two points, legal experts said, indicate in no uncertain terms that the app could be used as a

tracking tool if the need be. "It is sort of like the ankle bracelet for prisoners and

Mobile testing

lab to speed

screening

up COVID-19

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath

Singh Thursday unveiled via video

link a Mobile Virology Research

and Diagnostics Laboratory

(MVRDL) developed by DRDO

that will help speed up COVID-19

Research Lab (MVRL) that will

speed up coronavirus screening

and related R&D activities was de-

veloped by the Research Centre

Imarat (RCI), the Hyderabad-

based laboratory of the Defence

Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO), in consul-

tation with ESIC Hospital,

Hyderabad, the statement said.

The MVRL is the combination of a

Biosafety Level 3 lab and a BSL 2

lab essential to carry out its work.

The first such Mobile Viral

screening, a statement said.

### 'BREACH' OF PERSONAL DATA

■BECIL, a CPSE under the I&B Ministry, has floated a tender inviting companies to supply devices such as COVID-19 patient tracking tool, online high fever scanning tools and handheld thermal imaging systems

■ The requirements and functionalities sought by the CPSE in the three tools raise red flags of surveillance and "severe breach" of personal sensitive data, experts said

parolees that many countries have ... This tool takes one step forward and analyses the data, providing invasive insights into personal lives," a Punebased cyber-law expert said.

One of the requirements of the device states that it should be able to geofence an area of interest, such as "meeting place, airport, mosque, railway station, bus stand" and identify all the people present at the said location, the tender document said.

"Many components of the tool included in the tender document go beyond the common requirements of contact tracing and could result in pervasive surveillance." the SFLC statement said.

Apart from the tracking tool, the Centre has also sought supplies of hand-held thermal imaging system and an online thermal fever sensing system.

For the hand-held thermal imaging system too, the government has specified that the device – apart from being able to take temperatures from a distance of 2-5 metres should also have a secure digital memory card slot with a capacity of up to 32 gigabytes.

The said device should also have voice annotation recording and text comment feature while capturing an image, and should have an in-built microphone and be big enough to be mounted on a tripod. Though the device will have "an audio alarm for high temperature.". the "high-temperature value shall be adjustable as per user requirement in the real-time scenario", the tender docu-

ment said. The third tool, an online thermal fever sensing system, also has certain controversial requirements such as face detection feature, video and audio recording, a minimum of one month of video footage being recorded, experts said.

### INDUSTRY BODIES WORKING ON PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT SNAPSHOT SURVEY

# Govt, industry to join hands, map skills with jobs for 22 lakh stranded migrants

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

AFTER REGISTERING details of 22 lakh stranded migrant workers in shelters amid the ongoing lockdown to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, the government plans to collaborate with the industry to find the migrant workers employment by mapping their skill sets to meet the requirement for jobs

on the ground. The process had hit a roadblock as the database for migrant workers registered so far in many states was limited to identification details - name, bank accounts. mobile number, Aadhaar, Ujjwala registration — but lacked details of their skill sets and immediate preceding work experience. This information is critical for the industry to meaningfully map the The process had hit a roadblock as the database for migrant workers registered so far in many states was limited to identification details but lacked details of their skill sets and immediate preceding work experience

skills and qualifications of workers with the available work opportunities in areas near the shelters. Attempts are being made to fill

up this crucial information gap to feed the available worker pool to nearby industrial units after the requisite testing regimen. "Government has collected information for the migrant workers. But a better approximation of where those workers can fit in can be done only if we have data on their skill sets and where they were employed before they came to stay in the shelter. These questions need to be added to make it a workable dataset," an industry source said.

Industry representatives said the details so far are more from the identification perspective and might help in any proposed transfer of benefits by the government, but more granular details will help in getting the workers employed.

