



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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INDIAN
EXPRESS
GROUP



Delhi adds 117 private clinics to Covid list

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

SIGNALLING ITS estimate of the Covid-19 spread in Delhi, the state government on Sunday directed 117 private clinics with a capacity of at least 50 beds to earmark 20 per cent of them for positive cases.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said in a tweet that the government "felt an imperative need" to increase the number of beds. The nursing homes that are covered under the directive will continue to provide treatment to non-Covid patients too, officials said. They have also been allowed to add 25 per cent extra beds, depending on need and availability of space.

Delhi reported 508 fresh cases on Sunday, taking the total to 13,418. Of the 1,886 patients currently in hospital, 1,379 are undergoing treatment in six government facilities. Ten private facilities have also been roped in.

The latest order, Dr Nutan Mundeja, director-general of health services, said: "It has been found that in the recent past, a majority of beds earmarked for Covid-19 patients in the dedicated private hospitals are occupied at a given time. Therefore, there is a need to increase the number of beds dedicated for Covid-19 patients in the city private hospitals."

On Sunday, most of the top designated private hospitals were running at 100 per cent bed capacity in Covid ICUs.

At Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital in Saket, all 32 beds in the Covid ICU were full. "Initially, we had 160 beds earmarked for Covid-19 patients but we increased it to 194 on Saturday," said a hospital spokesperson. The eight Covid ICU beds at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital and the three at Fortis Hospital in Shalimar Bagh were also occupied.

WORLD



PUSH TO REOPEN HOUSES OF WORSHIP IN EUROPE

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APANDEMIC PRESCRIPTION

SHAMIKA RAVI

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GOVT & POLITICS



MAHARASHTRA GOVERNOR WANTS RAJ BHAVAN TO BE INDEPENDENT

PAGE 5

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

FROM AN Indian food company placing one of its top-selling products against the tri-colour background to a foreign shoemaker invoking its 89-year old presence in the country to buttress its Indian roots, companies are bracing to either leverage Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "vocal for local" call as a tool to market their brands under the nationalistic banner or are gearing up to tackle potential backlash on account of a brand's foreign identity — de-



At IGI Airport's Terminal 3, which becomes operational on Monday, passenger baggage will be sanitised in 'UV tunnels' to check the spread of the novel coronavirus. At least 13 such tunnels have been set up. *Abhinav Saha*

MUMBAI AIRPORT TO OPERATE 25 ARRIVALS, 25 DEPARTURES

Domestic flights begin today, 11 states and J&K will quarantine

Ministry asks airlines to display state-specific information on their sites

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

A DAY before airlines resume domestic flights, at least 11 states and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir have mandated either institutional or home quarantine for arriving passengers. A spreading sense of caution among states, hours before operations are set to resume, led to confusion among civil aviation sector stakeholders.

On Sunday evening, senior airline executives met Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola and other government officials to fine tune last-minute modalities, and to understand how to deal with a

BUSINESS AS USUAL



flurry of state government orders and guidelines.

In the meeting that lasted over an hour, the government in-

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW

MP: If passengers test positive, to be sent to Covid care centre or institutional quarantine for 10 days

KERALA: Travel permit for flying in, 14-day quarantine

UP: Incoming passengers to submit details, 14-day home quarantine

TAMIL NADU: Thermal-screening, 14-day quarantine for incoming passengers

ASSAM: 1,000 hotel rooms in Guwahati for quarantine

WEST BENGAL: Domestic flights to resume May 28

formed airlines about the "cautiousness" of state governments in allowing people flying into their borders in large numbers. Airlines were asked to display all state-specific information on their websites besides other in-

formation necessary for passengers to know ahead of flying.

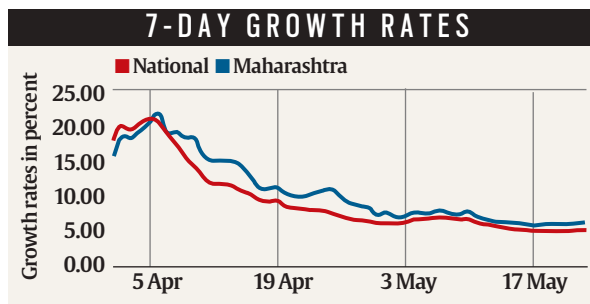
Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CASE CONCENTRATION

Maharashtra accounts for a third of all-India cases, shapes Covid map

On March 24, it had a fifth of all cases; last 10 days, 40% of all new cases

**AMITABH SINHA**
PUNE, MAY 24

IN THE nearly three months the Coronavirus has been in India, the one enduring trend has been the dominance of Maharashtra in the growth of Covid in the country. If anything, this has steadily strengthened with time.

On March 24, when the first countrywide national lockdown was imposed, Maharashtra had one-fifth of all the Coronavirus infections in the country. Two months later, as India's caseload has gone past 1.3 lakh, Maharashtra's share has increased to more than one-third. In the last ten days, more than 40 per cent of new infections detected in the country have come from Maharashtra.

Such is the dominance that

EXPLAINED Mumbai, Pune hold key

THIS IS double-edged. If Mumbai-Pune belt can be contained, it will flatten India's curve but this region is crucial to economic activity. And the high population density clusters makes sealing a logistical challenge.

whenever Maharashtra has managed to slow down its growth for a while, it has slowed the national growth rate as well. And, the opposite has been true as well. In fact, the curve for the national growth rate very closely

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

LOCKDOWN DAY 61 **CASES: 1,31,868** **RECOVERED: 54,440** **DEATHS: 3,867** **TESTS: 29,43,421** **DOUBLING RATE: 13.20****



KEY STATES TO WATCH	TOTAL CASES	SURGE IN 24 HRS	7-DAY AVG. GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**
■ Maharashtra	47,190	2,608	6.33%	11.37
■ Gujarat	13,669	396	3.17%	22.74
■ Delhi	13,418	508	4.66%	15.45
■ Tamil Nadu	15,512	759	5.61%	12.83
■ Bihar	2,394	228	10.66%	6.75
■ West Bengal	3,459	127	4.30%	16.74

* Compounded Daily Growth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth

CONCERN BIHAR: Slight dip in growth rate, but situation remains largely unchanged. Cases rising rapidly.	CAUTION TAMIL NADU: Four straight days of 700+ new infections. Daily high so far is 798.	A GLIMMER ODISHA: Growth rate down by nearly half over the last week. But could be a temporary relief.
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Based on daily data by Centre, ICMR, state governments

Court grants activists bail saying they were only protesting, police arrest them again

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL & ARANYA SHANKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

A DAY after a team from Northeast Delhi's Jafrabad police station arrested two members of Pinjra Tod, a women's student organisation, in connection with their alleged role in the anti-CAA Jafrabad sit-in protest in February this year, a Delhi court granted them bail, saying that

IPC Section 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) invoked against them was "not maintainable", and that they were "merely protesting against NRC and CAA".

The respite, though, was short lived as a Special Investigation Team of the Crime Branch arrested them under charges of murder, attempt to murder, rioting and criminal conspiracy, and sought their police custody for 14 days. The



Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal of Pinjra Tod

court eventually remanded them in two-day police custody. Police claim the two women,

Devangana Kalita (30) and Natasha Narwal (32), were among those who organised an anti-CAA protest and road blockade under Jafrabad Metro station on February 22-23. The protest had prompted a pro-CAA rally by BJP's Kapil Mishra and his supporters on February 23. A day later, riots broke out in the district.

The women are facing three probes by the Special Cell, the Jafrabad police station, and the Crime Branch SIT. On Saturday, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Covid wake-up call: Health infrastructure only 1 per cent of Smart City projects

KARISHMA MEHROTRA & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

AS URBAN centres struggle to put down the outbreak of Covid-19, creation of health infrastructure seems to be very low priority in projects for 100 cities being developed as smart cities under a central government scheme.

A scrutiny of publicly available data of projects taken up under the Smart City Mission reveals that only 69 of 5,861 proj-



Jaipur among hotspot cities that have not listed health-related project. *Archive*

ects were for health infrastructure and capacity building — this works out to a little over 1 per cent of total projects selected

since 2015.

These 69 projects, located in 55 of the 100 smart cities being developed, will cost an estimated Rs 2112.06 crore — about 1 per cent of the total Mission investment of Rs 205,018 crore. In percentage terms, it's even lower than the combined health expenditure of Centre and states — 1.6 per cent of the GDP — in 2019-20.

Of 491 projects worth over Rs 100 crore sanctioned under the Mission, only three — in Erode (Rs 370 crore), Belagavi (Rs 350

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Whistleblower behind Gujarat HC order: 'No PPE kit, mask, gloves... can be in big trouble'

RITU SHARMA
AHMEDABAD, MAY 24

ALL COVID patients are managed by junior resident doctors, with no senior professor on duty for rounds or emergency. Doctors on non-Covid duty are not given PPE kits, N-95 masks, or proper gloves. Not even 10 per cent of the nearly 700 resident doctors, who stay in a common hostel, have been tested.

These are some of the key

charges listed in the anonymous letter that is a part of the Gujarat High Court's scathing order on the poor Covid management and high mortality rate in the state's frontline facility — Ahmedabad Civil Hospital.

The contents of the letter suggest that it was likely written by a 25-year-old medical professional in the hospital's gynaecology department who tested positive while on non-Covid duty.

In its order Saturday on a *suo motu* public interest litigation,

the High Court called the hospital, which has accounted for 377 Covid deaths (45% of Gujarat's toll), "as good as a dungeon, may be even worse".

Describing the letter's contents as "very disturbing", the court asked if the Health Minister and Chief Secretary had "any idea" about the problems faced by patients and staff.

On Sunday, Health Minister Nitin Patel said the state government has "reviewed the High Court order and its observations"

and "held a meeting to discuss and give a reply... next week".

The letter, meanwhile, details alleged inhuman conditions at the hospital for doctors and claims that arrangements in wards posed a threat to the life of patients.

"The hospital management is just concerned that if residents will get tested, and if they turn out to be positive, then who will work. No senior professors are coming for rounds or emergency. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

Brands, local and global, get vocal about their Indian roots

pending on which side of the divide they're on.

According to senior people in several companies *The Indian Express* spoke with soon after the Prime Minister said that every Indian "has to become vocal for their local, not only to buy local products, but also to promote them proudly", C-level executives scrambled to come up with a plan to get the brand's messaging across.

This was followed by a flurry of social media posts by companies.

On Instagram, biscuit and candymaker Parle advertised its glucose biscuit Parle-G as

"Bharat ka apna biscuit" (India's own biscuit), and called for supporting swadeshi businesses. On the other hand, even as most foreign brands chose to sit this one out, shoemaker Bata, founded in the Czech republic and now headquartered in Switzerland, took to Twitter to highlight that since 1931, it has four factories "that contribute to footwear requirement of crores of Indians and India's self-reliance story". Various other brands with Indian roots, including FMCG majors such as Dabur and ITC called for supporting local businesses in India.



Illustration: Mithun Chakraborty

On May 12, announcing the Rs 20 lakh crore AtmaNirbhar package in an address to the nation, Prime Minister Modi had said, "Friends, the Corona crisis has also explained to us the importance of Local manufacturing. Local market and Local supply chain. In times of crisis, this Local has fulfilled our demand, this Local has saved us. Local is not just the need, it is our responsibility also."

However, the PM's call for supporting homegrown businesses has been discussed by companies beyond the realm of marketing and brand strategy. An executive with a US-

based infrastructure company said as a measure of abundant precaution, they're exploring options to counter any adverse reaction if the call for embracing local companies is adopted by customers in their field of operations, a majority of which are state-owned entities. As a fall-back measure, one of the options being discussed in to leverage the company's old association with India, which dates back to the early 1900s.

But an executive with a homegrown sporting goods manufacturer said this couldn't have come at a better time. Sports good manufacturers in

India are hoping to use the "go local" call to their advantage, especially given the rising competition in the budget sports goods category on account of the influx of Chinese brands and French brands.

Interestingly, administrative agencies such as the Central Police Canteen have reached out to major foreign firms such as Hindustan Unilever, the Indian unit of Anglo-Dutch company Unilever, and Japanese electronics company Panasonic, to seek details of their products — whether they are made from locally-sourced raw materials.



WEB EXCLUSIVE

HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO A VACCINE?

Days after US biotechnology company Moderna Inc reported successful results from its experimental vaccine for Covid-19, a second breakthrough has been made in China, with Cansino Biologics Inc saying the vaccine appeared to be safe and might protect people from the novel coronavirus

VIDEO OF THE DAY



COVID: INNOVATIONS WE'LL REMEMBER

Here are a few innovations the pandemic led to

EXPLAINED



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PREGNANCY & COVID

Pregnant women are at a higher risk of more severe illness

New Delhi

3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

BRIEFLY

Two injured in fight between groups

New Delhi: Two men sustained injuries after a fight broke out between two groups in Northeast Delhi's Maujpur, said police Sunday. Cross FIRs have been registered against the groups for allegedly inciting violence. Police denied allegations of communal violence.

Landlord 'kills' his tenant

New Delhi: A 35-year-old e-rickshaw driver was allegedly killed by his landlord after he used a 100-watt bulb inside his rented house in Harsh Vihar on Friday. Police said the landlord has been arrested.

Man who shot self critical

Gurgaon: Two days after a 34-year-old man shot himself inside his car, with the bullet piercing through his head and injuring his 24-year-old pregnant wife, police said the former, against whom an FIR has been filed, is still critical in the ICU of Safdarjung Hospital. The woman is out of danger.

Heatwave continues

New Delhi: The heatwave continued in Delhi-NCR on Sunday, with the maximum temperature being recorded at 44.4 degrees Celsius in the city. **ENS**

WAS ON VENTILATOR, SAYS DOCTOR

46-yr-old nursing officer dies of Covid at Safdarjung

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

A 46-YEAR-OLD nursing officer, who worked at a private hospital in Delhi, died Sunday afternoon at Safdarjung Hospital — the day she was moved to the Covid-19 ICU after she tested positive.

A doctor at Safdarjung Hospital told *The Indian Express*, "Ambika P K tested positive for the virus."

According to the United Nurses' Association, she is the first nursing officer to have died of Covid-19-related complications in the capital.

The Safdarjung doctor said the nursing officer was admitted



Ambika P K worked at Kalra Hospital in Kirti Nagar

to the hospital on May 22, and was kept at the suspected Covid-19 ICU: "She was moved to the

Covid-19 ICU Sunday. She passed away in the afternoon." Ambika was on ventilator support, said the doctor.

The nursing officer is survived by her husband and two children. Joldin Francis, secretary of the United Nurses' Association, Delhi, said Ambika hailed from Kerala's Kottayam.

"Her husband Sanil Kumar works and lives in Malaysia, their son lives in Kerala, and their daughter lives in Delhi. We have been told that she passed away at 3.45 pm Sunday. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family," said Francis.

Ambika worked at Kalra Hospital in West Delhi's Kirti Nagar. An official at Kalra

Hospital told *The Indian Express*, "She worked here for 12 years and was on leave since May 14. On Sunday, we found out that she passed away at Safdarjung Hospital. We are awaiting more details."

The official said Kalra Hospital is not a designated Covid-19 hospital.

So far, over 500 healthcare workers have tested positive for the virus in Delhi, including those posted in non-Covid-19 hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Dean of RML Hospital, Dr Rajeev Sood, tested positive for the virus on Sunday. At the hospital, over 30 healthcare workers have tested positive for the disease so far.

People landing at IGIA without symptoms don't need quarantine: Govt



As flights begin today, a series of steps have been taken at the Delhi Airport to ensure social distancing as well as screening. *Express*

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

AS DOMESTIC flight operations restart today, every passenger who disembarks in the national capital will have to undergo thermal screening at exit points, the Delhi government said Sunday.

In standard operating procedures laid down after a meeting on Sunday, the Delhi government said asymptomatic passengers will not be required to undergo quarantine either at a government or private facility, or even at home. They will, however, be advised that they self-monitor their health for 14 days. "In case they develop any symptoms, they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the state/national call centre (1075)," the guidelines state.

In case someone develops symptoms, they will be taken to a health facility and assessed on

the basis of the severity of symptoms. Those having moderate or severe symptoms will be admitted to dedicated Covid health facilities.

"Those having mild symptoms will be given the option of home isolation or isolation in the Covid care centre (both public and private facilities) as appropriate and tested as per ICMR protocol available," the guidelines state.

Those whose test results are positive will be asked to continue staying in Covid facilities based on the severity of symptoms. The Delhi government has also advised all passengers to download the Aarogya Setu app on their phone.

A series of steps have been taken at the Delhi Airport to ensure social distancing as well as screening. For those who will board flights from Delhi, a separate procedure has been put in place by the airport authority.

Domestic flights will only operate from Terminal 3 and passengers have been asked to report at least two hours prior to departure. Officials will check an individual's 'green status' on the Aarogya Setu app and each will be thermally screened.

Delhi government officials said the chance of a symptomatic passenger exiting the airport is low as if they have symptoms at the airport of origin, they will not be allowed to board.

"There is a very low chance of someone developing symptoms within 2-4 hours of boarding a flight. Nonetheless, the directions even in that eventuality are clear," said a government official.

At the airport, passengers will be encouraged to self-check-in using contactless kiosks where scanning the QR code will produce the boarding pass. All baggage will be disinfected and sanitised.

Tihar reports first case as jail staffer tests positive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

TIHAR JAIL reported its first Covid-19 case, after a 45-year-old assistant superintendent at Jail no. 7 tested positive Sunday.

Delhi Prisons DG Sandeep Goel said the staffer took a holiday on Friday, as he wanted to go home and meet his family. Before leaving, he got tested at Amrapali Hospital on Friday. The results came positive on Sunday. DG Goel said, "He showed no symptoms. He lives in the jail's staff residential complex."

Jail authorities soon began tracing the staffer's contacts. Another staffer, said to have been in close contact with the infected

man, has been tested and sent to home quarantine. Nine neighbours of the Covid-positive staffer, who work at different Delhi jails, have been asked to quarantine themselves, though none of them came in contact with him.

Five others — two jail staff and three inmates — were also found to be in contact with him. The staffers have been sent to home quarantine, while the inmates have been shifted to the isolation barrack.

DG Goel said all the men are asymptomatic and authorities will keep a check on everyone's medical condition.

Tihar is one of the largest prison complexes in South Asia and, currently, it has 14,000 inmates.

Gurgaon cases cross 200, could slip into red zone

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

TWELVE NEW Covid-19 cases were reported in Gurgaon on Sunday, and 13 in Faridabad. A spokesperson of the Gurgaon district administration said, "Three of those who tested positive are contacts of patients already diagnosed with coronavirus, while one is a wholesaler."

With cases crossing the 200-mark, Gurgaon and Faridabad are once again posing a threat of being included in the red-zone. Gurgaon has so far recorded 271 cases, while Faridabad has 209 cases. Active cases in Gurgaon are 121 and 83 in Faridabad.

Haryana has already banned



Entry to four districts bordering Delhi is barred

entry into four districts bordering Delhi — Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonapat and Jhajjar — for people coming from the national capital, unless they test negative for coronavirus and have an e-pass from the state government.

