



The lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted supply chains. One crucial chain is delivery of information and insight — news and analysis that is fair and accurate and reliably reported from across a nation in quarantine.

A voice you can trust amid the clanging of alarm bells.

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# 2 TALK

ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD

## Step Outside the White Cube

Take a tour of museums in Europe from the comfort of your home



The Lewis Chessmen at the British Museum; (right) Vincent van Gogh's self-portrait at the museum in Amsterdam

VANDANA KALRA

### British Museum, London

The interactive museum website allows visitors to view its collection according to areas of interest — from the region to the medium. Visitors can also browse through the highlights, which include a mid-20th century wooden shield from West Papua, Raphael's drawing for his painting of the 'Virgin and Child', and the Lewis Chessmen (1150-1200) made of ivory. The museum also shares stories of its collectors. There are podcasts on a range of subjects, including scientist Kate Fulcher's research on the ancient Egyptian coffin residue 'black goo', and an exploration of how women have interacted with the museum since its opening in 1759.

### Louvre Museum, Paris

One of the world's most visited museums, many of its exhibits can be seen online. There's Leonardo da Vinci's much-recognised *Mona Lisa* and Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*. There are also virtual tours of three of its galleries. While the Egyptian Antiquities section has collections from the Pharaonic period, Galerie d'Apollon, destroyed by fire in 1661, features ceilings with renowned paintings. A tour of

Louvre's Moat tells the tale of its past. Built as a fortress by French king Philippe Auguste in 1190, it was intended to protect Paris from an attack.

### Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Designed by Giorgio Vasari in 1560, the Uffizi Gallery is home to several celebrated works of art, specially from the Renaissance period. Its collection can be viewed online on Google Arts & Culture. Search for Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* in a section dedicated to the Italian artist, and also look for Federico Barocci's prints and drawings. Learn about Piero di Cosimo's *Perseus Freeing Andromeda*, Cimabue's *The Santa Trinita Maesta*, and Amico Aspertini's drawings.

### Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Home to the biggest collection of paintings by Vincent van Gogh, most of the works, including his much-celebrated *Self-portrait* (1888) and *Sunflowers* (1889), can be viewed online. Each work is accompanied by a detailed description. Apart from the Dutch master, the showcase also includes works of some of his contemporaries and artist friends such as Paul Gauguin and Emile Bernard. The museum website also shares the artist's letters and school lessons based on his work.



Methil Devika; (right) Mrinalini



## Dancing Alone, Together

In these unprecedented times, classical dancers are attempting to create awareness and provide hope through online performances

SUANSHU KHURANA

IT WAS a nudging phone call from a doctor friend in Melbourne that prompted Palakkad-based Mohiniyattam dancer Methil Devika to create a dance piece with coronavirus as the central theme. She wasn't convinced about the idea of merging her lyrical classical form with a medical, social and economic calamity. So she decided to understand the psyche of COVID-19 — the virus itself. The result is her dance piece, *Break the Chain*.

The performance has her taking the form of the coronavirus to tell its story via dance. To represent it musically, Devika took an 18th-century Muthuswamy Dikshitar composition that she had once used for a separate production on the Bengal famine. Dressed in red and white,

as the coronavirus, she becomes a demon with wide eyes and a smirk on her face. With straight and staccato movements and hand gestures, she attempts to create spikes and a crown on the head. She then becomes the one infected and shows, with her *abhinaya*, how the virus spreads from person to person. Devika concludes with how people can prevent it by hand washing and following social distancing. "I wasn't sure how it would work. But it has," says Devika, in a telephone conversation. After her piece attracted attention online, Kerala Health Minister KK Shailaja also sent a message. "She has conveyed a very good message, making her work significant," she said.

Around the time Devika was imitating the coronavirus, Delhi-based Kathak dancer, Mrinalini, 26, was attempting a dance of hope in the corridor of the Dwarka

building that she lives in. She came across poetry by writer and journalist Kuldeep Mishra and matched expressions and movements with it. Her impromptu piece was quick to go viral on social media. "My mother, a Kathak dancer herself, received this poem as an audio file on WhatsApp, and asked me to attempt an *abhinaya* piece on it," says Mrinalini, a student of Kathak exponent Shovana Narayan.

Photographer and sarod student Innee Singh has collaborated with his friend and writer Shraddha Singh to create *Hum hain saath*, which features dancers Vidha Lal (Kathak), Arushi Mudgal (Odissi), Divya Ravi (Bharatanatyam), Divya Goswami (Kathak), Dakshina Vaidyanathan (Bharatanatyam) and Vrinda Chaddha (Odissi). The poetry in Ravinder Pant's voice has Singh's sarod playing in raag Desh as the background and all the six dancers presenting *abhinaya*. Bharatanatyam dancer Usha RK, director of Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre in Moscow, saw the video and decided to create versions of it. The piece now has about five versions.

When New York-based ballet dancer and performer Ashlee Montague stepped out onto Times Square to dance late last month, in a gas mask, her grace and fluidity weren't lost on the world. It was a reminder of the fact that in the high stakes battle that the entire world is fighting, the arts are fighting alongside; in an attempt to give hope, asking the world to have faith, and to even prevail.

## Book Mark

The literary community is offering talks and storytelling sessions online

SURBHIGUPTA

### Read Me a Story



Listen to your favourite children's stories with Michelle Obama (pictured). In the four-week series, every Monday a video of the former First Lady goes live, at 9.30 pm IST, on PBS Kids' YouTube channel. In partnership with Penguin Young Readers and Random House Children's Books, it started with Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's *The Gruffalo*. On May 4, Obama will read Eliza Wheeler's *Miss Maple's Seeds*, and on May 11 listen to Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

### Found in Translation



Through 'Translation Thursdays', writer and translator Mohini Gupta attempts to bring translation into focus through sessions hosted on Zoom with celebrated translators. After Mamta Sagar and Jerry Pinto, this week's session will be with Rita Kothari (pictured), who has translated several works from Gujarati to English. For registration, follow Mother Tongue Twisters on Facebook or Instagram.

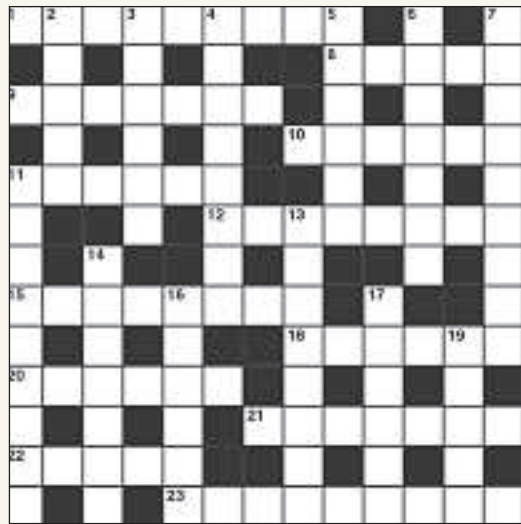
### Tips and Tricks

British writer Nikesh Shukla and poet Nikita Gill are running a "writing clinic" on Instagram. Keep a tab of the sessions on their handles @nikeshshuklawriter and @nikita\_gill, where they meet on Monday evenings for 30 minutes to discuss aspects related to storytelling and writing.

### Let's Talk

Through its digital initiative, Roli Pulse, publishing house Roli Books has been hosting podcasts, debates and virtual book clubs every week. There will be a panel on 'Mental Health in the Lockdown' on April 29. Publishers Urvasi Butalia, Michael Dwyer and Naveen Kishore will talk about 'The Nuts and Bolts of Independent Publishing' with Hal Robinson on May 1.

### CROSSWORD 4104



#### ACROSS

- One's tried for a military and domestic offence (9)
- Engagement ring? (5)
- Does it carry chain letters? (7)
- Equip for touring around, but not north (3,3)
- Hasten to provide foreign capital (6)
- Growing tired of signalling? (8)
- It was once the talk of India (8)
- Frenchman who couldn't adapt to a new regime? (6)
- Disinclined to serve a stew (6)
- Black mark for copper (7)
- Type which is the very best (5)
- She may suit you (9)

#### DOWN

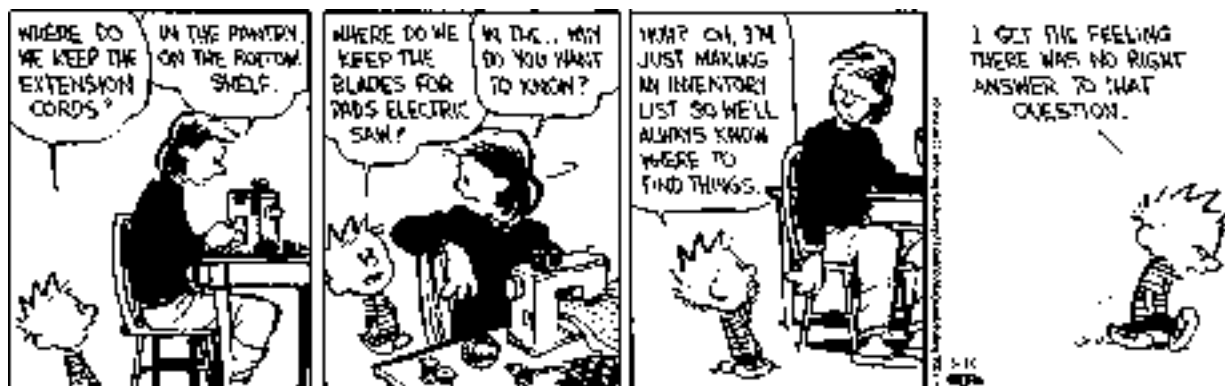
- Take some reflex action (5)
- She has an inclination, we hear (6)
- Side-to-side movement in football perhaps (8)
- Identifying man fuddled with gin (6)
- Security is lifted in the store (7)
- The actors I get the spectators to criticise (9)
- Renegades stop at sea perhaps (9)
- Seeking to gain a monopoly even so? (5,3)
- Succeed in getting a woman to take it on (7)
- Lot of Arabs (6)
- A number get inner sustenance (6)
- Breaks supports (5)

**Solutions Crossword 4103:** Across: 1 Case law, 4 Civet, 7 Earn, 8 Dinosaurs, 10 Meerschm, 12 Tropic, 13 Agrees, 15 Cinderella, 18 Maintain, 19 Echo, 20 Hyena, 21 Thunder. Down: 1 Cream, 2 Surveyor, 3 Weight, 4 Chorus girl, 5 Veal, 6 Targets, 9 Aspidistra, 11 Replaced, 12 Triumph, 14 Addict, 16 Amour, 17 Pine.

### OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



### CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



### MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



### JUMBLD WORDS

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.

If you go anywhere, even paradise, you will \_\_\_\_\_. - Malala Yousafzai (4,4,4)

CHORE



CDIOS



GLYMSU



BLUHMY



**SOLUTION:** CHORE, DISCO, SNUCKLE, HUMBLBY. Answer: If you go anywhere, even paradise, you will miss your home. - Malala Yousafzai

SUDOKU 4194

Difficulty Level 2s

#### 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 nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4193



### DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

#### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The entire mood of the times is still very emotional, and not a little mysterious. You'll soon find your feet but, to start with, the best thing you can do is probably to operate on the basis of your dreams and imagination, rather than on some alleged definition of so-called 'reality'.

#### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You have every right to do as you please, even more so because others have let you down. Why should you rely on those who have proved unreliable? However, such feelings go against the grain and, at work, especially, you should pay all respect due to authority.

#### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

There is absolutely nothing wrong with being ambitious. The trouble is that you want to come out on top, but you're also usually very idealistic. Avoid the tendency to judge yourself a failure when all around you people are impressed by your success.

#### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

A home or domestic matter has been responsible for the odd sleepless night. However, you may now be able to identify the deeper pattern and hence the purpose in recent personal difficulties. You might even find that a delay is really to your advantage.

#### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Other people may have been dragging their feet, and no doubt they will continue to do so. You may be even more impatient than usual. However, there are now distinct signs of movement, and you can push things along by the simple matter of getting people to talk to each other.

#### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Even if you discover that someone is not after all a paragon of virtue there is no need to be disillusioned. This would not be the first time that they have failed the test. Have you considered the possibility that your standards are a little too exacting?

#### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You should be in high spirits. If you're not, it's because you are failing to see the obvious. The correct course to follow is one which brings out your confidence through learning new skills. It is never too late to sign up for a course, class or training programme.

#### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Sometimes you'll do anything to stand up to fresh challenges, but you have been drifting towards escapism recently. The best advice now is to turn and face the questions from which you've been running away. You may not get all the answers, but at least you'll reach some sort of resolution.

#### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You're mainly concerned with private and personal matters rather than professional ones. What is agreed or finalised now could safeguard your long-term comfort and security. It's all down to Saturn, planet of stability, a thoroughly mature planet as it happens: you're growing up fast.

#### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Slowly but surely the overall planetary picture is easing. However, there is one last hurdle to clear before you can truly relax and put your feet up. For your own sake do not tie others to commitments they can't fulfil, but give them the time and space they need to come to their own conclusions.

#### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You may make a determined effort to relax today - and give extra thought to your long-term plans. It's one of those friendly periods when others seem to be particularly susceptible to your advances, and when your suggestions should go down well.

#### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You are feeling extra-sensitive today. As your planetary aspects are supportive you should feel mainly hopeful about the future. You may give in to your sentimental feelings and put real life to one side — at least in questions which don't really matter.

**1,594 CASES IN LAST 24 HOURS**

## Last week of lockdown, challenge ahead: Fewer hotspot districts now, but zones keep changing

Major clusters in big cities of Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Indore and Delhi

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & KARISHMA MEHROTRA**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

AS THE nationwide lockdown nears its scheduled end on May 3, the number of hotspot districts (red zones) has shrunk to 129 from the 177 that were identified on April 15, after three weeks of implementing the curbs. The number of orange zone districts has risen from 207 on April 15 to 250 now, sources in the Health Ministry said.

Twenty of the red-zone districts account for 60 per cent of the novel coronavirus case load in the country, data available



with the Ministry show. This data is crucial as the government explores modalities for relaxations after May 3.

Orange zones are those that have not reported a case in 14 days; green zones are those that have not had a new case in 28 days. It has been suggested that

these criteria be revised, especially after May 15, when the case load starts to reflect the situation after May 3, the sources said.

Over the past few weeks, the disease has spread to more districts, but it is in the major urban centres of Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Indore, and Ahmedabad that the clusters of larger and faster transmission have emerged.

The number of heavy case-load districts has increased, accounting for a larger share of cases in the country. At the end of the first week of April, only seven districts had more than 100 cases; by 22 April, this number was 24. In that period, the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4****EXPLAINED**  
**E** Dynamic disease

THE DISEASE curve and spread at the end of the 40-day lockdown will decide the shape and extent of restrictions thereafter. The disease seems to have spread thinly in at least 429 districts, but has snowballed intensely in large urban clusters. A consolidation is seen in red-zone districts from a fortnight ago.

## Only 80 of 21,632 active cases need ventilators, say Health Ministry data

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

WHILE THERE were 21,632 "active" COVID-19 cases across the country till Monday, only about 80 of them were on ventilators. Top government sources said this is in line with the daily pattern seen so far.

Meanwhile, even as some states have started plasma therapy, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said there is "no ev-

idence to use it as treatment", and warned against adopting this line of treatment without following proper protocol and getting approval.

With 1,594 fresh cases and 51 deaths being reported in the last 24 hours, the tally has now gone up to 29,974 cases (including 7,026 recovered) and 937 deaths. A total of 7,16,733 samples have been tested so far.

According to Health Ministry data, of the "active cases"

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**Former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian at *The Indian Express* e-Adda on Tuesday evening. Renuka Puri

## Ex-CEA at e-Adda: It's a pralay, plan for negative growth, spend extra 5% GDP

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

INDIA MUST plan for substantially negative growth this year and be ready to spend an additional Rs 10 lakh crore since its facing a *pralay*, or a deluge, "in terms of economic things" following the COVID-19 pandemic, said former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, and now Visiting Lecturer at Harvard Kennedy School.

"We save for a rainy day, and when a rainy day comes, you have to spend. This is not a rainy day, this is a deluge, it's like the Hindu *pralay*. This is *pralay* in terms of economic things... What is all this kind of, you know, prudence for? (It) is not to actually save for a rainy day, but to spend for a rainy day," he said at the Express Adda, the first e-Adda hosted by *The Indian Express*.

In conversation with Harish Damodaran, National Editor, and P Vaidyanathan Iyer, Executive Editor (National Affairs), Subramanian said the COVID-19 pandemic came at a time when the economy was already struggling. Terming the IMF growth forecast of 1.9 per cent for this year as mystifying he said, "India was already weakening, the lockdown policies in India have not been any less severe than advanced countries. India has a fiscal response of less than 1 per cent of GDP while advanced countries have a response of more



than 8.5 per cent of GDP. I cannot see how even allowing for the fact that India is a more dynamic economy, how India's growth rate cannot decline by the orders of magnitude that the IMF is projecting for the advanced countries. I think the IMF forecasts for India are absolutely mystifying and bizarre... We should plan for negative, maybe substantially negative, growth rates in this financial year," he said.

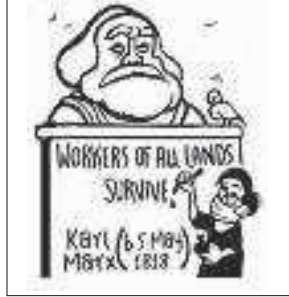
In its recent World Economic Outlook, the IMF estimated India to grow 1.9 per cent in 2020-21, and projected a sharp recovery to 7.4 per cent in 2021-22.

To deal with the unfolding crises, Subramanian said, the country needs additional spending of at least 5 per cent of the GDP (around Rs 10 lakh crore), adding that some part of the fiscal deficit can be financed responsibly through monetisation. But this, he said, should only a "one off" measure. India needs to find the resources to deal with this phase, he said.

Subramanian said the crisis does provide an opportunity for countries to emerge stronger by

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 15****BUSINESS AS USUAL**

By UNNY



## Delhi alert: If lockdown stays, coffee and chips will face squeeze

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE SUPPLY of import-dependent items, such as coffee, diapers, dry fruits, oil and cereals, is expected to take a hit if the lockdown is extended beyond May 3, says a report prepared by a six-member Delhi government panel on supply of essential items such as food and medicine.

According to the panel, fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) in short supply include: "Lays c-chips, Haldiram Namkeen products, shampoos, moisturisers of prominent companies, products of major consumers goods companies such as Nestle, P&G, HUL, biscuits, cereals of reputed companies, sanitisers of reputed companies."

According to the report, traders associations have also told the panel that there is a shortfall in supply of packaging material for essential items, which will worsen if the lockdown continues.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4****STOP CORONA VIRUS**

A RED initiative appears in today's edition of *The Indian Express*. These pages are an initiative of the marketing solutions team of The Indian Express Group and contains content paid for by advertisers. These pages should be read as an advertisement.

## HEADING TO HOTSPOT

BMC medical personnel move towards Mumbai's Shastri Nagar slum, Tuesday. A large number of the about 4,000 migrants, who had gathered at the Bandra railway station after the lockdown was extended earlier this month, live in Shastri Nagar. Prashant Nadkar

## 35-yr-old travels 14 days to UP village from Mumbai, dies in hrs

**ASAD REHMAN**  
LUCKNOW, APRIL 28

INSAF ALI walked or hitch-hiked 1,500 km from Mumbai to Shravasti district in Uttar Pradesh, carrying his last remaining Rs 5,000, and managing to dodge police and checks for 14 days. Just when he had reached his Mathkanwa village early Monday morning, the 35-year-old, who worked as a helper to a mason in Mumbai before the lockdown, was caught and quarantined. By Monday noon, he was dead.

With his test results for coronavirus awaited (a postmortem will be done only if Ali is negative), his wife Salma Begum, 32, and family can only speculate why he died. Salma said before Ali's mobile phone ran out of battery, he told her he was surviving on only biscuits. Officials



Insaf Ali's mother (right) at their home in Mathkanwa village of UP's Shravasti district. Express

say that at the quarantine, he kept throwing up.

Salma said she didn't get to even see Ali after he returned as she was at her parents' home, and his body was taken away before she returned. They have a six-year-old son, Irfan. The rest of Ali's family, including his parents, and his brothers' families, are quar-

antined. Ali's two elder brothers are also migrant labourers, and currently stranded in Punjab.

Salma said Ali left Mumbai on April 13, telling her he was running out of money. "He had not got any work for weeks. He said that in the village, he would at least be around familiar

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4****THE EDITORIAL PAGE****THE POPULIST MOMENT**BY CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT & JEAN-THOMAS MARTELLI  
**PAGE 8****WORLD****US NEARS 1 MILLION CASES AS STATES EASE RESTRICTIONS****CDC ADDS NEW SYMPTOMS TO LIST OF COVID SIGNS**  
**PAGE 14**

## Maharashtra OKs HCQ for contacts, govt panel advises caution in use for patients

**TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA & ANURADHA MASCARENHAS**  
MUMBAI, PUNE, APRIL 28

THE MAHARASHTRA government has said in a new circular that hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) may be administered to all high-risk contacts of confirmed COVID-19 patients, and those admitted to quarantine centres.

It has also recommended that the drug be administered, after obtaining consent, to all health workers, nurses, and frontline workers, including those working in COVID care centres, COVID health facilities, and dedicated COVID hospitals in the state.

With this, it appears that the state government has shelved a controversial earlier plan to administer the prophylactic to all

residents of containment zones within Dharavi and other areas, and is now recommending it for contacts of confirmed cases, and frontline workers, in line with ICMR guidelines.