Industry chambers such as the Confederation of Indian Industry are already working on a proposal to conduct a snapshot survey across the country to assess the potential work opportunities for these migrant workers after pardustry for resumption of work beginning April 20. A senior Labour Ministry official said data has been collected for 22 lakh workers and more work is being done to update the database. On Wednesday, addressing a

FICCI webinar, Labour Secretary Heeralal Samariya had said that the Centre has collected the data of migrant workers from states as well as districts. "... we are trying if there's work available with factories, builders, how to do matching so that they can be provided employment in nearby places so that work can start in factories ... we are on job, issuing instructions to concerned district administration so that work and relief material can be given," he had said.

As per the status report submitted by the Home Ministry to the Supreme Court in March end,

up 21,064 relief camps for food or shelter, with the governments having provided shelter to 6,66,291 persons and food to 22,88,279 persons. This dataset includes details of poor and destitute, stranded migrant workers, workers who need access to food, or workers who reached their destination but were needed to be quarantined.

Though there's a countrywide lockdown in force till May 3, the government had allowed partial resumption of some industries from April 20. The Centre had also allowed movement of migrant labour between districts within a state, primarily to facilitate the movement of available skill sets to areas where they would be needed if factories and industrial units are to start. The movement of labour between states, however, remains prohibited.

### BRIEFLY

### 'Don't count paymentdelays dueto lockdown'

New Delhi: Sebi Thursday asked valuation agencies not to consider any lockdownrelated delay in payment of interest or principal or extension of maturity of a security as default for the purpose of valuation of money market and securities held by mutual funds. PTI

### Relief package for exhibition industry

New Delhi: Amid the hardship being faced by third party fair organisers, India Trade Promotion Organisation, the nodal trade fair body under the Commerce Ministry, announced relief package/steps to third party organisers who hold exhibitions at Pragati Maidan. ENS

### TLTRO 2.0: Banks not keen on NBFC bailout, take little over half of RBI funds

**GEORGE MATHEW** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

BANKS HAVE largely ignored the Rs 25,000-crore targeted long term repo operations (TLTRO) conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and bid for only half of the money put by the RBI on Thursday, indicating their reluctance to bail out troubled non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions (MFIs).

Of the Rs 25,000 crore put by the central bank on the TLTRO window on Thursday, banks took only Rs 12,850 crore (for threeyear tenor), while there were no takers for the remaining amount. The RBI offers TLTRO funds at the reporate of 4.40 per cent. "Banks don't seem to be keen

> on giving money to small and medium NBFCs ... many of them are facing liquidity crunch as collections have fallen due to the lockdown." said a banking source. There's already a complaint

that banks which had taken funds from the central bank's TLTRO window earlier had given that money to top-rated corporates, ignoring the claims of cash-starve small and medium units. Last week, the RBI announced

TLTRO 2.0 and the scheme man-

Partial credit guarantee

# an option

POOR PARTICIPATION by

banks in the TLTRO for

NBFCs clearly highlights the banks' reluctance to lend to mid-size and small NBFCs and MFIs in the current situation. A viable option could be a structure with partial credit guarantee by the government, similar to the PCG scheme launched last year for securitisation. This is likely to ease liquidity challenges of NBFCs

dates that within the total size of Rs 50,000 crore, 10 per cent shocent to NBFCs with asset size of Rs 500 crore and below, and 25 per cent to NBFCs with asset size be-

tween Rs 500 crore and Rs 5,000 crore rated in investment grade. NBFCs, especially those not at

the highest end of credit rating, were unable to access the funding. The situation has aggravated as many banks have not been accommodative in providing a moratorium to NBFCs, while the latter have already provided a moratorium to their customers. On top of this, banks are not availing of funds offered by RBI to help small and medium NBFCs, sources said.

Vydianathan Ramaswamy, director-ratings, Brickwork Ratings, said limited participation by banks in the TLTRO 2.0 clearly highlights the banks' reluctance to lend to mid-size and small NBFCs and MFIs in the current situation. "Given the lack of risk appetite in banks, a structure with partial credit guarantee by the government similar to the PCG scheme launched last year for securitization may be the only viable option to ease liquidity challenges of NBFCs." he said. While collections are falling

steeply in the wake of the lockdown, closure of units and job losses, an estimated Rs 1.75 lakh crore debt obligation of NBFCs will mature by June 2020.

