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NEARBY
Two deaths, 93 new cases in the Capital

NEW DELHI
The Capital on Friday reported two deaths and 93 new COVID-19 cases. The death toll now stands at six with the total number of cases jumping to 386. Of the 93 new cases, 77 are from the centre run by the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2
Lockdown lifts Delhi's air quality to 5-year high
NEW DELHI
The lockdown has pushed pollution levels in Delhi to a 5-year low and, across India, the number of cities that recorded 'good' on the air quality index jumped from 6 on March 16 to 30 on March 29, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9
Supreme Court quashes I-T case against NDTV
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday quashed an income tax reassessment notice issued against New Delhi Television Limited. The department had accused NDTV of "round-tripping" finances in connection with a July 2007 issuance of step-up coupon bonds amounting to \$100 million through its U.K. subsidiary.

Coronavirus toll touches 62; revised testing norms likely

2,653 cases confirmed across country, 647 of which are from Nizamuddin cluster

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The number of COVID-19 cases continued to rise in the country with 336 new cases reported in the past 24 hours taking the total tally to 2,547, while 18 more deaths were reported, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday. India has registered 62 deaths due to COVID-19 so far, while 162 patients have been discharged. Nationwide, 66,000 samples have been tested so far, which includes repeat tests on patients to confirm health status.



"India, due to its early measures, had been able to keep its COVID-19 numbers low but one incident has caused our numbers to rise, which highlights the need for absolute compliance. The 647 coronavirus cases reported over the last two days are linked to the religious gathering of the Islamic sect Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi. These cases are spread across 14 States. Some deaths have also been linked to this," Joint Secretary at the Union Health Ministry Law Agarwal said at the Minis-



In the slow lane: Essential commodities being transported on a bullock cart in New Delhi on Friday, amid the lockdown restrictions. •R.V. MOORTHY

try's daily press briefing. According to reports from State Health Departments, the total number of confirmed cases nationwide was 2,947 with 2,655 active cases. The death toll rose to 83. Maharashtra continued to report the most cases at 417, followed by Tamil Nadu and Delhi where numbers have spiked to 411 and 386 respectively. Kerala reported 286 cases, while Telangana reported 229 cases. Despite the rise in cases, Mr. Agarwal said the revised testing guideline is still un-

der consideration and would be released by Saturday. He added that the Ministry's newly launched app - Aarogya Setu - had been downloaded by 30 lakh people. **Rapid antibody test** In an interim advisory, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommended the use of the rapid antibody test in the country's coronavirus hotspots. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting on Thursday of the National Task Force dealing with the

COVID-19 crisis. "Population in hotspot areas may be tested using rapid antibody test. Antibody positives to be confirmed by RT-PCR (reverse transcription-PCR) using throat/nasal swab, and antibody negatives to be quarantined at home," the ICMR advisory said. The official said the Health Ministry was in touch with the States to trace, track, isolate and treat cases. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 8 **MORE REPORTS** ▶ PAGES 5, 6, 9, 10 & 12

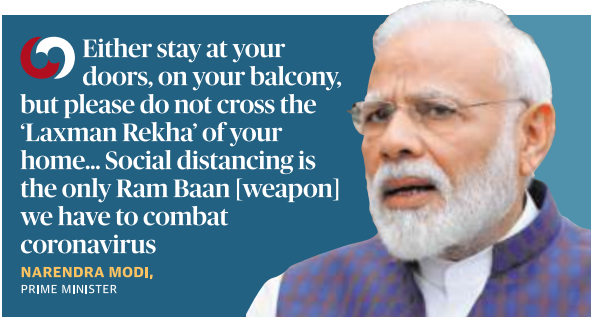
PM: on Sunday, light lamps for 9 minutes from 9 p.m.

He calls for demonstration of collective will to fight virus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

On the 10th day of the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the countrymen to demonstrate a collective will to fight coronavirus, a token demonstration of which, he said, would be to light candles, lamps and hold mobile phone torches for nine minutes from 9 p.m. on April 5. In an address to the nation, he noted, "There is no bigger force than our conviction and resolve. There is nothing we cannot achieve with these forces." Mr. Modi made it very clear that the coronavirus threat could only be combated with the full cooperation of the people, and that the collective strength was what would take the country out of what he termed "darkness that engulfs us" in the form of coronavirus.