Separately, a high-power committee to audit COVID-19 deaths in Maharashtra (except those in Mumbai), has cautioned the state health department that the use of HCQ in combination with the antibiotic azithromycin for confirmed COVID-19 patients should be closely monitored due to the likelihood of cardiac toxicity, The Indian Express has learnt.

The state government-appointed committee submitted its report last week.

Sources in the state health department said that during the audit of the first lot of 31 COVID-19 deaths, mainly in Pune, Yavatmal, and Ratnagiri, in at

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## Manipur books several people for criticism of Covid handling

**JIMMY LEIVON & ABHISHEK SAHA**  
IMPHAL, GUWAHATI, APRIL 28

PUBLIC CRITICISM of the government's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak has landed several persons in trouble with the law in Manipur.

Official records show that police have invoked sections of the Disaster Management Act and Indian Penal Code to press charges against them.

In Imphal West alone, there are more than 10 cases, including three relating to sedition.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4****CASES IN ANDAMAN, CHHATTISGARH TOO**  
**PAGE 11****PAGE 1 ANCHOR****SANJANA BHALERAO**  
MUMBAI, APRIL 28

AS A SAMPLE collector steps into the small cubicle that resembles a telephone booth, with metal panels on two sides, a sheet of glass in front and two hand-sized holes with large rubber gloves attached. He is not wearing PPE, there is no need for it. The cabin is equipped with filters designed to keep out fine particles and purify the air.

After cleaning his hands with sanitiser, and donning a pair of disposable gloves, the collector puts his hands into the large rubber gloves, reaches out with a

swab to the person sitting on the other side, and draws a sample from his nose and throat.

Welcome to the Dome. Only weeks ago, this was one of the largest event venues in the country at over 38,000 sq ft and a seating capacity for 8,000-10,000, at the National Sports Club of India in Worli, with a sweeping view of the Arabian Sea. Today, it is a 500-bed isolation centre for asymptomatic COVID-19 patients.

Equipped with a "contactless" sample collection facility and diagnostic "self-clinic", everything is done across a glass panel, with patient and medical

professional communicating over cordless phones.

On Monday, there were 260 patients in the facility that is jointly run by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and well-known bariatric and laparoscopic surgeon, Dr Mufti Lakdawala, founder of Digestive Health Institute in Mumbai. A team of 10 doctors and 30 nurses from the institute, and 30 volunteers and BMC officials, monitor patients round the clock.

Mumbai has over 25,000 isolation and quarantine beds in government and private hospitals. But with the city emerging as Ground Zero of the COVID-19



Worli's Dome is now a 500-bed isolation centre for asymptomatic patients. Ganesh Shirsekar

outbreak, with over 5,000 cases so far, the Dome is being described as "a model unit".

"Here, patients are provided all facilities, from consultation to food and entertainment. We have tied up with two local pharmacies, too," said Sharad Ughade, the assistant municipal commissioner of G-South ward, which covers Worli, Prabhadevi and Lower Parel, and has recorded 600 cases, the highest among all wards in the city.

The Dome is also part of a network of mega facilities being added to the city's arsenal. A 1,000-bed quarantine and isolation facility is under construction

at the BKC exhibition ground. Then, there's a 1,240-bed facility with oxygen cylinders at the Goregaon exhibition centre, apart from 250 BMC schools. Officials say they are gearing up to tackle an estimated 75,000 cases by May-end.

At the Dome, the BMC is getting oxygen cylinders for each of the 500 beds, with the possibility of symptomatic patients being admitted soon, portable ICU units, and 100 beds in open areas of the NSCI stadium.

Inside, there are four sections — senior citizens, males, females and families. There's a fan for

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



# 5 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

**206 FRESH CASES IN CAPITAL**

## Results pending, Delhi asks Centre to speed up testing for containment zones

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & ASTHA SAXENA**

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

IN A review meeting with the Union Health Ministry, Delhi government officials have highlighted the delay in test results, which is thwarting containment measures in the city that has one of the highest caseloads in the country.

On Tuesday, 206 fresh COVID-19 cases were reported, taking the total count to 3,314. The death toll remains 54, with no death reported for the third consecutive day. Around 75% of the total samples sent for testing are pending with government and private labs in Delhi, stated the report prepared by the Delhi government Tuesday afternoon.

According to sources, senior health officials raised concerns over pending results, especially from the containment zones.

There are 101 containment zones, and 6,972 samples have been sent for testing so far. On Tuesday, the government did not give an update on the total positive cases from these areas, but till Monday, 273 of the 5,438 samples tested were positive.

"At times, it takes around five-six days for the test results. The containment zones are already hotspots and a delay of five days creates trouble for us to trace contacts. In those days, the suspected patient might have transmitted it to several others. We have requested the Health Minister to put more focus towards cases in the city. At least the test results of those in containment zones should be provided at the earliest," said a senior health official who attended the meeting.

As per the report shared by officials with the Ministry on Tuesday afternoon, the highest number of containment zones are in the Southeast district. The



At Shakarpur market, Tuesday. There are 101 containment zones in the city so far. *Praveen Khanna*

testing rate till Tuesday afternoon in Delhi is 1,726 per million population. Of the total positive cases, the highest, 895, were reported from New Delhi district.

Pendency of results at the National Institute of Virology in

Noida came up repeatedly during the review meeting, with district magistrates pointing out that delayed results mean containment measures suffer as contact tracing can only begin once a person has been confirmed as positive.

**CORONA COUNT DELHI NCR**

**3,605 CASES** **54 DEATHS**

**1,277 RECOVERED**

"One major point for the spurt in cases that was highlighted is that test reports from the central high-risk hotspots are stuck in NIV, Noida, since April 16 — around 200 test results are pending since then... They highlighted the need to get results in 24 hours. Earlier, officials said about 1,000 reports were delivered in 24 hours. But that has really slowed down," said a source at the meeting.

While states like West Bengal have resented the visits of inter-ministerial teams from the Centre, the Delhi government has sought an IMCT visit to identify gaps and suggest focussed inter-

vention, sources said.

The South Delhi district magistrate too highlighted testing delays and expressed concerns about the possibility of people who have recovered having spread the disease during their illness and not having been diagnosed. The western zone deputy commissioner also flagged delayed testing. "He said about 100 test results are awaited," said a source.

Senior officials said the idea to ramp up testing facilities in the city was discussed. During the presentation, officials were also pulled up for not being able to update the patient's medical journey. As per data shared by the health department at the meeting, in about 98.96% of cases, information about the patient outcome is left blank. "A meeting was also held after this to discuss issues faced by officers in data compilation," said another official.

## Five more health staff test positive at Safdarjung

**ASTHA SAXENA**

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE CENTRAL government-run Safdarjung Hospital has recorded 13 cases of healthcare workers testing positive for coronavirus. On Tuesday, five more staff members, including a doctor from the department of medicine, tested positive.

Resident doctors working in the hospital have alleged the medicine department did not quarantine staff after the doctor tested positive — a charge denied by the medical superintendent.

In a letter dated April 24, resident doctors requested the head of the department to quarantine staff deputed in ward 11 after three doctors tested positive. "We, being very close contacts of those residents, are at a high risk of exposure without proper PPE kits in the ward. We request you to quarantine the residents of ward 11 to reduce the risk of exposure to other people as well as the patients," the letter signed by 29 resident doctors stated.

Doctors alleged none of them were sent for a quarantine. When contacted, Dr D K Gupta, head of the department, told *The Indian Express*: "We have tested 19 doctors posted in ward 11 and all of them tested negative. We have enough testing facilities for all our healthcare staff, and if needed, we will send their reports again for testing. The quarantine period starts from five to 14 days, and we have got the doctors tested within that period. All of them are negative, and if they come out to be positive, then the quarantine period for 14 days is followed. We are taking enough care of healthcare workers."



Temperature of healthcare workers being checked at Max Hospital. *Praveen Khanna*

There are around 25 doctors posted in ward 11, which is a non-COVID treatment area.

The medical superintendent of the hospital, Dr Balwinder Singh Arora, also denied the allegations: "The allegations are baseless. Nothing like this has happened in the department."

Several healthcare workers working in other hospitals also tested positive on Tuesday.

At Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar (BSA) hospital, 11 more healthcare workers tested positive for COVID-19. So far, 45 staff members have tested positive from the hospital. On Tuesday, staff members protested demanding PPE gear.

"The director of the hospital is in quarantine, and on Tuesday, higher authorities told the doctors not to take more samples of healthcare workers. We don't know where to go," alleged a hospital staff. Director of the hospital, Dr M M Kohli, did not respond to the calls.

Three more workers from AIIMS also tested positive for the disease, taking the number to 11. At Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital, 10 more staff members tested positive, taking the total count to 75.


**CORONA WATCH**

### 36 cops on court duty quarantined

*New Delhi:* A day after a Supreme Court employee tested positive for COVID-19, 36 police personnel, in charge of the court's security on the day the infected employee had come to work, were sent into self-isolation Tuesday.

### Govt launches website for info on COVID-19

*New Delhi:* The Delhi government Tuesday launched a website with information regarding the number of cases, provision for applying for e-passes, a list and geo-locations of containment zones, testing facilities, ration shops, temporary relief centres and hunger relief centres. Those who want to get ration from the government but don't have ration cards can also apply on the website — <https://delhifight-scorona.in/>.

### Drones to monitor South Delhi

*New Delhi:* Starting Wednesday, Delhi Police will deploy three imported drones in south district to ensure smooth implementation of lockdown.

### 355 patients examined at flu corner

*New Delhi:* Doctors at the 'Flu Corner' at Charak Palika Hospital in Moti Bagh have examined 355 patients in the fortnight since it was set up.

### 'Make safai karamcharis eligible for compensation'

*New Delhi:* The three BJP-led MCDs and the Congress have demanded that the state government make safai karamcharis eligible for Rs 1 crore compensation if they die due to coronavirus. A Delhi government spokesperson said only sanitation staff on COVID-19 duty are covered by the scheme. **ENS**

## CRPF officer in Mayur Vihar camp dies, first death in force

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

A 55-YEAR-OLD sub-inspector with the CRPF succumbed to coronavirus in Delhi Tuesday. This is the first death in the paramilitary force due to the virus.

According to the CRPF, the sub-inspector, Mohammed Ikram Hussain, is a resident of Assam's Bapeta and was attached with the 31st Battalion of the force. The battalion has its camp at Mayur Vihar.

Home Minister Amit Shah paid tribute to the sub-inspector, saying his contribution to national security was inspiring. "I am extremely saddened by the news of the death of CRPF's brave sub-inspector Mohammed Ikram Hussain while fighting corona infection. He kept fighting with the epidemic with great courage till his last moments," Shah tweeted.

He said he had spoken to the

**Sources in the CRPF said the entire 31st Battalion is under quarantine at the moment and the Mayur Vihar camp has been virtually sealed**

sub-inspector's family only two days ago. "Only day before yesterday, I had enquired about his well-being from his family members. To lose a brave soldier is an irreparable loss to all of us. I express my condolences to his family members. In this hour of grief, the entire country and the Union government stands by his family," he said.

Sources in the CRPF said the entire 31st Battalion is under quarantine at the moment and the Mayur Vihar camp has been virtually sealed. Sources said the situation is serious in the battalion as 46 of its jawans

have tested positive for COVID-19.

Sources said the infection appears to have been brought to the Mayur Vihar camp by a jawan posted in Kupwara in Jammu & Kashmir. The jawan, a resident of Noida, had come back home on leave just before the imposition of the March 24 lockdown. He is part of the force's nursing staff.

As he could no longer go back to Kashmir, he was asked to join the paramedical facility at the Mayur Vihar camp of the 31st Battalion. "That's how the infection spread in the Mayur Vihar camp. Barring Mayur Vihar, we have just one more positive COVID patient in the force. He is posted in Ahmedabad," said a CRPF officer.

CRPF camps across the country are engaged in providing food and relief material to stranded migrant labourers or daily wagers. The force has also been providing medical help to those in need.

## AISA alleges police entered Delhi unit head's home, seized phone

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE ALL India Students' Association (AISA) Tuesday alleged Delhi Police had seized the mobile phone of its Delhi unit president Kawalpreet Kaur. Police sources confirmed the development.

In a statement, AISA said police had gone to Kaur's house on Monday and seized her phone.

Since the lockdown was announced, Delhi Police have made a spate of arrests in connection with the Northeast Delhi riots, and also invoked the stringent UAPA against several people, including two Jamia Millia Islamia students and former JNU student Umar Khalid. *The Indian Express* had reported on April 25 that Delhi



AISA Delhi unit president Kawalpreet Kaur

Police are exploring action against several members of the Popular Front of India (PFI), the Jamia Coordination Committee, Pinjra Tod, AISA as well as former and current students of Delhi University and JNU.

The Delhi Police Special Cell had arrested the president of

the Alumni Association of Jamia Millia Islamia, Shifa-Ur-Rehman (43), under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on Sunday afternoon. He has been sent to police custody for 10 days.

"The seizure memo given to her cites an FIR with a slew of charges including the draconian UAPA — a supposed anti-terror law that is basically an excuse to lock up students and activists who are critical of the government, without trial, without bail — and throw away the key," AISA national president N Sai Balaji claimed in a statement.

The Delhi Police had tweeted on April 20, "While investigating Jamia and NE riot cases, Delhi Police has done its job sincerely and impartially. All arrests have been made based on scientific and forensic evidence."



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Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015, notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on **Thursday, April 30, 2020** *inter alia* to (a) consider and approve the standalone and consolidated audited financial results of the Company for the quarter / year ended March 31, 2020, (b) recommend dividend on equity shares of the Company, and (c) consider a proposal to issue equity shares to existing shareholders on Rights basis, as may be permitted under applicable law, subject to such regulatory/statutory approvals, as may be required.

The said Notice may be accessed on the Company's website at <http://www.ril.com> and may also be accessed on the Stock Exchange websites at <http://www.bseindia.com> and <http://www.nseindia.com>.

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Savithri Parekh  
Joint Company Secretary and Compliance Officer

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Date : April 27, 2020

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# WE ARE WITH YOU

During this lockdown the Delhi Government is committed to the safety of all women. In this difficult time preventing domestic abuse is a top priority. If you feel insecure at any point of time, during this lockdown Delhi government has implemented following measures to protect you.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005 :**

Protection officers have been appointed to assist women courts for better and effective protection of the rights of women suffering from domestic violence.

**WOMEN HELPLINE (24X7):**

If you feel insecure at any point of time, during this lockdown dial Delhi Commission for Women's toll free helpline 181, or send a message on the given whatsapp helpline number 9350-181-181

**INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES:**

Women in distress, destitute women or women who need care and protection can seek shelter in shelter homes run by the Delhi government and NGOs. List is available at [www.wcdldelhi.in](http://www.wcdldelhi.in).

**SAKHI ONE STOP CENTRE (24X7):**

The scheme provides integrated services such as psychosocial counselling, legal assistance, police assistance, medical care and temporary shelter. Detailed information is available at [www.wcdldelhi.in](http://www.wcdldelhi.in), or the women's helpline 181.

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Women and Child Development Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

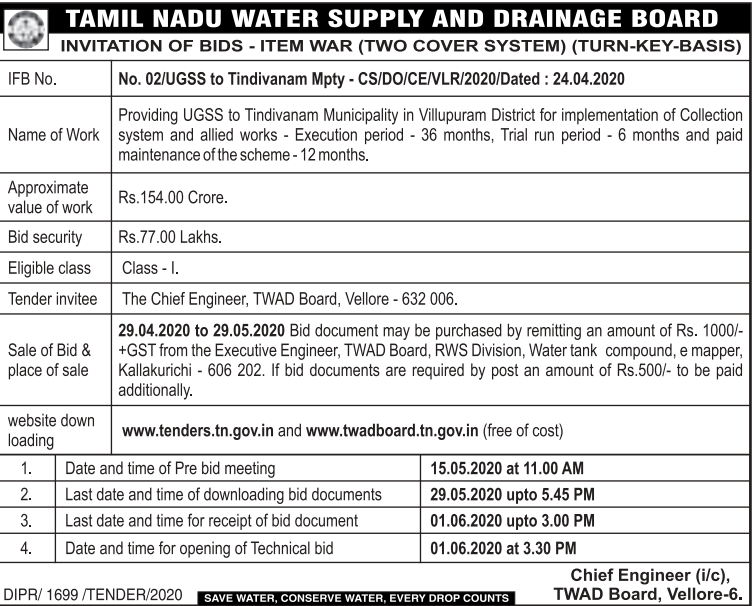
# Azadpur mandi in eye of storm as 11 traders positive; 700 screened

# Voices at furniture market: ‘Employers deserted us, on May 3 we’ll walk home’



# Once a jeans factory worker, man goes door to door in Jangpura in search of food

“Regulations at the border are the same as they have been through the lockdown — people with valid passes are being allowed movement. But vigilance has been increased,” said Gurgaon Police PRO Subhash Boken.



**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,**  
**WATER SUPPLY MASTER PLAN DIVISION, SRINAGAR**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**E-N.I.T NO: 01/WSMP of 04/2020 DT:- 23-04-2020**  
**Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division Srinagar on behalf of Lt. Governor of J&K,**  
**invites tenders bye-tendering mode from approved Registered firms eligible**  
**(As Per Qualification Criteria Mentioned in RFP Document)**

**Position of funds:- Available (Under SSCL)**

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Name of Division	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Cost of Document (In Rs.)	Head of Account	Class of Contract
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Request for proposal "Selection of Consulting Services for Assessment of Non-Revenue Water and Developing Strategy For Implementation of Action Plan for reduction of Non-Revenue Water for Srinagar Smart City"	Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division Srinagar	Rs. 150.00 Lacs	Rs. 300000/- Pledged to Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Div. Sgr.	Rs. 5000/- Pledged to Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Div. Sgr	SSCL	(As Per Qualification Criteria Mentioned in RFP Document)

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23.04.2020
2.	Date of Publication of E-tender	25.04.2020 at 10:00 A.M.
3.	Document Download/Sale Start Date	25.04.2020 at 10:00 A.M.
4.	Bid Submission Start Date	25.04.2020 at 10:00 A.M.
5.	Pre Bid Meeting at Office of the Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division Srinagar	11.05.2020 at 02:00 P.M.
6.	Bid Submission Close Date	18.05.2020 at 02:00 P.M.
7.	Date and Time for Opening of proposal in response to RFP Notice	23.05.2020 at 02:00 P.M.
8.	Place of Opening Bids	Office of the Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division Srinagar
9.	Period of Bid Validity	180 Days
10.	Office Inviting Bid	Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division Srinagar.

**Note:** For details, bidders are requested download the RFP Document published on website: <http://www.jktnr-ders.gov>

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**Prof. H P Gupta**  
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## The Indian EXPRESS

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BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## RESET AND REFORM

Corona crisis provides an opportunity to address inadequacies in healthcare system, and lack of safety nets for urban poor

IN HIS INTERACTION with state chief ministers on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about the need for ushering in reforms that touch the lives of citizens. While details of the specific reforms the government intends to pursue, or the possible roadmap, are still to be spelt out, the ongoing crisis provides an opportunity for a conversation on re-evaluating the state's priorities. Two areas in particular deserve attention: First, the glaring inadequacies of the healthcare system in India. And second, the absence of safety nets for large sections of the labour force, including migrant labour. They need to be addressed urgently.

Public spending on healthcare in India continues to languish, falling well below levels in other countries which are at similar levels of income. Yet, over the years, there has been a tendency to favour an insurance-based model, moving away from significantly expanding the public provision of healthcare facilities. This crisis is exposing the inadequacies and limits of that model. In the Union Budget of 2020-21, central government spending on health was pegged at Rs 67,484 crore, or 2.1 per cent of its total budgetary outlay. Government spending on health, at all levels, needs to be significantly increased. Yet, merely ramping up spending is unlikely to lead to the desired outcomes as preferences for private alternatives may dominate. Thus, spending plans will have to be reconfigured to ensure a commensurate rise in the quality of public healthcare facilities, in addition to ensuring accountability for the services being offered. The focus has to shift to primary healthcare, neglect of which leads to a rise in overall healthcare costs down the line, as well as lowering health outcomes. The centralised model of healthcare spending also needs to be reexamined. As this crisis has shown, states have varying levels of institutional capacity, and going ahead, this needs to be factored in.

The pandemic has also exposed the precarious living condition of casual wage labourers, including the large migrant population, and their difficulties in accessing basic services. Dependent largely on daily wages, this section of the labour force does not have safety nets, and a drop in their incomes can push them into poverty. To address this, a social security architecture that is geared towards ensuring access to healthcare services, providing short-term relief for loss of income, and compensation for occupational hazard, needs to be urgently considered. There is need to ensure portability of benefits, such as the provision of food through the public distribution system. The long-term strategy should be to bring greater numbers into the formal workforce, which will provide them with some form of social security. The government could incentivise this shift by funding part of the social security contributions, as it has done through the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) where it pays the full employers' contribution towards their provident fund

## SCHOOL'S OUT

To work online effectively, children and their teachers need helping hands in the digital classroom

THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS Commission held a meeting on Monday to consider a tentative academic calendar for the current year, and the need to promote online learning and conduct common admission tests via the internet, but school education is not getting the attention it deserves. When the national lockdown started, schools had scrambled to take their courses online. They had been quite innovative in uncharted waters, using digital resources available in teachers' homes to conduct classes online. Formidable challenges were faced — limited bandwidth, personal computers and phones unequal to professional work, and teachers and students falling back on the communications grammar of the live classroom, which produces confusion online. Parents have had to bear the burden of keeping electronic classrooms in order — by keeping their wards in check — and have been devoting half their day to their education, while working from home themselves. And everyone involved has discovered that electronic education is not a complete solution. Paper, pens and geometry sets are still essential, even though stationery shops are closed.