The RBI had asked banks, cooperative banks and NBFCs to offer three-month moratorium on loan repayments by their customers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown in the country. However, banks have refused to give the same facility to NBFCs which have taken huge loans from the banking sector. According to India Ratings,

NBFCs with an asset size between Rs 500 crore and Rs 5,000 crore largely belong to 'BBB' and 'A' rated categories and may have weaker liquidity and other buffers than higher rated issuers. With a large segment of NBFCs' customer base (both in MSME and otherwise) likely to be significantly impacted by the lockdown, delinquencies could disproportionately rise for these lenders. The RBI may have to revise their strategy to help small and medium NBFCs as banks are hesitant to give funds to them. In the TLTRO 1.0 window, most of the funding was absorbed by public sector entities and bigger corporates. A top corporate had raised Rs

8,500 core through an NCD issue earlier this month. Banks have so far mobilised Rs 1 lakh crore from the RBI at reporate. Many of these corporates are raising this debt to not only tide over short-term liquidity challenges but also strengthen their liquidity buffers.

\$10-20 PER

**BARREL**:

**PRICES** 

### Prolonged lockdown: Growth may contract by 0.9%, says CII activity is likely to remain con-

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** MUMBALAPRIL 23

CORPORATE INDIA has expressed fears that the GDP will contract by 0.9 per cent in FY21 if the coronavirus outbreak gets prolonged and the lockdown continues for a long period. "In case of a more prolonged outbreak, where the restrictions in existing hot-spot regions get extended, while new regions are identified as 'hotspots' leading to intermittent stop and start in economic activity, GDP is likely to decline by -0.9 per cent," the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said.

On Thursday, Fitch Ratings also cut India's growth projection to 0.8 per cent in 2020-21, saying an unparalleled global recession was underway due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and resultant lockdowns.

In the baseline scenario, GDP is expected to grow at 0.6 per cent on an annual basis as economic tions on free movement of goods and people beyond the lockdown period, CII said. "This will lead to disruption in supply chains, slow pick-up in investment activity, labour shortages in the short-run and muted consumption demand on account of reduced household incomes," it said. In the optimistic scenario,

strained due to continuing restric-

which envisages a faster pick-up post the lockdown period, GDP is projected to register a growth of 1.5 per cent at best, it said. "Given the extent of the dam-

age to the economy from the disruption to business, the GDP growth in FY21 will likely be the lowest in many decades," said Chandrajit Banerjee, director general, CII. "The economic costs of the lockdown are rising each passing day with the impact being felt across sectors. The situation reguires immediate, across the board intervention from the government," he said.

### As output costs exceed global prices, upstream oil & gas cos seek relief

**KARUNJITSINGH** 

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 UPSTREAM OIL and gas compa-

nies are seeking reliefs on taxes and levies from the government as the fall in international Brent crude prices to below \$20 per barrel has hit their profitability. Sources at ONGC and Oil India (OIL) said that top management was in discussions with the Petroleum Ministry seeking relaxations in both oil cess and royalties, as their cost of production exceeds international crude prices.

"ONGC management has asked that oil cess and royalties not be levied when crude prices are below \$45 per barrel," said a source aware of developments, adding that these should be waived for the duration of the supply glut and demand collapse due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Oil producers are required to pay a 20 per cent oil cess on the price of crude as well as a royalty of 10-12.5 per cent for offshore production of oil. Another source in the know

said that upstream oil PSUs had borne the brunt of providing subsidies to consumers when crude oil prices had reached over \$100 a barrel in 2007 and 2008, and the government should consider an arrangement in which OMCs are asked to purchase crude oil from PSUs at rates above international prices in such situations. "Oil marketing companies (OMCs) could be asked to buy domestic crude production which account for only 20 per cent of crude demand in India at some agreed upon price which is viable for domestic producers," said the person.