PANDEMIC, AND AFTER: HOW BADLY BRUISED IS INDIA'S ECONOMY? THE WAY AHEAD.

E-XPLAINED
by *The Indian EXPRESS*

with

Dr Rathin Roy

Director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP)

Various research outfits have projected a recessionary crisis this year worse than in 1979-80. Join us for an engaging conversation with Dr Roy, one of the finest economic minds, to understand the challenges, the options India needs to consider and exercise, and the trade-offs involved, in the medium to long term.

Mr Roy will be in conversation with

P Vaidyanathan Iyer

Executive Editor (National Affairs)
The Indian Express

Anil Sasi

National Business Editor
The Indian Express

26 MAY 2020

07:00 PM

Join us on **zoom**

To register, SMS - IEEXP <space> "IE" <space> "Your name and email ID" to 56161
Confirmation SMS will be your registration.

The Indian EXPRESS
— JOURNALISM OF COURAGE —



25 मई 2020

25 मई 2013 को बस्तर की झीरम घाटी में नक्सलवादियों द्वारा किए गए हमले में सर्वश्री नंदकुमार पटेल, विद्याचरण शुक्ल, महेंद्र कर्मा, उदय मुदलियार, योगेंद्र शर्मा सहित अनेक वरिष्ठ नेतागण एवं सुरक्षाकर्मी शहीद हो गए थे। नक्सलवादी हिंसा के लंबे दौर में अनेक गणमान्य नागरिकों सहित कर्तव्य निभाने वाले सुरक्षा कर्मियों ने भी अपने प्राणों का उत्सर्ग किया है।

आइए, संकल्प लें कि इनकी शहादत को व्यर्थ न जाने देंगे। शांति, विश्वास और विकास की त्रिवेणी से छत्तीसगढ़ में खुशहाली का स्थायी वास होगा। छत्तीसगढ़ को शांति और सौहार्द का टापू बनाए रखने के लिए हम हरसंभव योगदान करेंगे।

शहीदों की पुण्यस्मृति और विनम्र श्रद्धांजलि

जय हिंद, जय छत्तीसगढ़

- भूपेश बघेल
मुख्यमंत्री, छत्तीसगढ़



434 POLICEMEN COVID POSITIVE SO FAR

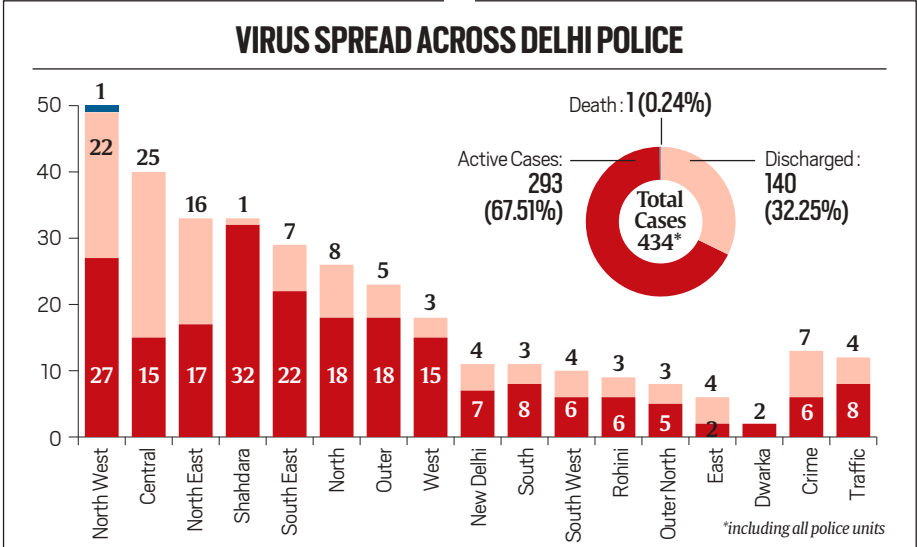
Ashok Vihar police colony emerges as hotspot with 16 cases, sealed

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, MAY 24

THE ASHOK Vihar Police Colony in Northwest Delhi has been sealed as 16 Covid cases have emerged from the area in the past week. Police personnel and their families who live in the complex have been asked to remain indoors and follow social distancing norms. So far, 434 policemen have tested positive in Delhi.

According to the containment order passed by the Northwest Delhi DM Sandeep Mishra, there are around 300 flats in the colony housing 1,500 people. Residents will not be allowed to step out for any reason and essential items, such as milk, vegetables and fruits will be delivered to their houses. “We have assured families of all help,” said a senior police officer. “First positive case of Covid-19 was reported in police colony, Ashok Vihar, on May 17 and subsequently, 15 more persons have been found positive in the area, making the area a cluster of



Covid-19 positive cases. ... On May 17, as precautionary measure, the local process... was directed to cord off all entry and exit points. ... MCD was directed to sanitise the entire area to remove the possibility of community transfer,” the order passed by the DM said. The area surrounding the po-

lice colony has been declared a buffer zone.

Colony RWA president Nepal Singh told The Indian Express that they have sealed the entrance and exit points and are sanitising the area with the civic agency's help. “We have also requested all policemen, going out to perform

their duties, to stay outside and are making arrangements for delivery of essentials,” he said.

District officials said the authority has allowed only a select number of vendors to supply groceries and other essentials to the neighbourhood, with the help of RWA and civil defence volunteers.

Of the 434 personnel who have tested positive, more than 200, including an additional DCP-rank officer, are under home quarantine. Around 140 police personnel have been discharged, while one constable died.

In several meetings, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava has emphasised that every police colony and building has to be sanitised. On May 20, Shrivastava issued fresh guidelines to the force aimed at preventing the spread of the disease.

The circular has details on general precautions at police stations, micro-grouping, beat patrolling, crowd control, protest sites, crime and hospitals spot visits, handling bodies, arresting protocol, and role of SHOs and ACPs.

As per the circular, at police stations, all personnel should wear masks and gloves, disinfect weapons, anti-riot gear, blinkers, dragon light, computers and printers. “Buildings, furniture, toilets, kitchens, messes as well as vehicles must be cleaned thoroughly using sanitisers twice a day....” says the circular.

Migrants with tickets claim got no seat on trains to Bihar

JIGNASA SINHA

NEW DELHI, MAY 24

WAITING OUTSIDE a screening centre in East Delhi for hours on Saturday, construction labourer Sarvan Paswan (42) hoped to board the Shramik special evening train to Bihar — only to be turned away by officials in the afternoon. He was among hundreds of migrant workers who stood in the heat outside the Vinod Nagar screening centre, with many lining up by 4 am. Some of them even had a reservation. However, later in the day, officials told all workers to return as there was no seat in the train.

Angry and disappointed, Paswan, who lived in Chanchal Park, said, “Where do we go now? My landlord has locked the house. He told me I might have coronavirus and shouldn't come back. We stood in line for more than 10 hours. Only have biscuits and a banana in my bag.” He earned 6,000 a month.

Paswan then started walking towards the Ghazipur border. Others planned to sleep outside the centre and wait another day or cross the border on foot.

Some workers complained that they had been waiting for weeks to get a reservation. Shrayan Kumar (33) said, “I got a message on my phone saying my reservation was confirmed. I left for the centre at midnight and now I have to go back to my



Outside the screening centre in West Vinod Nagar. Amit Mehra

house. My kids are tired and crying for food.”

Kumar lives in Bawana with his wife and two children aged five and two. He used to work at a toy factory and earned Rs 9,000 a month, but hasn't been paid in two months. The family decided to sleep outside the centre.

The screening centre also saw some chaos after a few migrants started shouting at officials. Policemen outside the gates then removed the men and urged everyone to leave. Workers also alleged the East Delhi screening centres are very crowded and many are turned away every day.

However, officials in East Delhi district said around 400 people were asked to return.

Arun Kumar Mishra, District Magistrate (East Delhi), said, “On Saturday, we sent over 2,800 people to Bihar via two trains. We have already increased the num-

ber of trains from one to two. Some of the people who got registered and screened were sent earlier. Over 400 people were left behind, but we have made arrangements for them as well.”

Over 50-60 workers were taken to shelter homes in Patparganj and IP Extension.

A Railways spokesperson said, “No trains have been cancelled from Delhi till date. The only issue is the increase in the number of migrants. Earlier, it was easy to send around 2,000 people on a train, now we can only send 1,000. They also have to be registered and screened. People who get themselves registered on the site receive a message to arrive for screening. This doesn't mean they will be sent that day itself. Sometimes, we send people the next day or two-three days later.”

On Sunday, 19 trains left from Delhi to Bihar, UP and MP.

HC refuses to scrap govt's death audit panel

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 24

THE DELHI High Court has refused to scrap the Death Audit Committee (DAC) constituted by the Delhi government, observing that there seems to be “no arbitrariness or discrimination being done nor is there are any material to show false fabrication of data” on the number of coronavirus cases and the death toll.

A PIL was filed on May 21 al-

leging that the Delhi government was downplaying the spread of the disease and not presenting the true data on the number of people who had died due to Covid. DAC audits each death of a coronavirus patient in government and private hospitals.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan stated that “we are not sitting in appeal against the reports published by the DAC... Moreover, there is no basis for the allegations to the effect that the Committee is

not working properly”.

The bench disposed of a PIL by the All India Lawyers' Union. The body's Delhi unit had filed the petition through its secretary, lawyer Sunil Kumar.

The Union's counsel, Fidel Sebastian, alleged there was an attempt by the Delhi government to downplay the seriousness of the Covid spread and the number of deaths. Delhi government's Standing Counsel (Criminal) Rahul Mehra said the allegations were baseless.

He submitted that guidelines have been issued by the central government in this regard and a three-member DAC has been constituted by the Delhi government on April 20 for auditing and publishing the data. Mehra contended that the data has to be reported by all central government, Delhi government and private hospitals in a tabular form. The bench said, “...it appears that the whole case of the petitioner is based upon presumptions... as the same has been filed... without proper research.” “There seems to be no arbitrariness or discrimination... nor is there are any material to show false fabrication of data,” it said.

The Indian Express had earlier reported on a mismatch between the toll released by the Delhi government and the four hospitals, the latter being significantly

higher. Later, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said hospitals were not providing details in the prescribed format and on time to the DAC.

The North and South civic bodies have also claimed that more than 400 funerals of 'Covid positive' bodies had been recorded until May 16. But the Delhi government said the MCDs had not provided documents to back their claims.

Meanwhile, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia welcomed the order. “I am glad that... Delhi High Court has put an end to ugly politics being played by some opposition leaders,” he tweeted.

AAP also sought an “apology” from BJP. “I think this HC judgment is a tight slap on the face of BJP and they should immediately apologise....” said party spokesperson Raghav Chadha.



FESTIVE GLOW

Jama Masjid on Sunday, a day before Eid. Gajendra Yadav

Ahead of Eid, Sikh NGO sanitises Jama Masjid

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 24

AHEAD OF Eid, 20 members of the Sikh community, belonging to a human rights NGO, sanitised the Jama Masjid on Sunday.

Old Delhi's Jama Masjid will be shut for common folk during Eid prayers, which will be performed only by the Imam and a few staff, Monday.

“Since the outbreak of the disease, we have been sanitising places of worship... We also wanted to ensure the sanitisation of religious places before government allows opening up of these places. It also gives a good mes-

sage to society and promotes brotherhood,” said Parminder Singh, director of United Sikhs.

He said that different teams of the NGO had earlier sanitised Bangla Sahib, Sis Ganj gurdwara. Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place and a few churches as well. “We will sanitise Connaught Place once again on Tuesday,” he said.

Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, Ahmed Shah Bukhari, said that the organisation had contacted him three days ago. “I immediately assented. Such exercises between communities is the need of the hour as it promotes brotherhood among people following different religions...,” he said.

Teen reunited with family after 2 months

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 24

“WE WERE so happy to see him again, we couldn't stop crying.” Santosh Pathak was describing the moment he and his wife were reunited with their 13-year-old son Vishal on Saturday after two months.

Vishal was “thrown out” of his house in Dwarka's Sector 1 by the landlord in March while his parents were stuck in their village in Bihar when the lockdown was announced.

He spent the next two months sleeping on a park bench in Dwarka and near a municipal toilet in the area.

Pathak and his wife had gone to their village in Bihar's Samastipur on March 15 to make arrangements for their daughter's wedding, and expected to return by March 22. “Then the lockdown was announced and we couldn't make the wedding arrangements or return,” Pathak said.

Meanwhile, his landlord kept phoning him to demand advance rent

for the month of April. “On March 24, the landlord found one of our three children, Vishal, crying outside the house... he told him to leave and not return,” said Pathak.

Vishal ran away and his elder brother Prakash (20) and sister Divya (18) could not trace him. “Police made me sign a statement saying that the landlord has not thrown Vishal out,” Divya alleged. Police denied the allegation. “We came to know about the matter through Twitter. We enquired and found that the family didn't file any complaint,” said a senior officer.

On April 8, Vishal was seen lying on a marble bench with some dogs sleeping around him inside a neighbourhood park in Dwarka's Sector 7. Yogita Kumari (25), who noticed him, shared his story on social media.

The story went viral, drawing the attention of an NGO (India Cares) and IPS officer Arun Botha, who arranged for his parents to return from Bihar. On Saturday, upon seeing his parents, Vishal broke into tears, Kumari said.

Office of Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad
E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tenders
No. 918/Nivida-Moradabad Circle/20-21
1. On behalf of the Government of Uttar Pradesh tender for following work are invited by the Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle PWD Moradabad online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from registered contractor from 27.05.2020 at 10.00 am to 26.06.2020 at 5.00 P.M. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened 27.06.2020 at 12.30 noon in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorized representative bidder who wish to be present "Financial Bid of the tenders" who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day.

Sl. No	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Time of Completion of the work (including rainy season)	Cost of Tender documents including GST (In Rs.)	Category of Road Contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Amroha	Construction of Box Culvert, Approach, Additional Approach and Safety Work over Bagad River on Hathiyakhera to Rukhali Road in State Sector.	130.00	8.50	9 Month	2354.00	'A' & 'B' Road & Bridge Category

Rules/condition & details of the tender are available at website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.

UPID-151720 Dt. 22.05.2020
www.upgov.nic.in

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Moradabad Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad

Office of Superintending Engineer, World Bank Project Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad
E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tender
No. 728/Am - WBPCircle/20
1. On behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work are invited by the Superintending Engineer, World Bank Project Circle, PWD Moradabad online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from registered contractors from 01.06.2020 at 10.00 am to 18.06.2020 at 5.00 P.M. Amount mentioned in column no. 5 & 7 shall be mandatory deposited by Net Banking Only through E-tender portal. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on 20.06.2020 at 12.00 noon in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representatives/bidders who wish to be present. Financial bid of the tenders/ who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day.

Sl. No	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Time of Completion of the work (including rainy season)	Cost of Tender documents including GST (Rs.)	Category of Road Contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Moradabad	Construction Work of Office Buildings of Superintending Engineer World Bank Project Circle & Executive Engineer World Bank Division in Moradabad district at PWD Compound Moradabad.	64.00	5.20	06 Month	2354.00	Building 'A' 'B' 'C' category

Rules/conditions & details of the tender are available at website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.

UPID-151429 Dt. 13.05.2020
www.upgov.nic.in

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
World Bank Project Circle, PWD, Moradabad
For and on behalf of Governor of UP

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, ग्रामीण अभियन्त्रण विभाग सहारनपुर परिमण्डल - सहारनपुर।
प्रज्ञांक- 18/ग्रा.अ.वि./निविदा प्रज्ञा./2020-21 दिनांक- 11.05.2020

ई-प्रोक्वायेस्ट निविदा सूचना

1. महामहिम राज्यपाल, उ.प्र. की ओर से अधीक्षण अभियन्ता ग्रामीण अभियन्त्रण विभाग परिमण्डल- सहारनपुर के द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु निविदाये प्रेषित दूर में ग्रामीण अभियन्त्रण विभाग में पंजीकृत वही एवं उच्च श्रेणी के ठेकेदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा एवं या एक से अधिक कार्यों के लिए निविदा दाखल करना है।
क्र. कार्य के नाम तालिका के अनुसार।

क्र.	जम्मा रकम का नाम	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)	घोरेल धराशायि (लाख में)	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य सहित करों सहित (र. में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	मुक्तक नगर में मेरठ काला पत्र पर ग्राम कुतुबल बस स्टैंड के सामने से ग्राम इटावा रोड हेतु हुए ग्राम नगर धरोरा किला वाहन की रोडक तक लेव कर एवं एटनवा आवासी आवासी में सहरी श्री अधिकतम रकम के सहित एक सी.सी. रोड निर्माण कार्य।		117.42	2.35	2000+300+414 (18% GST)= 2714.00	06 Month category

नोट: जी.एच.टी. नवीयन शास्त्राचार्य के अनुसार देखें।

3. निविदा प्रपत्रों के वेबसाइट (etender.up.nic.in) पर प्रकाशित होने की तिथि एवं समय: दिनांक 27.05.2020 प्रातः 10.00 बजे से।
4. ई-प्रोक्वायेस्ट के माध्यम से निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय: दिनांक 27.06.2020 सायं- 05.00 बजे तक।
5. जी.एच.टी. की कोल-9 के अनुसार अधीक्षणकारी के पास निविदाओं में संशोधन करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है जो किसी समानांतर पत्र में प्रकाशित नहीं किया जाएगा। और इच्छुक निविदाकर्ता ई-टेंडरिंग की वेबसाइट निम्नलिखित रूप से देखेंगे रहे।
7. शेष कर्तव्य एवं निविदा प्रपत्र प्राप्त करने के लिए <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर लागू रहेंगे।

हस्ता./ (प्रमुखी कुमार यादव) अधीक्षण अभियन्ता
कार्यालय अभियन्त्रण विभाग परिमण्डल- सहारनपुर।
मो.: 9149196601

UPID- 151678
DATE- 11.05.2020
www.upgov.nic.in

Office of Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad
E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tenders
No. 1759/Nivida-Moradabad/20-21
1. On behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work are invited by the Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, PWD Moradabad online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from registered contractors from 27.05.2020 at 10.00 am to 26.06.2020 at 05.00 p.m. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on 27.06.2020 at 12.30 pm in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representative/bidders who wish to be present. Financial bid of the tenders/ who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day.

Sl. No	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (with Bitumen) (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Time of completion of the work (including rainy seasons)	Cost of tender documents including GST (Rs.)	Category of road contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Amroha	Under RIDF- 25 Scheme Construction of road from Dhanaura-Kamelpur road (OOR) Ch-11.52 left side to Aaralpur Khalsia	153.00	9.65	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category
2	Amroha	Under RSN- 5954 Scheme Construction of road from Chamraua to Tandera	133.00	8.65	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category
3	Amroha	Construction of road from NH-90 to Khanpur via Daryapur Buzard Shiv Temple	116.00	7.80	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category
4	Amroha	Construction of road from Dhakia Bhoor to Nagla	124.00	8.20	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category
5	Amroha	Construction of road from Deoli to Sujamma	113.00	7.65	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category
6	Amroha	Construction of road from Bachraon road to Firzapur-Fazalpur road	103.00	7.15	6 Months	2354.00	"A" & "B" Road category

Rules/conditions & details of the tender are available at website <http://etender.up.nic.in>.