The purpose of a lockdown is to delay a crisis while the state and institutions marshal their resources. This is being achieved, though imperfectly, in public health. But much needs to be done in school education, on which the more distant future depends, and which is in urgent need of the support of the state and the IT industry. Back in 2006, the MIT Media Lab's One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative came a cropper in India over a question of how just Rs 450 crore should be spent. But today, a similar project to make all students capable of receiving digital education seems essential. Low broadband penetration and the preponderance of prepaid mobile connections suggests that large sections of the population are low on data, and the consequent digital divide calls for subsidies. Besides, both teachers and students need training in how to operate in the electronic classroom, and how to deal with digital workflows.

State-backed television and radio, along with community radio in underserved places, can help to bridge this divide temporarily. In fact, education was part of the original remit of Doordarshan. But eventually, the school system would have to cut the cord and learn to operate online as effectively as it does in the physical classroom. The COVID-19 crisis offers an opportunity to make it possible, with a little help from the state and the industry.

## SCHRÖDINGER'S KIM

Kim Jong-un is missing in action. The speculation puts the uncertainty principle to shame

IN 1935, WHEN Erwin Schrödinger proposed his now-famous thought experiment, the idea was simple: The interpretation of quantum mechanics could not, while making any degree of what ordinary people call sense, be applied to everyday objects. Hence, if a cat is locked up in a box indefinitely with a radioactive substance, or poison of any kind, for a significant period of time, we do not need to open the box to know that its life force has been freed of the mortal coil. Schrödinger's cat — and the limits of the uncertainty principle it illustrates — needs an update. Schrödinger's Kim is at hand, and quantum physics has nothing on the mysteries surrounding North Korea's Supreme Leader.

Speculation about the whereabouts, health and even death of Kim Jong-un began on April 15, when he did not turn up for The Day of the Sun festivities in Pyongyang. The day commemorates Kim Il Sung, his grandfather and first leader of communist North Korea, and is an important public show of strength. Is Kim in self-quarantine? Is he just seeking attention via his absence? Is there some other medical ailment, serious enough for him to disappear at a time when most world leaders are eager to be seen at the frontline of the "Covid war"? Donald Trump claims he has secret knowledge about Kim's condition. China is sending over doctors to North Korea. But, given that the box that is North Korea and its leader remains firmly sealed — and Trump's casual relationship with facts — this merely adds another variable to the uncertainty.

Till we know, we do not know. Unlike the cat in the box, the missing dictator's fate is uncertain. The world is chiming in with theories and even picking successors. The lesson for Schrödinger, and those fond of citing his experiment as a pop culture reference is this: The uncertainties of the quantum realm pale when faced with the facts of politics.



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND JEAN-THOMAS MARTELLI

IN THE CONTEXT of the COVID-19 crisis, political decisions are presented as instruments of warfare. Narendra Modi recently proclaimed that the executive must "work on war footing" to fight the new, invisible enemy. Because, in a Clausewitzian sense, war is the continuation of politics by other means, we need to ask what this politics of warfare is the extension of.

At the national level, the current crisis consolidates a populist rapport between a person — Modi — and a fictional representation of the people. Here, populism does not refer to irresponsible economic redistribution. It is understood not only as the enactment of stands against corrupt elites, but as a practice of democracy in which a political leader personifies in his/her style and governance a direct, imitative relation to the imagined people. This entails institutional disintermediation and the "flaunting of the low" that Pierre Ostiguy has pointed out. Several aspects of the management of the COVID-19 outbreak by Modi confirm the populist rooting of India's democracy. First, all major decisions related to the crisis are announced by Modi himself using direct visual mediums. No cabinet member, no parliamentary or party official, not even the Minister of Health and Family Welfare is communicating any significant policy information — in fact, most of the briefings are made by a joint secretary. Not only does this maintain an unmediated connection between the ruler and the ruled, it also constitutes a "one-way traffic" since no press conference and no parliamentary debate has created the space for questioning the handling of the crisis.

While healthcare is a state subject and contagious diseases are on the Concurrent List, the imposition of the lockdown and the creation of the PM Cares Fund for coronavirus-related medical expenses were pushed by the Centre without consultation with elected state governments. Not only that, while CSR money can go to the PM Cares Fund, it cannot finance similar initiatives at the state level. This personalisation of power stands in stark contrast to the style of Modi's predecessor, the *primus inter pares* of a team of experienced ministers.

Second, Modi continues to tap into popular emotions, in contrast, once more, to Manmohan Singh who was a policy-oriented technocrat. Today, the politics of emotions pre-

Current crisis consolidates a populist rapport between a leader and a fictional representation of the people

Modi's simpler language relies mostly on the use of short sentences and non-conceptual vocabulary. He does not engage in institutional or political dialogues but speaks with 'the people'. This results in the underuse of vocabulary associated with institutional processes. Democratic accountability is minimal in Modi's India; instead, what is enforced is permanent authorisation through constant campaigning. Hence, an accumulation of rhetorical questions, 'I and you' periphrases, vocative cases as well as self-references — sometimes in the third person. The language of intimacy is a striking feature.

vails, sometimes at the expense of administrative efficiency — hence delays in dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic. While the 2016 demonetisation was about requesting sacrifices from citizens to eradicate the black money of the corrupt wealthy lot, the "people's curfew", "imposed by the people" — in Modi's own words — was similar in scope, as it demanded "sacrifices" "in service of the nation." This call transformed society into what Victor Turner called a *communitas*, a group in fusion, as evident from the *taali bajana*, *thaali bajana* (clap your hands, clang your vessels) and *diya jalao*, *mombatti jalao* (light earthen lamps, light candles) events.

Third, Modi's language is comparatively more accessible and culturally evocative than that of his predecessors. The majoritarian turn in Indian politics means that references to the Hindu fold have stronger electoral appeals, inducing the Opposition to talk like Modi in the hope of retaining its vote-share. COVID-19 or not, this modality of Indian politics is here to stay. The legitimate complaint by liberal circles that Modi's speeches have led to diffusion of superstitious messages on social media is not inconsequential. The spreading references to astrology and the destructive powers of devotional noise are triggered by Modi's fetishised references to the Hindu cultural and religious folklore.

In this scenario, another feature of Modi speeches is consolidated: The multiplicity of readings it offers. Approached literally, Modi's discourses are about constructive and optimistic values, but when associated with the content of his governance, they consistently prompt communal interpretations. After the episode of "corona jihad", in which many media reports painted the Muslim community as responsible for the hike in infections linked to a religious meeting of the Tablighi Jamaat, Modi's call for switching off lights on April 5 also generated religious polarisation. His appeal for expressing solidarity in the "war" against COVID-19 sparked fear that non-compliance from Muslims would cause retaliation against them — and in some places, it did.

The management of the COVID-19 outbreak is not only the outcome of remarkable times, it is also the persistence of an unremarkable — yet efficient — politics, characterised

by the populist ethos of Modi. An exploration of the Indian Prime Ministers' Speeches (DIPMS) dataset, containing 5,254 speeches (91,54,654 words) of 11 prime ministers since Independence, confirms that the official discourse today is a prolongation of the Modi strand of politics. A text analysis of the DIPMS corpus indicates that Modi most the language associated to intimacy, disintermediation and simplicity. He enables multiple readings of his speeches, cultivating an image of unchallenged authority while simultaneously emphasising humility, victimisation and social harmony. Similarly, he activates anti-minorities readings of his decisions, accompanying an otherwise positive discourse.

Modi's simpler language relies mostly on the use of short sentences and non-conceptual vocabulary. He does not engage in institutional or political dialogues but speaks with "the people". This results in the underuse of vocabulary associated with institutional processes. Democratic accountability is minimal in Modi's India; instead, what is enforced is permanent authorisation through constant campaigning. Hence, an accumulation of rhetorical questions, "I and you" periphrases, vocative cases as well as self-references — sometimes in the third person. The language of intimacy is a striking feature: Modi's discourses keep on referring to conversant realms of family, kinship and home. But he shuns the use of "we" which is associated with unequal power relations.

In the global context of the COVID-19 crisis, heads of state capture the whole media attention, limiting — in the name of public interest — the spaces for healthy checks and balances in which an argumentative civil society would have its say. In this scenario, surveillance and the limitation of freedoms of assembly and expression have become everywhere the war-time norm. This trend may bear longstanding consequences in democratic countries where populism has already developed affinities with authoritarianism.

Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, professor of Indian Politics and Sociology at King's India Institute, London. Martelli is a researcher at the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH) in New Delhi



SHOBHIT MAHAJAN

A TEACHER AT one of the colleges in Delhi University had been told to take online classes during the lockdown. Since he was stuck in his native village which has no broadband connection, he was forced to rely on a mobile hotspot to connect to Zoom for his lectures. The problem was that there was only one location in the house, a spot in the backyard next to the cattle shed, where there was reasonable mobile connectivity. So he would conduct his classes from his backyard, until the day the transformer in his village conked off and there was no electricity for three days.

In these unusual times, when nouns like "Zoom" have morphed into verbs and "online teaching and assessment" seems to be the flavour with education bureaucrats, it is important to realise the implications of this radical shift. There are significant issues — technological, social and pedagogical — which need to be thought through before we jump onto this bandwagon.

First, the technological issue. The University of Hyderabad carried out an in-house survey with about 2,500 students on issues related to online teaching. Though 90 per cent of the respondents have a mobile phone, about 63 per cent of them could only access online classes infrequently or not at all. Interestingly, among the concerns raised about online instruction, 40 per cent reported unreliable connectivity as being a major deterrent while 30 per cent cited the cost of data. Significantly, 10 per cent reported uncertain

## SOME ONLINE QUESTIONS

Technological, social, pedagogical issues must be resolved for online teaching

electricity supply as a concern.

These numbers are not specific to a particular institution. Our students at the University of Delhi (DU) have shared similar concerns. And these are students from two of the premier institutions in the country — the situation of students in hundreds of state universities and thousands of colleges could at best be similar, or worse. The Niti Aayog, in its "Strategy for New India@75" report, highlighted quality and reliability of the internet as a major bottleneck. It went on to point out that 55,000 villages in the country are without mobile network coverage.

The technological issues are, of course, interrelated with social issues. In the last two decades, there has been a conscious effort on the part of the state to improve access to education at all levels. From the Right to Education Act to OBC reservation to the more recent EWS reservation, we have seen a concerted effort to bring marginalised sections of our society into the ambit of state-funded education. And this is reflected in the student demographics.

In a survey of 400 students at DU in 2017, we found that 35 per cent lived in villages. The economic and educational backgrounds of the students was significant — more than 75 per cent of them reported a family income of less than Rs 5 lakh per annum while more than 40 per cent of them had parents with less than high school education, making them the first-generation of college-goers. Our experience is that the numbers in recent years are similar

or even worse. It is important to note that these figures are for DU — not some moffusil college or state university.

Given the socio-economic milieu from which students are coming into higher education, these challenges are important to factor into policies. And they segue into pedagogical issues — a large number of students are not comfortable with spoken or written English. This makes online pedagogical material that much inaccessible. In face-to-face teaching, these factors are mitigated to an extent by the use of the bilingual communication which, incidentally, we have been using for several years now. Further, the students come with different levels of prior training, which makes it difficult to have a one-size-fits-all approach which online teaching assumes.

The current situation is, of course, an unprecedented one. However, we should be careful of advocating inappropriate, inequalitarian, and discriminatory strategies to deal with it. The issue is not of a few weeks of online teaching and online exams. The real question is whether we are letting in the proverbial nose of the camel into the tent. Once it is there, there is no stopping the beast from taking over. Reduced commitment of the state to invest in public education and promotion of the online model instead might just be the logical result. Or maybe, that is what our education planners really want!

Mahajan teaches physics at University of Delhi



## APRIL 29, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

### GANGA TALKS FAIL

A THREE-HOUR MEETING between India's energy minister, A B A Ghani Khan Chowdhury, and the Bangladesh deputy prime minister, Jamaluddin Ahmed, in Delhi failed to break the deadlock gripping the deliberations of the Joint Rivers Commission over the Ganga waters. Officials of the two countries have also spent several hours in discussions but could not come to an agreement on a draft by which the commission should admit its failure and remit the issue back to the two governments to resolve. The only positive aspect of the this meeting of the JRC was the promise that it will meet again in Dacca sometime in June.

### NEPAL REFERENDUM

AFTER THE YEAR-OLD campaign dust and noise settles in the Himalayan kingdom, over 13 million Nepalese will anxiously wait to see whether the 7.2 million of their countrymen with voting rights retain the partyless panchayat system or reject it in favour of multi-party parliamentary democracy that they lost in 1960. The country's first national referendum, promised by King Birendra a year ago in the wake of an unprecedented popular upsurge against the closed partyless panchayat government, will be held on May 2. The outcome of the referendum will, however, be known only after a week.

### PLOT AGAINST J C SHAH

IN AN APPLICATION for anticipatory bail filed before the Delhi High Court, R C Sharma, senior superintendent of police, at Kamal in Haryana, has stated that over the past two months he has been repeatedly pressurised to lead false evidence against Justice J C Shah (who headed the commission to look into Emergency excesses) and other important personalities, by swearing that Justice Shah had personally asked him to have P S Bhinder — now commissioner of Delhi Police — implicate Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi in the textile inspectors case. The application for anticipatory bail is to come up in the Delhi High Court.

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The other pollution

Our children need a happy and congenial environment to grow up in, not a climate of fear and hatred



S Y QURAISHI

THE DAMAGE TO our planet by environmental pollution has been a hot topic of discussion for decades. There are, however, equally serious if not greater dangers which no one talks about — the consequences of the pollution of minds, especially those of the young.

A child's mind is, at its most impressionable, like wet clay waiting to be moulded into shapes — good, bad or ugly. According to Benjamin Spock, an American paediatrician whose book *Baby and Child Care* is amongst the best-selling books in history, 85 per cent of the child's mind is developed by the age of five. This is spelt out lucidly by Robert Fulghum in his magnum opus *All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*: "Share everything, play fair, don't hit people, put things back where you found them, clear up your mess, don't take things that are not yours, when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together!"

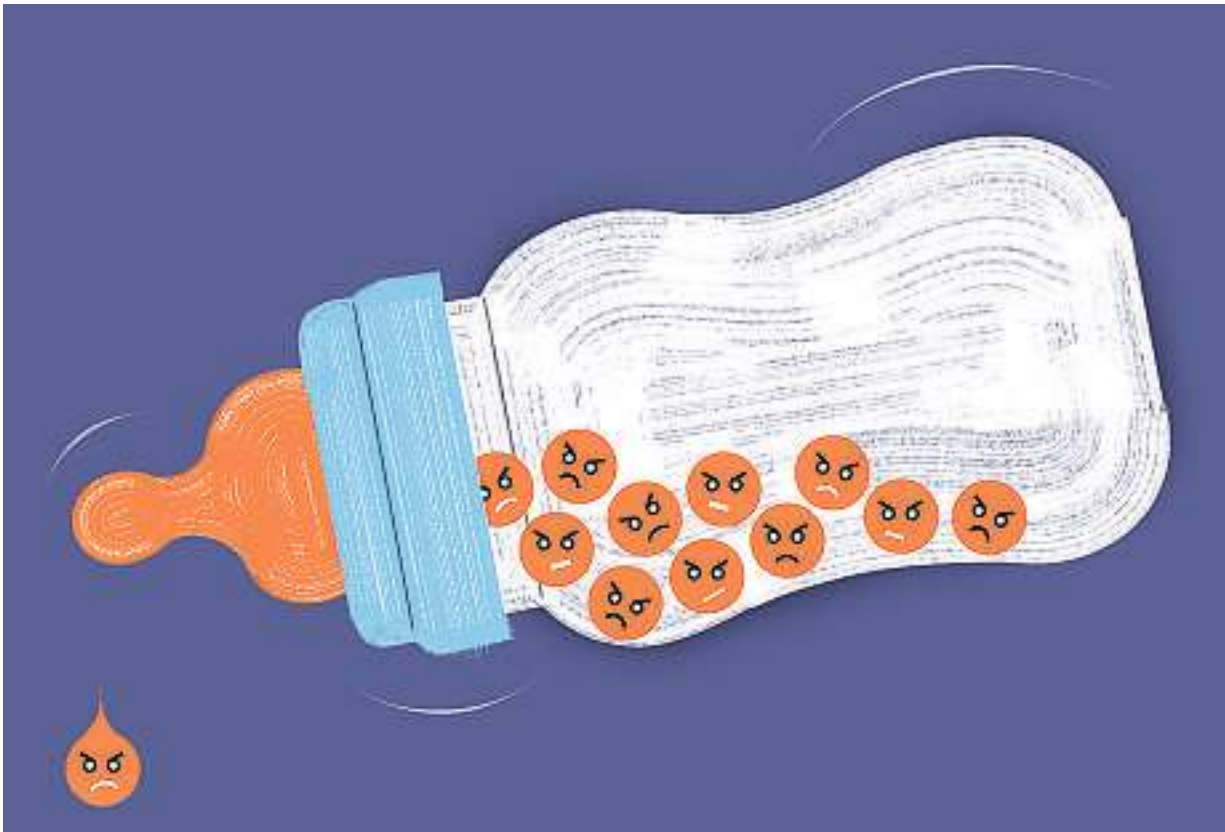
If the formative years are so crucial, it is vital that what a child is exposed to is healthy and positive. In the global village, there are streams of messages floating around, generated by mutual hatred. Children are mercilessly left to infer what they can from these. The consequences are unimaginably disastrous. The seed of poison is planted without much notice. This cancer affects the soul, curbs the development of the individual and constrains personality. Fear and aggression get ingrained in the psyche.

With the phenomenal expansion of TV, a child's exposure to the outside world is enormous. Hate and violence pre-dominate TV content. According to an American study, by the time a child is 18, (s)he has been exposed to 2,00,000 acts of violence, including 25,000 killings. So much exposure to violence brutalises children more than adults. They tend to take murder as a way of life.

Experts believe that violence shown in the media is the single largest source of pathogenic and criminogenic imagery. Aggressive characters become children's role models and many of them grow up to be angry young men and women. Their belief in the established legal system is subverted. The cases of mob lynching and people taking the law into their own hands prove the point.

The pollution of the minds of adolescents is as severe, if not more. The crisis of identity makes this age segment vulnerable to physical and psychological behavioural problems. They are overtaken by several emotional problems like anger, aggression, depression, loneliness, insecurity and feelings of guilt. The physiological changes lead to adolescents getting involved in high-risk behaviour like sexual experimentation and drugs. Crimes by and against adolescents surface in many forms like eve-teasing, abduction, rape, incest, prostitution, and sexual harassment. How can we forget that in the horrendous December 2012 Delhi rape and murder case, the most brutal offender was a teenager? In many cases of mob lynching and communal and caste violence, teenagers have been in the forefront.

Mind pollution typically expresses itself



C R Sasikumar

in the creation of stereotypes. This could be about gender, communities, religion, ethnic groups, or any other distinction. Targeting them with hate and violence is often the next step. One particularly severe pollutant is communalism, which calls for some elaboration as an example. The child's mind is the worst victim of this pollution.

In my professional upper-middle-class setting, my seven-year-old son returns from a posh Delhi school and asks me, "Papa, are we Musalmaans?" Bewildered at first, I questioned him: "Why do you ask?" "A boy in my class was telling other children," he answered. This was 30 years ago. It is a hundred times worse now. Nazia Erum, in her book *Mothering a Muslim*, has amply documented this phenomenon, where Muslim children as young as three have been called terrorists by their classmates. The communalisation of textbooks, demonising some communities in the process, is aggravating the situation.

The "we and they" being instilled in young minds is a terrible form of mental pollution. This not only fills them with anger and hatred for the "other", but instills in them a fear of the other. As Edmund Burke has observed, "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear." It will not be wrong to say that living in fear is a self-inflicted punishment.

All pollution spreads through agents or carriers. Propaganda is a major carrier. In the wake of a few unfortunate terrorist acts, a well-orchestrated campaign dubs the entire Muslim community as terrorists. Some obscurantists trumpet derivative slogans about Muslims like, "Hum paanch, hamare pachees" (we are five - husband and four wives - and have 25 children), and an image is deliberately or mischievously created of Muslims as polygamists. This is designed to cause a rift between communities. They have achieved tremendous success. This is a travesty of facts.

The only study on marriage customs ('Towards Equality — The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India,

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1975') found that all the communities in India, including Hindus, had incidences of polygamy. Muslims, in fact, had the least! The 227th Report of the Law Commission of India (2009) on prevention of bigamy via conversion to Islam stated that as many as one crore Hindu men had more than one wife, compared to 12 lakh Muslim men, as per the 1971 census.

The media, unfortunately, has played a key role in the propagation of distorted images. With the proliferation of social media, fear and hatred have become visceral. Individuals can easily find others who share those feelings and this soon leads to a mob mentality.

Now, let us turn to the Muslims. Some on the lunatic fringe talk of "jihad against the infidel" as a religious duty and a passport to Jannat (paradise). But en route to Jannat, hell is created. They conveniently forget the fact that the concept of jihad in Islam meant a struggle within to overcome illiteracy, ignorance, and immoral desires.

The resistance to mind pollution has to start with the realisation of its disastrous consequences — direct and imminent. We need serious research to quantify the possible damage by mind pollution, as has been done for environmental pollution. We cannot wait a day longer. Mind pollution has to be stopped. Moreover, the pollution that has already taken place has to be addressed.