'We are not alone'
The plight of the poor, with the grinding halt of all economic activity, was also foremost in the Prime Minister's speech. "We have to take our poor brethren towards the light and certainty. To defeat this darkness, we have to shine the light in every direction," he said.



Disappointing, says Oppn.

Opposition leaders expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video message asking citizens to light lamps in their homes on Sunday. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor called him a "showman and a photo-op Prime Minister", while

former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram questioned why the government had not announced a second financial action plan. CPI leader D. Raja said people expected Mr. Modi to come out with substantial measures. •PAGE 8

Mr. Modi acknowledged that being under a lockdown could be a lonely experience full of anxiety and assured the people that "we, none of us, are alone" and that the "collective will of 1.3 billion people of India was with us in this time of crisis". As his earlier exhortation to applaud essential services workers during the Janata Curfew of March 22 saw instances of mass gatherings

in some parts of the country, Mr. Modi made it a point to say that nobody should repeat it. "Either stay at your doors, on your balcony, etc., but please do not cross the 'Laxman Rekha' of your home," he said. "Social distancing is the only Ram Baan [weapon] we have to combat coronavirus." **EDITORIAL** ▶ PAGE 6

NSA to be filed against 6 for harassing nurses

They used obscene language, gestures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW/ GHAZIABAD
The Uttar Pradesh government has said that six persons associated with the Tablighi Jamaat who have been accused of misbehaving with women staff at the district hospital in Ghaziabad will be charged under the National Security Act (NSA). Though the government is yet to issue an official statement, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi attributed the direction to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. "Ye na kanoon ko manenge, na vyavastha ko manenge, ye manavta ke dushman hai..." [They don't follow the law or the system, they are enemies of humanity]," Mr. Awasthi said in an

official WhatsApp group quoting Mr. Adityanath. The police had filed an FIR against the six persons who attended the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Delhi and were admitted to the MMG District Hospital. Nurses there accused them of inappropriate behaviour and complained to Medical Superintendent Ravinder Singh, who wrote to the Uttar Pradesh police. Dr. Singh said the six were using obscene language and were making vulgar gestures at the staff. His letter said that some of them were moving around in a state of undress and were demanding bidis and cigarettes. **CONTINUED ON** ▶ PAGE 8

A battle won



Hailing a hero: Colleagues cheer as nurse Reshma Mohandas leaves the Kottayam Medical College Hospital after being cured of COVID-19 on Friday. She got infected while treating two elderly patients, who too have been discharged. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SC calls for quick end to Kerala-Karnataka border row

Patients seeking treatment in Mangaluru denied access

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Friday ordered the Centre, Kerala and Karnataka to confer immediately and "formulate parameters for passage of patients for urgent medical treatment at the interstate border at Talapadi". The order by a Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta came on a series of petitions highlighting Karnataka's blockade of the border. The blockade, the court was informed, had resulted in deaths as ambulances bound for Mangaluru (in Karnataka) were not being permitted to cross the border. The court listed the case for hearing next on April 7. The order came on petitions to facilitate the free movement of vehicles carry-



The Supreme Court has listed the case for April 7.

ing persons for urgent medical treatment across the border between Kerala and Karnataka (Talapadi). The court, meanwhile, issued formal notice on an appeal filed by Karnataka against the Kerala High Court order of April 1 allowing patients to cross the border for treatment. Karnataka has argued that the blockade was in the in-

terest of public health. The situation regarding coronavirus was "really dire", it said. Karnataka has warned that opening the blockade would cause a law and order issue as the local population wanted the border to remain sealed. Karnataka argued that Kerala was the "worst-affected" State in the country with nearly 194 coronavirus cases. In this, Kasargod, adjoining Karnataka, was the "worst-affected" district of Kerala with over a 100 positive cases. The court separately considered a writ petition by Kasargod MP Rajmohan Unnithan for an order to forthwith open the border. He said Karnataka's blockade was "ill-planned and dangerous" and had already led to the loss of lives.