UPID No. 151712 Date - 22.05.2020
www.upgov.nic.in

Sd/-
(Rajeev Govti)
Superintending Engineer
Moradabad Circle, PWD Moradabad
Ph. 0591-2414619

TELANGANA STATE SEEDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. HYDERABAD
SHORT TENDER NOTIFICATION
No. SSDC/Mrktg/Short Tender/ V-2020-21 Date: 23.05.2020
Sealed short tenders are invited by T.S.S.D.C. Ltd., Hyderabad, T.S. for supply of freshly harvested certified seeds of Soyabean and Redgram C/S/T/L Seed on need basis as specified below for subsidy seed distribution during Vanakalam-2020.

Sl. No	Crop	Variety	Class of seed	Approximate qty. to be tendered in qtls.	Minimum qty to be supplied in qtls.	EMD (Rs. In Lakhs)
1	Soybean	JS-335	C/s	50000	2000	7.00
2	Redgram	---	C/S / T/L	25000	1000	5.00

Eligible suppliers are requested to participate in the tender process. The cost of Tender schedule is **Rs. 2,500/-**. **Excluding 18% GST** by paying cash/ D.D.

Sale of tender schedule from : 27.05.2020, 11.00 A.M. to 03.06.2020 12.00 P.M.
Last date and time for submission of : 03.06.2020 up to 1.00 P.M.

Opening of tender and negotiations : 03.06.2020 at 2.00 P.M.

Tender schedule containing detailed specifications, terms and conditions will be available in the website : www.ssdcl.telangana.gov.in The tenderers who download the Tender Schedule from the web site, need to pay the tender schedule cost and attach the cash receipt to the tender schedule before submission.

Sd/- Managing Director
R.O. No. : 1833-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21
TSSDC Ltd.

Office of the Chief Engineer
Water Resources Zone Kota
(Two-Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)
(FOR ITEM RATE/ADMEASUREMENT CONTRACTS IN CIVIL WORKS)
E-NIB No 01 of 2020-21
On behalf of Governor of Rajasthan Online Bid is hereby invited through E-NIB No. 01 of 2020-21 for Rehabilitation, Improvement and Basic Facility of Chhapi Dam in Jhalawar District of Rajasthan under DRII-II with estimated cost of work Rs. 1555.00 Lacs from the contractor enlisted in appropriate class with the Water Resources Department Rajasthan / CPWD / Telecom/ Railway/ other state government / center government / state government undertaking in class equivalent to "AA" class contractor of Rajasthan Government. Bid Document will be downloaded & uploaded through e-Tendering. The details may be seen in NIB Exhibited in website www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in & www.waterresources.rajasthan.gov.in and bid can be downloaded/ seen from 22.05.2020 to 22.06.2020 (up to 18.00 Hours) on website www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in and sppp.rajasthan.gov.in

Sd/-
(Rajeev Chowdhary)
Chief Engineer
Water Resources Zone Kota

UBN WRD2021WLOB00383 (Rajeev Chowdhary)
NIB WRD2021A0102 Chief Engineer
DIPR/C/3607/2020 Water Resources Zone Kota

Regd. Office.: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
CIN: U40109PB2010ISGC033813; Website: www.pspcl.in

E-Tender Enquiry No. 7173/P-1/EMP-11678 dated. 19.05.2020 & ID: 2020_POWER_47806_1
Scope of Work: Procurement of cable jointing Kits (EJ Group) for the year 2020-21
Qty: As per NIT
EMD: @2% of tender value
Date & time upto which tender shall be received: 25.06.2020 & 11.00 AM.
Date & time of opening of Tender: 30.06.2020 & 11.30 AM

Tender specification can only be downloaded from PSPCL website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> & no hard copy of the same will be issued by this office.

Note:

1) In case any difficulty regarding uploading of the tender the prospective bidders are requested to get clarification from this office and or e-procurement system Government of Punjab. Contact No.+91-(172)-2970284/63. It is also requested to get their digital signature well in time so as to submit tenders through e-tendering only.

2) It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on website. eproc.punjab.gov.in

Sd/-
DY.CE/Monitoring,
GGSSTP, Roopnagar

RTP-23/2020

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited.

Regd. Office.: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
CIN: U40109PB2010ISGC033813; Website: www.pspcl.in

E-Tender Enquiry No. 7173/P-1/EMP-11678 dated. 19.05.2020 & ID: 2020_POWER_47806_1
Scope of Work: Procurement of cable jointing Kits (EJ Group) for the year 2020-21
Qty: As per NIT
EMD: @2% of tender value
Date & time upto which tender shall be received: 25.06.2020 & 11.00 AM.
Date & time of opening of Tender: 30.06.2020 & 11.30 AM

Tender specification can only be downloaded from PSPCL website <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> & no hard copy of the same will be issued by this office.

Note:

1) In case any difficulty regarding uploading of the tender the prospective bidders are requested to get clarification from this office and or e-procurement system Government of Punjab. Contact No.+91-(172)-2970284/63. It is also requested to get their digital signature well in time so as to submit tenders through e-tendering only.

2) It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on website. eproc.punjab.gov.in

Sd/-
DY.CE/Monitoring,
GGSSTP, Roopnagar

RTP-23/2020

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



OFFER OF SUPPORT

LJP HAS offered support to Jyoti Kumari, who cycled almost 1,200 km to Darbhanga from Gurgaon amid the lockdown with her injured father riding pillion. LJP patriarch and Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan urged Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju to arrange training and scholarship for her. LJP has offered to sponsor her education till graduation and party chief Chirag Paswan has provided an assistance of Rs 51,000.

NEW CASE

THE FOURTH case of Covid-19 in the Railway ministry was detected Sunday. This time, it is a joint director in the traffic directorate. Fourteen people have been advised home quarantine. The official had attended work till May 20. The premises may once undergo sanitisation once again. There is concern now that more cases will emerge.

WORDS OF PRAISE

UNION MINISTER Ravi Shankar Prasad recently received appreciation from an international body for initiatives taken by the country and the IT Ministry under him in the fight against Coronavirus. Secretary General of Commonwealth Patricia Scotland said: "So many people have been impressed by what India has done in ICT (Information and Communication Technology). The minister has been at the forefront for development of mobile app and its interoperability between business and people and government."

Ashok Chavan is second minister in Uddhav cabinet to test positive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 24

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and Public Works Department Minister Ashok Chavan has tested positive for Covid-19. He is the second minister in the Uddhav Thackeray government to catch the infection after

Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad. Chavan is currently admitted at a hospital in Nanded. His condition is stable, sources said, adding that he was reportedly under home quarantine for the last few days. Awhad, after recovering from the illness earlier this month, had recently come out in public about how serious his condition was.

Maharashtra seeks 50 doctors, 100 nurses from Kerala

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, MAY 24

THE MAHARASHTRA government has sought 50 trained specialist doctors and 100 nurses from Kerala to plug the dearth in manpower in treating Covid-19 patients in the state.

In a letter sent by the Directorate of Medical Education and Research (DMER) to Kerala Health Minister K K Shailaja on Saturday, the government has asked for recruitment of these doctors and nurses on a "temporary basis". Even Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has reached out to an association of nurses in Kerala, among other

agencies, seeking to appoint nursing staff in civic hospitals. Maharashtra has roughly 1.5 lakh nurses in both private and public sectors. Officials said they will need more nurses in Mumbai and Pune, from where the bulk of cases are being reported. In the letter, DMER Director Dr T P Lahane said cases would likely rise in Mumbai and Pune. The letter added that Dr Santosh Kumar, vice-president of the South Asia chapter of Doctors Without Borders had been willing to cooperate with Maharashtra. "pursuant of his assurances, we request you to kindly provide 50 specialist doctors and 100 nurses on purely temporary basis," the letter said.

'Irrespective of curbs, courts' duty to protect rights of citizens'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

ALTHOUGH INCREASED government action is necessary during a public health emergency, it is the duty of courts to ensure accountability and protect rights of citizens, Supreme Court judge Justice D Y Chandrachud said Sunday. "All emergencies, including a public health crisis that we are in vest substantial powers in the executive. During a public health crisis, increased government action may be necessary to preserve public health and welfare. However, irrespective of governmental action and restrictions, it is above all, the duty of courts — civil,

criminal and constitutional — to protect the rights of citizens and ensure governmental accountability and the rule of law," he said. The judge, who heads the e-committee of the SC that is tasked with overseeing the digitisation of the court, was speaking at a webinar organised by Nyaya Forum of National Academy of Legal Studies and Research, Hyderabad on the topic 'Future of Virtual Courts and Access to Justice in India'. "I want to dissuade people from the idea that virtual court hearings are some sort of panacea. We had no choice in the pandemic but to resort to this. They will not be able to replace physical court hearings," Justice Chandrachud said.

Delhi lockdown for foreign arrivals: 14-day quarantine, Aarogya Setu app

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

IN A sign that India may be ready to start international flights soon, the Ministry of Health on Sunday released guidelines for international travellers which include "mandatory quarantine for 14 days" on arrival. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said last week that the aim was to start international flights before August.

Guidelines were also issued for domestic travel — by bus, train or air.

While Puri had on Saturday said domestic air travellers — domestic flights are set to resume operations on Monday — don't have to undergo quarantine as long as they have the Aarogya Setu app, the guidelines for international travel say: "Before boarding, all travellers shall give an undertaking that they will not undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days — 7 days paid institutional quarantine at their own



Hardeep Singh Puri

cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home. Only for exceptional and compelling reasons, such as human distress, pregnancy, death in the family, serious illness and parent(s) accompanied by children below 10 years, as assessed by the receiving states, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days... Aarogya Setu app shall be mandatory in such cases."

Though quarantine rules have been spelt out, the guidelines go on to say states can come up with their own protocol for quarantine and isolation. The earlier, pre-lockdown guidelines for those flying in from abroad mentioned institutional quarantine for 14 days, not home quarantine.

The guidelines for international travellers said only those

who are asymptomatic will be allowed to board their flights, after they clear thermal screening. On arrival in India, if they are judged to be patients, they will be tested and sent to hospitals.

The testing protocol remains the same as that issued by Indian Council of Medical Research on May 18 — only patients with influenza-like illness will be tested. For those without symptoms, after seven days of institutional quarantine, if they are still asymptomatic, they can go in for home quarantine, said Health Ministry officials.

Puri's remark on Saturday at a Facebook Live session — that there was no need for states to quarantine incoming domestic air travellers if passengers had Aarogya Setu on their phones — had been met with resistance from Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Maharashtra. On Sunday, more states said they would quarantine domestic arrivals.

Guidelines for domestic travellers — by bus, train or air — say all passengers should be "ad-

vised" to download Aarogya Setu.

"The States/UTs shall ensure that all passengers shall undergo thermal screening at the point of departure and only asymptomatic passengers are allowed to board the flight/train/bus. During boarding and travel, all passengers shall use face covers/mask... At airports/railway stations/bus terminals required measures to ensure social distancing shall be taken.... (they should be) regularly sanitized/disinfected... Thermal screening at exit point shall be arranged," say the guidelines.

The guidelines do not mention mandatory quarantine unlike for international travellers — they say states can develop their own protocol on quarantine and isolation as per their assessment.

The total number of cases in the country went up to 1,31,868, with 6,767 fresh cases added in the last 24 hours. The Covid toll so far is 3,667, with 147 deaths in the last 24 hours. A total of 54,400 people has recovered so far, 2,657 of them in the last 24 hours.

In Maharashtra, Koshiyari wants Raj Bhavan independent

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 24

IN AN escalating stand-off between the Maharashtra government and Raj Bhavan, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari has sought the delinking of the administration of Raj Bhavan from the state's General Administration Department (GAD) under Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, Koshiyari has said Raj Bhavan should be made an independent establishment on the lines of the judiciary and the legislative secretariat. Simply put, Koshiyari's office has sought transfer of powers to decide on appointments, transfers and other service-related matters of the staff deployed at Raj Bhavan.

These matters are currently handled by a desk in the GAD. Senior government sources said the Shiv Sena-led coalition government will not give in to the Governor's demand.

A senior source said the Governor's proposal was not in keeping with the prevalent recruitment rules. "The senior staff at Raj Bhavan is meant to serve as a bridge between the state administration and the Governor. There will be problems in coordination between the two sides if the Governor's office demands specific officers, especially from cadres of the other states."

Sources confirmed that the government has not responded to Koshiyari's letter to the CM written in March. "The established procedure is when there is a staff requirement for the governor's office, he is sent a list of eligible can-



Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari

didates from which he can choose. The government does not thrust officers on the Raj Bhavan."

Sources in Raj Bhavan said administrative delays encountered by the Governor's staff in routine service matters prompted such a move. "Raj Bhavan employs over 200 people. Besides senior officials from the IAS and IPS, several junior employees are also a part of its establishment. But even for a routine pay scale matter, the file has to travel to the GAD, which often takes a while to approve it. Raj Bhavans in some other states are independent establishments," said a Raj Bhavan source.

This is not the first time Raj Bhavan under Koshiyari and the Thackeray-led government are sparring. Tension between the two sides has also been brewing over the extension to statutory development boards, established to alleviate development backlog in Vidharbha, Marathwada, and other backward regions.

While the term of the boards set up by the previous BJP-Sena government expired on April 30, the Thackeray cabinet has still not taken steps to appoint new members or grant extension to the existing board. The Governor has the right to issue directives for fund allocation to the boards for specific interventions to correct regional imbalance. **FULL REPORT ON**

www.indianexpress.com

NORTHERN RAILWAY'S STATION/TERMINAL-WISE TRAFFIC PLAN FOR THE TRAINS ANNOUNCED TO RUN W.E.F. 1st JUNE, 2020 AND ONWARD

For the convenience of rail passengers, Northern Railway will start train operations of announced Mail/Express trains w.e.f. 01.06.2020 from the following major Terminals/Stations of Northern Railway:-

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT NEW DELHI			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02230/29	Lucknow Mail	New Delhi	Lucknow Jn
02392/91	Shramjivi Express	New Delhi	Rajgir
02394/93	Sampoon Kranti Exp.	New Delhi	Rajendra Nagar
02418/17	Prayagraj Express	New Delhi	Prayagraj
02420/19	Gomti Express	New Delhi	Lucknow
02452/51	Shram Shakti Express	New Delhi	Kanpur
02560/59	Shivganga Express	New Delhi	Manduadih
02630/29	Karnataka S.K. Exp.	New Delhi	Yesvantpur
02724/23	Telangana Express	New Delhi	Hyderabad
02802/01	Purushottam Express	New Delhi	Puri
02218/17	Mahamana Express	New Delhi	Varanasi
02554/53	Vaishali Express	New Delhi	Sahrasa
02382/81	Poorva Express	New Delhi	Howrah
02303/04	Poorva Express	New Delhi	Howrah
02055/56	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	New Delhi	Dehradun
02057/58	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	New Delhi	Una Himachal
02566/65	Bihar S.K. Express	New Delhi	Darbhanga
02806/05	AP Express	New Delhi	Vishakapatnam

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT NEW DELHI			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02716/15	Sachkhand Express	Amritsar	Nanded
02926/25	Paschim Exp. (Delux)	Amritsar	Bandra Terminus
02556/55	Gorkhdam Express	Hisar	Gorakhpur

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02156/55	Bhopal Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Habibganj
02168/17	Mangla Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Ernakulam
02963/64	Mewar Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Udaipur City
02182/81	Jabalpur Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Jabalpur
02284/83	Duronto Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Ernakulam
02285/86	Duronto Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Secundarabad
02060/59	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Kota
02917/18	Gujarat S.K. Exp.	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Ahmedabad
02780/79	Goa Express	Hazrat Nizamuddin	Vasco-da-gama

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02903/03	Golden Temple Mail	Amritsar	Mumbai Central
02716/15	Sachkhand Express	Amritsar	Nanded

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT ANAND VIHAR T.			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
04010/09	Champaran Satyagrah Exp.	Anand Vihar T.	Bapudham Motihari
02558/57	Saptkranti Express	Anand Vihar T.	Muzaffarpur
02247/73	Satyagrah Express	Anand Vihar T.	Raxaul
02220/19	Suhaildev Express	Anand Vihar T.	Gazipur
02234/33	Gazipur Express	Anand Vihar T.	Gazipur

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT DELHI JUNCTION			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02916/15	Ashram Express	Delhi Jn.	Ahmedabad
05484/83	Mahananda Express	Delhi Jn.	Alipurduar
05956/55	Brahmaputra Mail	Delhi Jn.	Dibrugarh

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT DELHI JUNCTION			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
04674/73	Shaheed Express	Amritsar	Jaynagar
04650/49	Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Amritsar	Jaynagar

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT DELHI SARAI ROHILLA			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02463/64	Sampark Kranti Exp.	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	Jodhpur
02066/65	Jan Shatabdi Express	Delhi Sarai Rohilla	Ajmer

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT LUCKNOW JN			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02229/30	Lucknow Mail	Lucknow Jn	New Delhi
02419/20	Gomti Exp.	Lucknow Jn	New Delhi
02533/34	Pushpak Exp.	Lucknow Jn	C Shivaji Maharaj Terminus

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT LUCKNOW JUNCTION			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02392/91	Shramjeevi Exp	New Delhi	Rajgir
02556/55	Gorakhdham Express	Hisar	Gorakhpur
02554/53	Vaishali Express	New Delhi	Sahrasa
02558/57	Sapt Kranti Express	Anand Vihar T.	Muzaffarpur
02220/19	Suhaildev Express	Anand Vihar T.	Ghazipur
04674/73	Shaheed Express	Amritsar	Jaynagar
04650/49	Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Amritsar	Jaynagar
09037/38	Awadh Express	Bandra Terminus	Gorakhpur
09039/40	Awadh Express	Bandra Terminus	Muzaffarpur
02358/57	Durgiana Express	Amritsar	Kolkata
02218/17	Mahamana Express	New Delhi	Varanasi Jn
09187/68	Sabarmati Express	Ahmedabad Jn	Varanasi Jn
09165/66	Sabarmati Express	Ahmedabad Jn	Darbhanga

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT VARANASI JN			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
01072/71	Kamayani Express	Varanasi Jn	Lokmanyatilak T.
01094/93	Mahanagri Express	Varanasi Jn	Mumbai CST
02217/18	Mahamana Express	Varanasi Jn	New Delhi
09186/67	Sabarmati Express	Varanasi Jn	Ahmedabad Jn

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT VARANASI			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
01061/62	Darbhanga Exp.	Lotnaya Tilak (T)	Darbhanga
02792/91	Express	Danapur	Secunderabad Jn.
09045/46	Tapti Ganga Exp.	Surat	Chhapra

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT MORADABAD			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02091/92	Jan Shatabdi Express	Dehradun	Kathgodam
02408/07	Karambhum Express	Amritsar	New Jalpaiguri
02230/29	Lucknow Mail	New Delhi	Lucknow Jn
02218/19	Mahamana Express	New Delhi	Varanasi
04674/73	Shaheed Express	Amritsar	Jaynagar
04650/49	Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Amritsar	Jaynagar
02358/57	Durgiana Express	Amritsar	Kolkata

TRAINS ORIGINATING FROM/TERMINATING AT AMRITSAR			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
04674/73	Shaheed Express	Amritsar	Jaynagar
04650/49	Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Amritsar	Jaynagar
02716/15	Sachkhand Express	Amritsar	Nanded
02926/25	Paschim Exp. (Delux)	Amritsar	Bandra Terminus
02904/03	Golden Temple Mail	Amritsar	Mumbai Central
02408/07	Karambhum Express	Amritsar	New Jalpaiguri
02054/53	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	Amritsar	Haridwar
02358/57	Durgiana Express	Amritsar	Kolkata

PASSING TRAINS HAVING STOPPAGE AT AMBALA			
Train No.	Train Name	From	To
02053/54	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	Haridwar	Amritsar
02057/58	Jan Shatabdi Exp.	New Delhi	Una Himachal
04650/49	Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Amritsar	Jaynagar
04674/73	Shaheed Express	Amritsar	Jaynagar
02716/15	Sachkhand Express	Amritsar	Nanded
02904/03	Golden Temple Mail	Amritsar	Mumbai Central
02408/07	Karambhum Express	Amritsar	New Jalpaiguri
02358/57	Durgiana Express	Amritsar	Kolkata

Note: Reservation/Booking in the above trains may be done through any PRS counter, IRCTC, Authorised Rail Travel Agent and Common Service Centres etc.