Another source said that OIL was losing around \$10-15 per barrel of crude production and that a relief from the Centre in royalties and oil cess may not be enough to Crude rallies on faster output cuts New York: Oil soared on

Thursday after major oilproducing nations said they would accelerate planned output cuts. Brent rose \$1.90, or 9.4 per cent, to \$22.28 a barrel by 1553 GMT, while WTI jumped \$4.02, or 29 per cent, to \$17.80. **REUTERS** 

in meeting operating expenses.

"Both gas and crude businesses are incurring major losses, but we are sure the government will take steps to provide relief" said an official at Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), noting that staff at offshore sites were spending stints of over 40 days as against an average of 14 days to

The Centre slashed natural gas prices earlier this month by 26 per cent to \$2.39 per million British thermal units (mmBtu), despite calls from industry that a downward revision from the previous price of \$3.23 per mmBtu would make gas production unviable for

Ajay Kumar Dixit, CEO of private upstream player Cairn India, told The Indian Express that domestic producers needed relief

"Companies are getting hammered down heavily. It would take at least couple of quarters for things to normalise," he said, adding that the Centre should

### 'Indian refiners stare at ₹25,000 cr inventory loss'

Indian oil refiners may have incurred a ₹25,000-crore inventory loss in January-March period, Crisil Ratings said



20-50 DAYS: CRUDE INVENTORY THAT INDIAN REFINERS KEEP ON **AVERAGE TO AVOID** DISRUPTION IN OPERATIONS

Crude prices nosedive: As demand slumped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the prices of global crude oil plummeted from an average of

\$55 per barrel in February to: \$33 in March ■ \$20 at March-end

**Inventory losses:** The mayhem in the oil market meant that by the time crude oil is processed

and converted into fuel, the rates have fallen, resulting in inventory losses

INVENTORY LOSS CAUSED

**DUE TO RAPID FALL IN CRUDE** 

9.7 million barrels per day: Record production cut that oil cartel OPEC and its allies agreed to on April 12, in spite of which crude prices have hovered low

Source: Crisil Ratings/PTI

### IndiGo reverses April pay cut for staff keeping

in mind 'govt's wishes'

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU PRESSTRUST OF INDIA** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

the matter.

INDIA'S LARGEST airline IndiGo Thursday reversed its decision announced last month to cut salaries of its employees despite facing financial pressures due to flight restrictions on account of the COVID-19 outbreak, according to people with knowledge of

In March, the airline had announced across the board pay cuts of up to 25 per cent, citing a "precipitous drop in revenues" that threatened the very survival of the airline industry.

According to company sources, IndiGo chief executive Ronojoy Dutta wrote to the airline's staff Thursday informing them of the reversal in decision on account of the "government's

ing the lockdown". Consequently, the staff will be paid full salaries for the month of April. However, Dutta informed the staff that executive committee members and those above senior vice-president level have volunteered to take the pay cuts for April.

wishes of not reducing pay dur-

Concurrent with the countrywide lockdown, airlines are not allowed to operate any scheduled commercial flight on domestic or international routes till May 3.

IndiGo's decision stood out among its competitors in the domestic sector, most of which have either reduced the salaries of employees or have furloughed them.

Airlines – which have a highfixed cost model - have been trying to reduce costs to survive, given that revenue generation has now been limited to cargo operations for Indian carriers.

### Amazon India's pilot project to give local stores online presence gets ₹10 cr boost help the customers in need," he this program helps customers

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI. APRIL 23

ONLINE RETAILER Amazon India on Thursday announced an investment of Rs 10 crore in a pilot programme under which it has onboarded 5.000 local stores selling items including grocery, electronics, apparel, toys and home

The investment commitment comes a day after Facebook announced a \$5.7-billion stake purchase in Jio Platforms, alongside an arrangement between its messaging platform WhatsApp and Reliance Retail that will see the new e-commerce platform JioMart accelerate its drive to digitise three crore small grocery stores across the country.