Doctors who escaped mob return next day

'Country needs us... don't step back'

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL
A day after they were heckled, pelted with stones and chased away from a locality in Indore, doctors Trupti Kattare and Zakiya Sayyed returned to the same spot. Back to finish an incomplete task, they refuse to abandon the role that could help save lives. "I am not afraid. The profession we picked is a noble one," says Dr. Sayyed in a message. "And right now, the country needs us. So, don't step back, step forward and help the country." The incident in Indore on Wednesday, where cases have soared to 112, left both the doctors, and the country, shocked and outraged. "Not even in our dreams could we imagine it," says Dr. Kattare. As they traced contacts of a patient in Tatpatti



Trupti Kattare and Zakiya Sayyed in Indore. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bakhal, tempers flared on requests for quarantine, and a mob chased them out. Dr. Kattare fell to the ground and hurt herself, while others were injured as stones landed from behind. After managing to escape in the tehsildar's car, they met the Collector who motivated them. But the push from their husbands proved most useful: "They said you should not give up this easily," says Dr. Kattare. And they returned the next day. **36 QUARANTINED IN INDORE** **LOCALITY** ▶ PAGE 4

In Coimbatore, take your daily bread & leave cash in the box!

Stall set up by baker elicits good response from locals

R. AKILESH
COIMBATORE
With physical distancing being underscored repeatedly to avoid the spread of COVID-19, a sweet shop owner at Rathinapuri in Coimbatore city, has set up a temporary stall outside his closed shop, stocked with loaves of bread but with no shop attendant. The customers can simply pick up a loaf and leave ₹30 in a cash box placed nearby. With grocery shops being instructed to down their shutters before 2 p.m. amid the COVID-19 lockdown, this initiative has garnered a good response from the residents, said A. Vignesh, owner of Moondru Kambam Nallai Muthu Vilas Sweets and Bakes. "We set up this stall last Tuesday evening itself," he said, referring to March 24, when prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrP came into force across Tamil Nadu at 6 p.m. About 300 bread loaves are left at the makeshift stall daily. The stall is open



Assured supply: A customer collecting bread from the self-service counter of a shop in Coimbatore. •M. PERIASAMY

throughout the day. The bread is baked in Mr. Vignesh's bakery behind the sweet shop. "A simple meal would cost ₹40. There are some who cannot afford it. At least they can have this bread for one meal," says the 24-year-old.



Food for thought: People queue up to receive food being distributed by Delhi police at Durga Park in Sagarpur, New Delhi on Friday. • V.V. KRISHNAN

IN BRIEF

Online activities for classes KG to VIII start

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government has kick-started its online learning activities for students of Class KG to Class VIII with assignments sent via SMS, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said. He said that the daily activities will involve tasks on memorising new things, brushing up their speaking skills and improving their writing skills. "After the schools reopen, these assignments will be checked by their respective teachers. These activities will be a part of the students' internal assessment," Mr. Sisodia said.

DU admission registrations on hold

NEW DELHI
Admission registrations for all courses in Delhi University for the academic year 2020-21 have been put on hold, the university announced on Friday. Given that the university has been declared closed until April 14, the registration process for admissions to undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil and Ph.D courses have all been put on hold until further orders, DU said. Those concerned may also check the website for updates, it added.

'Evacuation of Indians from other countries impossible'

NEW DELHI
The Central government on Friday informed the Delhi High Court that due to the lockdown in the wake of COVID-19, it was "not possible" to organise any evacuation of Indians from Bangladesh or any other countries. The Centre's response before the court came on a petition filed by advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal seeking direction to the authorities to take steps for safe return of Indians, who are stuck in Bangladesh. The MEA said the Bangladesh government too has announced a similar lockdown from March 26 to April 4.

Youth walks 5 km with torn intestine; son misses funeral

In the jhuggis of Mayapuri, lockdown has left people helpless and devastated; strict police and unresponsive ambulance teams compound woes

**HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI**
It was a painful five-kilometre walk for 19-year-old Gautam Prasad from his house in congested Mayapuri to ESI Hospital in Bali Nagar on Tuesday. His intestines were ruptured, but denied even an ambulance, he ended up walking the entire stretch.

Gautam had a bout of fever for two-three days. But on Tuesday morning, he complained of excessive pain and was taken to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, accompanied by his father Radhey Shyam, a factory worker, and

neighbour Ram Kirpal Prajapati. Here again, there was no option but to walk.

At DDU hospital, the staff allegedly told the family that they will give him pain-relief medicine. But as his pain aggravated, they decided to get an ultrasound scan at a nearby private hospital.