While parents have to rise to play their role, the responsibility of the state, education system, judiciary, and the media needs to be especially recognised. Children require a happy and congenial environment when they are growing up, not fear and hatred. The coronavirus will, hopefully, disappear soon. But the communal virus will continue to haunt us for long. Let's not build a nation at war with itself.

The writer is former Chief Election Commissioner of India. He holds a PhD in child development

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It would be a mistake to think the spread of Covid-19 can be checked by hope alone. The last 10 years have undermined the ability of the government to respond effectively and efficiently." — THE GUARDIAN

## Strengthening the local

Post-COVID economic models, rules of governance, must be bottom-up, not top-down. That's how world can move from relief to recovery, and into resilience



ARUN MAIRA

THE WORLD is *Flat*, Thomas Friedman's paean to globalisation, begins with a golf game in Bengaluru with the CEO of a global Indian IT firm. When he saw billboards of European and Japanese MNCs around the golf-course, Friedman had a "eureka" moment. He called his wife in the US on his cell-phone, and said, "The world is flat". When Friedman launched his book in New Delhi in 2005, India's Minister for Panchayati Raj, Mani Shankar Aiyar, disagreed with his view. Jetsetters may be connected with the rest of the world, he said. However, they don't know what is happening in villages just 50km from where they live.

The sub-title of Friedman's book was, *A Brief History of the 21st Century*. The history of the globalisation he was celebrating has turned out to be very brief. In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of Indians to return to their villages. Jetsetters have been locked in their gated communities. Global supply chains have been broken apart. People are scrambling for essentials from local suppliers. The ideology of globalisation has hit realities on the ground.

Recovery from COVID-19 is an opportunity to create economies that are more resilient and fair. Three architectural principles must apply.

The first principle is, economies of "scale" should be replaced by economies of "scope". A complex global economy in which local producers obtain scale (and lower costs) by supplying products for global markets is vulnerable to shutdowns anywhere. Local economies that have a variety of capabilities within them, albeit on smaller scales, are more resilient. Therefore, local economic webs must be strengthened, in preference to global supply-chains.

COVID-19 has settled, for now, the debate between free-trade evangelists and advocates of industrial policy. "Make in India," which was dismissed by free traders as a reversion to pre-1991 economic policies, has become a necessity — to maintain supplies of essentials and to create employment for the hundreds of millions of Indians with fragile incomes who have been badly shaken by the lock-down of the Indian economy.

The second principle is, local systems solutions are essential for global systemic problems. Garrett Hardin had coined the expression, "The Tragedy of the Commons", in 1968, for the proposition that a resource that belongs to everybody will not be cared for by anybody. This supported policies to privatise public property, ostensibly for the benefit of everybody and became the dominant school of economics from the 1970s onwards. "Capitalists" often cite Hardin in their quarrel with "socialists".

Elinor Ostrom, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 2008 (the first woman economics laureate, after 62 men), offered a different explanation for the

tragedy of the commons. She argued that common resources are well-managed when those who benefit from such resources the most are in close proximity to them. For her, the tragedy occurred when external groups exerted their power (politically, economically or socially) to gain a personal advantage. She was greatly supportive of the "bottom-up" approach to issues: Government intervention could not be effective unless supported by individuals and communities, she asserted.

The world is facing challenges of ecological sustainability and persistent inequalities, which seem to get worse with the prevailing paradigm of economic growth. These challenges are described in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They cut across national boundaries. They also span several domains of expertise and institutional mandates. The final, 17th goal states the principle by which all the goals will be achieved — "partnerships".

Effective action to address multiple challenges together requires "systems thinking" — that is, a systemic vision spanning across the problems. In contrast, the prevalent action theory, used by governments, businesses and philanthropic organisations to solve complex problems, focuses on breaking complex problems into components and then tackling the components in separate silos. Indeed, this widely prevalent theory of action has contributed greatly to causing the systemic, interconnected problems the SDGs now aim to address.

Systems thinking is essential, amongst experts at the top and amongst partners on the ground. Several organisations are promoting collaborative action with systems thinking on the ground in India. Kudumbashree in Kerala has proven the power of community action. The Foundation for Ecological Security, guided by Elinor Ostrom's ideas, is working in many Indian states. *Dainik Bhaskar* is promoting "SDG chaupals" in Indian villages.

The third principle for the new economy is, empower the people, the fundamental requirement for genuine democracy. Countering Friedman's celebration of globalisation, Aiyar mentioned India's constitutional requirements for self-governance in India's towns and villages. These are not being implemented by governments and policy experts who do not want to give up power to the people.

India lives in its villages, Mahatma Gandhi had said. Most of India still does. And many, who had migrated to cities looking for jobs, are returning, shaken by the pandemic. Gandhi was a systems thinker. He also had a vision for a just world. For Gandhi, the global village was an abstract concept. This cannot be realised until local villages and towns become harmonious communities, where people live in harmony with each other and with nature around them.

COVID-19 marks the end of the economics' paradigm of the Washington Consensus. New models of economies, and new rules of global governance, must be bottom-up, not top-down. That's how the whole world can move from relief, to recovery, and into resilience.

Maira is a former member of the Planning Commission and author of *Transforming Systems: Why the World Needs a New Ethical Toolkit*



SIDDHARTH KAPILA

## Let's help the healers

Doctors deserve dignity, security as they risk their lives during the pandemic

A CHENNAI doctor, Simon Hercules, died of COVID-19 on April 19. He was denied even basic dignity at the time of his death as a mob attacked his friends and family with sticks and rods when they were transporting his body to a burial ground.

This incident has, yet again, cast a worrying spotlight on the health and safety of our frontline soldiers in the collective fight against COVID-19. How do we, as a people, go from clapping hands on our balconies and rooftops as a gesture of gratitude for healthcare workers to heaping the kind of abuse we witnessed in Indore, Moradabad and Bengaluru?

An eminent Noida-based doctor told me that doctors have been subjected to attacks for quite some time in our country. He contracted COVID-19 while treating an asymptomatic patient, and is currently in self-isolation in a hospital, separated from his family. He said the news of him testing positive for coronavirus had spread like wildfire. His driver, who had not come for work since the lockdown on March 25, was not permitted by his neighbours to enter his house unless he produced a negative coronavirus test certificate.

According to a 2017 study by the Indian Medical Association, over 75 per cent of doctors have faced violence at work and 56.5 per cent had thought of hiring security at the place of their practice.

Nineteen states in India have passed Medicare Service Persons and Medicare

Service Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss of Property) legislations in the past decade. But most complaints were not registered by the police.

Less than a year ago, doctors and medical professionals in Kolkata launched a massive protest after a doctor at a government medical hospital in the city was beaten and left with a fractured skull over the death of a 75-year-old patient. This sparked nationwide protests over violence against doctors, leading to a Healthcare Service Personnel and Clinical Establishments (Prohibition of Violence and Damage to Property) Bill, 2019, being proposed by the government.

In light of such recent attacks on doctors and healthcare workers across the country, the central government, on April 22, introduced an ordinance to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, to make attacks on doctors and healthcare workers a cognisable, non-bailable offence: The offence shall be punishable with imprisonment ranging from three months to five years, and penalty ranging from Rs 50,000 to 2 lakh. In cases of very serious attacks, the imprisonment may be for a minimum period of six months, and a maximum of seven years, with the penalty ranging from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

The doctor's Hippocratic Oath is, historically, taken by physicians who swear to uphold the highest ethical standards in the practice of medicine. If doctors, out of their strong sense of personal duty, are willing to

make huge personal sacrifices by risking their health, and by living apart from their families, then why can't we ordinary citizens treat them with the dignity that everybody deserves?

Consider the fact that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has framed guidelines on the rational use of impermeable suits, protective shields and goggles — generally referred to as personal protective equipment (PPE). The donning and doffing of PPE is a cumbersome process for which a strict protocol is mandated. A doctor at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan hospital told me that, "once you zip up you are sealed in for six to seven hours. You pass dark urine because you cannot drink water. Because of the impermeable fabric, it becomes suffocating and your sweat does not evaporate". A junior resident at Ram Manohar Lohia hospital, Delhi, narrated how his colleague fainted due to dehydration while wearing the PPE.

Significantly, the PPE is for one-time-use: Due to shortages in supply, the healthcare workers fear substandard products have flooded the market. A well-known doctor from a prominent private diagnostic laboratory in Delhi said that the PPEs provided are often found torn and damaged.

Apart from the constant risk of pathogen exposure, medics face continued psychological distress. And despite great personal sacrifices made by our doctors, nurses and healthcare providers, landlords have dispossessed medics from ten-

anted premises since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

The Supreme Court on April 8 directed that testing of COVID-19 in private labs be made free for the economically weaker sections of society who are unable to afford the fee. Later, on April 13, it further clarified that the benefit of free testing can be availed only by those eligible under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana, as implemented by the government, and any other category of economically weaker sections in society, as notified by the government for free testing.

The doctor associated with the same prominent private lab in Delhi, mentioned above, pointed out that though there's a perception that Rs 4,500 for a test is expensive, the actual cost to the labs exceeds that amount by a much greater margin. If all overhead costs are factored in, the lab will incur serious losses. Despite all this, when healthcare workers from the lab visit patients and are "frequently subjected to physical violence", it is deeply demoralising.

Such interactions with doctors reveal some stark contradictions within our society. We deify doctors as life-givers on the one hand but don't refrain from attacking them in times of desperation, on the other hand. We repose our lives in them as though they are god, but we forget that doctors are also human, and fallible.

Kapila is a Delhi based lawyer and writer

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### STICK AND STICK

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'No one should buy vegetables from Muslims: UP BJP MLA' (IE, April 28). Will the authorities file an FIR and arrest MLA Suresh Tiwari for making such an outrageous and overtly communal statement? Is there really any room for investigating "the circumstances in which he made the remarks," as claimed by the BJP spokesperson? Whenever this government faces critical comments, it has two weapons to beat its critics with: Brand them as traitors ("desdhoi"), if they are Hindus, or ask them to go to Pakistan (if they are Muslims). It would not be a surprise if no action is taken against Tiwari.

Ranjan Das, Mumbai

### TOUGH BALANCE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Ways of opening up' (IE, April 28). While the developed nations tend to focus on the "lives" of their citizens, India needs to concentrate on both lives and livelihoods. Easing the lockdown restrictions in states with the lesser number of COVID-19 cases is a sensible decision. On the other hand, ensuring that this easing does not lead to a rise in cases in India will be a great challenge.

Parul Srivastava, Prayagraj

### 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](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

### STORE IN INDIA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let's fill up the tank' (IE, April 28). While looking at storage for oil reserves abroad is one option, there is an alternative. As there is an employment crisis and the lockdown has to be lifted for ensuring livelihoods, it is better to construct storage facilities in India. This construction can contribute a bit to addressing the uncertainty so many face right now and also make us fully independent in terms of storage.

Aamil Lodhi, Gandhinagar

# 10 THE OUTBREAK NATION



## CORONA WATCH



**A medical camp, where samples were earlier collected, lies abandoned at Ramganj Chaupad in Jaipur. Rohit Jain Paras**

### J&K

## Covid patient dies in Valley, J&K toll 8

*Srinagar:* A woman in her 70s, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died in a Srinagar hospital on Tuesday. The COVID-19 toll in Jammu and Kashmir has reached eight. "She had co-morbid conditions like hypertension and diabetes," Chest Disease Hospital medical superintendent Saleem Tark said. Health officials said that preliminary investigation has revealed that the deceased has no travel history. "We are now ascertaining how she got infected. Her contacts are being quarantined," said Dr Qazi Haroon from the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir. **ENS**

## UTTARAKHAND AIIMS nurse among 2 more cases

*Dehradun:* Two people in Uttarakhand — a male nurse at AIIMS (Rishikesh) and a 32-year-old woman from Dehradun — tested positive on Sunday, taking the number of cases in the state to 50. A Health Department official said the 28-year-old AIIMS staffer was working in the Urology Department and was not involved in treatment of COVID patients. The woman gave birth in the Doon Medical College Hospital on Saturday and her child is healthy. Contact tracing has begun in both cases. **ENS**

### NEW DELHI

## 36 Delhi cops posted at SC in isolation

*New Delhi:* A day after a Supreme Court employee tested positive, 36 Delhi Police personnel, who were in charge of the court's security on the day the infected employee had come to work, were sent into self-isolation on Tuesday. One more staffer who was with the infected employee will also be tested, sources said. None of the employees had shown any symptoms. **ENS**

# 20 deaths in a day in Gujarat, 19 of them in Ahmedabad

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD, APRIL 28**

GUJARAT REPORTED 20 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, with Ahmedabad alone accounting for 19 of them.

This is the highest single-day death count in the district, with the deceased including four persons with no known co-morbidities and one being a 21-year-old man.

The total cases in Gujarat is now 3,785, with 218 new cases reported on Tuesday.

"Nineteen deaths were reported from Ahmedabad. Fifteen of the deceased were suffering from co-morbid conditions," said Principal Secretary Health Jayanti Ravi.

All 19 died at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. They included two men aged 55 and 69 years and two women aged 54 and 64 years with co-morbidities of diabetes and hypertension, and five men aged 40, 63, 60, 55 and 47 years with hypertension. A 58-year-old man died of multiple co-morbidities of diabetes, hypertension and epilepsy while another 79-year-old man had hypertension and mental complications. An 80-year-old woman who succumbed was suffering from cancer along with kidney complications. Another 62-year-old deceased man suffered a stroke.

Ahmedabad reported 164 new cases, taking the total cases in the district to 2,543. The Anand tally went up to 65, with

seven new cases from Khambhat. All were admitted to Cambay General Hospital.

Vadodara reported one death — a 70-year-old man. The district recorded 15 new cases, taking the count to 263. Five of those who tested positive were arrested on Monday for assaulting police during lockdown in red zone areas of Nagarwada.

Six more tested positive in Gandhinagar, taking the total to 36, while 14 new cases in Surat took the tally to 570. Rajkot, with nine new cases, now stands at 55 cases. Other districts that reported new cases are Bhavnagar (1) and Botad (2).

Forty people in the state were discharged after recovering from COVID-19, taking their total

number to 434. Among them is a 90-year-old man from Bhavnagar who was undergoing treatment in hospital since April 5 and was on oxygen support, Ravi said.

Another patient included a woman from Kutch, who was hospitalised for nearly 36 days and tested positive for coronavirus 10 times before finally testing negative, she said.

Ravi said two women infected with coronavirus gave birth on Tuesday in Rajkot and Bhavnagar. "Though the babies have tested negative for coronavirus, their mothers will have to take extra care while feeding them," she said. Coronavirus cases were reported from 30 of Gujarat's 33 districts.

(WITH PTI)



## HOME COMING

Students in Prayagraj board a bus to return home on Tuesday. The UP government has arranged over 300 buses to ferry nearly 10,000 students stranded in Prayagraj to their home districts. On Tuesday, 50 buses were deployed. *Ritesh Shukla*

# 10 pilgrims back from Nanded test positive, Punjab govt fears a cluster

**NAVJEEVANGOPAL CHANDIGARH, APRIL 28**

AT LEAST 10 pilgrims who have returned to Punjab from Nanded Sahib in Maharashtra, where they were stranded, have tested positive for coronavirus. As more than 4,000 the pilgrims were staying together in large numbers at Nanded, officials are apprehensive of a Tablighi Jamaat kind of situation, which had led to tracing of a similar number and their contacts, stretching across 15-plus states.

With a 48-year-old Hoshiarpur resident who drove 15 of the pilgrims back to Punjab on a tempo traveller on April 25 also testing positive on Saturday, they are now being tested.

While seven of the pilgrims who have tested positive reached Sur Singh and Khemkaran in Tarn Taran district on private vehicles, the three others travelled on one of the buses arranged by the Punjab government to Kapurthala district.

Around 800 pilgrims have



The first batch of stranded pilgrims reached Ludhiana, Sunday. *Gurmeet Singh*

reached Punjab in three batches in buses since Sunday. Punjab State Transport Commissioner Dr Amarpal Singh said the last batch, of 2,850 pilgrims in 80 buses, was expected Wednesday evening.

Atop Punjab government official said they were confident of controlling the situation as all the pilgrims were accounted for. "All of them have been tracked, and they are cooperating."

Nanded Sahib has one of the holiest Sikh shrines, and the pil-

grims had gone there in March and got stuck due to the lockdown.

Punjab CM Amarinder Singh has said that all the pilgrims returning from Nanded, like the students and labourers coming from outside the state, would be sent from the borders to government quarantine centres for 21 days and would be tested.

The president of the Takht Sachkhand Hazur Sahib in Nanded, Bhupinder Singh Manhas, said all the 320 pilgrims

staying with them had gone back. A majority of the pilgrims were staying in serais (inns) managed by Gurdwara Langar Sahib, he said, which was "not linked to Takht Hazur Sahib".

Manhas added, "At Takht Hazur Sahib, we followed all the guidelines and ensured proper distancing. The pilgrims underwent medical examination."

Baba Balwinder Singh of Gurdwara Langar Sahib said while the pilgrims from Punjab staying in their serais were on their way back, those from Delhi, UP and Haryana were still stuck there.

One of the pilgrims from Tarn Taran who tested negative for novel coronavirus and stayed in one of Gurdwara Langar Sahib's serais said they were concerned.

"In some rooms, as many as eight pilgrims were together. Five of those who have tested positive lived in one such room with three others," said the pilgrim, adding that they used common elevators.

A health official said contact tracing of the pilgrims had been carried out and their samples taken for testing.

# Gene sequencing doesn't suggest 'Indian' strain so far, say scientists

**AMITABH SINHA PUNE, APRIL 28**

THE ONGOING analysis of the gene sequences of the novel coronavirus has so far not revealed anything to suggest that the virus present in India is in any way different from that circulating in other parts of the world. There is also no evidence, as of now, of any one particular strain of the virus being more deadly than the other, scientists have said.

Viruses, or indeed any organism, develop minor but permanent changes in their genetic codes, called mutations, over a period of time due to a variety of factors, including climatic and environmental conditions. It is these variations that are responsible for the diversity that is seen in any organism.

Scientists track the mutations happening in the viruses keenly, because these are key to understanding their behaviour, and in drug and vaccine development.

"We have been extracting the genome sequences of this virus taken from infected people across the country. We have completed about 20 such sequences. And within that we have noticed some 15-20 variations that, at this moment, appear unique to the virus circulating in India. However, the data we have right now is not ad-

**EXPLAINED**  
**No proof of 'weaker' virus**

IT has been suggested that the virus circulating in India is 'weaker', or Indians have a 'stronger' immunity. A few days ago, a doctor in Ahmedabad suggested that the relatively high number of deaths in Gujarat could be due to a deadlier strain of the virus than the one in Kerala. Research does not show evidence for this possibility so far.

equate to draw any conclusion.

You will find variations in gene sequences of two individual viruses also. Only when we finish many more gene sequences, will we be in a position to interpret the data in any meaningful way. As of now, there is nothing to say that the Indian strain is in anyway special, or different," Rakesh Mishra, director of Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), a CSIR research laboratory, told The Indian Express.

CCMB is one of the several laboratories, within the CSIR network and outside, that are actively en-

# Use hotels for quarantine: Top panel on COVID

Home quarantine for mild, pre-symptomatic cases: Health

**ABANTIKA GHOSH NEW DELHI, APRIL 28**

IN A proposal aimed at addressing complaints about quarantine facilities and kickstarting the hospitality sector, one of the Centre's empowered groups on COVID-19 has recommended that hotels be used to quarantine asymptomatic or mild cases.

The Health Ministry, meanwhile, has notified new guidelines to let patients, who have been medically assessed as "very mild case/pre-symptomatic case by the treating medical officer", undergo home quarantine.

In the hotel proposal, which was sent on April 15, the empowered group on hospitals, isolation beds, quarantine facilities, etc., has urged the Ministry to lay down SOPs and start the process of certification of hotels that can be used as COVID facilities.

The idea, officials say, is that patients pay for the rooms and other expenses, such as food, while hotels follow laid-down SOPs, including having a doctor on call and nurses in charge of rooms.

"There have been multiple complaints about the quality of quarantine facilities, especially toilets... For the hotels, it makes sense to abide by the SOPs and conditions for certification because they will get business. These quarantine facilities can have single-oc-

cupancy rooms with attached toilets. They will supplement government facilities," said an official.

This model is essentially an extension of home quarantine, except that in hotels the risk of exposure is even less for others. "Patients are at the centre of all that we are planning so we need to have options that take their concerns into account, too," the official said.

In its guidelines for mild and pre-symptomatic cases, the Health Ministry said: "Such cases should have the requisite facility at their residence for self-isolation and also for quarantining the family contacts. A care giver should be available to provide care on 24x7 basis. A communication link between the caregiver and hospital is a prerequisite for the entire duration of home isolation. The care giver and all close contacts of such cases should take Hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis as per protocol and as prescribed by the treating medical officer."

The guidelines also state that the caregiver has to mandatorily download the Arogya Setu app. "The person also has to give a written undertaking and seek medical attention when s/he faces difficulty in breathing, persistent pain/pressure in the chest, mental confusion or inability to arouse, developing bluish discolorations of lips/face, etc," it states.

# Chouhan calls for yoga, chants for treatment

**MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, APRIL 28**

CHIEF MINISTER Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday advocated the use of yoga, chants and music for treatment of coronavirus infections along with other existing systems of treatment.