Note:- For any kind of information like Time-Table, Frequency & other Stoppages of the above trains, passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

7 | E. EXPLAINED THE OUTBREAK

KABIR FIRAQUE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

WITH DOMESTIC flights resuming on Monday, the question being asked is about the risk of fliers being infected with Covid-19.

In general, the risk of a viral infection inside an aircraft is thought to be low, except in cases where healthy fliers are sitting too close to someone carrying an infectious virus.

Studies over the years have sought to quantify the infection risk. Here, we look at two recent ones — neither study, however, looks specifically at the coronavirus pandemic.

One study is from 2018, on droplet-borne virus transmission in aircraft; the other is from this year, focusing on boarding procedures but also looking at onboard transmission.

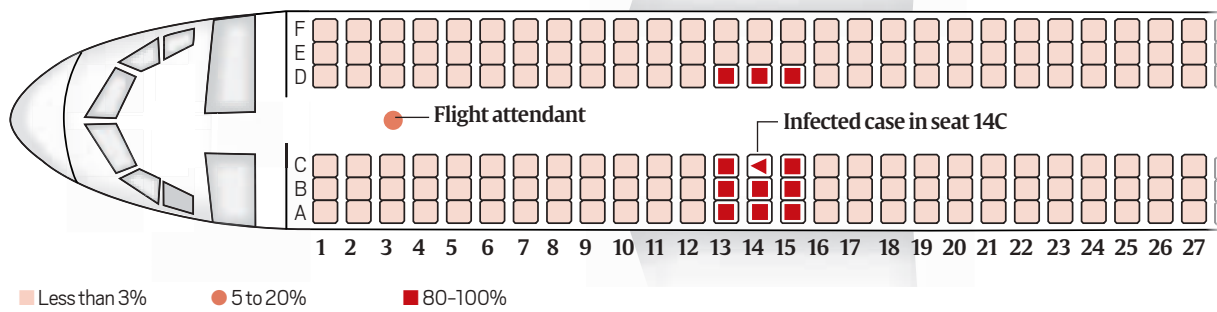
What is known about such infection?

On infections that spread through droplets, the World Health Organisation (WHO) says: "Transmission of infection may occur between passengers who are seated in the same area of an aircraft, usually as a result of the infected individual coughing or sneezing or by touch... Highly contagious conditions, such as influenza, are more likely to be spread to other passengers in situations where the aircraft ventilation system is not operating."

About ventilation, it says: "Ventilation provides a total change of air 20-30 times per hour. Most modern aircraft have recirculation systems, which recycle up to 50% of cabin air."

As flights resume in various countries, air-

ONE INFECTED PASSENGER, AND HOW TRANSMISSION RISK REDUCES BY DISTANCE



From a 2018 study on the transmission of droplet-mediated respiratory diseases during flights, this seating heat map shows the probability of one passenger (triangle) infecting each of the other passengers (squares) and crew members (circle). Probability of infection set at 1.8% per minute of contact. While the infected passenger is shown in seat 14C, the same probabilities apply anywhere except the front and back rows. The study covered transcontinental flights. Source: Hertzberg, Weiss et al, PNAS 2018

craft makers Airbus and Boeing have stressed the safety ensured by their ventilation systems, Reuters reported.

What does being "seated in the same area" mean?

For Covid-19, the WHO has prescribed that a distance of 1 metre should be maintained. The 2018 study quantified the infection risk based on proximity to an already infected passenger. The study, by researchers from Emory University and Georgia Tech, was published in the journal *PNAS*. As a modelling study, it is not a prediction — only a calculation of probabilities based on simulations.

The study chronicled the movements of economy class fliers on 10 transcontinental US flights to draw up a transmission model for respiratory disease spread through droplets. (Movement of passengers and crew can play a key role in virus transmission.)

The figure shows an already infected passenger in seat 14C. The calculated risk of transmission varies, but is very small for most passengers. Only in 11 seats (those nearest to 14C) is the chance of catching the infection high, at 80%-100%. For all other seats, the risk is less than 3%, and reduces with distance. For passengers seated farther away from 14C than 1m (the WHO stipulation) — which means al-

most all seats beyond the nearest 11 — the probability of transmission is less than 1%. For a flight attendant who walks the aisle, the risk is between 5% and 20%, according to the study.

Why specifically seat 14C?

It is just illustrative. "Although we use seat 14C to illustrate this finding, outcomes are similar for an infectious passenger seated in any aisle seat, except in the first or last row, for which no passengers forward or aft, respectively, are infected," the study said.

The study set the probability of transmission at 1.8% per minute of contact, a conservatively high estimate, it said.

But will it apply to Covid-19?

"Nobody knows these probabilities — for Influenza or COVID!" biomathematician Howard Weiss, one of the study authors, who is now with Pennsylvania State University, told *The Indian Express* by email.

What is the other study about?

Researchers from three institutions in Florida have developed a model to analyse which boarding procedures reduce the risk of disease spread in airplanes. The model of pedestrian dynamics, called CALM, simulates how people maintain a distance from one another. The research was published in the journal *PLOS One* in March.

"While our focus was on identifying good boarding procedures in general, we looked at sections of the planes, just to get some extra insight," computer scientist Ashok Srinivasan of the University of Western Florida said by email. Among the findings: "We found that business class carries less risk than economy."

And does the risk change with a window, middle, or aisle seat?

It depends on air flow. Srinivasan said: "Others have looked at window vs middle vs aisle. If you don't consider air flow, then aisle seats are more at risk and window less. With air flow considered, things get more complex. In most planes, a window seat would still be safer. But it is possible to have air flow patterns that make window seats riskier."

The 2018 study assumed omni-direc-

tional spread of virions, which Weiss said is a crude assumption. Asked if leaving a seat vacant helps, he said: "Based solely on our study, I cannot justify that. Psychologically, as a passenger, I would certainly prefer it. I could hand-wave that if a passenger is facing forward then the virions coming out sideways have substantially less momentum and will settle more quickly, so the vacant middle seat will provide some protection — but I cannot scientifically justify this."

What about boarding procedures?

The 2020 study found that it is better to use fewer zones. "If you have many boarding zones, then people tend to cluster together while stowing luggage, which leads to increased contact. The boarding process is faster with more zones, but so is infection spread likelihood," Srinivasan said.

But aren't boarding procedures going to be different now?

Yes, they will be. Indian airports, for example, are doing away with physical check-in. The results of the study by Srinivasan and colleagues, however, are based on the procedures that existed before flight operations ceased around the world.

"Airlines have introduced new boarding procedures in response to COVID-19. We recently completed the basic analysis on these, but have not published them yet," Srinivasan said. "The above observations still apply. But there are also some interesting insights that would need to wait for a publication!"

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

HCQ: what we know so far

India has extended guidelines for hydroxychloroquine use, a study has raised fresh questions about its efficacy against Covid, and Trump continues to push for it. A look at both sides of the continuing debate

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MAY 28

LAST WEEK, a study in *The Lancet* raised further questions about the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) as a treatment for Covid-19. This comes even as US President Donald Trump continues to push for HCQ, including a claim that he has been using it himself.

HCQ has been the subject of debate around the world. It is India's drug of choice both for treatment and prophylaxis (post-exposure preventive). India has extended guidelines for its use and is currently exporting it to 55 other countries, even though the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been cautious about its efficacy.

What is hydroxychloroquine?

It is a drug used in the treatment of autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. It is also used for the prevention of malaria and its treatment; it is a derivative of the antimalarial drug chloroquine. On prophylactic use of HCQ for malaria, the US Centers for Disease Control says: "Hydroxychloroquine can only be used in places where chloroquine... is still effective. There are only a few places left in the world where hydroxychloroquine is still effective including parts of Central America and the Caribbean."

Countries that have allowed use of HCQ for Covid-19, with restrictions, include the US (for emergency use in hospital), France (on prescription), Brazil, Russia and South Korea.

Why is it so much in the spotlight?

The prime mover of the theory that HCQ works against Covid-19 has been President Trump, starting with his tweet in March: "HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE & AZITHROMYCIN, taken together, have a real chance to be one of the biggest game changers in the history of medicine. The FDA has moved mountains — Thank You! Hopefully they will BOTH (H works better with A, International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents)... be put in use IMMEDIATELY. PEOPLE ARE DYING, MOVE FAST, and GOD BLESS EVERYONE!"

A short while later, Trump warned of "retaliation" if India continued with its policy against export of HCQ (India later eased export restrictions). A few days ago, Trump said he uses HCQ for prophylaxis.

How far does Trump's view reflect in US guidelines and scientific assessment?

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases director Dr Anthony Fauci has called the evidence of the efficacy of the combination "anecdotal".

The US Food and Drug Administration says: "The FDA is aware of reports of serious heart rhythm problems in patients with COVID-19 treated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, often in combination with azithromycin and other QT prolonging medicines. We are also aware of increased use of these medicines through outpatient prescriptions... Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine have not been shown to be safe and effective for treating or preventing COVID-19. They are being studied in clinical trials for COVID-19, and we authorized their temporary use during the COVID-19 pandemic for treatment of the virus in hospitalized patients when clinical trials are not available, or participation is not feasible, through an Emergency Use Authorization."

What is the evidence in favour of, or against, the efficacy of HCQ?

There is an emerging body of evidence, of-



Many countries allow HCQ use against Covid-19, with restrictions. AP

ten conflicting. The latest, in *The Lancet* last week, is not encouraging. "We were unable to confirm a benefit of hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, when used alone or with a macrolide, on in-hospital outcomes for COVID-19. Each of these drug regimens was associated with decreased in-hospital survival and an increased frequency of ventricular arrhythmias when used for treatment of COVID-19," concluded researchers led by the Brigham and Women's Hospital. Macrolides are a class of antibiotics that includes azithromycin.

In a small study published in the *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents*, published on March 17, French scientists reported: "Twenty cases were treated in this study and showed a significant reduction of the viral carriage at D6-post inclusion compared to controls, and much lower average carrying duration than reported of untreated patients in the literature. Azithromycin added to hydroxychloroquine was significantly more efficient for virus elimination." In other words, the combination did reduce the viral load. The size of the study, however, is too small for the conclusion to be treated as definitive.

In an observational study funded by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), HCQ was not found to be very effective in reducing severity of Covid-19. "... Hydroxychloroquine administration was not associated with either a greatly lowered or an increased risk of the composite end point of intubation or death. Randomized, controlled trials of hydroxychloroquine in patients with Covid-19 are needed," researchers reported earlier this month in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. However, there have been ecological studies comparing deaths in countries that have allowed HCQ with those that have not, to claim that the former showed lower death rates.

Among known side effects of HCQ are alterations in heart rates, intestinal problems, headache, dizziness, hallucinations etc.

What is the WHO position?

The WHO has said that while there is no conclusive evidence yet of the efficacy of HCQ in Covid-19 treatment, the side-effects are well documented. Dr Michael Ryan, executive director WHO, said during a briefing on Wednesday: "Every sovereign nation with effective regulatory authorities can advise citizens on the use of any drug... Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine are already licensed products. But they have not as yet been found to be effective in COVID-19 or in prophylaxis... there are warnings by

many authorities on potential side effects. Many countries have limited it to clinical trials under supervision of clinicians in hospital settings. However it is for each national authority to weigh and assess the evidence." HCQ and CQ along with beta interferons, however, form one arm of the multi-country Solidarity trials that are being carried out under the aegis of the WHO.

What is India's position?

India on Friday expanded the list of people eligible for prophylactic use of HCQ to include non-healthcare frontline workers. The revised advisory now says: "Joint Monitoring Group and NTF have now recommended the prophylactic use of HCQ in all asymptomatic healthcare workers involved in containment and treatment of COVID 19 and asymptomatic healthcare workers working in non-COVID hospitals/non-COVID areas of COVID hospitals/blocks, asymptomatic frontline workers, such as surveillance workers deployed in containment zones and paramilitary/police personnel involved in COVID-19 related activities and asymptomatic household contacts of laboratory confirmed cases."

The drug, though, is not to be used in people with retinopathy, hypersensitivity to the disease, cardiac problems or glucose 6 phosphate deficiency. It is not to be used in pregnant or lactating mothers of children aged less than 15 years, either. Use of the drug has to be preceded by an ECG.

Data on assessment of HCQ prophylaxis among 1,323 healthcare workers indicated mild adverse effects such as nausea (8.9%), abdominal pain (7.3%), vomiting (1.5%), hypoglycemia (1.7%) and cardio-vascular effects (1.9%). And as per the data from the Pharmacovigilance Program of India, there have been 214 reported instances of adverse drug reactions associated with prophylactic HCQ use. Of these, 7 were serious individual case safety reports with prolongation of QT interval on ECG in 3 cases. The advisory warned: "It is reiterated that the intake of above medicine should not instil a sense of false security."

The advice for use of the drug along with azithromycin in serious patients of Covid-19 remains. However, last week Dr R R Gangakhedkar director of epidemiology and infectious diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research said: "We will review the evidence (on hydroxychloroquine) and take a call". India has in the past discussed population-level prophylactic use of the drug.

FOCUS ON MAHARASHTRA

On the ground: HCQ use in worst-hit state

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, MAY 28

IN MAHARASHTRA, hydroxychloroquine remains the preventive of choice for healthcare workers exposed to the novel coronavirus. At least 80-90% of health workers involved in the treatment of Covid-19 patients have been given HCQ tablets as a preventive, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope told *The Indian Express*.

"These are dynamic numbers, but definitely HCQ has been taken by thousands of our frontline staff. We do not deviate from the ICMR protocol. Not just our frontline staff but police officers, doctors and even those who are exposed while conducting surveillance duties at the containment zone have taken the HCQ drug," Tope said.

On Friday, a revised central advisory recommended the use of hydroxychloroquine as a preventive medication for a wider range of persons in high-risk zones.

In Maharashtra, only in cases of contraindications — that is if the person has a heart ailment or even high blood pressure — does the doctor provide his/her recommendation. An ECG is also done on healthcare workers before administering the drug, Tope said.

HCQ is primarily prescribed for rheumatoid arthritis and lupus patients. Common side effects are usually mild to moderate and related to the stomach. "Patients of arthritis who are being effectively managed with HCQ need not be alarmed by what is being reported from HCQ experience with Covid-19," rheumatologist Dr Arvind Chopra said.

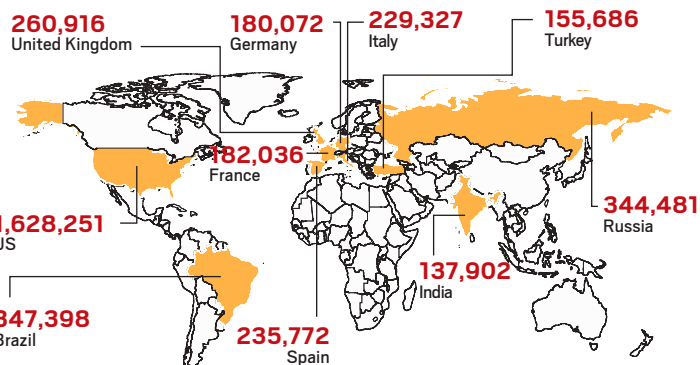
The latest ICMR advisory, while favouring the use of HCQ as a preventive in high-risk populations, has "noted the occurrence of side effects and since this has important implications in clinical practice they should publish the data in sufficient detail in a peer-reviewed medical journal on priority," Dr Chopra said.

Private hospitals have devised their internal protocol and identified those who are vulnerable. Dr Sunil Rao, Group Director of Sahyadri Hospital, said more than 2,000 of their frontline workers have taken HCQ. "If they have side effects like tingling sensation in the ear or any other symptom it is immediately stopped," he said. Employees at pharmacies and billing counters too are taking the drug.

Dr Zarir Udwadia, Mumbai-based pulmonologist, said in a review in *Association of Physicians of India* journal that caution must be exercised when using it, with monitoring for potential cardiac toxicity. The review said current data does not allow them to recommend for or against the use of these drug.

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

THE WORLD



TOTAL CONFIRMED: 5,354,539

DEATH COUNT: 343,116

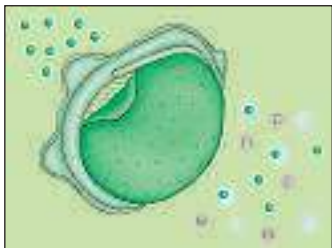
Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 24. JHU's India tally and Health Ministry's tally (below) may not match as these are accounted at different times.

For N95 masks, a more efficient, replaceable filter

N95 MASKS, worn mostly by healthcare workers, are known to offer the highest level of protection against airborne infections, but they still have limitations. N95 masks filter about 85% of particles smaller than 300 nanometres, or nm (1 nm is a billionth part of a metre). SARS-CoV-2, however, is in the size range of 65-125 nm, so some virus particles could slip through N95s.

Now, researchers have developed a membrane that can be attached to a regular N95 mask and replaced when needed. The filter has a smaller pore size than normal N95 masks, potentially blocking more virus particles, they report in the American Chemical Society's journal *ACS Nano*.

N95 masks are intended for a single use but, because they are in short supply, many wear the same N95 mask repeatedly. The researchers sought to resolve this problem by developing a membrane that more efficiently filters particles the size of SARS-CoV-2, and one that could be replaced after every use.



A replaceable nanoporous membrane attached to an N95 filters out particles the size of SARS-CoV-2. *American Chemical Society*

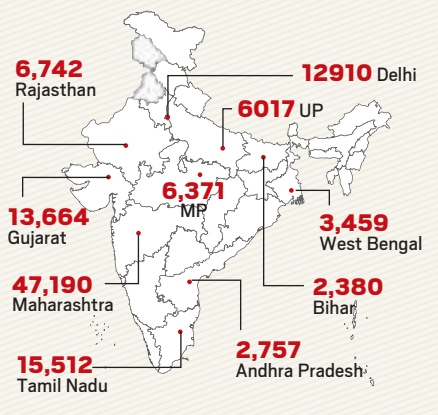
When the researchers measured the airflow rate through the filter, they found that for pores tinier than 60 nm (in other words, smaller than SARS-CoV-2), the pores needed to be placed a maximum of 330 nm from each other to achieve good breathability. The membrane also cleans itself.