"Over the last 6 months, we have been running a pilot with 5,000+ offline retailers and local shops to bring the benefits of online selling closer to them. Code-

discover products from local shops in their city (many they already trust and love!) from the convenience of their homes, while helping shopkeepers supplement their footfalls with a digital presence and expand beyond their normal catchment," Gopal Pillai, VP—seller services, Amazon India, wrote in a blogpost. These include stores from

Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Pune, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Surat, Indore, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Faridabad, Kota, Varanasi among "The last few weeks have

brought us across an unprecedented challenge. As we focused our efforts to serve only essential products to customers, it was heartening to see how hundreds of retailers and shopkeepers across India, already part of the pilot, played an important role to

added. As of now, shops enrolled

with the programme are only selling groceries and essentials, as those are the only categories permitted by the government, but Amazon expects other categories to pick up once the lockdown is relaxed.

spread of coronavirus and post the lockdown period, spending as well as shopping patterns of con-

Retail sector analysts are pre-

dicting a shift in consumer behaviour in favour of e-commerce even once the lockdown is lifted. "After the control of the

sumers are expected to change significantly ... In such times, retailers with presence across retail segments (grocery, apparel, appliances, accessories) as well as who have an omni-channel strategy with presence in both offline and online channels are expected to have a quicker recovery." CARE Ratings said in a research note.

New Delhi

### make up for losses, but may help

ensure uninterrupted supply.

some domestic producers. from government levies.

consider waiver or deferment on royalty, cess and profit petroleum. A spokesperson for the Petrol-

eum Ministry said the government was holding internal discussions about the proposals by upstream companies.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020 14 SPORT



#### MURRAY TARGETS FRENCH OPEN

Andy Murray has said that he would "definitely" play in the rescheduled French Open in September, if it is able to take place as planned. "I'd definitely play on the clay, if it goes ahead," former world number one Murray told CNN.

# **Asian Games** bid deadline

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** 

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

INDIA COULD not submit its bid to host the 2030 Asian Games before the April 22 deadline because of the coronavirus pandemic, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Narinder Batra said. The IOA is now considering to host the 2034 edition of the continental event.

Batra added his organisation had to change its 'priorities after the outbreak of the pandemic and ensure the well-being of its athletes first.' Consequently, the Olympic body could not complete the necessary formalities and secure government guarantees in time. The OCA, on Thursday, announced that Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the only two countries who have submitted a bid. "I wish the two countries the best. We could not complete the formalities after the virus outbreak. We will now aim to bid for the 2034 edition," Batra said.

The idea to host the Asian Games in 2030 gained momentum in 2017, when it was discussed by then sports minister Vijay Goel and former IOA chief N Ramachandran, Back then, the decision was welcomed by the OCA as well. By the end of last year, the IOA had formulated an ambitious plan to host more than one multi-discipline event in this decade. Apart from the 2030 Asian Games, they were also planning to bid for the Commonwealth Games in either 2026 or 2030 and the Youth Olympics in 2026. It now appears that the Youth Olympics, along with the International Olympic Committee's Congress in 2023, are the two events India will be aiming for.

Canadian city Hamilton is among the contenders for the 2026 CWG. India is yet to officially begin its process to submit a bid for the event it last hosted in 2010.

#### Bitter rivals in fray

Meanwhile, bitter neighbours Qatar and Saudi Arabia will battle for the hosting rights for the 2030 edition of the Asiad. Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed political, trade and transport ties with Qatar in mid-2017, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism and cozying up to regional foe Iran.

# Corona impact: I am sure BCCI will be open-minded in helping other countries: Tendulkar

**DEVENDRA PANDEY** 

MUMBAI, APRIL 23

EVERY CRICKETING nation will have its own problems to solve and has suffered due to the absence of international cricket during the lockdown across the world, says Sachin Tendulkar. In an interview to *The Indian* Express the batting great talks about how the game could change because of the pandemic and why everyone should chip in.