"Many diseases are cured with love but when it comes to infections like COVID-19 even the mother can't touch her son. So, along with the prevailing system of treatment, elemental practices in Indian traditions can be tried," the senior BJP leader said after holding a video conference with religious leaders.

Chouhan asked the leaders to send in their suggestions for alternative treatments. "Maybe we will come out with a module for treatment. It could even re-



Shivraj Singh Chouhan

duce the death rate," he said, suggesting songs, bhajans and shlokas to boost the morale of COVID-19 patients.

The video interaction came a day after Chouhan announced that the BJP government will distribute 1 crore packets of 50-gram ayurvedic churan to build immunity. The Congress had criticised the CM over Chouhan's photograph on food packets. "People are dying of coronavirus but your hunger for publicity is not ebbing," said former higher education minister and Congress leader Jeetu Patwari.

# Wake-up call for residents to not violate lockdown: Kin of Mumbai cop who died

**SAGAR RAJPUT & SRINATH RAO MUMBAI, APRIL 28**

CHANDRAKANT PENDURKAR's elder son wishes that his father's fever was taken seriously the first time he visited the hospital on April 16. The 57-year-old went on to become the first Mumbai Police personnel to succumb to COVID-19. "I wish my father was tested at Kasturba Hospital. The doctors told him that he was not infected. They gave him medicine for fever and sent him back," said his son.

The medicines, he said, brought the fever down but did not help the cough. "My father went to work the next day. That's when his health deteriorated further... I wish

there were more testing centres for police and other emergency service providers. They should be on everyone's priority list."

On April 22, when Pendurkar was struggling to breathe, his family rushed him to Kasturba Hospital. "We were told no beds are available. Doctors referred us to Nair Hospital, where we could admit my father only after contacting a senior police officer," the son said.

BMC spokesperson Daksha Shah said, "I am not aware of this case, but I am sure that the doctors must have advised the deceased to stay home... he should have rested for some days instead of going to work." Asked why he was turned away by Kasturba Hospital, Shah said, "If no beds are available, they will have to refer the patient to an-

other hospital."

The family stays in a 10x10 room in Worli. With Pendurkar gone, the elder son is now the sole breadwinner. Pendurkar's wife (54), sons (27 and 25) and daughter (23) are currently in quarantine. After Pendurkar, two more constables have died of COVID-19. The state has announced a compensation of Rs 50 lakh to the families of the deceased and a government job for a family member.

The second casualty in the department was Sandeep Surve (53) of protection and security branch, who died on Sunday. Surve had served in the city police for 27 years and recovered from a tumour in the thymus in his chest in 2017. "His immunity had weakened as a result of the treatment," said his elder brother,

who also works in Mumbai Police.

Surve, the brother said, got himself tested after feeling shortness of breath. His brother said he received plenty of support from doctors and his employers. "The doctor did their best but it wasn't to be," he added. The brother said Surve's death should be a wake-up call for the city. "Residents should learn to stay indoors and not raise their hands on police personnel, doctors and emergency workers. That is the only way we can defeat the virus. I feel proud that my brother died serving the country."

The son of a 56-year-old constable posted at Kurla Traffic Division, who passed away on Monday, declined to speak to *The Indian Express*.

# Amravati emerges as hotspot with 7 deaths

**VIVEK DESHPANDE NAGPUR, APRIL 28**

WITH SEVEN COVID-19 deaths so far, Amravati has emerged as the biggest coronavirus hotspot in Vidarbha in terms of fatalities.

The deaths have been reported from the congested Haiderpura locality of the city — declared a containment zone — and all of them took place at residences. Authorities said the test reports of the seven persons confirmed COVID-19 after the deaths.

The first death was reported on April 4 and two persons died on April 20, followed by one casualty each on April 22, 23, 24 and 25. Among the deceased are four women and three men.

Asked how authorities could not get a wind of COVID-19 cases

gaged in genome sequencing of SARS-nCoV2. Mishra said over the next one week or 10 days, hundreds of sequences are likely to be completed. These virus samples are being taken from infected people from different regions, age groups, and medical histories to make it representative.

"One of the things that we can easily find out — well developed scientific tools allow us to do so — is to track the origin of the virus, and the route it might have taken to come to India. Based on this information, you would have heard about different strains, like the 'Wuhan strain'. As of now, the only distinction we are able to make with respect to different strains is their source, or origin. There is no other difference that we presently know of," he said.

Gautam Menon, a professor of computational biology and theoretical physics at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai, said even in other parts of the world, there was no "unambiguous" evidence to suggest that any one strain of the virus was more "virulent" than the other.

"I think this is generally well accepted in scientific circles. I don't think there is any evidence as of now that there is any strain in any part of the world that is noticeably different from the others in its virulence. We are still in the process of discovering these things," he said.

# HC stays Kerala order to deduct 1-month salary of employees

**SHAJU PHILIP THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 28**

THE KERALA High Court on Tuesday stayed for two months the government's order to deduct one-month salary of employees in five instalments in the wake of the financial crisis stemming from COVID-19.

A bench of Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas observed that it was the right of every individual to receive salary for work. "Financial difficulty is not a ground for the state government to defer the payment of salary. Prima facie, the deferment of salary amounts to denial of property," said the judge.

The court was acting upon petitions filed by pro-Congress state employees' organisations, challenging the order which had evoked sharp protest from a section of employees and teachers.

The court said payment of salary is not a matter of bounty and it is a right vested in every individual to receive the salary. Article 300A of the Constitution confers a right to property and salary, and prima facie comes within the purview of property.

The judge further observed that he could not find any statutory basis for the deferment of salaries, neither in the Epidemic Diseases Act nor in the Disaster Management Act.

CM Pinarayi Vijayan said the government will follow the court order. A decision on moving appeals would be taken only after a detailed review of the order.

in the locality despite it being declared a containment zone, Amravati Divisional Commissioner Piyush Singh said, "It is a densely populated area. We have been conducting home-to-home surveys and seeking cooperation and information. But the same is hard to come by. We can't just go around forcing people to give information. All deaths have been of people above the age of 70 and with several co-morbidities."

There are 27 positive cases in the district so far.

This stands in sharp contrast against Nagpur, which has seen only one COVID-related death despite 131 positive cases. When asked about the containment strategy, Singh said, "We are now making sub-containment zones in the 100-metre radius of these deaths..."



New Delhi



# THE OUTBREAK NATION

## CBSE set for Board exams after lockdown ends, states suggest internal assessment

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is prepared to hold the remaining Board exams approximately 10 days after the day the nationwide lockdown ends, state education ministers were told in a meeting with Union Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal on Tuesday, even as some of them suggested that Class 10 and 12 students be promoted based on internal assessment.

The minister also asked state governments to start evaluating their board exam answer scripts and assist the CBSE in doing the same.

According to ministry sources, the Centre-run school board is planning to deliver the answer sheets to examiners at home and, hence, needs the state administration's cooperation. The CBSE had announced last month that it would conduct exams for only 29 of the 41 pending papers of Classes 10 and 12, which were suspended once the number of reported COVID-19 cases started increasing. The board stopped evaluation of answer scripts on March 18. It needs one-and-a-half months to evaluate more than 1 crore answer sheets.

Delhi, represented by its Education Minister Manish Sisodia, was among the states that suggested that students of Classes 10 and 12 be promoted



Ramesh Pokhriyal

based on their school assessment. Delhi is the only state that doesn't have a school board. All government schools here are affiliated to CBSE.

"Due to the need of social distancing, it will not be feasible to conduct remaining exams for Class 10 and 12 students even in May-June. Having exam thereafter will delay the next academic cycle heavily," Sisodia said in a press statement.

"In these uncertain times, I don't know if we would be able to conduct examinations again,

so on the basis of some formula like internal assessments, papers already conducted, etc, students of Classes 10 and 12 too should be evaluated. This will help us not waste our students' time," he said.

Punjab Education Minister Vijay Inder Singla said in the meeting that the state was thinking on the lines of promoting Class 10 students on their performance in the pre-board exams conducted by their respective schools. This, Singla told The Indian Express, is a suggestion of the expert committee set up by the state government.

Given the loss in teaching time, Assam requested the HRD Ministry that government school teachers should not be deployed on census duty once

the lockdown ends. The state was told that permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs would have to be sought.

In the meeting, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal announced that, as a one-time measure, mid-day meal (MDM) or its equivalent Food Security Allowance would be provided to students even during summer vacations. This will cost the Union government an additional Rs 950 crore. On online learning, many states informed the HRD minister that 60-70 per cent students are able to access such classes. While some states requested for live broadcast of classes on Doordarshan and AIR FM, Punjab suggested that students be given free internet data for a limited time.

## Food prices surge since lockdown: IGDR study

Supply disruptions key, big spike in tomato, potato prices

UDIT MISRA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

RETAIL AND wholesale food prices surged by as much as 20 per cent in the first four weeks - 28 days - since the nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, a study by researchers of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGDR), Mumbai, has found.

The study, titled "Urban food markets and the lockdown in India" by Sudha Narayanan and Shree Saha (associate professor and research associate at IGDR, respectively), mapped publicly available data for wholesale and retail prices for 22 commodities from 114 cities across the country. It found that average price increased as much as 28 per cent for tomatoes, 15 per cent for potatoes, more than 6 per cent for several varieties of pulses, and more than 3.5 per cent for most edible oils.

"Despite guidelines that allow the movement and transactions in essential commodities, it appears that law enforcement and the bureaucracy have privileged maintaining the lockdown over maintaining food security..." the paper states.

The spike in retail food prices after lockdown reverses the trend since early 2020. Many macro-economists have pointed out that recessionary trends will lead to lower prices but the IGDR study states, "It may well be that food prices will increase first before they go down."

Narayanan said, "The main reason for this increase in prices is the thinning of supply and the transportation bottlenecks."

On the demand side, there was a dip because demand from restaurants would have come down, and an increase due to panic buying and hoarding by households. But net-net, demand



Crowd at Galla Mandi in Lucknow on Tuesday. Vishal Srivastava

### 'SMALLER CITIES HIT WORSE'

Pre- and Post-lockdown	Wholesale Price Change (in %)	Retail Price Change (in %)
Tur dal	5 %	6.38 %
Masoor dal	6.3 %	8 %
Vanaspati oil	4.3 %	4.8 %
Potato	14.6 %	15.7 %
Tomato	27.5 %	28.9 %

Source: Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research study

rise did not cause this spike, rather it was due to supply disruptions, Narayanan said. "To corroborate, we asked retailers, and they pointed toward thinning supplies and transport disruptions as the main worries," she said. The spike was most in commodities such as perishables like tomatoes, for which retailers did not have as much stock. Increases were marginal for rice and atta, while wheat prices actually fell.

Another key finding was that smaller cities were affected worse, as they saw higher price inflation. "Bigger cities are more established markets and provide better prices and as such are better served than smaller cities or semi-urban markets," Narayanan said. She also pointed out that due to sealing of

state boundaries many horticulture (fruit and vegetables) farmers made heavy losses and are likely to stay away from growing these commodities in the next cycle, thus pushing up their prices in future.

"For instance, a lot of areas on Tamil Nadu border used to sell their horticulture produce to Bengaluru. But they could not (over the last few weeks), due to the sealing," she said.

Going forward, prices will be determined by both the area under cultivation for different crops as well as the easing of supply bottlenecks. The study also cautions against price controls and favours relaxing of production and distribution processes including in the informal sector.

## DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



### PANNED AFTER PRAISE

DAYS BEFORE the Centre told states in a presentation that Uttar Pradesh has the worst infrastructure to fight coronavirus, with severe scarcity of isolation wards and ICU beds in several districts affected by the pandemic, the RSS had declared UP as the best performing state. The organisation's mouthpiece, *'Panchjanya'*, has carried a cover report titled "Yoddha Yogi (Warrior Yogi)", which details how well the state under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has battled the outbreak. Most part of the article, however, focused on how strictly the state dealt with members of the Tablighi Jamaat.

### SAFFRON LESSONS

THE BJP's high pitch on nationalism and Hindutva has often worried the Congress, and the party has time and again tried to counter it, but without much success. But the party does not seem to be in any mood to call it quits. Punjab Congress on Tuesday linked the party's protest on May 1 to the national flag. It asked people in the state to raise the Tricolour at home that day to protest against what the party calls the Centre's discrimination against non-BJP states in the battle against the virus. Former Union Minister Jitin Prasada had another suggestion. Apparently taking a leaf out of the saffron party's book, he tweeted and asked people to blow the conch, arguing that "shankhnaad" finds a special mention in Vedic science for its purported health, spiritual and therapeutic benefits, which he believes is much needed in these times. He tweeted that it is worth trying over a consistent period of time to experience the goodness.

### BURYING A SUCCESS

WEEKS AFTER its launch to facilitate delivery of parcels, especially medicines on trains during lockdown, the platform Setu, started by Railways officers, is on the brink of shutdown despite its apparent success. Top Railway Board officers have apparently expressed displeasure that the platform was getting attention among people and also on social media as an initiative of traffic service officials. Traffic probationers were manning the 24x7 helpline, and those interacting with customers to get things delivered are all traffic officers since this is their job profile. After unofficial messages were conveyed from the ministry to field, those managing it suspended the Twitter handle of Setu on Monday. A new handle for Indian Railways Management Service has emerged around this time.

## Nadda pulls up UP BJP unit over MLA's remark

LIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

BJP PRESIDENT J P Nadda on Tuesday pulled up the party's Uttar Pradesh unit, saying the party would not "tolerate" communal remarks. The party also served a show cause notice to its MLA Suresh Tiwari, who asked people not to purchase vegetables from Muslim vendors.

"Naddaji called up the president of UP BJP and told him that the leadership will not tolerate such remarks. He questioned the state leadership for not taking action against the MLA," said a source.

The *Indian Express* on Tuesday reported that Tiwari, who represents Barhaj constituency, was heard making a statement in a video to people in Deoria district that they should not buy vegetables from Muslims. "Keep one



BJP president J P Nadda

thing in mind, I am telling everyone openly, no one should purchase vegetables from miyas [Muslims]," he is seen saying.

When contacted, Tiwari said he had made the statement last week during a visit to the office of Barhaj Nagar Palika as he had received complaints that people of a community were selling vegetables after contaminating them with saliva to spread coronavirus.

"The leadership found the comments were highly irresponsible and that the state unit should have taken immediate action," said the source. Nadda told UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh to take action against Tiwari immediately, sources said.

Following the violence by migrant workers at Surat Diamond Bourse on Tuesday. Hanif Malek

## Policeman injured as Surat sees violence

Surat: Two incidents of violence, allegedly involving migrant workers were reported from Dindoli and Khajod areas of Surat on Tuesday amid the lockdown.

In Dindoli, a mob clashed with the police, throwing stones at police personnel, leaving one policeman injured.

"The mob was dispersed after we resorted to minor lathicharge. We have detained five youths

from the spot and process of registering an FIR," Dindoli Police Inspector H M Chauhan said.

In the second incident, several migrant labourers, who were engaged at a construction project of Surat Diamond Bourse in Khajod, allegedly damaged the office of the organisation. Sources said over 3,500 workers are engaged at the site. On Monday night, a contractor had brought 50 labourers from

other areas of the state and they were asked to stay with others at the site. "On Tuesday, instead of going for work, the labourers gathered outside the administrative office. They waited for the contractor and administrative officials. After some time, when no one arrived, the labourers damaged the office and overturned two cars. No one was injured," Inspector K B Zala said. **ENS**

### CHHATTISGARH

## Notice on 'misleading' report; fake news panel not consulted

GARGI VERMA  
RAIPUR, APRIL 28

ON APRIL 24, Neeraj Shivhare, a journalist based in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada, published a report of a homemaker selling off household items to pay for her family's needs amid the lockdown. Two days later, he was served a notice by the sub-divisional magistrate over this "misleading" report.

The notice asks Shivhare to explain why an FIR should not be registered against him.

Dantewada collector Topeshwar Verma said the report states that the family had received no help from the government, which he says is not true.

But Shivhare, who stood by his report, said, "After I published the story, with her comment on record, other journalists also took her statement. She has constantly said she got no help and had to sell household items."

Verma said: "The reporter should have checked with us. We have provided mandatory ration

to the woman, along with 4 kg rice extra, twice... She might have sold off her fridge, but it wasn't because she didn't get help," Verma said the notice was sent "after investigating the report on ground".

The notice states, "The article... is without complete and correct information and is misleading. Under the current pandemic, the story causes fear amongst people and portrays the state in a bad light."

Shivhare said he did not submit anything to officials because "I believe they are wrong and my story stands true".

While the state government has a dedicated "fake news committee", chaired by Raipur range I-G Anand Chhabra and two journalists among other members, the Dantewada district administration is itself investigating this case.

The order to form the committee was issued by state General Administrative Department (GAD) on March 6. "The idea was to ensure that baseless and fraudulent news is not published. The GAD issued the order after consultation with the Directorate of

Public Relations," Additional Chief Secretary Subrat Sahu said.

While there is no clarity on the number of members in the committee, or when it was formed, Taran Prakash Sinha, commissioner of Public Relations, confirmed that the two journalists were "appointed by the state government". He said, "There are five members in the committee and they investigate fake news."

One committee member, Hindi journalist Aavesh Tiwari, said he was appointed a couple of months after the government was formed. He said the panel met in February 2019 and March this year. Raipur SP Aarif Shaikh, also a panel member, said there are seven members. He said more than 20 reports have been declared fake in the last two months.

According to the official order, the committee has four members: an SP; joint secretary, DPR; a district government lawyer; and CEO of Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society, a state agency.

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

## NITI officer tests positive, HQ sealed

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE GOVERNMENT'S top think tank NITI Aayog on Tuesday sealed its headquarters Niti Bhawan after one of its officials tested positive for COVID-19.

In a communication to employees, NITI Aayog deputy secretary (administration) Ajit Kumar said, "One officer in NITI building has tested Covid+." The matter was reported around 9 this morning. It was discussed with competent authority. The necessary protocol have been checked by Adviser (Admn)."

In the communication, Kumar mentioned five-point "instructions" for employees of NITI Aayog. "Building is being sealed for two days for a thorough disinfection and sanitisation. Normal working resumes after two days. We are trying to trace his direct contacts who are to go in for self-



A health worker sanitises the NITI Aayog premises in New Delhi on Tuesday. Anil Sharma

quarantine," said Kumar.

"All the employees who had reached the office were asked to go home and those who were on their way were informed about the closing of the building," said a source.

Later in the day, NITI Aayog officially announced that one of its

employees has tested positive.

"An employee working at NITI Bhawan has been detected positive with COVID-19. It was informed to the authorities at 9 am this morning. NITI Aayog is following all the due protocols necessary as per the Ministry of Health guidelines. The building has been

sealed," tweeted NITI Aayog.

"Disinfection and sanitization of the building are underway. Contacts of the single covid positive person have been asked to go on self-quarantine," it said.

NITI Aayog, which is headed by the Prime Minister, is headquartered at Parliament Street in New Delhi.

Sources say sealing of the building may affect the functioning of two empowered groups of officers who have been given the task of formulating the response against the pandemic.

Out of these two groups, one is 'coordinating with private sector, NGOs and international organisations' and is headed by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

It has held more than a dozen meetings since it was constituted on March 29, 2020. The other group is on 'Medical Emergency Management Plan' and is chaired by NITI Aayog member Dr V K Paul.

### ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

## Journalist booked for tweeting on 'quarantine over call with patients'

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA  
KOLKATA, APRIL 28

A FREELANCE journalist in Andaman and Nicobar Islands was arrested for tweeting on the need to quarantine people for speaking with COVID-positive patients on the phone.

Arrested on Monday evening, the journalist, Zubair Ahmad, was on Tuesday produced in a Port Blair court and granted bail.

Following a report in a local newspaper and information he had gathered over the last few days, Zubair tweeted on Monday, "Can someone explain why families are placed under home quarantine for speaking over phone with Covid patients?" He tagged the Andaman administration and the L-G's media cell in the tweet.

In another tweet, he wrote, "Request #Covid19 quarantined persons not to call any acquaintance over phone. People are being traced and quarantined on the basis of phone calls."

Explaining the arrest, DGP,

Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dependra Pathak told *The Indian Express* over the phone, "The person concerned started tweeting that the administration is doing (things) wrong. He urged people not to cooperate with the administration at a time when we all are battling the pandemic. We have arrested him and due process of law is being followed."

He said, "One way of contact-tracing of COVID-positive people is by tracking their phone calls, and after evaluation placing them in home quarantine for 28 days."

"I just asked the administration a question. Instead of answering me, they arrested me," Zubair said over the phone after getting bail on Tuesday. He said he had posed questions on other issues on social media, tagging the administration and officers, earlier as well, and "got replies for some (of those questions)".

As journalists, Zubair said, "We have the right to ask question. But I think they wanted to teach me a lesson, and therefore the arrest."

DGP Pathak said besides Zubair, cases have been lodged against four others in the last 10 days "for circulating material detrimental to the public in these times". He said, "We have zero tolerance in such matters. We have (even) lodged cases against wives and relatives of police officers, and even a government officer."

Besides Section 51 of DM Act (obstruction of government staff and refusing to comply with directions) he was also booked under different IPC Sections. Zubair said: "From news reports and other sources, including journalists, I learnt people are getting quarantined even over phone calls. One journalist was quarantined for speaking over phone to a COVID-positive person."

Denis Giles, editor of *'Andaman Chronicle'*, a local newspaper, who was present in court with Zubair on Tuesday, said: "We carried a report that a family was quarantined for speaking with a COVID person over phone. Zubair was moved by the issue and that is why he tweeted..."