SOURCE: AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY



INDIA COUNT: 131,868 (3,867 DEATHS)

TOP 10 STATES



REST OF INDIA	
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	33
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	329
Chandigarh	225
Chhattisgarh	214
Dadar Nagar Haveli	2
Goa	55
Haryana	1131
Himachal Pradesh	185
Jammu and Kashmir	1569
Jharkhand	350
Karnataka	1959
Kerala	795
Ladakh	49
Manipur	29
Meghalaya	14
Mizoram	1
Odisha	1269
Puducherry	26
Punjab	2045
Sikkim	1
Telangan	1813
Tripura	189
Uttarakhand	244

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 23. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. 54,441 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 32 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

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



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The Indian **EXPRESS**

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UNQUIET FRONT

Waning trust erodes India, China capacities to manage Ladakh face-off. Beijing must back off, sensible diplomacy is needed

ASTENSIONS between the Indian and Chinese armed forces mount in eastern Ladakh, Delhi and Beijing seem to be hurtling towards a fourth military crisis on their long and contested northern border. The resolution of the last three crises — at Depsang plain in northern Ladakh during 2013, Chumar in eastern Ladakh in 2014, and Doklam on the east at Bhutan's border with China in 2017 — required ever-higher political intervention. Prime Minister Li Keqiang's visit to India in 2013 and President Xi Jinping's trip to India in 2014 helped lower the military temperature at Depsang and Chumar respectively. A series of high-level meetings between Modi and Xi at various multilateral settings in 2017 provided the necessary political push to disentangle the conflict that lasted 73 days at Doklam.

Two summit-level retreats between Modi and Xi — at Wuhan in 2018 and near Chennai in 2019 — raised expectations for more enduring solutions. Those hopes have not so far translated into effective agreements to manage the new normal on the Sino-Indian frontier. Three features define the new normal. In the past, the divergent perceptions of the Line of Actual Control meant "incursions" across the other's claim line were common but not threatening. Since the late 1980s, Delhi and Beijing had crafted a series of protocols to address these incursions. Second, these protocols are unable to cope with the new dynamic marked by more vigorous patrolling by the two armed forces and more frequent and intense face-offs between them, thanks to the modernisation of military capabilities and transport infrastructure on both sides of the disputed border. Finally, the diminishing trust between Delhi and Beijing amid the widening template of economic and political conflict threatens the capacity of the two security establishments to manage crises.

Reports in this newspaper in the last few days on the geographic scope and depth of the incursions, and the intensity of troop concentration, suggest there is a danger of the current face-off in eastern Ladakh becoming a bigger military confrontation. Three urgent imperatives present themselves: First, PM Modi must take the Opposition political parties into confidence on the nature of the crisis. Second, is the need for an early political consultation between Delhi and Beijing on exploring ways to end the stand-off. Reports that Chinese troops are sitting on Indian territory underline the importance of restoring status quo ante; this is unlikely to be achieved at the local level. Finally, a renewed effort at resolving the conflict over the boundary dispute must necessarily complement the management of frequent crises on the Indian frontier with China. In recent years, Delhi has often proposed that the two countries must begin the clarification of the Line of Actual Control on an urgent basis. That would pave the way for a political settlement of the boundary dispute. China would be wise to take a fresh look at its position instead of risking a prolonged confrontation with India and a deepening chill in bilateral relations in a world still reeling under the effects of COVID, and at a time when its own handling of the outbreak is coming under mounting scrutiny.

EASE OF LEARNING

It shouldn't have taken a global pandemic for Indian education to explore online teaching and learning. Challenges lie ahead

The central Home Ministry is yet to issue a timeline for the reopening of schools and for almost two months now, the classroom has been virtual. School education has been jolted out of its conventional ways by an unprecedented disruption. Many other countries embraced massive open online courses (MOOCs) years ago, and it shouldn't have taken a global pandemic to force Indian education to go online. But on the digital superhighway, as a series in this newspaper showed, mileage varies in a country with a yawning digital divide and no social security architecture. The level of success, across classes and income levels, is determined by two axes — the ease of digital access and the ability of parents to support learning at home. Earlier, enterprising children could succeed despite the poverty and illiteracy of parents because the classroom provided an enabling environment. But now the poor are disconnected and irrespective of background, some children cannot relate to the online classroom, and many more are losing out on midday meals. If education remains online-only, millions could suffer a loss of opportunity, at the expense of future national productivity.

The physical classroom does not only impart the syllabus. Children are also socialised, and there is an element of sport and play. However, while Pythagoras' theorem and Eratosthenes' sieve may be readily transmitted in the digital classroom, the matrix for socialisation is not replicated on an LCD screen. Parents have felt pressed, too, having to support their children's classes while working from home themselves. Now that they are returning to the workplace, without reliable daycare facilities, both work and schooling could be compromised. Also, in the public interest, medical professionals in the UK and Europe argue that the role of children in transmission must be understood to arrive at a full epidemiological picture, and this can only happen when schools reopen.

The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti has approached the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and other educational organisations await instructions from state governments. Schools may reopen in a staggered manner, with hygiene and distancing protocols in place, and induction should be contingent on testing. Perhaps residential institutions like the Navodayas should lead, since they can seal the perimeter and do not run the continuing risk of spreading presented by daily student traffic. The Centre should issue a timeline soon, because as in other spheres, despite the virus, life must go on in the classroom — with maximum caution.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



A pandemic prescription



SHAMIKA RAVI

Imperative to instil confidence, remove fear around health and economy should inform COVID policy

INDIA IS CONFRONTING two simultaneous crises. An economic crisis destroying our livelihoods and a health crisis which threatens our lives. The twin crises are deeply intertwined — our economy cannot be reopened without credibly addressing fears of infection and resurgence. The health crisis caused an economic crisis because people do not consume, work, or invest when there is visceral fear. Despite repeated assurances from governments, the unabated reverse exodus of migrants to their homes in the eastern states signals the fear and uncertainty that has gripped the nation. The immediate reaction of the government, an extended national lockdown, has been extremely successful in slowing the growth of the virus. However, we are yet to "flatten the curve" — that is reach the peak beyond which active cases decline steadily and total number of cases flatten with strong recoveries. It is also important to note that "flattening the curve", doesn't make the virus go away. There remain high chances of resurgence, as seen in Germany, South Korea and, more ominously, in Iran. We must, therefore, now shift to a plan that balances the need to protect our health and reopen our economy by locking down only those who are infectious.

This article presents a simple, scalable, and credible solution. One, introduce a comprehensive "test and isolate" policy across the country. Two, build testing laboratories in all 7,000 blocks across the country and three, build dedicated infectious diseases wards in every district hospital across the country. This will make it safe for Indians to return to work and help in keeping the infection rate below 0.5 per cent of the population (currently it is 0.007 per cent). Until a vaccine is developed and deployed, the simplest and safest path to this outcome is a national COVID management strategy of isolation combined with contact tracing and testing. This strategy is far less disruptive and cost-effective than our current policy. It does not rely on any technological breakthroughs and will work even in the worst-case scenario. This provides a roadmap for a future in which Indian citizens are confident that their health and the economy's future are protected

One, introduce a comprehensive 'test and isolate' policy across the country, two, build testing laboratories in all 7,000 blocks across the country and three, build dedicated infectious diseases wards in every district hospital across the country. This will make it safe for Indians to return to work and help in keeping the infection rate below 0.5 per cent of the population (currently it is 0.007 per cent). Until a vaccine is developed and deployed, the simplest and safest path to this outcome is a national COVID management strategy of isolation combined with contact tracing and testing.

against the virus, and from future pandemics. It is the fastest path to an economic revival because it is the simplest and safest path. A strong commitment from the Centre to provide resources has already been signalled by the finance minister in her last stimulus announcement.

The solution outlined above is of long-term strategic interest, beyond the current virus outbreak, since infectious diseases are a major killer in India even in normal times. Tuberculosis alone accounts for over 4,00,000 deaths every year in the country. Let us look at required investments into different components of this COVID management strategy.

Our research estimates that India has approximately 19 lakh hospital beds, 95,000 ICU beds, and 48,000 ventilators. Most of these facilities are concentrated in a few states and cities. How can we optimise the scarce resource across states as the infection spreads eastwards and to rural areas? A critical piece in our public health architecture is the urgent upgradation of health and wellness centres (HWCs). This is an efficient gate-keeping mechanism for COVID management. These HWCs become points for early detection, contact tracing and testing of COVID cases. We estimate this expense to be Rs 30,000 crore.

We have to proactively adopt the following steps to overcome this pandemic and minimise its spread. One, testing: If all states were to match the testing rate of Tamil Nadu, it would allow us to cover 5 per cent of the population (7 crore tests/year) at a cost of Rs 21,000 crore (at Rs 3,000/test). Testing is critical to the detection and containment of the virus. Two, contact tracing: The most sustainable and effective way to scale up contact tracing and surveillance (besides using district police) would be to hire and train additional ASHA workers. India could double the number of ASHA workers for Rs 10,000 crore/year. Three, quarantine: Clean, safe and adequate isolation facilities are critical to managing this pandemic. This is particularly relevant for people living in high density housing. If an estimated 2.5 per cent of the population were to be kept in isolation for

two weeks and some compensation was paid to the poor for involved income loss, this would cost Rs 30,000 crore. Four, masks for all: The government could make abundant masks available to the general population and incentivise firms to provide masks to its employees through tax subsidies. This would cost Rs 10,000 crore.

The creation of public diagnostic labs at every block level has been announced by the finance minister in the final tranche of the economic package last week. It is important to keep in mind that approximately 1,00,000 diagnostic laboratories, which include pathology laboratories and radiology centres exist in India. Developing an efficient public-private-partnership model could be the way ahead to tide us over the current crisis and leverage the existing infrastructure at local levels. Blocks that do not currently have any labs should be prioritised for the creation of government labs.

Put together, these investments would cost around one lakh crore a year and will allow us to implement a COVID management model across the country. Since each week of the lockdown costs Rs 200,000 crore, these investments are obviously worthwhile. Right now, it may be difficult to envision a date when the number of infections drops to very low. Easing containment policies without a viable alternative like "test and isolate" in place would resume the exponential growth of the virus and very likely bring us back to our current situation. The strategy, once implemented, must continue for the next 18-24 months or until a vaccine is widely available.

Fear is driving a significant part of the current economic downturn. This includes fear for our own health as well as the uncertainty of future lockdowns. Our policy must be simple and feasible enough to instil confidence among people that the health crisis is being effectively managed by all tiers of the government along with the business and health communities, and that its implementation will prevent additional economic losses.

The writer is a former member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council

INVISIBLE INDIA

Covid-19 has made migrant workers' plight, state apathy visible



ANIL DHARKER

HOW CAN SO many be so invisible? All around us, in our great metropolises, we see cranes on the top of buildings stealthily climbing skywards but we do not see the workers inside. At the important crossroads and chowks of our cities every morning, hordes of young men gather — masons, carpenters, painters — waiting for a call to work, blended into the landscape. On every street, yet others come to their claimed spots in the morning, carrying their trade on their heads and shoulders — from bhel puri to vegetables. They return home, their daily wage earned, in the evening. We don't see them either.

Yet, there are millions of them.

A widely-quoted figure based on the 2011 census and on NSSO (National Sample Survey Office) data, asserts there are 65 million inter-state migrants, of which a third are workers — so around 22 million. By conservative estimates, 30 per cent of these depend on daily work, and an equal number are employed on a regular basis, but in the informal sector. Add street vendors, and you get. no one knows how many. And no one cares.

It's only now, with the images we see everywhere, that we have begun to see them: An exhausted child asleep on his mother's suitcase as she drags it along, a young man cradling his friend as he breathes his last after walking hundreds of miles. We hear of, but luckily do not see, the expectant

mother in full-term and walking nevertheless, who delivers her child, and then walks on again. We hear of, but can scarcely believe, as wave after wave of the poor — with only rotis and chutney to sustain them — undertake journeys of a thousand miles on foot, to reach home.

You and I see them now when, for many, it's too late. Didn't the politicians who go to them for their votes not see them before this? When the PM announced the first lockdown on March 24, he gave about three-and-a-half hours notice to India, including its chief ministers. The Railways, which carry 23 million passengers per day, cancelled all trains. The migrants had rushed towards the railway and bus stations but the gates were shut by then.

Right from the start, the fight against COVID-19 has suffered from the invisibilising of the poor. When the PM asked people to fight the virus with *thaalis* and light from their balconies, he forgot that the poor don't have balconies. When social distancing was made a central point of the campaign, the impossibility of it in slums was overlooked. Worst of all, was the lack of the anticipation that without work, savings or food, migrant workers and their families would want, and attempt, to rush home. When the rush could no longer be ignored, it still took five weeks to announce the resumption of trains.

But even this was conditional for mi-

grants: Their origin state (say Maharashtra), should first want the workers to leave, and then the destination state (say UP), should agree to have them. Such an arrangement was bound to fail, and it did. In announcing the lockdown, the central government had invoked the Disaster Management Act, which overrode state governments' powers: But when it came to the migrants' transportation, suddenly, without notice, why was the onus transferred to the states? The chaos this caused could be gauged from the desperate crowds at Dadar and Ghaziabad, and other stations. So, again the decision was reversed, but only on May 19. Further, it has taken the central government 53 whole days to set up NMIS (National Migrant Information System), an online dashboard for the states to put up figures so that they can monitor the movement of people. Why did it take 50 days to announce food supplements for 80 million Indians who are not part of the rationing system?

If policy-makers had abandoned their middle-class value systems and thought of our country's invisible multitudes in time, they would have commandeered the whole rail system on a war footing, organised buses and trucks, food stations en route, and put cash and essential rations in each starving hand. But how could they, when the hand was invisible to them?

Dharker is a writer and columnist

MAY 25, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM DIALOGUE

THE STAGE WAS set for resumption of dialogue between the government and agitation leaders of Assam on the foreigners' issue. The government released the first installment of three agitation leaders detained under the preventive detention ordinance. They are K Cbaruah, president of the Assam Yuba Samaj, Parag Challa, a prominent agitation leader of Sibsagar and Heela Barthakur, a senior leader of the women's wing of the AAGSP. The second batch of political detenus, expected to be released shortly, include Nibaran Bora, chief of the Purbanchal Lok Parishad, Atul Bora, secretary, All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad and Nagen Hazarika, president,

Assam Jatiyabadi Dal.

WORLD COURT ON IRAN

THE WORLD COURT unanimously ordered Iran to release the American hostages and declared that Iran must also pay damages to the US for the six months hostage affair. Iran had ignored an interim ruling by the court in December that the hostages be freed. The International Court of Justice, the judicial arm of the United Nations, did not rule on an American claim that Iran be ordered to put on trial those responsible for November 4 seizure of the US embassy in Teheran. The Court decided by a vote of 12-3 that Iran is obligated to pay damages to the US.

GIAN SINGH REMAND

GIAN SINGH, THE Connaught Place garage owner, who was yesterday arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the murder of the Nirankari Mission chief, Baba Gurbachan Singh, was remanded to police custody till May 21 by the chief metropolitan magistrate, M A Khan. The CBI's application for remand said that the interrogation so far had revealed that Singh was "positively" involved in the commission of the crime. Singh is said to be a close friend of Ranjit Singh, the 25-year-old carpenter suspected to be the brain behind the murders of the Baba and his bodyguard, Pratap Singh.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE

Cash transfers for farmers

Time has come to merge the income benefit schemes of the Centre and state governments with programmes such as the MGNREGA



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI

ON MAY 12, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that his government's relief-cum-stimulus package would be Rs 20 lakh crore, almost 10 per cent of India's GDP. Most experts hailed the announcement. But when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the package, sector by sector, many wondered where the "new cash" was? It did not take much time to figure out that the additional relief and stimulus in the system is just about 1 per cent of the GDP — not 10 per cent. Much of the rest is directed towards increasing liquidity and deferring some loan payments, but not much additional cash.

The government has been stingy on cash payments presumably because its tax revenues are falling and it is hesitant to print more cash out of the fear of being downgraded by rating agencies. Even the worst-affected migrant workers have not got much cash support. Farmers too have suffered losses because of the fall in farm prices, especially perishables. Onions and tomatoes, for example, are selling at around Rs 6/kg in India's largest mandis like Lasalgaon, Chittoor and Kolar — this when the cost of production is about Rs 10/kg. Farmers growing flowers and grapes and milk producers face the same predicament. The government did promise Rs 2,000 per farm family from the PM-KISAN scheme, but this is only a reiteration of an earlier commitment.

In this context, the Chhattisgarh government deserves compliments for launching the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana (RGKNY), an income transfer scheme at Rs 10,000/acre for paddy farmers and Rs 13,000/acre for sugarcane farmers. The state's chief minister, Bhupesh Baghel, has said that the scheme will be extended to farmers of other crops — in fact, to landless labourers as well. One will have to wait and see how the scheme is implemented, but on the face of it, RGKNY will help put money directly into the hands of farmers and poor agricultural labourers.

Baghel is not the first CM to implement a cash transfer scheme for farmers. In kharif 20'8-19, Telangana's Chief Minister, K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) announced a cash transfer scheme of Rs 4,000/acre, per season — this was raised to Rs 5,000/acre per season in kharif 2019-20. There is a live portal that gives the details of the scheme and its progress. In the rabi season of 2018-19, the Odisha government launched the KALIA scheme (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) on a somewhat similar pattern. West Bengal's Krishak Bandhu and Jharkhand's Mukhya Mantri Krishi Aashirwad Yojana are the other income support schemes worth mentioning. These schemes were launched just before elections for obvious reasons. They also egged the Centre on to announcing the PM Kisan Yojana.

These income support policies are welcome. But it is high time to evaluate these schemes and refine or merge some of them



C R Sasikumar

so that they serve their purpose in an efficient and inclusive manner without much leakage.

The first question to ask is: Who is the actual beneficiary of the income support schemes? Are cash advances given to the owner farmer or the tenant farmer who actually tills the land? Ideally, the money should go to the real tiller. But in large parts of the country, there is no record of tenancy. The government data shows only 10 per cent tenancy in the country while several micro-level studies indicate that it could be anywhere between 25-30 per cent. In fact, in many regions like the Godavari belt, it could be even more than 50 per cent. It does not make much sense to put money into the accounts of absentee landlords. The best way would be to change the tenancy laws, and open up land lease markets, ensuring that the owner of the land has full rights to take his land back after the expiry of the lease period. The current law, favouring "land to the tiller", is loaded against the owner. As a result, much of tenancy in the country remains oral.

In the absence of such legal changes in land lease laws, the only way forward is to fully inform the tiller that the owner has got income support and then appeal to the owner to pass on this benefit to the tiller — or adjust the land rent accordingly. Information and persuasion campaigns in radio and newspapers would increase the chances of the benefits being passed on to the real tillers — or at least help the tenants to bargain on the terms of tenancy.