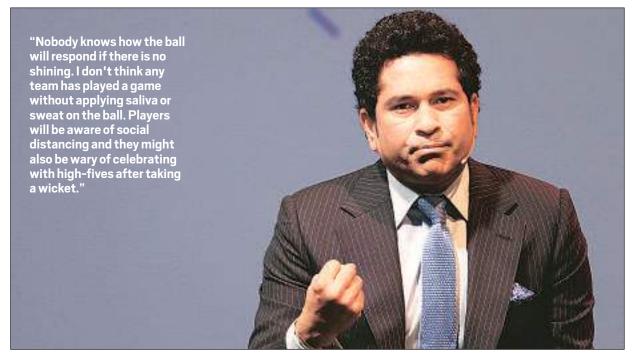
Do you think sport will be the same again? There is already some talk about cricket and in particular about the use of saliva in

All these things are going to change, without any doubt. Nobody knows how the ball will respond if there is no shining. I don't think any team has played a game without applying saliva or sweat on the ball. Players will be aware of social distancing and might also be wary of celebrating with high-fives after taking a wicket. What I hear is that stands are likely to be empty when a tournament is played initially. That certainly won't be easy to adjust for the players as they draw a lot of energy from spectators. We will be needing government clearance on whether it's safe to play, of course, first. The most important thing is to save lives.

What do you think should be the role of Indian cricket as the future of several cricketing nations looks bleak? Countries like Zimbabwe, West Indies and even New Zealand and Sri Lanka will find it extremely tough to survive this lockdown and global economic crisis.

Everyone has suffered in this. Some have suffered more, some have suffered less. It would be appropriate if BCCI answers this question and not me as I don't know what BCCI's capabilities and capacity are at the moment. Each country will have its own problem to solve, not only in cricket but overall. After all, BCCI is India. I am sure they (BCCI) will be open-minded in helping other countries if they approach them.

Should the BCCI, with a cricketer as presi-



Sachin Tendulkar believes it is better to be safe than sorry when it comes to the coronavirus pandemic. File

dent, play a big role in leading cricket's global fightback?

If you look into other boards, cricketers are in different positions. This is not a cricketing decision; cricketing decisions are taken onfield. This decision is more humanitarian. I am sure rest of the board members will have their views and they too want to help. I feel, at this level, whether you are cricketer or not, at this moment everyone will help. He (Ganguly) is board president and it has nothing to do (with) whether he has played cricket or not. He will take this call as board president.

Not just foreign cricketers, even Indian domestic cricketers might suffer if the money goes out of the game.

Yes. A solution will have to be found. I think right now nobody is thinking about it, everyone is thinking about beating the virus. But I am sure India will be in a position to

help and they too want to help.

(Roger) Federer, (Rafael) Nadal and (Novak) Djokovic have spoken about helping tennis players who are not among the top 100 and are struggling to survive. Do you think even cricket needs to initiate a dialogue like this?

Everything is up to individuals there (in tennis). Here the rights and whatever it is, there is a board. I think players can manage up to certain extent. I don't know about tennis and what they are looking to do. Each sport or each country will have its own challenges and we would try and help. I am sure BCCI will be in a position to help our crick-

Do you think eventually a few top countries will continue to play cricket but mostly franchise cricket will grow more?

Franchise cricket will grow because of its T20 version, the version which is popular among most of the families. T20 is something one can take their family to and the game is over in three hours. Slowly, the game is moving towards that direction.

#### Are you a bit scared like the rest of us about this virus?

I think it's good to take all possible precautions. If one is negligent or has an attitude of 'nothing can happen to me', that is how it happens. That attitude is unacceptable to me. It is better to be safe than sorry. It all comes down to hygiene. As a UNICEF ambassador, I have been telling people how important it is to wash hands. My company has planned how to continue helping people. And not only till this coronavirus, people have problems at other times as well. I don't want to stop, I want to help people until my last breath.