## Post-lockdown challenge for Bihar: 6 lakh migrants

SANTOSH SINGH  
PATNA, APRIL 28

EVEN AS the Bihar government has left it to the Centre to take a call on extending the lockdown, it is gearing up to face the next big challenge - the return of migrants after the lockdown is lifted.

DGP Gupteshwar Pandey told *The Indian Express* that at least six lakh migrants are expected to return to the state. "We do not want to fritter away the advantage of door-to-door screening," he said.

The DGP said the government is now considering centralised quarantine at the block level. He said centralised quarantine centres would make it easier for police to monitor migrants.

"The idea is to conduct screening at two levels - first on inter-state borders and subse-

quently at quarantine centres. Once migrants are sent to quarantine centres at respective block headquarters, they cannot run away to their homes. There would be doctors at the centre and it would be easy for police to guard the centre," said the DGP, adding that the administration does not want migrants to intermingle with the population that has been screened.

Over three lakh migrants returned to the state before and during the lockdown. Those who returned after March 17 were quarantined in village schools, but they would often slip away to their homes.

The health department then had to start screening migrants in hotspot areas and so far there has been no trend of COVID-19 infections among migrants, barring a few cases of infection due to contact history.





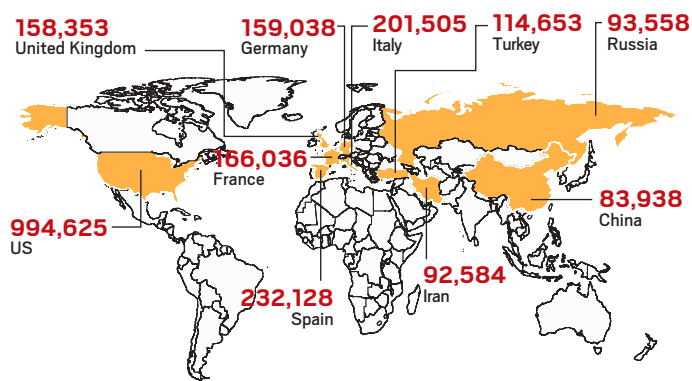
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#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@indianexpress.com](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

### YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY

TOTAL CONFIRMED: **3,074,948**DEATH COUNT: **2,13,273**

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11:00 pm on April 28

## What extra care should I take if I visited a high-risk area?



Shopping during relaxation of lockdown in Shimla. Pradeep Kumar

MUCH AS the outbreak is keeping many people indoors, there are some professionals such as doctors and police who need to go to their workplace. Besides, everyone needs to visit the grocer for essentials at one point. If they feel this brought them close to a person possibly infected with COVID-19, what extra precautions should they take?

First, it is not necessary that a COVID-19 patient will always infect everyone who came close to them. Second, to know if they did, the newly infected has to develop symptoms, which not everyone does. But if one does begin to feel unwell, the Health Ministry advises self-isolation by staying at home. Do that even with mild symptoms such as headache, low-grade fever and slight runny nose, until you recover.

If you develop fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, seek medical advice promptly; this may be due to

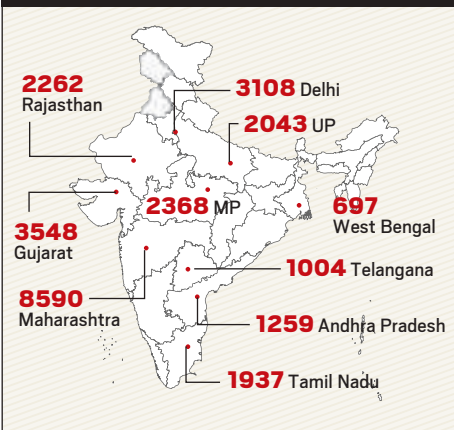
a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call the healthcare provider in advance and tell them of any recent travel or contact with travellers, so that the provider can quickly direct you to the right health facility, the Ministry advises.

Without symptoms, the usual guidelines apply. If you went out to buy or collect supplies, then wear a mask. Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based handrub, or wash them with soap and water. Both of these are known to kill viruses that may be on your hands; they destroy the fatty envelope that characterises viruses.

While outdoors, maintain at least 1 metre distance from others — especially if someone is coughing or sneezing. It is widely accepted that the novel coronavirus spreads itself through droplets, which are released in abundance when someone coughs or sneezes.

## INDIA COUNT: 29,974 (937 DEATHS)

### TOP 10 STATES



### REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	33
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	38
Bihar	346
Chandigarh	40
Chhattisgarh	37
Goa	7
Haryana	296
Himachal Pradesh	40
Jammu and Kashmir	546
Jharkhand	103
Karnataka	520
Kerala	482
Ladakh	22
Manipur	2
Meghalaya	12
Mizoram	1
Odisha	118
Puducherry	8
Punjab	313
Tripura	2
Uttarakhand	51

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, April 28. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above.

**7027 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](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

## SIMPLY PUT

# Doubling times, earlier & now

COVID-19 cases in India are taking a longer time to double during the lockdown than they were earlier. A look at nationwide trends, and how widely the doubling rates have varied from one state to another

ABHISHEK DE & NUSHAIBA IQBAL  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

THE GOVERNMENT has maintained that due to the lockdown imposed on March 24, the doubling time of coronavirus cases has increased. In the week before the lockdown, the doubling time across India was 3.4 days. By the week ending April 27, it had improved to 10.77 days, an analysis of daily data shows.

### Why this matters

Doubling time is a concept borrowed from the world of finance, where it is routinely used to compute the time taken for an investment to double. In a pandemic such as this, a single-day doubling time would mean that, if there were 100 cases to start with on Day 0, there would be 200 cases on Day 1, 400 on Day 2, 800 on Day 3 and so on. However, if the doubling rate was three days, 100 cases on Day 0 would increase to 200 cases on Day 3. Doubling rate is not known in advance. It has to be calculated, based on the emergence of new cases, and as such, it changes every day.

Sometimes, a large surge or dip in the number of cases can give an erroneous impression of the spread of the disease. Therefore, doubling rate is often calculated using the five-day, seven-day or ten-day moving average of cases to capture trends over longer periods. The government had highlighted seven-day moving averages. Here, we have calculated the doubling rate for five-day moving averages.

### The trends

Using five-day averages, and data till April 27, we show that the doubling rate at the national level increased from 3.21 days on March 23, just ahead of the lockdown, to 7.82 days in the five-day period ending April 17 (when the first phase of lockdown ended), to 10.77 days in the period ending April 27.

The national figures mask the wide variations in the states. Among the 12 states with the highest number of cases on April 27, the disease was growing at the fastest rate in West Bengal, doubling at just 7.13 days, followed by Maharashtra and Gujarat, at 7.9 and 8.3 days respectively. The slowest doubling was in Telangana, at 58 days (see chart).

West Bengal saw an increase of nearly 93% between April 20 and April 27, which corresponds to a cumulative daily growth rate (CDGR) of more than 10%. Cases in Maharashtra and Gujarat grew by 85% and 93%, respectively, in the same period.

In Kerala, which had registered the first three cases of COVID-19 in India in end-January, the doubling time has improved from about 3 days before the lockdown to 37.17 days now. The state has earned global praise for its containment strategy. While Telangana's doubling rate is even slower, Kerala's is significant given that it has a lower number of cases.

Doubling times have increased in all the top 12 states, underlining the effect of the lockdown so far. Except in West Bengal, the CDGR for the last five days of all other states in the top 12 have dropped below 10%. This has happened for the first time for Maharashtra, whose count grew by an average 8.74% per day as compared to over 17% in the first week of April.

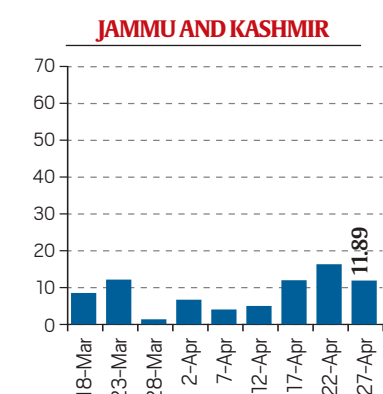
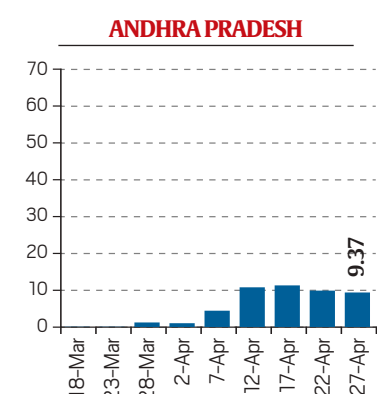
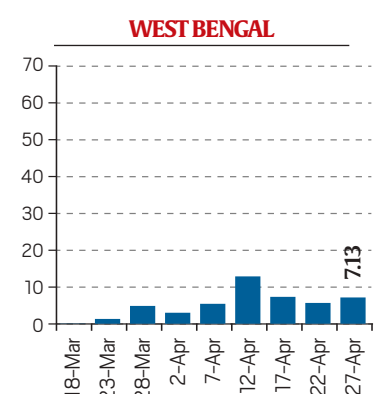
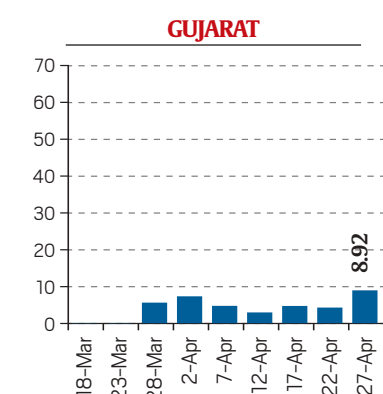
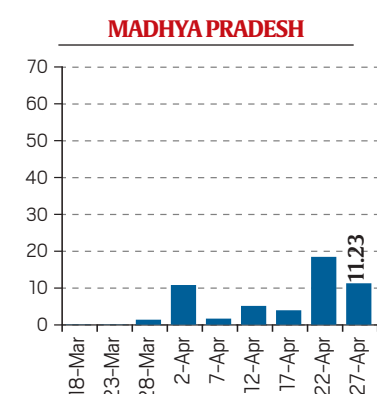
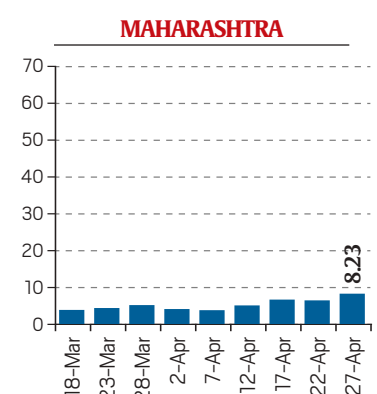
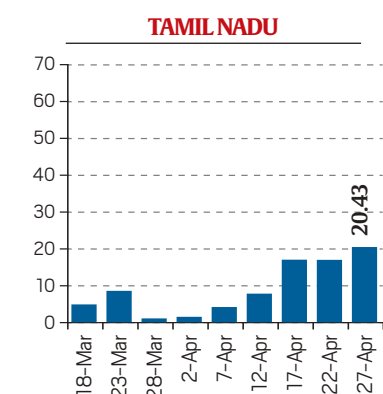
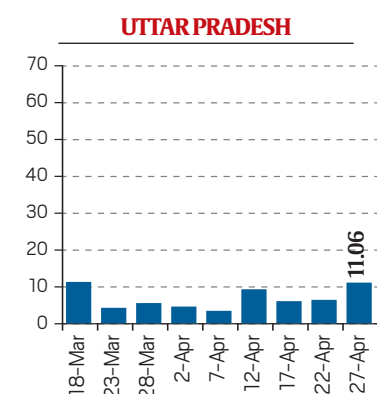
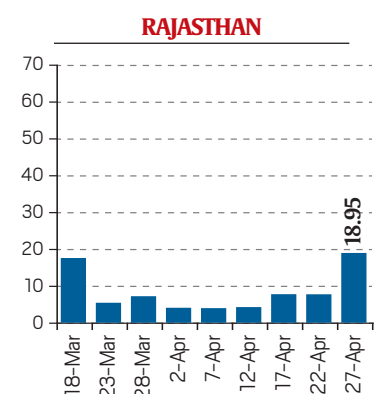
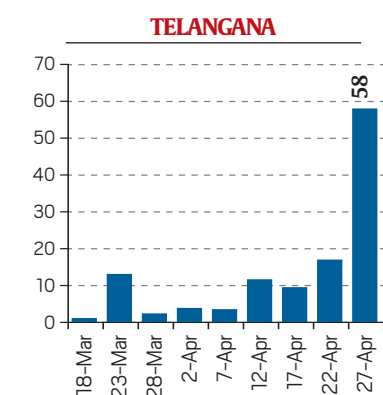
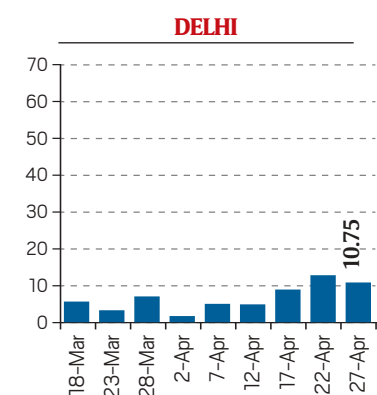
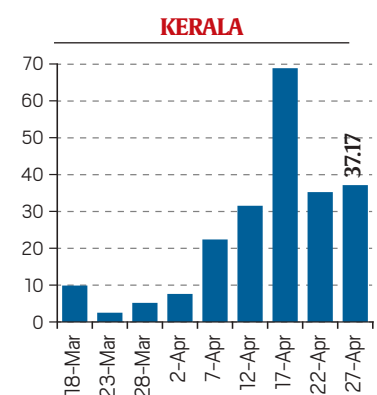
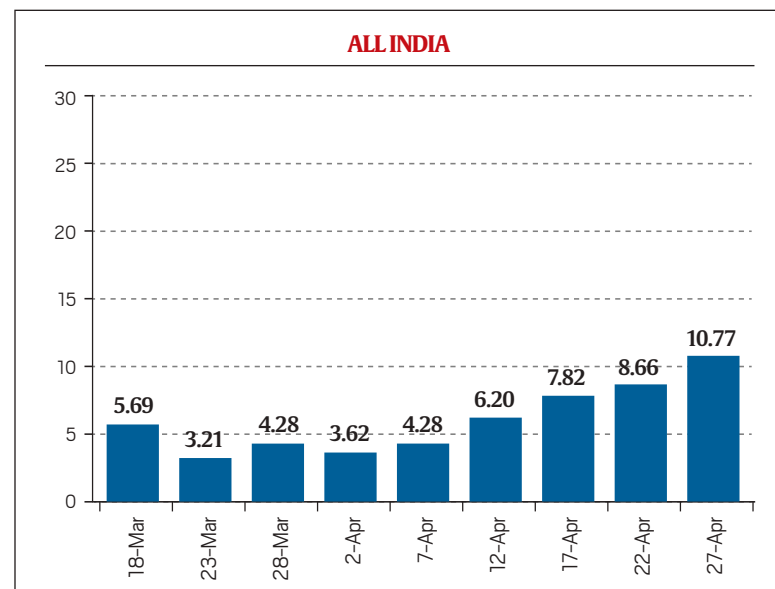
### The caveats

The current Indian Council of Medical Research guidelines allow for testing only people with symptoms, those with travel history, or contacts of infected people. However, 80% of patients are asymptomatic, giving rise to the possibility of many cases going undetected.

"One would expect that as more people are tested, more cases would come to light each day and the doubling interval will also decrease. Since that is not the case here, it suggests that there is a slowdown in the propagation of the disease. These data need to be read in conjunction with the hospitalisation numbers for serious acute pulmonary infection and the population surveillance data on influenza like illness, to give a three dimensional view," said Dr K Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India.

## FASTEST IN WEST BENGAL, SLOWEST IN TELANGANA

Doubling rates for COVID-19, simply defined as the number of days it takes of the count of cases to double, have been calculated here for five-day moving averages and plotted for the country and the 12 states with the highest number of cases as of April 27. The vertical bar against March 22, for example, signifies the doubling rate of cases in the five-day period leading to that date, which was two days before the lockdown was announced. As of April 27, West Bengal had the fastest doubling rate at 7.82 days. Cases in Telangana were doubling at the slowest rate — every 58 days — while Kerala's rate was 37 days.



# Do sex hormones help women fight COVID better? To find out, trials on men

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

FROM TRENDS so far, men have appeared likelier than women to die of COVID-19. While the reason remains an open question, reports from the US over the last two days have described trials that will seek to find out whether the answer lies in two sex hormones in women — estrogen and progesterone.

### The trends & the theories

Various studies have captured a trend that appears to prevail in many countries and regions. In mid-February, a paper by Chinese researchers analysed data from Wuhan, Hubei, and China as a whole and calculated a fatality rate of 2.8% for men, as compared to

1.7% for women. Since then, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Germany, France and the UK have released data that showed a similar trend. Data from the UK's national statistics office, in fact, suggested that men were twice as likely as women to die of COVID-19. And daily data from Australia's Health Department show a visibly higher death rate among men in the age groups 70-79 and 80-89.

India does not release sex-aggregated data on COVID-19 cases and deaths.

As for the cause, there have been various since the trend became obvious, including the possibility that women's sex hormones help them fight the infection better than men. Among other theories related to biology, one draws from the fact that a woman's genetic makeup consists of two X chromosomes (a man has only one of those).

Because X chromosomes contain most of the genes related to the immune system, the inference is that women are better equipped to mount an immune response.

Other theories are based on lifestyle and perceptions — men are likelier to smoke and take risks, which could include not taking enough precautions against infection.

### The hormones

Estrogen and progesterone are the two main sex hormones that characterise a woman. Estrogen helps her develop female physical features and also maintains her reproductive system. Progesterone is secreted by a temporary endocrine gland that the body produces during the second half of the menstrual cycle, and helps prepare the body for possible pregnancy after ovulation. The

male body too has estrogen and produces progesterone, both in smaller amounts.

Now, two teams in the US are testing the theory that these hormones help women fight COVID-19 better. One team, at Stony Brook University, New York, has already started treating male patients of COVID-19 with mild doses of estrogen. The other team, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, will conduct trials with progesterone on men infected with the coronavirus.

More candidates are being recruited for the estrogen trials. "The purpose of this study is to find out if estrogen... given as a patch placed on skin of COVID19 positive or presumptive positive patients for 7 days can reduce the severity of COVID19 symptoms compared to regular care," the US National Library of Medicine says.

The New York Times quoted Dr Sara Ghandehari, principal investigator for the progesterone study of Cedars-Sinai, as saying that men are clearly doing worse than women in ICU, and that pregnant women (who have high levels of estrogen and progesterone) tend to have mild courses of the disease. "So something about being a woman is protective, and something about pregnancy is protective, and that makes us think about hormones," she told The NYT.

### The counter-argument

Women produce the most estrogen and progesterone during reproductive age, and the levels of both fall drastically after menopause. So, if these hormones were responsible for the lower fatality rate among women, the trend should not have shown

itself among older women. However, even elderly women have shown a better survival rate than elderly men.

As such, some experts who study sex differences in immunity have warned that hormones may fail to be the magic bullet that some are hoping for, The NYT report said. Sabra Klein, who studies sex differences in viral infections and vaccination responses at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told The NYT: "We see this bias across the life course. Older men are still disproportionately affected, and that suggests to me it's got to be something genetic, or something else, that's not just hormonal."

The disproportionate fatality rate among men shows itself very prominently among 70-89-year-olds in graphics released by the Australian government.

# 14 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

## PANDEMIC WATCH



Kim Jong Un *File*

### NORTH KOREA

#### Absent Kim may be trying to avoid virus: South

*Seoul:* Fear of catching the coronavirus could have kept North Korean leader Kim Jong Un away from state ceremonies for a key holiday in April, a South Korean minister said Tuesday as speculation swirled over Kim's health. South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, who oversees engagement with the North, said it was plausible that Kim decided against attending because of the coronavirus, given the stringent steps his government has taken to head off an outbreak. "I don't think that's particularly unusual given the current situation," the minister said, though North Korea says it has no confirmed cases of the virus. **REUTERS**

### BANGLADESH

#### 600 apparel factories reopen despite virus risk

*Dhaka:* Nearly a month after Bangladesh ordered garment factories shuttered to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the industry is reopening hundreds of them despite risks the disease might spread. Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, or BGMEA, said she was under pressure to reopen factories after the pandemic cost the industry more than \$3 billion in orders that were cancelled or suspended. Huq said Tuesday that about 600 factories had reopened during this week, adhering to health protocols. Workers living near the factories are the first to return to the production lines, she said. **AP**

### MADAGASCAR

#### President touts herbal drink against virus

*Antananarivo:* President Andry Rajoelina has promoted the drink Covid Organics on national television saying it will "change the course of history". The herbal drink has not been scientifically tested and there's no proof it works against COVID-19. But the president is enthusiastically promoting it. The label on the bottle does not list the ingredients but the president said it is made from artemisia, a bitterroot that is used in some malaria drugs. **AP**

# US nears 1 mn cases, some states ease curbs

## REUTERS

WASHINGTON, NEW YORK, APRIL 28

THE NUMBER of confirmed US coronavirus cases neared 1 million on Tuesday and the projected American death toll rose in a closely watched academic model, even as some states eased restrictions aimed at fighting the pandemic battering the economy.

With President Donald Trump's economic adviser forecasting an unemployment rate of more than 16 per cent for April and many Americans chafing under stay-at-home orders, about a dozen states were moving to restart their battered economies despite a lack of large-scale virus testing.