The first question to ask is: Who is the actual beneficiary of the income support schemes? Are cash advances given to the owner-farmer or the tenant-farmer who actually tills the land? Ideally, the money should go to the real tiller. But in large parts of the country, there is no record of tenancy. The government data shows only 10 per cent tenancy in the country while several micro-level studies indicate that it could be anywhere between 25-30 per cent.

The other issue is identifying the landless labourers working on farms. Majority of them are temporary and seasonal workers, and leaving the task of identification to panchayats and patwaris can open doors for large leakages and corruption. There have been talks in the past for synchronising MGNREGA with farm operations to contain the cost of farming as well as ensuring that those engaged in this employment guarantee scheme do useful and productive work. The legal framework of the MGNREGA scheme does allow this on farms owned by people of SC/ST communities, and on the lands of marginal farmers.

The time has come to think seriously about merging income support schemes, including the PM KISAN and state-level schemes, with the MGNREGA and price-subsidy schemes — food and fertiliser subsidies given by Centre and power subsidies given by state government. These schemes amount to Rs 5 lakh crore — that's a good sum of money to start a basic income cover for poor households. Markets could then be left to operate freely. This approach can cover landless labourers, farmers, and poor consumers — these categories overlap.

Let there be an expert group to look closely into the functioning of each one of these schemes and create an umbrella scheme to take care of the poor and the needy. Would the Modi government move towards direct cash transfers?

The writer is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Hong Kong belongs to China, not the US. The latter has only two choices when it comes to the city: be a friendly cooperator, or stay away. China will never offer the US a third option." — **GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA**

The power of partnership

NGOs, private sector, and international organisations have joined hands with government against Covid



AMITABH KANT

EVERYBODY AGREES that we are living through unprecedented times. The nature and scale of the crisis which the COVID-19 pandemic has led to is unparalleled. In such a scenario, solutions are unlikely to come from past experiences or best practices. The biggest source of strength now is the partnerships we have built over the years. The situation at hand calls for stakeholders to come together, work side by side and support each other. This is precisely what one of the Empowered Groups created by the government for comprehensive action and integrated response to contain the pandemic has been doing since it was formed.

The mandate of the group is to coordinate with three key stakeholders — NGOs, the private sector, and international development organisations — and help them in charting the best course of action. The fight against COVID-19 needed as many hands as were available. The job was too big for the government to handle alone. The strategy was to leverage vertical and horizontal partnerships: Vertical partnerships, which the stakeholders have built within their organisations and horizontal partnerships, which the government has institutionalised with stakeholders. The group itself is a partnership as its members are from eight different government ministries/organisations.

The NGOs, given their deep connection with spatial and sectoral issues, were a natural partner in this endeavour. There is nobody better placed than the NGOs to understand the pulse at the grassroots and engage closely with communities. Around 92,000 organisations were urged to partner with district administrations and contribute to the response efforts. Chief Secretaries of all states were requested to engage NGOs in relief and response efforts and designate state and district nodal officers to coordinate with them. The approach was to leverage the strength and reach of the local NGOs in identifying priority areas for action and avoid duplicity of efforts.

The response from NGOs was heartwarming. They have been actively setting up community kitchens, creating awareness about prevention, and physical distancing, providing shelter to the homeless, the daily wage workers, supporting government efforts in setting up health camps and in deputing volunteers to deliver services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, and others. An outstanding contribution of NGOs was in developing communication strategies in different vernaculars which went a long way in taking awareness measures to the community level. Akshaya Patra, Rama Krishna Mission, Tata Trusts, Piramal Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Action Aid, International Red Cross Society, Prayas, Help-age India, SEWA, Sulabh International, Charities Aid Foundation of India, Gaudia Math, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, the Salvation Army, and Catholic Bishops' Conference of India are some partners who have embodied the whole-of-society approach in COVID-19 response management.

The crisis has brought out the best in the start-up space. Many of them have risen to the occasion and accelerated the development of low cost, scalable, and quick solutions. The results have been promising. AgVa

accelerated the development of ventilators which are low-cost, mobile, low on power consumption and require minimal training for operators. Biodesign has developed a robotic product called ResperAid, which enables mechanised use of manual ventilators. Kaaenaat has developed highly portable ventilators which can be used to serve two patients simultaneously and has a built-in battery, oxygen concentrator, and steriliser cabinet. The products of a few non-ventilator start-ups too came to the aid of the COVID-19 fighting machinery. The AI-enabled analysis of chest X-Rays developed by Qure.ai enables large-scale screening to identify potential cases. GIS and geo-fencing technologies by Dronamaps enabled information cluster strategies for hotspots. AI-powered online doctor consultation and telemedicine platform by Mfine connects diagnostics labs and pharmacies with doctors and patients. The AI-enabled thermal imaging camera developed by Staqu facilitated large-scale screening at low cost. These developments strengthen the argument that low-cost and scalable solutions designed and developed domestically must drive our country's transformation.

The manner in which stakeholders have responded to the pandemic reinforces the power of partnerships. In fact, they have operated through partnerships. The NGO leaderships created momentum throughout their networks and delivered the much needed response. They also brought to the attention of the group the problems from the grassroots. Multiple agencies of international development organisations designed and executed joint response initiatives, leveraging their presence across the country. The coalitions which industry organisations such as CII, FICCI, and NASSCOM have built over the years brought people and resources together, identified problems at multiple levels, channelised ideas and solutions and facilitated innovations. The role played by the government has been facilitative in nature, which was based on the institutional and informal partnerships built with the three groups of stakeholders over the years.

Where do we stand today? Until three months ago, not a single N95 mask or personal protective equipment (PPE) was manufactured in India. Today, we have 104 domestic firms making PPEs and four manufacturing N95 masks. Over 2.6 lakh PPEs and two lakh N95 masks are being manufactured in India, daily. Domestic manufacturing of ventilators has strengthened manifold — orders for more than 59,000 units have been placed with nine manufacturers. While this shows the adaptiveness of Indian industry, the shift to domestic production must happen on a larger scale for a wider set of sectors in the long run, as envisioned by Make in India.

Civil society, and voluntary and non-government organisations constitute the backbone of the collective articulation of citizen interest in a democracy. As facilitators, mediators, and advocates of this interest, they have put people before everything else during this crisis. Their resource limitations did not slow them down in reaching to those in vulnerable situations. The support provided by NGOs to government initiatives has been timely and invaluable, and their commitment unshaken. They also have worked hand-in-hand with the private sector. We are certain that the vertical and horizontal partnerships built over the decades and strengthened during the joint fight against this pandemic will deliver greater results in times to come.

Kant is CEO, NITI Aayog. Views are personal



YASHWANT SINHA & ATUL K THAKUR

Rebooting the world

Post-Covid order should uphold equality, secularism and democratic principles

A NEW world is bound to emerge from the present corona crisis. But what will be the new world order like? The present one, already in shambles, has failed in dealing effectively with the pandemic. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has not covered itself with glory. The WHO's understanding of the situation and the manner in which it dealt with it has been called into question by many — the US has even stopped funding.

As the world looks on, the virus is spreading dangerously all over the world with 185 countries affected, the total number of infected people standing at 52,37,508 and over 3,35,805 dead so far. We are still far from an antidote. Global and national economies are collapsing like ninepins. People, especially the poor everywhere, are suffering as never before. Nobody in the international community seems concerned at the tragedy unfolding in countries like Yemen and Sudan. Indeed, the so-called world leaders are at their wits end or have no time to spare given their national concerns.

The political system, especially in a democracy, should ideally debate the role of the government in serving the needs of the citizens even in these trying times. Asking questions and holding the government accountable are the stuff democracy is made of. Similarly, the world order should be questioned about its role in tackling the pandemic. Nations must also prepare themselves as the world enters uncharted

territory. This is the time to think nationally and prepare to face the process of global transformation as it inevitably begins. Those who think of these issues first will take the lead, others will follow. India has to decide where it wants to stand.

Everything is halted as of now, including lives, economy and hope. Most of us are desperate and dependent on the physician, dietitian, statistician, economist and healer for the time being — the fact remains that everything is in a quandary. We have no expertise to quantify the large-scale losses caused by the global lockdown, and figure out the numbers needed to deal with the miseries knocking at every door. Nature has scripted a new chapter for the world to adopt new ways to work or perish.

While the post-truth era is not over, it is prudent to recall how it has produced leaders and beliefs that make a mockery of reason, science and statecraft. The challenge posed by COVID-19 cannot be overcome by their hollow claims and misjudged action. Barring exceptions, the world has governments largely represented by people who care little or not at all about democratic principles, nationally or internationally. They are driven by their own wild dreams and have no patience with dissenters. See what is happening to activists and journalists in Kashmir and other parts of the country. So, evolving a consensus is not going to be easy!

As the world is suffering unprecedented

losses, the burden of "absurd government culture" has to get offloaded. On the verge of collapse, humanity now needs to reclaim the not-so-old world wisdom that prominently relied on scientific temperament and judicious statecraft.

There are four or five areas we must concentrate on in the post-COVID world. Internationalism will have to be brought back to the centre stage. Nations and leaders cannot be allowed to act wilfully or ill-treat global institutions. Simultaneously, global institutions must repair and reform themselves. Many of them are vestiges of the Second World War. They have lost their utility. Without reform they will die a natural death causing incalculable harm to internationalism, multi-polarity and justice. So, restraining wilful leaders and reforming international institutions must be the first task. The priorities must be healthcare, education, environment, terms of trade, disarmament including nuclear disarmament, the global financial system and multi-polarity, which must include reform of the UN system. What we need is a new San Francisco conference, a new Bretton Woods conference and many more specialised conferences for reforming WHO, UNICEF and other institutions.

On another front, the central banks have to be given autonomy to function, as they will be the major rescuing forces of the governments. In recent times, numerous cases have come to notice where the autocratically mo-

tivated regimes have tried to dominate the central banks and severely compromise their autonomy. Central banks are storehouses of expertise and knowledge. In the troubled times ahead, their role is going to expand further beyond the usual regulatory and monetary functions. They may emerge as conscience-keepers to save the governments of non-experts.

Regionalism must go hand in hand with internationalism. Nearer home, there is an opportunity to revive the near-defunct regional associations like SAARC, South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) initiative.

Keeping the macro perspectives in view, the new world should have unwavering commitment to egalitarianism, secularism and democratic principles. Late-stage capitalism is entering a phase where it needs rebooting through fair ideas and priorities. The system has to be inclusive, progressive and pro-people. Public healthcare, education, R&D, livelihood creation, clean environment should be its major constituents. Nations that imbibe these values nationally will naturally be better placed to lead the world in creating the new order. The time to think about all this is now.

Sinha is a former Union Minister of Finance and External Affairs. Thakur is a Delhi-based policy professional and columnist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FLYING SAFE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Taking off' (IE, May 22). The Narendra Modi government's sudden decision to allow domestic flights reveals another paradox of the pandemic. When migrant workers were allowed to travel, their seating arrangements in trains and buses ensured social distancing, and they are being quarantined at arrival. But despite the rising number of infected cases in metros, which have been designated as red zones, airlines are flying without social distancing as well as no quarantine at arrival.

L R Murmu, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Taking off' (IE, May 22). The government's restarting of domestic passenger flights is welcome. This resumption will go a long way in lifting the overall economic sentiment in the country. All the air-carriers along with airport staff and most importantly, the passengers must adhere to social distancing norms.

Vandana Chopra, Chandigarh

ATTACK ON LABOUR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Take the

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

- **THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE:**
PAYAL CHAWLA
- **THOSE WITHOUT SYMPTOMS:**
NERGES MISTRY

www.indianexpress.com

worker onboard' (IE, May 22). The recent suspension of most labour laws by the Uttar Pradesh government and other state governments moving in the same direction is a severe blow to workers. The article rightly asserts that workers and those who speak for them must be heard. More inhuman working conditions will force labour away from industry towards agriculture. This will harm the economy and society.

Vasant Nalawade, Satara

THE OUTBREAK

THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



Dominic Cummings, special advisor for British PM Boris Johnson. Reuters

BRITAIN

Boris backs aide despite pressure to fire him

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson backed his senior adviser Dominic Cummings on Sunday, despite calls from within his own Conservative Party for the aide to resign for travelling 250 miles during the coronavirus lockdown. Cummings, who masterminded the 2016 campaign to leave the European Union, came under pressure when newspapers reported he had travelled from London to Durham in late March, when Britain was under a strict lockdown. **REUTERS**

NORTH KOREA

Kim holds meet on bolstering nuclear forces

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hosted a meeting to discuss the country's nuclear capabilities, state media said on Sunday, marking his first appearance in three weeks after a previous absence sparked global speculation about his health. The meeting discussed "increasing the nuclear war deterrence of the country and putting the strategic armed forces on a high alert operation," KCNA said. **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

Govt, Taliban declare 3-day ceasefire for Eid

Islamabad: The Taliban and Afghanistan's president announced late Saturday a three-day ceasefire ahead of a major Islamic holiday that begins Sunday to mark the end of the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan. The Taliban order was soon followed by an announcement via Twitter from Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announcing the government "extends the offer of peace". **AP**

Push to reopen houses of worship in Europe; Germany sees cluster at church

THE NEW YORK TIMES
BERLIN, MAY 24

AS NATIONS weigh the calculus of reopening parts of society after locking down because of the coronavirus, Germany has plunged ahead after bringing its outbreak under control, reopening houses of worship and allowing the faithful to gather again in larger numbers.

That decision has had pivotal consequences, with a new cluster of cases emerging as 40 churchgoers tested positive after a May 10 service at a Baptist church, the German health authorities said on Friday. Six parishioners were hospitalized, according to Wladimir Pritzkau, a parish leader.

"We followed all the rules," Mr. Pritzkau told the *DPA* news agency, adding that the church did not know how many people attended the service two weeks ago.

The state of Hesse, where the infections occurred, has been allowing church services under special guidelines, including asking worshippers to keep five feet apart and requiring churches to have disinfectant readily available. Now, the church has since moved its weekend services, which are held in German and Russian, back online.

The new cluster illustrated the perils of trying to restore some semblance of normalcy amid the relentless persistence of the virus. Germany reported 431 new coronavirus cases on



People attend a mass at Saint-Francois-Xavier church, Paris on Sunday. Reuters

Saturday, bringing the country's toll to 178,281, with 8,247 deaths. In the United States, President Donald Trump has pressed state officials to allow church gatherings, declaring religious institutions essential. In Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre church reopened after a two-month lockdown. In the West Bank, protesters on Sunday demanded that mosques be reopened for Eid al-Fitr, the festival that marks the conclusion of the Ramadan fasting month.

And in France, the faithful took the first tentative steps to worshipping in groups again this weekend after a lockdown, while observing social distancing and wearing masks. Some small churches reopened Saturday; the first Mass was on Sunday.

The move followed a legal challenge to the French government's ban on public worship that was not set to be lifted until the end of May.

Last Monday, the Council of State, France's highest administrative court, ordered the government to reopen churches, mosques and synagogues within eight days, saying that worship is a fundamental freedom that

could be reconciled with appropriate measures to protect health.

The decree lifting the ban with immediate effect was issued late on Friday and caught most of France's religious leaders off guard.

"It was a nice surprise," said the Reverend Antoine De Folleville, the parish priest, noting that it had coincided with the celebration of the Ascension of the Lord. "It's a great joy to finally be reunited with our parishioners."

"How should Communion be given?" a woman asked Father De Folleville. "With pliers?" "No, we'll wash our hands

with alcoholic gel right before taking up the host," said the priest.

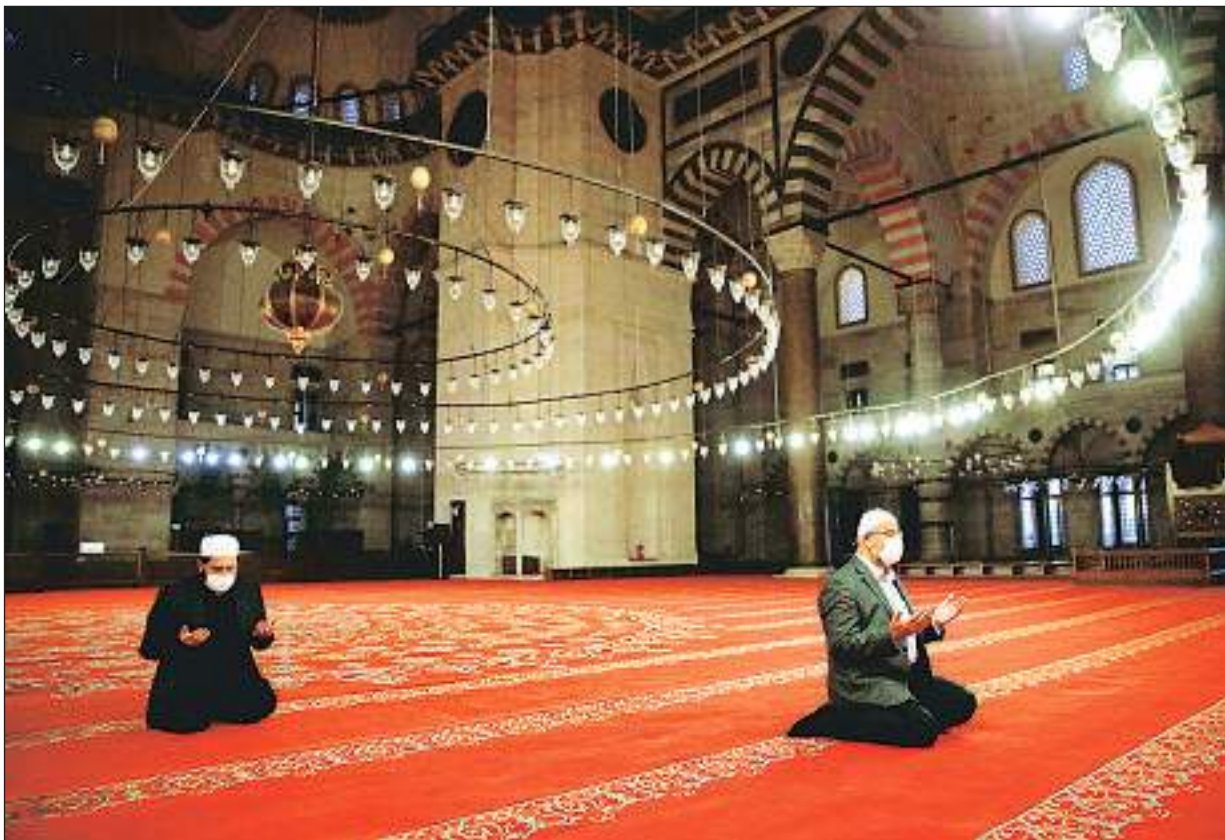
In Spain, houses of worship have progressively reopened since the start of this month, with a limit of one-third or half the full occupancy depending on the provinces, under a government plan to ease the lockdown restrictions at a faster pace in areas that are deemed to have contained the coronavirus threat.