### **BCCI** proposes new revenue sharing model at ICC meeting

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** 

KOLKATA, APRIL 23

The BCCI wants to lead the post Covid-19 cricket world, as it has laid out the roadmap for the future ICC functioning. It is learnt that during the global body's Chief Executives' Committee (CEC) meeting on Thursday, BCCI secretary Jay Shah proposed a new revenue distribution system that will look after all cricket boards. The CEC meeting, via conference call, was attended by 12 Full Members and three Associates.

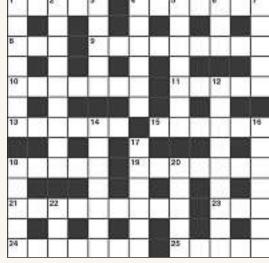
The BCCI has assured the other cricket boards, feeling the pinch of a global economic meltdown, of its support. According to an insider, during the meeting, Shah requested the chief executives of all other cricket boards to roll over the existing structure and draw up a draft proposal for a new revenue distribution model.

The current revenue distribution model for the ongoing eight-year cycle expires in 2023. At the ICC, though, regulations may be made or amended by the "Board of Directors or by any Committee, Sub-Committee or member of ICC Management to whom appropriate authority has been delegated by the Board of Directors". For a special resolution to pass, "more than 75 per cent of the aggregate number of votes" is required, while for an ordinary resolution more than 50 per cent would suffice.

In 2014, the BCCI had joined hands with the England and Wales Cricket Board and Cricket Australia to form the Big Three that had approved a contribution-based revenue distribution system. With the Indian board contributing to more than 70 per cent of the ICC's revenue, its projected share was \$570 million for the 2015-2023 rights cycle. In 2017, when the ICC dismantled the Big Three model, the BCCI's revenue share reduced to a little over \$400 million. But in a post Covid-19 world, almost every other cricket board, especially weaker nations, will need the BCCI's support - series against India for example - to make up for the financial losses.

With the Covid-19 outbreak causing havoc, the CEC all but ruled out any cricket in the near future, while discussing contingency plans for the World Test Championship, T20 World Cup and the 2021 Women's Cricket World Cup.

### **CROSSWORD 4100**



### ACROSS

- 1 In fact a point of view (5) 4 A cleric angered about being sorted out (7)
- 8 Manage to stand (3) 9 and 2 Down: Protective device
- for speedy transport worker (9.9)
- 10 He is sorry for one who is late (7) 11 Homes in the finest situations?
- 13 Don't miss a review (6) 15 He flies automatically. Some
- swear by him (6) 18 See 25 Across
- 19 Small article produced by an erratic knitter? (7) 21 Want to try? Only too willing!
- (4,1,4)
- 23 Sorcery Japanese women get  $wrapped\,up\,in\,(3)$ 24 Dead set about being calmed
- down(7) 25 and 18 Across: Famous
- Western stage partnership

- Gang leader (7)
- See 9 Across
- Used by a bird of prey in a brutal onslaught (5)
- 4 Consider changing gear on the
- Helping poor relations?
- Romanian money that is left over(3)
- 7 Artist when old retires south
- 12 Having got well, how to get rich(6,3)
- 14 To prevent overheating use this - not coal, anyway
- 16 Necessarily involves a silent reformation(7) 17 What people who had designs
- on eating out did? (6) 18 Drops of water (5)
- 20 Two in difficulties being pulled
- along(2,3)22 Deceive a child (3)

Solutions Crossword 4099: Across: 1 Apprehends, 8 Siren, 9 Leeward, 10 Ukulele, 11 Lydia, 12 Ratify, 14 Ascent, 17 Miser, 19 Etching, 21 Atelier, 22 Fleas, 23 Perversity Down: 2 Pursuit, 3 Rinse, 4 Holder, 5 Needles, 6 Sward, 7 Advantages, 8 Square meal, 13 Furrier, 15 Evident, 16 Degree, 18 Sheep, 20 Cuffs