Public health experts have warned that a premature roll-back of social distancing policies aimed at curbing the spread of the pathogen could cause a surge in new infections.

Georgia, at the vanguard of states reopening businesses, on Monday permitted restaurant dining for the first time in a month. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said on Monday he would let the state's stay-at-home order expire and begin reopening businesses including restaurants and retail shops in phases beginning on Friday.

The governors of other states including hard-hit New York have put off the reopening of businesses out of concern they might fuel a second wave of infections.

More than 56,000 Americans have died of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus, with an average of about 2,000 a day this month, according to a Reuters tally.

The University of Washington's model, often cited by White House officials and state public health authorities, upwardly revised its projected U.S. coronavirus death toll to more than 74,000 US lives by August 4, compared with its previous forecast of 67,000.

#### US House will not return next week

Lawmakers in the US House of Representatives will not return to Washington next week as planned, due to the continuing risk of coronavirus infection, a top House Democrat said on Tuesday, in a reversal of plans outlined only a day earlier.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said he made the decision to keep the chamber on an extended recess after discussing the situation with the official House physician. "The House's physician's view was that there was a risk to members that we would not recommend taking," Hoyer told reporters.



Protesters call for the end of stay-at-home orders in Orange, California. *AP/PTI*

## Coronavirus diplomacy: How China's Red Cross serves the Communist Party

### THE NEW YORK TIMES

NEW YORK, APRIL 28

BEARING THE familiar red and white logo, it looks just like any Red Cross group that rushes to disasters, deploys medics and raises funds across the world with political neutrality and independence.

But there is a big difference: China's Red Cross has been built, funded and directed by the Communist Party — effectively making it an arm of the state.

In Wuhan, the charity's officials were quickly paralysed by bureaucracy, competing mandates and chaos. For days, tens of millions of dollars in funds went unused while piles of protective gear sat in a sprawling warehouse as desperate health workers battled the virus without it.

The Red Cross Society of China did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

As public criticism mounted, China's top leader, Xi Jinping, called on the Red Cross to be more open. "Charitable organizations and the Red Cross must operate efficiently, enhance transparency, and actively accept supervision, so that compassion and goodwill can be promptly fulfilled," Xi said in February.

When a natural disaster strikes, the Chinese government



A medical worker embraces a colleague from Wuhan. *AP File*

often gives the Red Cross a near monopoly on collecting donations. But the Red Cross shares the traits of many of the country's government ministries and state-owned enterprises.

As the Chinese Communist Party looks to expand its influence overseas, so goes the Red Cross.

In Pakistan, where China is building a network of roads, railways and pipelines, the charity has offered ambulances and medical professionals. In Afghanistan, it has treated children with heart disease. In Sri Lanka, it has donated funds for flood victims.

Now, China is following a similar playbook in its coronavirus diplomacy. The charity's image has become crucial to

Beijing's efforts to quell anger about its early missteps in dealing with the outbreak. The Red Cross has sent doctors, masks and traditional Chinese medicine to Iraq. It flew more than \$600,000 in testing kits and surgical hoods to Pakistan.

As they travel the world, Red Cross employees are splashed across Chinese media outlets in a propaganda drive that helps to fuel national pride and blunt public anger at a time of economic distress.

In Baghdad, they are shown discussing the construction of a coronavirus testing center. In Pakistan, they are depicted helping children put on masks. In Italy, they are portrayed visiting hospitals.

#### China rejects calls for compensation

*New York:* China is pushing back against the growing chorus of voices around the world calling for the country to pay compensation for the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

At a briefing Tuesday, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Geng Shuang, accused politicians in the US of "lying through their teeth".

"We advise American politicians to reflect on their own problems and try their best to control the epidemic as soon as possible, instead of continuing to play tricks to deflect blame," he said.

Mr Geng's comments came one day after President Donald Trump suggested in a news briefing that the United States would be seeking "substantial" compensation for Beijing's handling of the coronavirus outbreak. **NYT**

"When I got the news last night at 10 that 40 respirators had been donated...I nearly began to cry," said Giulio Gallera, the top health official of Italy's Lombardy region.

- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Previously it had listed just three symptoms: fever, cough and shortness of breath.

The CDC added the six symptoms after new recommendations were issued by an organisation of public health epidemiologists that is responsible for defining which infectious diseases are tracked and reported to the agency. The organisation, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, or CSTE, recommended that COVID-19 be considered a nationally reportable illness and gave guidelines about how cases should be defined and identified.

The group's recommendations say that cases should be reported if there are positive lab tests, but also if there are clinical

symptoms that meet one of several thresholds. One category involves people who have cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Another involves people with two of the following symptoms: fever, chills, shivers, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or new dysfunction of taste and smell. Cases of people in both categories should be reported as likely COVID-19 only if there is no other more plausible diagnosis, the recommendations say.

While people who become seriously ill from coronavirus infection primarily have acute respiratory distress, other symptoms that accompany the disease can vary widely, doctors and researchers have reported.

It has turned out, for example, that many people with COVID-19 do not have fevers or that their fevers wax and wane, and are sometimes accompanied by chills.

Shortness of breath can emerge at the same time as other symptoms or it can crop up suddenly a week or even 10 days after a person has been experiencing more manageable symptoms like cough and achs.

Some people report a notable loss of smell and taste, an effect that can also occur with other respiratory infections.

The revised CDC list differs somewhat from the symptoms described by the World Health Organization on its website. The WHO says the most common symptoms are fever, dry cough and tiredness.

"Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, sore throat or diarrhea," the WHO says.

## Indian held by US border protection tests positive

*New York:* A 31-year-old Indian man, who was apprehended on the suspicion of illegally crossing into America through the US-Mexico border, has tested positive for the COVID-19, becoming the first individual in the border protection agency's custody to be infected with the virus.

The US Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) said that on April 23, a border patrol agent apprehended three Mexicans and the Indian national sus-

pected of having illegally crossed the US-Mexico border near California.

The Indian national, who was not identified, displayed flu like symptoms, following which he was evaluated by medical personnel and placed in quarantine. He was tested for the COVID-19 and his evaluation came back positive.

"This is the first individual in CBP custody to test positive for COVID-19," the agency said. **PTI**

## Governor of Pakistan's Sindh tests positive for coronavirus

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
KARACHI, APRIL 28

THE GOVERNOR of Pakistan's Sindh province, Imran Ismail, a very close aide of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has tested positive for the coronavirus, his party said.

A stalwart of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Ismail said he was prepared to fight it out. "I believe this is nothing what we are prepared for. May Allah give us the strength to fight the pandemic inshallah," he tweeted. Before he went into self-isolation, the governor met a number of people and attended important meetings.

According to information released by the Governor House, Ismail held separate meetings with delegations of the Jewelers and Manufacturers Association and the Beauty Parlour Association on April 24.



Imran Ismail

On the same day, the governor attended an informal ceremony at a field isolation centre to donate 3,000 protective gear. Meanwhile, Khan wished Ismail a speedy recovery from the coronavirus on Tuesday.

"Praying for Governor Imran Ismail's speedy recovery from COVID19. May Allah grant him the strength to fight this," he tweeted.

"I am thankful to all the cabinet members, friends & family who showed their concern regarding my health...I am in good health & spirit..." Ismail tweeted.

### OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

## Xi calls Nepal counterpart, inquires about Oli's health

**YUBARAJ GHIMIRE**  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 28

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping on Tuesday telephoned his Nepali counterpart Bidhya Devi Bhandari, promising all help in the fight against COVID-19.

A release by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Xi, in his conversation with Bhandari, also expressed happiness over the return of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to a normal work schedule after his kidney transplant surgery last month, and conveyed his best wishes for his good health and happiness.

The phone call comes at a time when Oli is said to be embattled from factions within the ruling Communist Party of Nepal.

A statement released by China, however, did not mention Xi's inquiry about Oli's health. It says, "President Xi Jinping said on Monday evening that the Chinese side had been following the epidemic situation in Nepal, and will continue to firmly support its combat against the COVID-19 outbreak."

Xi, also called for the health and medical institutions in the two countries to strengthen communication and cooperation, the release said.

## Blast in Syria town kills 40

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
ANKARA, APRIL 28

A FUEL tanker exploded Tuesday in an attack on a northern Syrian town controlled by Turkish-backed opposition fighters, killing at least 40 civilians, Turkey's Defense Ministry said.

The Defense Ministry tweeted that the attack took place in a crowded street in Afrin and the dead included 11 children. The ministry said 47 people were wounded.

Turkey's state news agency cited unnamed security officials who said the attack was believed to have been carried out by Syrian Kurdish fighters linked to

Kurdish militants fighting Turkey.

Turkey and allied Syrian fighters took control of Afrin in 2018 in a military operation that expelled local Kurdish fighters and displaced thousands of Kurdish residents. Ankara considers the Kurdish fighters who were in control of Afrin to be terrorists. Since then, there have been a series of attacks on Turkish targets in the area.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the blast occurred in a market and killed 36, including women and children, and wounded about 40 others.

The blast set several cars and

shops on fire and tanker trucks were used to fight the blaze.

Similar blasts in areas controlled by Turkey-backed opposition fighters have killed scores of people in recent months, attacks that Ankara blames on Kurdish fighters.

Turkey supports the Syrian opposition in the war against President Bashar Assad but has joined with Russia to secure and monitor local cease-fires.

Activist collectives in northern Syria urged people in the Afrin area to head to hospitals and donate blood.

The Observatory and other activists said the death toll could rise because some of the wounded were in critical condition.

## Lebanon riots over price hikes leave one protestor dead, scores injured

**REUTERS**  
BEIRUT, APRIL 28

VIOLENT PROTESTS erupted in Lebanon's Tripoli again on Tuesday, with more banks set ablaze after a night of rioting that left one protester dead, according to security and medical sources, in demonstrations renewed by growing economic despair.

A collapse in the Lebanese pound and soaring inflation and unemployment are compounding hardship in Lebanon, which has been in deep financial crisis since October. A shutdown to curb the spread of the new coro-



Soldiers near a car set afire by protesters in Tripoli. *AP*

navirus has exacerbated economic woes.

The man who died was in his

20s and it was not immediately clear who was responsible for his death, the source said.

## 15 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 32,114.5 ▲ 371.44 NIFTY: 9,380.90 ▲ 8.60 NIKKEI: 19,771.19 ▼ 12.03 HANG SENG: 24,575.96 ▲ 295.82 FTSE: 5,944.90 ▲ 98.11 DAX: 10,835.93 ▲ 175.94

International market data till 1900 IST

COVID-19 EFFECT  
ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURINGDistrust against China  
could work to India's  
advantage: PrasadENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

THE GENERAL distrust against China following the COVID-19 outbreak could be an opportunity for India's state governments to try and attract investments into the electronics manufacturing sectors, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Monday. In his conference with state IT ministers, Prasad said that states should be "proactive" when such an opportunity comes, as there will "anger against China".

"That opportunity for India is going to come. We have already announced many incentives and I would like that the states play a crucial role by attracting such investments," Prasad added. Though electronic products from any country would be subject to security audit, the same would be more intense for Chinese products, the Electronics and IT Minister said. "We are not against any country ... we are only pro-India. We are committed to India and will take measures to create opportunities for India. As regards security initiative are concerned ... any product coming from any country, particularly China, we expect proper security audit and verification."

On March 22, the Cabinet had approved three schemes worth Rs 48,000 crore for promotion of electronics manufacturing in the country. Apart from direct production-linked incentives for companies, the government had also announced two schemes under which electronics manufacturing units could get benefits for setting up plants at remote or underdeveloped locations.

The Centre's initial plans to make India a hub for high-end large electronics equipment and semiconductor units hit a roadblock after most global companies opted to assemble in India rather than set up manufacturing units.

The Economic Survey 2019-20 noted this and observed India should follow the

EXPLAINED

Abundance of  
labour an  
advantage

WITH NATIONS across the globe laying the blame on China for hiding the actual information on COVID-19, big multinational corporations are likely to shift base to other nearby cheap labour countries like Taiwan, Indonesia and India.

At the forefront with the maximum available labour, India wants to position itself as the next low-cost manufacturing hub. Domestic electronics sector, which as of now provide auxiliary items and assemblies products, could also get a boost once the high-end device manufacturing units decide to shift base to India.

China model of becoming an assembling hub for the world for 'network products' such as computers, electronics, and road vehicles to raise its share in the world export market.

Reviewing the domestic situation of the information technology (IT) industry, Prasad said that over 95 per cent of employees in the sector were working from home, according to data by Nasscom. To further facilitate work from home measures and ensure social distancing, the government has decided relax the norms till July 31.

The government is also monitoring the spread of fake news and has alerted all social media intermediaries to ensure that any articles or news which can fan communal tension due to any misinformation on COVID-19 must be taken down immediately. Prasad told reporters via a virtual press conference after his meeting with state IT ministers.

## MORGAN STANLEY REPORT ON MUTUAL FUND INDUSTRY

'MFs shifting to stronger borrowers  
could mitigate redemption risk'SANDEEP SINGH  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

EVEN AS there is a growing concern around redemption pressure on debt mutual funds in the country and the Reserve Bank of India on Monday announced a special liquidity window worth Rs 50,000 crore for the industry, following Franklin Templeton's decision to wind up six credit funds, a report prepared by Morgan Stanley says that since mutual funds (MFs) have already shifted significantly towards stronger borrowers, the downside risk is contained.

"Recent events at credit risk funds have increased risk of redemptions at debt mutual funds. However, we think a big shift in AUM mix over the past 18 months towards stronger borrowers should mitigate this risk," it said.

Data on deployment of funds by MFs available on Sebi's website shows that between March 2019 and March 2020, MFs moved towards safer assets. The overall exposure of debt assets under management (AUM) to government securities rose from 3.98 per cent to 8.49 per cent over the last year. They also raised their holding of PSU bond/debt from 11.85 per cent to 15.09 per cent in the same period. Besides, the share of MF al-

DEPLOYMENT OF FUNDS		
ASSET TYPE	MAR 2020	MAR 2019
Government Securities	8.49	3.98
COMMERCIAL PAPER		
NBFC	3.33	8.13
Others	13.75	18.98
Bank Certificates of Deposit	10.16	15.49
Treasury Bills	4.73	0.83
CBLO	8.55	3.59
Other Money Market Investments	3.11	1.15
CORPORATE DEBT		
NBFC	7.19	8.46
Others	22.69	24.31
PSU Bonds / Debt	15.09	11.85
Asset Backed Securities	0.80	0.98
Bank FD	1.11	1.78
Any Other (Please Specify)	1.01	0.48

All figures show percentage share of Debt AUM; Source: Sebi

location to treasury bills and collateralised borrowing and lending obligations rose by 3.9 per cent and 4.96 per cent, respectively.

On the other hand, exposure to commercial paper of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) reduced from 8.13 per cent last March to 3.33 per cent in March 2020. The exposure to corporate debt (NBFCs) declined

from 8.46 per cent to 7.19 per cent in the same period. MFs even reduced the share of investment in commercial paper of companies other than NBFCs from 18.98 per cent to 13.75 per cent over the last one year, and they also cut exposure to banks' certificate of deposits from 15.49 to 10.16 per cent.

While credit risk funds that have come under pressure now,

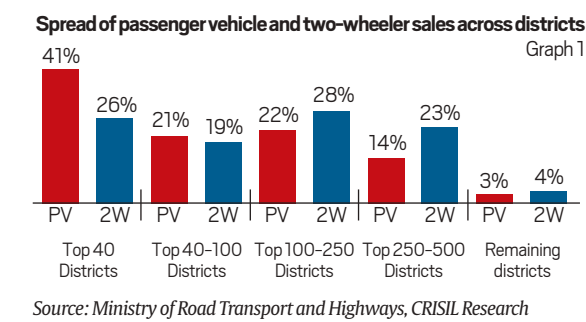
constitute 5 per cent of overall mutual fund debt AUM, the report said that NBFCs/HFCs with strong percentage constitute more than 80 per cent of MF debt exposure to NBFCs/HFCs. It further said that lenders facing funding constraint represent around 5 per cent of overall mutual fund debt exposure to NBFCs/HFCs.

"We think further downside risks to mutual fund exposure to the NBFC/HFC segment are contained. We note that of a sample of 25+ leading NBFCs/HFCs for which we were able to get granular funding data, the share of mutual funds in overall borrowings is down from 18 per cent in Sept-18 to 12 per cent as of Dec-19. However, for entities facing funding constraints, it is down more sharply, from 28 per cent to 6 per cent," said the Morgan Stanley report.

It further noted that while mutual fund debt investments in NBFCs/HFCs have been a big contributor to their growth between FY 14 and first half of FY 19, mutual funds have been cutting debt exposure to them on account of decline in AUM as well as risk aversion and regulation. The report indicated that with this development, along with banks turning risk-averse towards NBFCs, in turn raises a potential funding risk to NBFC segment.

'Auto sales may remain  
muted even after lockdown'

*The extended nationwide lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the automobile industry to a standstill, with manufacturers and dealers — who were grappling with weak demand and liquidation of BS-IV inventory ahead of the shift to BS-VI — now left wringing hands, a Cricisil report said*



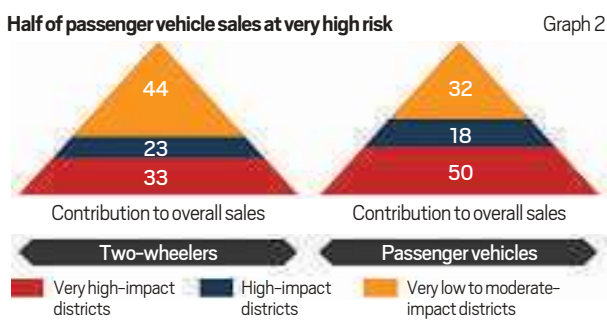
**SALES ACROSS DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIES:** Two-wheeler (2W) and passenger vehicle (PV) segments cater to different customer segments. As a result, the geographies they are dependent on for sales also varies

**Sales in 'very high impact' districts at risk:** Level of risk for 2W and PV segments is

considerably different in 'very high impact' districts, or districts where both automobile sales intensity and COVID-19 infection are significantly high

**Resumption of normal operations at would depend on whether a dealership is outside a demarcated hotspot**

Source: Cricisil/PTI

Deadline to bid  
for Air India  
now extended  
till June 30

**New Delhi:** The Centre has extended the deadline to bid for national carrier Air India, which is undergoing disinvestment, by two months till June 30.

Issuing a corrigendum to the expression of interest (Eoi) for sale of Air India, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said the deadline has been extended in view of the "request received from the IBs (interested bidders) in view of the prevailing situation arising out of COVID-19".

Further, the date for intimation to qualified interested bidders has been extended by 2 months till July 14, DIPAM said in the corrigendum on its website. **ENS**

7.4 lakh claims  
processed,  
₹2,367 cr paid  
out by EPFO

**New Delhi:** The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has processed 7.40 lakh claims and disbursed an amount of Rs 2,367.65 crore during this month in the online facility to allow withdrawal not exceeding the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to a member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, in the wake of the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

Including settlement of other claims, the total disbursal during the lockdown has been Rs 4,684.52 crore by processing 12.91 lakh claims, the Labour Ministry said in a statement. **ENS**

RBI's RTI response: Finance Minister hits  
back at Congress over list of wilful defaultersENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

HOURS AFTER Congress spokesperson on Monday Randeep Surjewala released the list of wilful defaulters, while sharing the RBI response — that showed that banks "technically" wrote-off Rs 68,607 crore in outstanding loans of top 50 wilful defaulters, including of firms belonging to fugitive economic offenders Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya, till September 30, 2019 — to an RTI query filed by activist Saket Gokhale, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman hit back at former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Surjewala.

In a series of 13 tweets, the FM suggested that the wilful defaults originated in UPA's tenure and that Gandhi and Surjewala have "attempted to mislead people in a brazen manner". She added that "neither while in power, nor while in the opposition has the @INCIndia shown any commit-

ment or inclination to stop corruption & cronyism."

While asking the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi to introspect why they fail to play a constructive role in cleaning up the system or show any commitment or inclination to stop corruption and cronyism, she credited the NDA government for pursuing the wilful defaulters. "It is @PMO @narendramodi government which is pursuing these wilful defaulters. 9967 recovery suits, 3515 FIRs, invoking Fugitive Amendment Act in cases are on now. Total value of attachment & seizures in the cases of Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya : Rs 18332.7 Crore."

Stating that scheduled commercial banks had written-off Rs 1,45,226 crore between 2009-10 & 2013-14, she pointed that provisions are made for NPAs as per the four-year provisioning cycle laid down by the RBI. "Upon full provisioning being done banks write-off the fully provided NPA

but continue to pursue recovery against the borrower. No loan is waived off," Sitharaman added.

Hitting out at then UPA government, she said that defaulters who do not repay despite having capacity to pay, divert or siphon off funds, or dispose of secured assets without bank's permission are categorised as wilful defaulters. "They are those well connected promoters who benefited from UPA's 'Phone banking'."

The FM also cited former Reserve Bank governor Raghuram Rajan as saying, "A large number of bad loans originated in the period 2006-2008 ... Too many loans were made to well-connected promoters who have a history of defaulting on their loans ... Public sector bankers continued financing promoters even while private sector banks were getting out. RBI could have raised more flags about the quality of lending." She added that in 2015, the Centre asked PSBs to check all NPAs above Rs 50 crore for wilful default.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi alleged that the NDA government had hidden the names of top 50 wilful bank loan defaulters from Parliament because it included the names of some of the friends of the BJP. On Twitter, he said that on March 16 he had asked the FM in the Lok Sabha for the list but "the finance minister refused to answer. And now the RBI has given the list which includes the names of BJP's friends including that of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi. That is why the truth was hidden in Parliament."