To help reduce the risk of contagion, the Roman Catholic Church in Spain also put in place its own safety measures and recommendations, including holding more Sunday Mass services to avoid having too many of the faithful gathered at the same time, as well as avoiding choir singing because of the problem of maintaining safe social distances between choir members.

But in the West Bank, thousands of Palestinians crowded into streets early on Sunday in spite of coronavirus restrictions, including many who demanded that the Palestinian authorities reopen mosques.

"The people want holiday prayers," demonstrators chanted in front of the Palestinian Authority's headquarters in the West Bank city of Hebron.

The authorities in Hebron ultimately gave in to the demands and decided to open up large mosques, school grounds and soccer fields for Eid al-Fitr prayers. "There was immense pressure," said Khaled Dodeen, the Palestinian Authority's deputy governor of Hebron.



EID IN THE TIME OF CORONA

Staff at Istanbul's Süleymaniye Mosque pray behind closed doors on Sunday. Turkey has imposed a four-day nationwide lockdown for Eid al-Fitr, a move aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus. The country has recorded more than 150,000 Covid-19 cases, with over 4,000 casualties. Reuters



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi broadcast remotely during a press conference in Beijing on Sunday. AP

China targets US: Plotted too many conspiracies

YEW LUNTIAN
BEIJING, MAY 24

THE UNITED States should stop wasting time in its fight against the coronavirus and work with China to combat it, rather than spreading lies and attacking the country, the Chinese government's top diplomat Wang Yi said on Sunday.

State Councillor Wang, speaking at his annual news conference on the sidelines of China's parliament, expressed his deep sympathies to the United States for the pandemic, where the death toll is expected to surpass 100,000 in the coming days, the highest number of any country.

"Regrettably, in addition to the raging coronavirus, a political virus is also spreading in the United States. This political virus is using every opportunity to attack and smear China," said Wang, who is also China's foreign minister.

"Some politicians have ignored the most basic facts and concocted too many lies about China and plotted too many conspiracies," he added.

"I want to say here: Don't waste precious time any longer, and don't ignore lives," Wang said. "What China and the United States need to do the

most is to first learn from each other and share their experience in fighting against the epidemic, and help each country fight it."

China remains prepared to work with the United States in the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, Wang said, when asked if Sino-US relations would further worsen.

"China has always advocated that, as the world's largest developing country and the largest developed country, both of us bear a major responsibility for world peace and development," he said. "China and the United States stand to gain from cooperation, and lose from confrontation."

Last month, Missouri became the first US state to sue the Chinese government over its handling of the coronavirus, saying China's response to the outbreak that originated in the city of Wuhan brought devastating economic losses to the state.

Wang said such lawsuits lacked any legal basis. "The China of today is not the China of a century ago, and nor is the world," he added. "If you want to infringe upon China's sovereignty and dignity with indiscriminate litigation, and extort the fruits of the hard work of the Chinese people, I am afraid this is a daydream and you'll only humiliate yourself." **REUTERS**

Pompeo: CPC's nature clear as result of virus

Washington: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday that the authoritarian nature of China's ruling Communist Party and its desire to have hegemonic influence around the world has become clear as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

President Donald Trump and Pompeo have repeatedly said they suspect the novel coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan was somehow released from the laboratory.

"The nature of the Chinese Communist Party now, I think, has become clear as a result of this coronavirus. Those of us who have been watching this

had been talking about this risk to the world. We know the nature of authoritarian regimes. We know what happens when there's not freedom, when journalists can't speak," Pompeo told *Sky News Australia*.

"They knew there was this risk. We saw them close down Hubei province but leave open flights to Milan and flights to Tehran... flights to places like New York City, I'm sure Australia as well," he said.

"That's not the nature of what good governments do. What governments who are trying to protect and defend and secure do is they would alert the world....," he said. **PTI**

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Netanyahu becomes first sitting Israeli PM to go on trial

REUTERS
JERUSALEM, MAY 24

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU on Sunday became the first serving Israeli prime minister to go on trial, proclaiming his innocence in the corridor before walking into court to face charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

The trial came a week after Israel's longest-serving leader was sworn in to a record fifth term, demonstrating his knack for survival by securing an unexpected power-sharing deal with his main opponent after three inconclusive elections in a year. He says the cases against him are a left-wing plot to unseat him.

Netanyahu, 70, was indicted in November in cases involving gifts from millionaire friends and for allegedly seeking regulatory favours for media tycoons in return for favourable coverage.

He appeared at Jerusalem

District Court flanked by a clutch of cabinet ministers from his right-wing Likud party.

The hearing lasted an hour. The court excused Netanyahu from appearing in person at the next hearing, set for July 19.

Israeli analysts say the trial could last months or even years. Before the hearing, Netanyahu appealed to public opinion, addressing television cameras in the courthouse hallway. "These investigations were tainted and stitched-up from the first moment," Netanyahu said. "I am appearing here today, as your prime minister, standing tall and with head high," he said.

In a statement, Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit said prosecutors "will continue to conduct themselves without fear, even given the preposterous attempt — which should be rejected out of hand — to ascribe ulterior motives to law-enforcement authorities".

Hong Kong protesters, resisting China's security legislation, clash with police

THE NEW YORK TIMES
HONG KONG, MAY 24

THOUSANDS OF protesters and riot police officers swarmed some of Hong Kong's busiest neighborhoods on Sunday, cutting off traffic and freezing most retail activity in the city's largest street mobilization in months.

The confrontations, which began around 1 pm, were scattered throughout the Causeway Bay and Wan Chai neighborhoods, both lively commercial hubs. Protesters had originally planned to march between the two neighborhoods in a show of opposition to China's push to tighten its control over the semi-autonomous region with security legislation.

But when the police blocked their route, deploying tear gas and water cannons, protesters splintered into clusters of dozens or sometimes hundreds that dispersed and reassembled repeatedly over the course of



Riot police detain a protester in Hong Kong on Sunday. AP/PTI

several hours.

Many residents see the move by China's ruling Communist Party to impose national security laws in Hong Kong as a major, perhaps irreparable, blow to the city's relative autonomy. It

rekindled longstanding fears that the Communist Party would use such sweeping legislation to strangle the civil liberties — such as freedom of assembly and press — that distinguish the city from the mainland.

"Hong Kong independence is the only way out," protesters chanted as they poured onto a busy thoroughfare in the Causeway Bay shopping area. They sang songs and hoisted signs as they pressed forward, ignoring the warnings of dozens of police officers in riot gear to disperse.

The demonstration was the biggest in the territory in the several months since the coronavirus epidemic and rules on social distancing have kept many antigovernment protesters at home.

Tam Tak-chi, an activist from People's Power, a pro-democracy group, held what he described as an open-air public health lecture at a street stall, distributing masks and social-distancing advice while also criticizing the city's riot police officers and Beijing's tightening grip.

"With the national security law, the people cannot be healthy," Mr. Tam said. "Stand

with Hong Kong. Fight for freedom."

The police moved quickly to shut it down, and Mr. Tam was seen being taken away.

As the crowd thickened, trams sat immobilized on the rails, with passengers poking their phones out to film the activity. One protester jammed police cones under the tires of a minibus to prevent it from moving.

"I came out today to protest against the evil law China will impose on Hong Kong," said Billy Lai, a 34-year-old social worker. "If everyone of us can do a little bit more, I hope we can bring changes to the society."

In Beijing, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, said that the protests that roiled Hong Kong for much of last year had posed a grave threat to national security, demonstrating that such legislation was long overdue.

"We must get it done without the slightest delay," he said at a news briefing.

Germany likely to end economic aid programme with Nepal

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 24

THE GERMAN Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) intends to end bilateral cooperation with Nepal as part of its BMZ 2030 reform process.

Under this scheme, Nepal has been receiving 25 million euros annually. The criteria used to terminate the programme have not been made public, but it is believed that rampant corruption, poor state of human rights and transitional justice, restrictions on media, and the concentration of power by the K P Oli government are issues discussed by the BMZ before arriving to the decision.

However, sources said Kathmandu is lobbying Berlin for a review of the decision at a time when the "consolidation of democracy" is a major challenge that the government of Nepal is trying hard to achieve, sources said.

ECONOMY

CREDIT OUTSTANDING TO INDUSTRY UP BY JUST ₹1.74L CR OVER LAST 4 YRS

Sluggish growth in bank credit to industry since FY16, micro & small sectors worst hit

SANDEEP SINGH & SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

THE GOVERNMENT'S push for manufacturing and an Atmanirbhar Bharat comes amidst a near collapse of the industry demand for bank credit since 2016, when the Centre announced its war on black money though demonetisation. As per data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), while the bank credit outstanding to the industry grew marginally by 0.7 per cent to Rs 29.05 lakh crore in the year ended March 2020, over the last four years, credit outstanding to the industry has expanded by just Rs 1,74,451 crore, or at a compounded annual growth rate of 1.56 per cent.

In fact, credit demand by the industry is significantly lower when compared to the other two key segments, services sector and the personal loan category, which have witnessed a 4-year CAGR of 13.9 per cent and 16.4 per cent, respectively. Even the gross bank credit outstanding that grew at 6.8 per cent in FY20 witnessed a 4-year CAGR of 8.64 per cent.

While the government last week announced a credit guarantee scheme for bank lending to the MSME sector and others, data shows that micro and small industries have, over the last four years, witnessed an even slower credit expansion.

While large industries saw

DECLINING CREDIT GROWTH TO INDUSTRY					
	Credit Outstanding of SCBs (Rs crore)			Credit Growth (4-yr CAGR)	
	Mar '20	Mar '16	Mar '12	Apr '16 to Mar '20	Apr '12 to Mar '16
Gross Bank Credit o/s	92,63,134	66,50,000	43,79,300	8.6	11.0
Industry	29,05,151	27,30,700	19,40,800	1.6	8.9
• Large	24,17,728	22,44,400	15,72,300	1.9	9.3
• Medium	1,05,598	1,14,800	1,31,500	-2.1	-3.3
• Micro & Small	3,81,835	3,71,500	2,37,000	0.7	11.9
Services	25,94,945	15,41,100	10,18,800	13.9	10.9
Personal Loan	25,53,652	13,92,200	7,90,000	16.4	15.2
Others	12,09,386	9,86,000	6,29,700	5.2	11.9

Source: RBI

their credit expand by Rs 1.73 lakh crore, or at an annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent between April 2016 and March 2020, micro and small industries saw their credit expand by only Rs 10,335 crore, or at a 4-yr CAGR of 0.69 per cent during that period.

By comparison, in the previous 4-year period from April 2012 to March 2016, while credit outstanding to the industry expanded by Rs 7.9 lakh crore at a CAGR of 8.9 per cent, that to the micro and small industries expanded by Rs 1.34 lakh crore or at an annual growth rate of 11.9 per cent.

However, the government expects credit disbursement to pick up in coming months as sanctioned loans come up for disbursement. "Loans worth over Rs 6.68 lakh crore were sanctioned by PSBs during March 1-May 19 for 59.79 lakh accounts from MSME, Retail, Agriculture & Corporate sectors. A

steady increase in credit availability for each of these vital sectors," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said on her official Twitter account last Friday.

"Public Sector Banks sanctioned over Rs 1.07 lakh crore as emergency credit lines & working capital enhancements in the period March 20 to May 19, with Rs 25,527 crore of this amount already being availed by customers," she had tweeted.

A senior Finance Ministry official said the Centre has been monitoring credit deployment data almost on a daily basis and expects a pick up soon. "The loan sanctions are there in place. Banks are ready to lend. Industries and borrowers were awaiting the lockdown to be lifted to take disbursement. Credit will pick up going forward as lockdown eases gradually and banks cater to the pent up credit demand," the official said.

EXPLAINED Note ban, NBFC crisis added to woes of industry

THE DEMONETISATION drive in November 2016 dealt a strong blow to the country's micro and small enterprises. This was exacerbated by the IL&FS fiasco in 2018, which led to a crisis in the NBFC sector, further impacting credit flow to the industry.

This year, however, the coronavirus-induced lockdown and an overall slowdown have added to the industry's woes.

cial said.

MSMEs are also expected to avail the credit facility as banks will be more than willing to lend loans that are now backed by 100 per cent government credit guarantee against loan losses, the official said, adding that this would boost credit deployment by Rs 3 lakh crore.

The decline in demand for credit by the industry, however, coincides with the decline in the demand in the economy and falling capacity utilisations. The RBI's Order Books, Inventories and Capacity Utilisation Survey (OBI-CUS) for the October-December 2019 quarter shows that the capacity utilisation declined to at least 12-year low of 68.6 in the quarter ended December 2019.

Experts say that the credit demand for the industry is set to go down further, following the collapse of demand amidst lock-

down and banks set to practice more caution as concerns rise over spike in non-performing assets.

This is not the first time the Centre has pushed MSME loans. Over the last five years, the government has announced various schemes to provide credit to MSMEs.

While in April 2015, the Prime Minister announced Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) to provide MUDRA loans of upto Rs 10 lakh, to income generating micro enterprises engaged in manufacturing, trading and services sectors, in November 2018, the Centre launched a 59-minute online loan scheme to boost fund flow to micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs). Within the scheme, small firms could get in-principle approval for loans of up to Rs 1 crore in 59 minutes. The limit for the loan was later increased to Rs 5 crore.

1.88 LAKH: NUMBER OF REC'S TRADED ON THE INDIAN ENERGY EXCHANGE (IEX) IN APRIL, COMPARED TO 2.24 LAKH IN THE SAME MONTH LAST YEAR

High supply: Both non-solar and solar REC's witnessed supply at the two power exchanges in April, with sell bids exceeding buy bids:

Bids received at IEX:
■ **>2.1 lakh:** REC's with buy bids
■ **>4.54 lakh:** REC's with sell bids

Bids received at PXIL:
■ **>0.49 lakh:** REC's with buy bids
■ **>1.16 lakh:** REC's with sell bids

0.49 LAKH: NUMBER OF REC'S TRADED ON THE POWER EXCHANGE OF INDIA (PXIL) LAST MONTH, AS AGAINST 1.44 LAKH IN APRIL 2019

Overall bids:
■ **>2.59 lakh:** REC's with buy bids
■ **>6.7 lakh:** REC's with sell bids

What are RECs: RECs are a type of market-based instrument to promote renewable sources of energy and development of market in electricity. One REC is created when one megawatt hour of electricity is generated from an eligible renewable energy source

Source: IEX/PXIL/PTI

MARKET WATCH

INVESTMENT VIA P-NOTES AT ₹57K CR

New Delhi: Investments through participatory notes (P-notes) in the domestic capital market increased to Rs 57,100 crore, as of April 30 after falling to over 15-year low at the end of the preceding month, data from Sebi showed. **PTI**

FPI flow to equity turns positive; debt outflows of ₹19.8K cr in May

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 24

AFTER PULLING out more than Rs 68,000 crore in March and April, FPIs have infused over Rs 9,000 crore into the Indian equity market in May so far, amid volatile stock movement and a mega block deal involving Hindustan Unilever. However, debt markets have witnessed FPI outflows of Rs 19,892 crore in May so far, taking the total FPI outflows from debt to Rs 1,02,371 crore in the January-May period.

The inflow of Rs 9,089 crore in May comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 6,883 crore in April and Rs 61,973 crore in March, on fears of a coronavirus-induced global recession. Prior to that, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had put in over Rs 1,820 crore in February and Rs 12,123 crore in January.

Foreign investors have pulled out a combined Rs 1,32,410 crore from equity and debt since January this year. FPIs, who took out Rs 45,825 crore from equity market in the January-May period, will keep a close watch on how India manages to keep COVID-19 cases under check with

AMID VOLATILE STOCK MOVEMENT

■ **After pulling out more than ₹68,000 crore in March and April, FPIs have infused over ₹9,000 crore into the Indian equity market in May so far, amid volatile stock movement**

■ **The inflow of ₹9,089 crore in May comes following a net withdrawal of ₹6,883 crore in April and ₹61,973 crore in March, on fears of a coronavirus-induced global recession**

relaxations in lockdown curbs and how quickly it revives growth.

"The equity market may experience a deterioration in investor sentiment, given the already high expectations, and flows from foreign portfolio investors and domestic investors are likely to abate in the near term because of the prospects of reduced income levels and corporate profits," Credit

Irdai to extend renewal dates of health, motor third-party policies

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 24

INSURANCE REGULATOR Irdai is planning to extend the date for renewals of health and motor third-party policies (TP) till the first week of June, in the wake of extension of the coronavirus-induced lockdown till May 31.

The further extension of date by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) will facilitate the payment of the motor TP insurance premium and health insurance premium dues falling during the period of ongoing lockdown from March 25 to May 31 to be paid in the first week of June.

The announcement by Irdai, which will made soon, will be the third extension provided by the government and the regulator for payment of renewal premiums for health and motor TP covers that could not be paid during the ongoing lockdown, that has been extended for the fourth time on May 17.

Irdai's forthcoming decision

The announcement by Irdai, which will made soon, will be the third extension provided by the government and the regulator for payment of renewal premiums for health and motor TP covers that could not be paid during the ongoing lockdown

will also include its stand on the continuation of cover, Standard Fire and Special Perils Policy (commonly known as property policy) by the general insurers to the "unoccupied properties" for more than one month.

According to the General Insurance (GI) Council, a Property Policy specifies that "if the building insured or containing the insured property becomes unoccupied and so remains for a period of more than 30 days (not applicable for dwellings), the insurance ceases to attach as regards the property affected unless the insured, before the occurrence of any loss or damage, obtains the sanction of the insurer signified by endorsement upon the policy by or on behalf of the company".

Earlier, with the interven-

Suisse said in a report.

"We continue to maintain our defensive stance on Indian equities with a preference for sectors linked to agriculture, telecoms, information technology, and certain consumer and utility stocks from a 3-6 month perspective," it said.

"While the near-term outlook for financials is still weak, we believe any further sharp correction or panic selling in quality financials could offer a good buying opportunity from a 2-3 year perspective," Credit Suisse said. FPI flows are less likely to come to India given the dwindling growth environment, it added.

According to a CARE Ratings report, FPI outflows to some extent have had a bearing on the rupee-dollar exchange rate. "Phase-wise analysis shows that the outflows in case of FPIs were severe prior to the announcement of the lockdown vis-à-vis post announcement. Monetary stimulus, fiscal relief measures and conditional relaxations in the second phase of the lockdown for resumption of economic activities to some extent eased to an extent the negative sentiments of foreign investors during phase 1 and phase 2 of the nation-wide lockdown," it said.

BRIEFLY

Floor price: Telcos seeking early decision

New Delhi: The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has written to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to move forward quickly on the issue of fixing floor price for tariffs.

BoM: Loans worth ₹2.8K cr sanctioned

Mumbai: Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Sunday said it has sanctioned loans of Rs 2,789 crore to MSME, SHG, agri and retail borrowers.

'Reforms don't mean abolition of labour laws'

New Delhi: Amid concerns over changes in labour laws in various states, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar on Sunday said reforms do not mean complete abolition of labour laws.