"We were informed that his small intestine has ruptured and he needs to be operated upon. They said it would cost around ₹60,000," said Ram, adding that the family decided to take him to ESI Hospital for monetary reasons. When walking back home,



Family members and neighbours of Gautam Prasad, who walked from Mayapuri jhuggis to ESI Hospital. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

his pain increased and he gave up. Ram dialled an ambulance, but no one picked up. After persistent buzz, someone did, but bluntly refused to send one.

"The hospital said they don't have any," Ram al-

leged.

Fear factor

Helpless, they started walking. Though Ram owned an e-rickshaw, he didn't offer the vehicle for fear of getting impounded. "They don't even let us go out on the street. They will take the vehicle if we use it," said Ram.

Worse still, they had to keep off the police, as they feared getting stopped. Finally, they reached the hospital, where he was operated on an emergency basis. On Wednesday, Ram and Gautam's father Shyam were stopped

by the police on their way to the hospital. After several pleas, they allowed the father to go. Gautam's sister Vandana too had to walk.

Faraway funeral

In another jhuggi in the same locale, Anita and her brother Annu Prasad, both employees of a private company, got a phone call on Thursday morning, informing the death of their father Kailash Prasad in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh. With no mode of transportation, they told relatives back home that they wouldn't be able to

attend the funeral.

"The last rites were performed by my sister's son," said Annu, the only son of Kailash. The father, he said, was diagnosed with blood infection on March 23.

"We spoke to a police officer and a local leader. They said they couldn't help. We didn't know about e-pass. Above all, we were told that even if we reach U.P., we will be put in separate shelters and won't be allowed to go home," said Annu, adding that he didn't get a chance to speak to his father or see him one last time.

Lockdown blues: no transport to reach hospitals

While some ride bicycle with patients, a few are left with no option but to walk

**HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI**

Five-year-old Laxmi, along with her brother Subhash (17), mother Rekha and sister Vandana came to Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital on Friday afternoon on a bicycle. She was suffering from high fever.

Subhash, who rode the bicycle about 3.5 km from Utam Nagar to Moti Nagar, said that they got scared after Laxmi got a bout of high fever, which is a COVID-19 symptom.

"We don't have a vehicle and people in the area refused to help so I took the bicycle. Thankfully, the police did not stop us," he said, adding that he brought Vandana and his mother along because he was unsure of the diagnosis.

But at the hospital, a staff told them that the doctor would come only after lunch and they should either come back the next day or wait. They decided to leave, as



Subhash rode the bicycle for 3.5 km to take his sister to hospital. • HEMANI BHANDARI

they reckoned it was not safe to hang around, said Subhash.

Deserted hospital

Inside the largely deserted hospital, announcements were being made, instructing people to visit hospitals only if it is absolutely necessary. Sitting on the pavement outside the hospital was 20-year-old Priyanka with her six-year-old brother-in-law Hari Om, who had suffered a fracture on his left hand. They had walked three kilometres from their

house in the jhuggis of Punjabi Bagh to reach the hospital.

"He got the plaster on his hand about a month ago and it had to be cut today, so I had to bring him. There was an e-rickshaw, but the driver was asking for ₹50-60 which I could not afford," she said, adding that buses did not stop. "If they wanted to impose a lockdown, they should have at least kept open options for us to reach hospitals," she said.

Standing at the bus stop near the hospital, a 45-year-

COVID-19

old man, who did not wish to be identified, said he had to show his office ID card to board a bus.

Ambulance woes

At the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, which also wore a deserted look, Heera Devi stood with her son Ravi outside the emergency ward waiting for a vehicle to go home. Ravi was suffering from typhoid and she had brought him to the hospital in an ambulance.

"I don't have any money. My husband is a construction worker and is not able to earn a penny these days. In the morning, I had called for ambulance on 102. The operator denied once. I called again and said I was poor and had no other option, after which they sent an ambulance. Now, I am calling them again, but no one is picking up," she said.

Rickshaw-puller in city helps people fight lockdown crisis

'Rickshaw owners not asking for rent for the vehicles'

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**

A rickshaw-puller outside Moti Nagar metro station here, on spotting an old woman with stooped shoulders walking towards the station with a bag in her hand, asked her: "Kahin chhor doon mataji? [Can I drop you somewhere?]"