Gandhi's attack came after the Congress, referring to the RTI reply attacked the Centre. Addressing a press conference, Surjewala — Congress' communication department head — alleged that the central bank, through the RTI reply, has disclosed that the Narendra Modi government had waived off Rs 68,607 crore due from 50 defaulters, including absconding jeweller Nirav Modi and his partner Mehul Choksi.

## FROM PAGE ONE

'It's a pralay, need to plan for negative growth, spend extra 5% of GDP'

being decisive or this can even aggravate pre-existing vulnerabilities.

On the kind of fundamental shift he foresees in the post-COVID-19 world, he said, "... certainly on some aspects of globalisation, we are going to see a reversal. Reliance on China is going to come down across the board and that means more de-globalisation ... how we regulate FDI is probably going to end up being more conservative. The second thing, of course, is this whole surveillance state. The fact that to deal with pandemics you need to have

a more intrusive state to be effective: does the world become what I would call a 'surveillance on steroids' states across the board. And this whole move towards populism and illiberalism, I think that, again, is an open question."

In India, Subramanian said, while the Reserve Bank's steps has left a huge overhang of liquidity in the financial system, it was not getting translated into credit due to the fear of 4Cs: courts, CVC (Central Vigilance Commission), CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) and CAG (Comptroller and Auditor

General).

"The RBI has provided a lot of liquidity, but it hasn't translated into actual credit flowing to companies. I think the two constraints are: first, who makes those decisions, and I think we need a lot of protection for people to make those decisions. And second, who bears the risk of that lending. There is no doubt in my mind that the risk of lending should be borne by the government in this situation. This could be via a credit guarantee scheme, or a separate government fund, like, in the United States," he said.

Uttar Pradesh pitches  
itself to US companies  
keen on shifting their  
base from ChinaLIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

A DAY after Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked states to utilise the opportunities thrown up by the coronavirus crisis in the world to their advantage, Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday engaged with US businesses to explore the possibilities. The state received quite a positive response as many firms appeared to be keen to shift their base out of China, according to a minister in the Yogi Adityanath government.

During a video conference with almost 100 investors and companies from the United States on Tuesday, Uttar Pradesh Minister for MSME, Investment and Exports Siddharth Nath Singh was flooded with questions on what the state could offer if the companies shift their base from China. "We have told them the Uttar Pradesh government under the leadership of Yogi Adityanathji already has quite business and industry friendly policies and according to their requirements, we are open for discussion and changes," Singh told *The Indian Express*.

Many firms considered leaders in their respective sectors, including Lockheed Martin, Adobe Inc, Honeywell, Boston Scientific, Cisco System, Fedex etc, attended the video conference. Singh said companies — including global delivery services firms like UPS and FedEx — asked the state government where would be their centre they could base on. "We suggested the proposed Jewar international airport could be used."

Singh said medical devices maker Boston Scientific was keen to know what would be incentives UP would be offering if it shift its base from China. "I told them that we are ready to engage with them and we can discuss changes according to their requirements. To the pharma companies which expressed interest ... near Lucknow, we said it would be an excellent location for them. The same with the defence firms, because Uttar Pradesh defence corridor could be used by them."

"We told them we already have announced many incentives: capital subsidy, land subsidy and a bouquet of incentives. Some wanted to know about the MSME to which our response was UP already has around 9 million MSME

Almost 100 investors  
and companies from the  
United States held a  
video conference with  
Uttar Pradesh Minister  
for MSME, Investment  
and Exports Siddharth  
Nath Singh

units which could be used for multiple purposes," he said.

The state government has recently discussed measures including amendment to the state's industry policy to attract companies that are keen to shift their base from China. Singh and the UP Industry Minister had held a meeting earlier this month with senior officials and asked them to work out a road map which includes tweaking policies for such firms.

The minister said those who attended the meeting were also keen to know that how the state has so far managed to fight the coronavirus successfully. "I told them it's our Chief Minister who leads the battle and we have been quite successful in containing the spread of the virus," Singh added.

With the pandemic disrupting the global business and triggering a rethink among global investors as well as industries to diversify their sourcing and supply chain, the PM has asked his ministers as well as state chief ministers to explore ways to cash in on the situation. It echoed in almost all the addresses he has made since the country went for a lockdown in the wake of COVID-19. While interacting with his Council of Ministers on April 6, Modi asked them to "strategise for the emergent conditions" post-lockdown.

According to sources, on Monday, while addressing the chief ministers, the PM said many global companies are reviewing their sourcing from China — where the virus erupted — and every state should see how they can make use of the opportunity.

Singh's meeting with the companies was facilitated by United States India Strategic Partnership Forum. He informed the companies about the 90 lakh MSMEs in state, which could benefit them, as well as expressways in the state and different sectoral policies for industries. **WITHENS/LUCKNOW**

RIL to consider  
rights issue at  
board meeting  
on April 30

**Mumbai:** Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), in a stock exchange filing, said it is planning to consider a rights issue at its board meeting on April 30. This would be RIL's first rights issue in nearly three decades. However, it did not provide any details of the rights issue under consideration.

RIL shares declined marginally by 0.15 per cent to Rs 1,428.10 on the BSE on Tuesday. The promoters hold slightly over 50 per cent stake in the company. **ENS**

## BRIEFLY

Sebieases  
compliance  
norms for MFs

**New Delhi:** Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday extended the deadline by six months for mutual funds to comply with the highest limits of investment in unlisted non-convertible debentures (NCDs). **PTI**

FY20: LIC  
improves  
performance

**New Delhi:** Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) achieved its highest number of policies for the last six years in FY20. Individual new business performance, as of March 2020, was at 2.19 crore in number of policies and Rs 51,227 crores in first year premium income. **ENS**



**“Sarwan, you are worse than the coronavirus right now... Sarwan, you are a snake. You are so vindictive. You are so immature.”**

**CHRIS GAYLE**

ON FALL-OUT WITH RAMNARESH SARWAN, ASSISTANT COACH OF THE JAMAICA TALLAWAHS

# Saving Australia: World T20 cancellation might see India extend tour

With BCCI looking to lead cricket's post COVID-19 recovery, Team India likely to play more ODIs, T20Is during scheduled series Down Under

**DEVENDRA PANDEY**  
MUMBAI, APRIL 28

THE CANCELLATION of the T20 World Cup in Australia might result in India playing more ODIs and T20Is than previously scheduled during the year-ending tour down under. It's a move that will help Cricket Australia (CA) cut its losses as it struggles to deal with the COVID-19 economic slump.

With BCCI keen on a leadership role in cricket's recovery once sports resumes, India's itinerary will see a major rewrite, increasing the workload and travel of its cricketers. Besides adding new series to their over-booked Future Tours Programme (FTP), India will honour its old commitments and undertake tours that didn't take place because of the ongoing lockdown.

A series against India is always lucrative for a host nation since it attracts millions of eyeballs, resulting in a multi-fold increase in broadcast rights and in-stadia advertisements revenue. While smaller nations like New Zealand, West Indies and Sri Lanka have historically banked on India tours to sustain themselves, the ongoing pandemic

has put even the bigger cricketing countries like Australia under financial stress.

BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal, giving details of the plan put forward by secretary Jay Shah at the recent chief executives' meeting, said India will lend a helping hand to boards dealing with the economic uncertainty.

"Once things settle down, BCCI will chalk out a plan. There are a few suggestions, for example we are scheduled to play Zimbabwe in the coming days which might not happen. But we will try to play them once the situation improves. This will give a chance for Zimbabwe to earn money through their TV deals. We will also ask other boards whether they would want to play extra games. It could be Australia, Sri Lanka or any other nation. We will ask other boards and try to come up with a formula where everyone can make some money and be financially stable," Dhumal told *The Indian Express*.

India has committed to play West Indies and Zimbabwe this monsoon, followed by a South Africa tour, the T20 World Cup and then the tour to Australia.

Dhumal said the Indian board will work



Besides adding new series to their over-booked Future Tours Programme (FTP), India will honour its old commitments and undertake tours that didn't take place because of the ongoing lockdown. *File*

for the best interests of every board and a detailed dialogue will take place in the future whenever cricket resumes.

"There is a chance one has to relook at the FTP (Future Tours Programme) or have a rejig in scheduling. All things will get clear once the Coronavirus is gone and then only can we have detailed talks on how to find a solution in terms to helping other boards."

The Indian team attracts broadcasters and every board wants to host them. Dhumal says India will have a big role to play once things are back to normal. Instead of arm-twisting which BCCI was accused of earlier, the new regime wants to be the 'Big Brother'.

"We want to be like a big brother to them in these tough times. Our secretary Jay (Shah) put forward a proposal during the ICC meeting and everybody appreciated it. The situation won't be the same again, for sure. Every board will suffer some way or the other. Nobody knows the exact numbers. As our secretary Jay said in the meeting, the BCCI wants to take everyone along. We understand cricket economics. BCCI will help other boards so that they can stand on their feet once things get better," Dhumal explained.

On the effect of Covid-19 on the Indian board's finances, he said: "BCCI is fine at the moment. Players' interest is paramount to us. We have instructed to release money to our players, including domestic cricketers. Officials will be getting their dues in the coming days."

## How investing in equities has hurt Cricket Australia's finances

CANCELLATION OF the Test series against India in December-January could be catastrophic for Cricket Australia (CA) for two reasons.

To start with, the four-Test series, which might have an additional game, is reportedly worth \$300 million, all broadcast deals included. Also, as *The Australian* reported, CA has lost a significant part of its reserves on the equity market. The paper revealed that CA chief executive Kevin Roberts has warned people about money running out by the end of August.

CA's 2018-19 annual report mentioned that the governing body of Australian cricket had a little over \$90 in shares. Following the revenue loss, however, the financial crisis has become so acute that earlier this month, CA decided to stand down 80 per cent of its staff until July. As per the financial report, the organisation had \$26.6 in cash reserves last year, down from \$200

million in 2016. CA is likely to announce pay cuts for its contracted players.

There's even a question mark over the Australian board meeting the organisational expenses of the 2020 ICC T20 World Cup if the tournament is played as per schedule, in October-November.

Former International Cricket Council chief executive Malcolm Speed feels that Roberts has "stumbled through" the complicated financial issues, but he defended the decision to go ahead with stock market investments.

"Well, before it lost millions on the stock market it made millions of dollars on the stock market and its lost part of its profits, but it hasn't lost anything yet because it hasn't sold," Speed told *SEN Radio*.

But the overwhelming belief is that for a non-profit organisation, the decision to invest in high-risk equity market didn't augur well. **ENS**

## ‘Games will be off if corona spills into 2021’



A man with a face mask walks in front of Miraitowa and Someity, mascots for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. *File*

THE POSTPONED Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled after the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year, the organising committee's president warned, ruling out further delays. The comments, in an interview with a Japanese sports daily published Tuesday, come as medical experts doubted whether the pandemic can be sufficiently contained by next year to hold an event drawing participants and spectators from around the world. The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021. But Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori was categorical when asked by the *Nikkan*

Sports daily whether the Games could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No." "In that case, it's cancelled," Mori said.

Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle against coronavirus to "fighting an invisible enemy".

If the virus is successfully contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer", he added. "Mankind is betting on it."

Masa Takaya, a Tokyo 2020 spokesman, declined to comment on a possible cancellation of the Games and told reporters that Mori's remarks were based on "the chairman's own thoughts". **AFP**

### French leagues postponed till September: Prime minister

French professional sports leagues including football and rugby cannot restart before September because of coronavirus restrictions, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Tuesday. He said no event where more than 5,000 people gather would be allowed until at least September. "The 2019-2020 professional sports leagues, notably football, cannot yet restart," Philippe told a televised address to French parliament. "I would like to be precise here, no large sports gathering or any gathering of 5,000 people or more, needing the permission of the local police and long prior arrangements, will be allowed before September," Philippe said. **AFP**

### Bundesliga targets mid-May

The Bundesliga could return by "the middle or end of May", Germany's sports ministers have said, as the league awaits the go-ahead from Angela Merkel's government to resume the season. The sports ministers of Germany's 16 states met Monday and announced in a statement that it is "justifiable" for the league to resume "in empty stadiums". "The German Football League must create and enforce the strictest hygienic and medical conditions, and monitor them with appropriate measures," added the statement. German Chancellor Merkel will meet state leaders in Berlin on Thursday. **AFP**

### Shun overseas players: Vaughan to Counties

Former England captain Michael Vaughan feels ECB should consider shortening the County Championship this along with scrapping of overseas recruits for the next two years. "You have to look at every area where you can save a few quid," Vaughan said on the Tuffers and Vaughan Show on BBC



Radio 5 Live. "Traditionalists will go mad at this, but these are unprecedented times. The next two years, look at not having overseas players for four-day game?" **PTI**

### F1 shutdown extended

A factory shutdown for Formula One teams and engine makers has been extended for a second time to a period of 63 consecutive days, the governing FIA said. It said in a statement that its World Motor Sport Council had approved an extension, running potentially into June depending on when teams started their closures, from the previous 35 days. The shutdown, first announced in March when the sport was hoping to race in May, was initially for 21 days but that was extended on April 7. Teams normally take most of August off, but that period has now been freed up to give F1 room to reschedule races. **REUTERS**

### India loses boxing worlds hosting rights

India on Tuesday lost the hosting rights of the 2021 men's world boxing championship to Serbia after the national federation failed to pay the host fee, prompting the International Boxing Association (AIBA) to terminate the agreement signed in 2017. "After New Delhi didn't fulfill its obligations to pay host fee as mentioned in the Host City Agreement terms, AIBA has terminated the contract. Therefore, India would have to pay a cancellation penalty of USD 500," the AIBA said in a statement. **PTI**

Forced into an unprecedented lockdown, sport is staring at unfathomable despair. Indian athletes, though, have given the country reasons to rejoice in the past. THE INDIAN EXPRESS looks back at a bunch of these memories.

# LORD AND MASTER



**THOSE MONTHS.  
THOSE MINUTES**

**AUG '79; JUNE '82; JUNE '86**

"You can win many Grand Slams. But people will always go through the list to see how many Wimbledons you've won."

**JUNE 7, 1986**

"I just reminded him once and Maninder batted extremely well. I got the third hundred but more importantly, we got a good lead."

Vengsarkar looks back at his three Test tons at Lord's – the only such feat by an overseas batsman – that are remembered till date

**GAURAV BHATT**

OH, TO walk half a mile in Dilip Vengsarkar's shoes. Especially, the stretch from St. John's Wood tube station to the time capsule that is Lord's cricket ground. His first visit was more than 40 years ago, but admirers, lugging their old-school photo albums, still flock around when the only overseas batsman to score three Test centuries there makes the walk.

"I am always surprised whenever I am at Lord's. The English fans know who's who. They still believe in autographs and photographs. But they don't disturb you. They wait for their moment to approach you," says Vengsarkar.

"When I first toured in 1979, everybody had said that you'll be written about only if you score runs in England. And Lord's, well, you read so much about the ground, hear so much about it on the commentary that you want to succeed there. More than two centuries old, and the way they care about their history and tradition is unbelievable. Now, just making that walk to the stadium, walking on the greens there, you get goose pimples. It feels like yesterday, *yaar*."

### Win-win

Never had Vengsarkar been more nervous at the venue than he was during his third England tour in 1986. The previous two visits had yielded two etchings on the Lord's Honours Board for Vengsarkar, who was batting at 85 when No. 11 Maninder Singh walked in. India were 303/9 and had earned a first-innings lead of nine runs, and Vengsarkar's mind wavered to the summer before, when he was left stranded at 98 in Sri Lanka. "That match, Maninder was playing well until he got bowled playing across. It was on my mind, a hundred per cent," Vengsarkar laughs. "I just reminded him once and Maninder batted extremely well. I got the third hundred but more importantly, we got a good lead."

The unbeaten 126 set up India's first win at Lord's – "I just looked around and felt the happiness on every Indian's face. They all drank and danced under the balcony, on the ground itself".



Dilip Vengsarkar scored a hundred at Lord's during the three tours of 1979, 1982 and 1986. *File*

Two weeks later at Headingley, 61 and an unbeaten 102 from Vengsarkar secured a series victory for India.

"I was on top of the Deloitte ratings for 21 months straight," says Vengsarkar, who finished 1986, his most prolific year, with 793 runs at an average of 132.16 with four centuries. "But these things were always a by-product. Records, centuries, all that will happen. Winning matches was always the most important."

Cruelly though, Vengsarkar had to witness Indian cricket's biggest triumph from the sidelines of his favourite haunt. In the heady doorway of the 1983 World Cup win, Vengsarkar is relegated to one frame, that of him shaking his head, clapping on the dressing room balcony as Mohinder Amarnath plucks a stump as souvenir. He had already scored centuries at Lord's in 1979 and 1982 (Vengsarkar is quick to add a fiery 96 in a tour game against MCC) but an injury inflicted by a Malcolm Marshall snorter kept him out of the final.

"I was injured in the middle of the tour, almost two weeks from the final. I was fit for the match but the Indian team was doing really well. And when the team is in good form and performing, the winning combination always stays. Of course, you feel bad missing out on an iconic game."

### Summer of '79

However, it was not 'love at first sight' between Vengsarkar and Lord's.

After the initial excitement came the intimidating, lonely walk from the pavilion to the centre, which very well could have been half a mile on its own. And as mortifying as a walk to the school principal's office. It starts from the large door in the corners of the dressing room, through the creaking corridors lined with photographs and member rooms, down the sectioned staircase, across the fabled, uncarpeted long room that doubles as a museum with its paintings and paraphernalia, down the stone steps, between the throng of spectators and onto the hallowed green.

For his first Lord's innings, a 12-ball duck, Vengsarkar made that to-and-fro at least six times.

"Rain interruptions, but you soon learn that's no excuse in England. And at Lord's, if you score a duck, it's a long way back. So the second time I went in, I was muttering 'I don't want to get a pair at Lord's. That will be a disaster'," Vengsarkar recalls. "I didn't want that against my name in the record books."

He scored 103 in the second innings and, along with Gundappa Vishwanath (113), helped save the Test. He cut, slashed, pulled, glanced, guided, punched. And he drove. And for a fine driver like Vengsarkar, slopes be damned. "I never thought about that slope," Vengsarkar says of the famous peculiarity of Lord's, a two-and-a-half metre drop that runs diagonally across the pitch.

"In the later part of my England tours, when I played league cricket (unofficial games played across venues such as West Brom, Sunderland and Chester-le-Street), I came across many grounds with massive slopes. In England, they don't level the grounds. Headingley too has a slope, it goes the other way, east-west. You could see Bob Willis running uphill.

"Players who went in with a positive frame of mind succeeded. At that level, it isn't like an international bowler will only bring it back in because of the slope. They took it away and you had to adjust," adds Vengsarkar. "Technically, it is very important in England to stay absolutely side on and play on the off-side. The bowling used to be middle and off to taking it away. If you opened up, you're gone. You'll square up, you will edge to slip. Side on, you got a better view of the ball moving away. I loved to drive, but you had to be very careful of the movement."

The bowlers were menacing and the conditions more so. Everybody remembers the Bothams, Willis and Pringles but Vengsarkar swears by the miscellany of seamers that made the ball talk in cold English summers.

"Mike Hendrick, John Lever, Graham Dilley. These were all top county bowlers, and our England tours took place in very cold and gloomy conditions. Facing the pace you don't mind, but the balls wobbled when the English bowlers bowled, you wouldn't know which way it would go."

Then there were the lost causes at Lord's. Vengsarkar singles out two innings when he

was squarely in the zone before untimely dismissals stopped his charge. First was the opening Test of the 1982 tour, the middle piece of his Lord's trifecta. Following on after the hosts had piled on 433, Vengsarkar scored 157 but says he could have carried on a lot longer.

"I was on the way to score a double hundred, more than that," recalls Vengsarkar. "We were shot out early in the first innings (128 all out), so we were trying to save the match. It's all ifs and buts. It was a slow bouncer from (Bob) Willis, edged it and was caught at deep fine leg. That was an enjoyable inning. The wicket was good. Sunshine throughout the day, wicket became a beauty. That one delivery I played badly. Call it complacency, overconfidence."

Then there was the 1990 tour, Vengsarkar's last, when the 34-year-old couldn't make it four in four. The visitors were always playing catch-up after Graham Gooch's first-innings 333. Centuries from Ravi Shastri and Mohammad Azharuddin raised hopes of a fightback, but Vengsarkar was caught behind at 52. "I remember I was stroking the ball really well. At 52, there was nobody on the leg side, and it was such a faint nick (against offie Eddie Hemmings). In India, you wouldn't hear such edges and you could just stay. In cold England, you could hear such nicks from the pavilion. It was very obvious. I scored 35 in the second but we lost."

In addition to being the only non-English centurion to make the honours board three times – "It's not like they do it *aanam se*, in a day or two. Immediately after your innings, your name is there" – Vengsarkar had a tavern suite named after him by MCC in 2001, and six years later his portrait (along with those of Kapil Dev and Bishan Singh Bedi) went up outside the visiting team dressing room. Lord's wasn't the most successful ground for Vengsarkar (four centuries at Feroz Shah Kotla) neither England his favourite opposition (he scored six tons against West Indies). Does he ever get bored of fielding questions about the Lord's passages?

"Absolutely not," Vengsarkar says. "You can win many Grand Slams. But people will always go through the list to see how many Wimbledons you've won."