ITC to acquire spices maker Sunrise Foods

New Delhi: ITC Ltd Sunday said it will fully acquire spices manufacturer Sunrise Foods Private Ltd. While ITC did not disclose the value of the deal, sources said it is valued around Rs 1,800 crore to Rs 2,000 crore. **PTI**

Green certificate sales down 35% to 2.37 lakh in April

Sales of renewable energy certificates (RECs) tumbled over 35 per cent to 2.37 lakh units in April compared to 3.68 lakh in the same month a year ago, according to official data



CII cautions cos not to violate Competition Act amid COVID crisis

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

INDUSTRY BODY CII has recommended that companies collaborating with competitors, in efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, document their work and avoid sharing competitively sensitive information to avoid any violations of the Competition Act.

Ordinarily, companies are not allowed to collaborate as concerted actions between competitors are presumed to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition. But the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had in

April published an advisory stating businesses could work together to improve efficiency in delivery of essential goods and services to consumers during the pandemic. The CCI had however noted at the time that businesses should only coordinate efforts in a manner that is "necessary and proportionate to address concerns arising from COVID-19."

"Businesses are cautioned not to take advantage of COVID-19 to contravene any of the provisions of the (Competition) Act," the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said in its manual for corporate collaboration during the COVID-19 outbreak.

'Could've set GDP growth goal around 6% had there been no COVID'

REUTERS
BEIJING, MAY 24

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping said China's annual economic growth target could have been set around 6 per cent had the new coronavirus epidemic not happened, according to state media reports on Saturday. The Chinese government on Friday omitted a gross domestic product (GDP) growth target for 2020 in its yearly work report unveiled at the start of the annual meeting of parliament, citing uncertainties brought on by the epidemic.

"If the epidemic hadn't happened, under general circumstances, the GDP growth target would be set around 6 per cent," Xi told a parliamentary group discussion on Friday, according to state media.



On Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping said a global recession is a foregone conclusion. File

That would have been in line with the goal of around 6 per cent that sources told *Reuters* in early December before the epidemic

China says US law on audits and regulations will harm both sides

Beijing: China's securities watchdog Sunday condemned a US law that could block Chinese firms from US securities exchanges, saying it politicised regulation and would damage both nations. The US Senate passed legislation last week that could prevent some Chinese firms from listing their shares on US exchanges unless they follow standards for US audits and regulations.

"We are firmly opposed to the act of politicizing the se-

curities regulation, as the content of some terms in the act directly target China rather than considering professional securities regulations," the China Securities Regulatory Commission said Sunday.

The act will harm the interests of both countries, as it not only hinders foreign companies from going public in the US, but will also weaken global investors' confidence in US capital markets, the Commission said. **REUTERS**

struck. "If we rigidly set one (GDP target), then the focus will be on strong stimulus and to hit the growth rate, which is not in line

with the purpose of our economic and social development," Xi said.

China has been reluctant to

INTERVIEW WITH ASIM DASGUPTA, ECONOMIST AND FORMER WEST BENGAL FINANCE MINISTER

'We have to move away from market-based solution to giving a welfare role to the government'

WITH THE coronavirus-induced lockdowns crippling global economy, former West Bengal Finance Minister and noted economist ASIM DASGUPTA spoke to SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY and dissected the Rs 20-lakh crore stimulus package that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced. Edited excerpts:

How do you look at the measures that have been announced as part of the Government of India's (GoI) Rs 20 lakh crore economic stimulus package?

When the Prime Minister had announced the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package, he mentioned that the Union Finance Minister

would explain about its allocation. Unfortunately, five press conferences later, there's no substantial concern about the livelihood problem of the poor. The primary reference is to a loan-based solution. But a loan-based solution can't be the government solution. Suffering individuals in the small-scale sector, if you give them loan instead of grant, it will not mean much.

Also, in the defence sector, the government is asking for foreign capital to move in, which is in contradiction to the Prime Minister's Self-Reliant India assertion. I find the GoI's approach inadequate for the bottom 80 per cent and also for economic recovery. The approach doesn't bring in money in

the hands of people to shore up demand, the lack of which is a problem now.

Has the GoI injected enough liquidity into the market?

In a situation where there's inadequate demand, the need is to increase the demand itself. It will not lead to inflation but will help recover the economy.

How do you look at the government's Rs 3 lakh crore collateral free loan scheme for businesses for MSMEs?

Again, the government is taking a loan route. For anybody in the small-scale business sector, going to the bank and taking this loan, transactions will naturally



take a longer time than what is required now. There's urgency here and it's very important that the problem should be solved through grant.

As for interlocking MSMEs or

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ASIM DASGUPTA

preparing a layout for them, we have to revisit the whole thing. We need to look around the world; which are the countries handling this coronavirus issue, and the related economic recovery, well.

Vietnam, Cuba, to an extent China, and in our country Kerala: the model they are following is essentially the Keynesian model of giving the state a welfare role. And the countries that are failing are those where dependency is only on the market. The United States for example, where the failure is very clear. So we have to move away from market-based solution to giving a welfare role to the government.

Do you think the migrant worker crisis could have been handled better?

This is one of the saddest spectacles we have seen after Independence. What was required first of all was to allow

them (migrant workers) to move freely to their respective destinations. Because there is unemployment all around, they naturally want to go back to their own villages.

Right at the beginning of the lockdown, railway services should have been provided to them free of cost and then it was the responsibility of the state governments to take them from railway stations to their villages and arrange the required medical programme and facilities for them. So far, I saw only tangential approach.

How do you look at the reforms announced for the farm sector and also the proposed 'One Nation, One

ration Card' system? There's a school of thought that the reforms had been long overdue.

What are the reforms the Finance Minister is talking about in the agricultural sector? She is talking about the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act. She is talking about amending the Essential Commodities Act. The Act says that hoarding is illegal for essential commodities. If you remove that, what kind of reform is that? It will only encourage the monopolistic elements within a legal framework. Monopoly is not reform. Moving towards more competition is a reform. She is doing exactly the opposite.



Goodwill hunting

At ICC meeting likely to announce election dates, BCCI hopes to build consensus on its leadership role

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, MAY 24

THE BCCI will try to build consensus for the next ICC chair, as the incumbent, Shashank Manohar, vacates the post in July. Manohar has already confirmed that he will not seek a third term and if everything goes to plan, then an election will not be required to pick his successor, this paper understands. Some ICC Full Members, it is learnt, want the Indian board to take the leadership role for global cricket, with the game reeling under the Covid-induced economic downturn.

On Tuesday, the ICC Board will meet to lay down the procedure for election. Two days later, on May 28, the Board will meet again and will likely announce the timeline for filing nominations. The May 28 meeting might also take a decision on the future of the T20 World Cup, scheduled in October-November in Australia. According to sources, there's a growing feeling within the global body that a postponement will favour everyone. Some important issues are going to be discussed in the ICC in the next few days.

As for consensus-building – a candidate from India or someone nominated by the Indian board – the BCCI is expected to start the process after May 28. "We will take a call in the best interests of world cricket. Many people feel that the BCCI should take the reins of the ICC and should play a larger role in this time of crisis for world cricket to revive. We will discuss amongst ourselves and will take a decision. We will wait for the ball to be rolled in," a BCCI official told The Indian Express.

A former cricketer of David Gower's stature has backed the current BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to take charge of the ICC. Former Proteas captain and the current Cricket South Africa (CSA) director of cricket Graeme Smith has dittoed. However, it is learnt that the BCCI hasn't even thought about it yet. The Indian board's priority is to have someone at the helm of the ICC through consensus, which benefits everyone. Once the ICC issues the election date, the Indian board will start making its strategy.



Shashank Manohar, who vacates the post in July, has already confirmed that he will not seek a third term. *Express file*

"When all the boards are struggling, then everyone has to come together for the best interests of world cricket. We need to revive the game. So we have to find a common interest and collaborate with each other," the official said.

Given that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), of late, is at odds with the BCCI – the IPL ban on Pakistan players means that the PCB doesn't get any revenue from the tournament also – the consensus-building process might have to overcome a major hurdle. The BCCI official, though, begged to differ.

"No, I don't see any reason for Pakistan also to pitch for an (unexpected) election. Pakistan also understands that all the cricket boards will have to come together at this point in time. There's no point in going against each other's interests," he said.

T20 World Cup future

The majority of the ICC Members, it is learnt, want the ICC Board to take a call on the T20 World Cup's future during its May 28 meeting – "whether it's happening or not happening (this year)". The members want clarity so that they can plan accordingly.

Sources said, in case of a postponement, February-March in 2021 or at the beginning of the Australian summer in 2022 could be the two alternates. Although the Women's Cricket World Cup is scheduled in February-March in New Zealand next year, a section of the Members is of the view that a little bit of tweak and some adjustments to fit in the Men's T20 World Cup will benefit every cricket playing nation. Stretching it to 2022 will pose logistical problems, as the global body will have to start everything from scratch.

Don't postpone T20 World Cup: Misbah

Karachi: The authorities must not postpone the T20 World Cup in haste since the showpiece event is the best product to highlight cricket once activities resume, Pakistan head coach and chief selector, Misbah-ul-Haq has said. Misbah said though logistics is a huge challenge due to the prevailing circumstances, the authorities must deliberate enough before arriving at a decision. "The logistics of hosting 16 teams is not easy but the authorities should give it time and wait for a month or more before taking any decision," Misbah said in an interview to Youtube channel, *Cricket Baaz*. "Everyone wants to see the T20 World Cup. It would be the best product to highlight cricket once activities resume internationally," he said. Meanwhile, former Australia captain Mark Taylor said that he does not foresee the World Cup going ahead as per schedule and wants the ICC to take a decision during its Board meeting this week. "It would probably be good (if a decision is made this week). Because then everyone can start planning and we can stop sitting here and saying 'well ifs, buts or maybes,' Taylor, also a former Cricket Australia director, was quoted as saying by 'Nine Network'.

PTI

As reported by this paper, the T20 World Cup postponement will open a window for the BCCI to organise this year's IPL in the autumn. And there's a school of thought that deferring the ICC event for a few months and holding the IPL will serve everybody's interest.

Cricket boards that are issuing NOCs to their players for the IPL get 10 per cent each based on the total contract value of the players from the respective boards. At the same time, the ICC Members stand to gain at least around \$7-8 million each in terms of revenue from the T20 World Cup. So as an official pointed out, a postponement looks like "best option for everyone".

Bournemouth player tests positive for corona



Bournemouth said the player would self-isolate for seven days.

A Bournemouth player was one of two people working for Premier League clubs who tested positive for COVID-19 following a second batch of testing, the club said on Sunday.

Bournemouth did not disclose the player's identity but said he would self isolate for seven days in line with league protocols before another test is conducted.

"AFC Bournemouth can confirm that one of its players has tested positive for COVID-19, following the club's second round of testing," Bournemouth said in a statement here. "Following strict adherence of the Premier League's return to training regulations, the club's training ground remains a safe working environment for players and

backroom staff, who will continue to be tested for COVID-19 twice per week."

Since players returned to limited group training on Tuesday, eight positive tests for the virus have been confirmed at England's top-flight clubs. Six individuals, including Watford defender Adrian Mariappa and Burnley assistant manager Ian Woan, were positive in the first round of testing on May 17-18.

No matches have been played in the Premier League since March, but the government has given the go-ahead for elite sport to resume from June 1.

The Premier League's "Project Restart" envisages a return to competitive action in June, although no date has been fixed. **REUTERS**

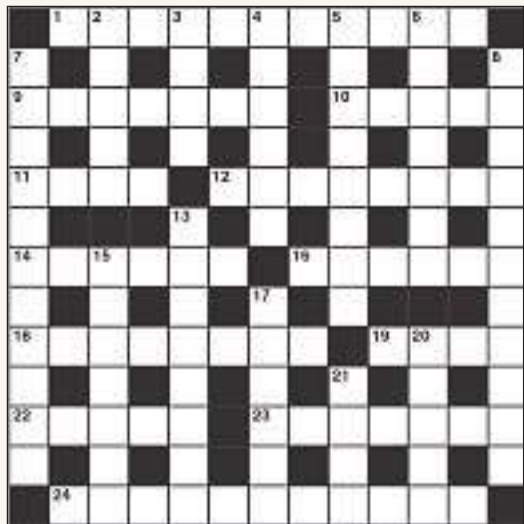
Former Pak opener Umar positive

Former Pakistan opener Taufeeq Umar has tested positive for COVID-19 but said his "symptoms are not at all severe". The 38-year-old is the fourth cricketer to be infected with the coronavirus after Majid Haq (Scotland), Zafar Saifraz (Pakistan) and Solo Nqweni (South Africa). "I got myself tested last night after feeling a little sick last night, and the result came positive. My symptoms are not at all severe," Umar told Geo News. "I have isolated myself at home," added the southpaw. Umar played 44 Tests and 12 ODIs, scoring 2963 and 504 runs respectively for Pakistan. **PTI**

NBA in talks with Disney

The National Basketball Association confirmed that they are in "exploratory" talks with The Walt Disney Co. about a late-July restart at one of their Florida resorts. League spokesman Mike Bass confirmed earlier reports that the league is having conversations with Disney officials about restarting the 2019-20 season in Orlando, Florida. "Our priority continues to be the health and safety of all involved, and we are working with public health experts and government officials on a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure that appropriate medical protocols and protections are in place," Bass said. **AFF**

CROSSWORD 4126



ACROSS

- Stock conveyance (6,5)
- Hailed or shed drops of water (7)
- Flying heart specialist (5)
- Inordinately vain man who had a terrible reputation (4)
- Go over new art and poetry (8)
- Military area needs rest, C.O. ordered (6)
- Sorts things out by degrees (6)
- He may act well but he paints badly (8)
- A boom in shipping perhaps (4)
- A revolutionary is said to show signs (5)
- His true array is shaggy naturally (7)
- Groups that promote diversionary activities (6,5)

DOWN

- Kipling's wolf emerging from a lake (5)
- Infants unbottled (4)
- Last, though almost sure to finish on top (6)
- Hope for the lost and sick (8)
- Frolicked about showing scarlet under garment (7)
- The seconds are important in such a fight (7,4)
- Advisers are represented on opposite sides (11)
- He does his writing in bars (8)
- Solve a mystery and become brighter (5,2)
- It induces pity in a way so upsetting (6)
- Sound fruit (5)
- Examination of the mouth? (4)

Solutions Crossword 4125 Across: 1 Titan, 4 Estimate, 9 Leaves, 10 Black out, 12 Rush, 13 Raise, 14 Visa, 17 Typist's error, 20 Drinking song, 23 Seth, 24 Afoot, 25 Peri, 28 Esurient, 29 Novice, 30 Destroys, 31 Recess. **Down:** 1 Tolerate, 2 Transpet, 3 Abet, 5 Sole survivor, 6 Inch, 7 Adonis, 8 Extras, 11 Passing fancy, 15 Usury, 16 Volga, 18 Nosedive, 19 Ugliness, 21 Ostend, 22 Struts, 26 Pier, 27 Mode.

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.

There are two kinds of people, those who ___ what they ___ and so on – Robert Byrne (6,,5)

LTAIR



COONTT



EUISS



IRTTFH

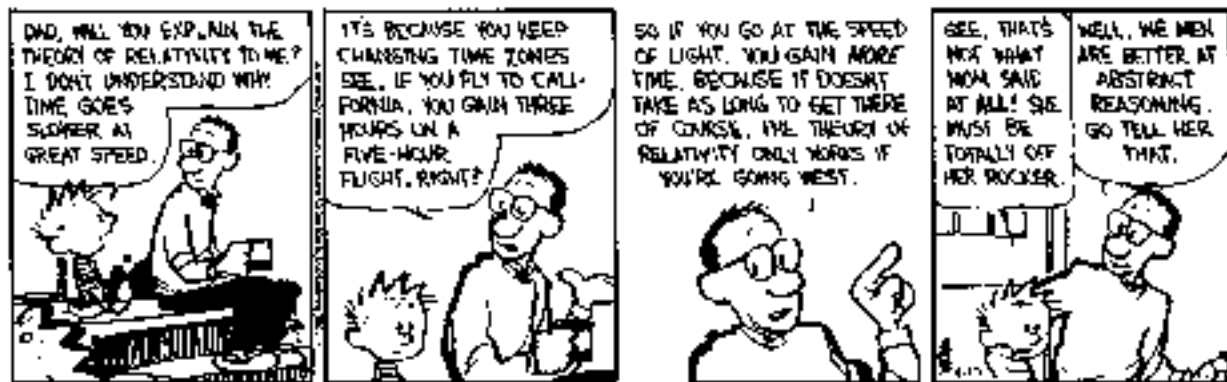


SOLUTION: LTAIR/TAIR, COONTT/COOT, EUISS/ISSUE, IRTTFH/THIRTY. Answer: There are two kinds of people, those who finish what they start and so on

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4119

Difficulty Level 5s

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 4118



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
The overwhelming trend of today's stars is pleasurable, adventurous and entertaining. You may therefore turn your gaze away from life's little problems and find activities which will bring fun and lift your morale. You might even enjoy new developments at work.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
To talk in terms of figures, there is a ten-percent chance of a move of home, but a ninety-percent chance of some positive domestic upheaval of equivalent magnitude. In the meantime, today's stars have a distinctly prosperous gloss, so keep your eye open for profitable possibilities.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
Careful judgment is required in all financial matters, but happily that seems to be just exactly what you'll have. There is much to be said for sharing your feelings with anyone who will listen, by the way, but you may have to pick your words with care.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
Commonsense a plenty should be the result of Mercury's helpful location in your solar chart. Hopefully this will help you avoid a number of hidden personal pitfalls, and enable you to give other people the benefit of your advice. Will they listen? I hope so.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
Your planetary positions remain nine-tenths perfect. That remaining one tenth, though, does represent the potential for a very silly emotional confrontation which could cost you dear. I advise great caution now and over the coming weeks. After all, you don't want to offend anyone who has been good to you.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
So much now seems to be going on behind the scenes that you may wonder what it's all for. If only you could get away for a while, you would see that the current situation is really rather different from what you imagine. Still, perhaps it's good for you to receive a surprise.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
It really does look time for a short trip, or two. Someone is waiting to hear from you, so do get in touch and don't waste any more time. Workwise there is much to be said for taking an early break, refreshing your energy and recharging your over-stretched batteries.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
Don't dwell on personal upsets, or even on any successes. Get straight on and deal with all those pressing personal issues, whether you're tackling recalcitrant relations, or reassuring a friend whose confidence has taken a knock. You'll lay down the law, but very gently.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
The world definitely seems to be going your way – a very fine indication that you can now call the shots. There does still seem to be a great deal of resentment around, but it would be a shame if it spoiled the atmosphere. See that everyone keeps smiling.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
Secrecy is the order of the day. Just why you must keep something yourself is your business, but other people will need a certain amount of reassurance. Monetary matters continue to look prosperous as long as you calculate the odds involved in any risk.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
What other people want to know is whether you are genuine about pursuing a particular ambition, or whether you will falter at the last hurdle, as you so often have done in the past. What they don't know is that Saturn, planet of hard work, is giving you the power to complete almost any task.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
You are often too sensitive by half, but right now there seems to be a great deal to be gained from taking an emotional risk and disregarding the consequences. You have been a doormat for too long. Remember, if you are going to make sacrifices, make sure they're worthwhile.