"I don't have money," the woman responded. The rickshaw-puller took the bag from her hand while saying: "It's okay. Come sit."

The woman, who had to reach her residence in Raghubir Nagar, was on her way back from Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital. The rickshaw-puller, later identified as Uttam Kumar Singh, dropped the woman at Rajouri Garden, a few metres away from the police barricades there as he was gripped in the fear of getting stopped. Mr. Singh also gave the woman



Uttam Kumar Singh outside Moti Nagar metro station on Friday. • HEMANI BHANDARI

water to drink. He said he did not charge money keeping in mind the situation due to the ongoing lockdown.

Only a few rickshaws are available outside metro stations and hospitals owing to the lockdown and the rickshaw-pullers said that they have not been riding more than a kilometre or two at a stretch because police officers stop them and use batons, "especially after 6 p.m."

Mr. Singh, a resident of Kirti Nagar, who has a family of seven to feed, said he had to

ride his rickshaw to make ends meet. "I manage to make about ₹100 these days, but I don't charge people who cannot afford," he said.

The rickshaw-pullers added that those who don't own their rickshaws and have taken them on rent are not being asked by the owners for money. "They [owners] know that we are hardly earning anything. They have said that we don't have to pay the rent during the lockdown," said Sikandar Bhagat (35), a resident of Moti Nagar.

Inmates at Gurugram relief camp bored, homesick and restless

Despite providing food and shelter, several of them are a concerned lot

**ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM**

It has been only five days since Lala Ram, 25, found shelter at a makeshift relief camp at a community centre in Sector 15 Part-II here. He already feels 'homesick' and 'bored'.

"We need not worry about food at the camp, but we also have no work to do. We are not allowed to step outside on the road because of lockdown. It makes us feel bored and homesick. Every time we call our families, we feel more miserable," he lamented.

Dinesh echoed similar sentiments. He added that since it was a harvest season for Rabi crop, the govern-



People at a gaushala, converted into a relief camp, at Manesar in Haryana. • V.V. KRISHNAN

ment should have made better arrangements for their stay in villages. "It will help us get some work. The local farmers will also benefit," he said.

However, most of them at the Kadipur night shelter are happy. Mostly daily-waggers and regulars for decades

now, they need not worry about two square meals a day anymore. "It is comfortable here, but the food served is not inadequate. Also, the quality of the food has deteriorated over the past couple of days," complained Bablu. Ashish, another inmate,

said they would sit outside the shelter for a few hours daily maintaining a proper distance. Staying at Manesar relief camp, Vijay, a migrant worker at a textile unit in Panipat, feared a further extension of the lockdown.

Neelam's worry was different. "It is very uncomfortable for me as a woman to stay at the camp with the males all around. It is all the more difficult with a two-year-old child. The government should at least consider sending [those with] families to their native places. There are very few women and children at this centre," said Neelam.

Support for govt.

Despite the hardships, many at the Sukhrali relief camp supported the government's decision for lockdown. Having left his home to stay at a relief

camp, Rajesh, a tailor, said the decision had hit everyone hard and more so the poor, but the government had little choice.

"I have read in newspapers that countries like Italy and China are struggling, so our government had little choice. But a little planning could have eased the pain of the poor," argued Rajesh.

He said that he would flash the light from his mobile phone to support the Prime Minister's call for lighting on April 5. "We should support our government," another inmate, Ajeet, chipped in.

Counselling planned

Meanwhile, Haryana AIDS Control Society's project director, Dr. Veena Singh, visited the camp on Thursday and interacted with the inmates. She directed the health authorities to coun-

sel the migrants staying in camps on a routine basis to clear their fear and anxiety, besides initiating recreational activities for the inmates.

Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran's Estate Officer-II, Vivek Kalia, said the administration would look into Dr. Singh's suggestions. He added that mostly daily-waggers and a few migrant workers comprised the centres. He claimed the administration supplied food to around 75,000 people every day within the municipal limits, including those in the slums.

Meanwhile, RTI activist Ramesh Yadav felt the government should arrange transport for those in the camps to return home instead of counselling them. He reckoned that many could also be employed as labourers for harvesting.