### **OVER THE HEDGE** by Michael Fry & T Lewis







### **CALVIN & HOBBES** by Bill Watterson







### MARVIN by Tom Armstrong







# AGGREGA

### JUMBLED WORDS

**FGLNU** 

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip An\_\_existence is a worse negation of life than death itself. - José Ortega y Gasset (10)

**AERYDM INOTPY** 

> José Ortega y Gasset hrawer: An **unemployed** existence is a worse negation of life than death itself. SOLUTION: ERODE, FLUNC, DREAMY, POINTY

#### Difficulty Level 4s Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle. every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns. in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the

Difficulty Level 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium: 4s = Hard: 5s = Very Hard; 6s =

nine boxes.

Genius

SUDOKU

9	П		П	П		1	3
1	1	i.	2	8	9		1.00
5						3	Ш
	2	6	3				8
7 1							9
	9	7					
	3		9	6			

6	9	3	8	1	4	7	2	
7	1	2	3	5	6	8	4	6
4	8	5	2	7	9	1	3	6
2	4	6	7	3	1	9	5	В
1	3	9	4	8	5	6	7	2
5	7	В	6	9	2	3	1	4
8	6	7	5	4	3	2	9	1
9	2	4	1	6	7	5	8	3
3	5	1	9	2	8	4	6	7

### **DAY TODAY**

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) A bright and colourful moon is

bound to lift your spirits, even if only temporarily. In fact, it's tomorrow's planetary picture which is going to set you on a permanent course for emotional fulfilment, so hang on in there, and do your level best to avert potential

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) If ever you imagined that domestic hassles or awkward family relationships could be put off until later think again. No matter what other people do or say, you must do

bad feeling

what you know in your heart to be right and proper. You can't put off the inevitable just by GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) It's a relatively lively day, celestially speaking. Probably

the best thing you can do for yourself is to revise a few of your attitudes and opinions, and drop those excuses you've been using to justify inaction. It doesn't matter what you do, just as long as you do something.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) When all is said and done, money still seems to be the most

important factor in your life. It may be best to consider the matter from the psychological perspective, for the extent to which you value yourself and your loved ones is more important than how much cash you have in your pocket. LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

This really can be a special time of year, as one by one the planets line up in your honour. The trouble is that life's still not easy,

but don't mistake obstacles or over-commitment for misfortune. Ouite the opposite: a chance problem may help you to refine your talents and skills.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Mercury, your planetary ruler, has switched roles,

somewhat prematurely in my opinion.

Don't be disappointed if it begins to seem that a recent promise or commitment will not be fulfilled. Strange as it appears, any delay will be well worth the wait.

#### BY PETER VIDAL

The social

dimension is

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

becoming stronger, which means that in work or in any equivalent major ambition, other people are now becoming increasingly important. Never imagine that you'll get your way without a large measure of support. If you try to go it alone, you might not

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23) You're undecided about what you should do and uncertain about what's expected of you. Even if

you decide to back-track on one particular social engagement, it may be too late to call it off. In any event, all professional Scorpios are about to hit a new high at work. Congratulations.

#### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22) The ever-present

influence of Jupiter, planet of growth, enhancing the principled and spiritual dimensions of your character, is

about to receive another shot in the arm from the Moon. On a purely mundane level, it's vital that you know your rights. CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Your emotional

situation is about to change, hopefully for the better, although it might not seem that way at first. Long-distance love is still the theme, so it's very much a question of absence making the heart grow fonder over the coming

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19) Saturn, that serious and sober planet, is still an extraordinarily

powerful factor. However, the feelings of stability which it has been nurturing are being increasingly overwhelmed by your deepening desire for a personal revolution and for more respect and recognition.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) Mercury and Venus

work hard.



### Vol LXXXVIII No. 142 Regd.No. DL-21046/03-05