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EASTERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM
Corrigendum to Open Tender Notice No. TM/Out-Sourcing/Box Porter(ASN)/2019-21, dated 02.03.2020 published earlier by Sr Divisional Operations Manager, Eastern Railway, Asansol. In the above tender, Opening Date 07.04.2020 at 12.30 hrs. is hereby extended upto 15.06.2020 at 12.30 hrs. due to Corona outbreak. Other terms & conditions will remain unchanged. ASN (01/2020-21)

PROCEDURE FOR ON-LINE CANCELLATION OF COUNTER TICKETS
Journey tickets booked from PRS Counters can also be cancelled on-line through IRCTC website. For on-line cancellation of counter tickets following procedure may be followed : Go to the IRCTC website (www.irctc.co.in), and under the Trains section, go to Cancel ticket and choose Counter ticket. Enter the PNR number, train number and the Captcha shown on the page and follow the instructions. Following link may also be used for cancellation of counter tickets : <https://www.operations.irctc.co.in/ctcan/SystemTktCanLogin.jsf>
Chief Commercial Manager/PM
EASTERN RAILWAY

The long march to uncertainty

Blamed for leaving their homes in defiance of the lockdown, hungry, and cash-strapped, migrants struggle in packed shelters, while those who managed to reach their native places face hostility. **Ajeet Mahale, Jatin Anand and Omar Rashid** report on their plight

"In my 20 years in Mumbai, I have never seen such a sight," said Gopal Das as he recounted his ordeal on March 21 at the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus. Gopal was among the sea of people who had attempted to board what would be the last few trains out of the city to their homes hundreds of kilometres away. Gopal, a construction worker, did not manage to board the train. And nothing had prepared him for what was to follow.

Gopal is from Bhagalpur, Bihar. He said he and his friends spent nearly four hours trying to get tickets. "A few people who had clambered on to the trains fell on the platform. A little later, we heard that all the trains had been cancelled. Since there was no public transport, we walked for three hours to our room in Bandra (East) with ₹250 in our pockets. We were still hoping they would start the trains. We didn't think it would last this long," he said.

Visuals of hundreds of workers wearing *gamchas*, carrying heavy backpacks and wailing children, and walking on national highways, boarding tractors, and jostling for space atop multi-coloured buses became defining images for days to come in India. To fight the novel coronavirus, States began imposing restrictions on the movement of people. Then the Prime Minister announced a nationwide 21-day lockdown. This tough measure was met with fear, anger and frustration in many parts of the country, including Mumbai.

No transport, no jobs, no food

In its own capacity to contain the spread of COVID-19, the Maharashtra government put in place a series of restrictions in the days leading up to the March 24 nationwide lockdown. On March 20, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray imposed a lockdown in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Nagpur until March 31. Suddenly, in just a few hours, lakhs of migrant workers living in the city found themselves without work. To make matters worse, there was little or no guarantee that they would get basic amenities such as food and water. This forced thousands of migrant labourers to flock to the city's major train termini – the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus – as well as train and bus terminals in other cities. Following the Chief Minister's announcement, the Railways operated 14 special trains on March 20 and 21, eight of them from Mumbai, to various destinations such as Patna, Howrah, Danapur, Gorakhpur, Manduadih and Baharshah. Long-distance passenger services were initially shut only on March 22 on account of the Janata Curfew. However, the suspension of services was extended to March 31 and then to April 14 after the Prime Minister announced the lockdown. Shahrukh Malik, a driver of Ola and Uber cabs, said: "Had we known this was going to last this long, we would have gone home much earlier and returned after two-three months."

Worse was to follow. City-based civic organisations were flooded with distress calls from workers across the city, who were in dire need of food. Sadrul Sheikh's phone has been ringing constantly for a week. He and his team, spread across the city, are part of the Jharkhandi Ekta Sangh. "We have managed to give ration to only 1,200 people. This is a fraction of the number of people who need help at the moment. With each passing day, the calls increase. I am now getting around 1,000 calls every day," he said.

According to the 2011 Census, Maharashtra has the highest number of migrants in the country (2.3 million). But activists say that the Census fails to capture seasonal migration that occurs for around four to five months. For 20-year-old Digambar Rai, the last week has been a nightmare. He arrived in Mumbai from Jharkhand on March 21 in the hope of earning for a few months before returning home. He had no idea about the lockdown; he was told that he could earn around ₹400 a day as a construction worker. "I have not even worked a day, so I have no money. I am struggling to get ration. I am relying on other workers from Jharkhand to help me," he said.

According to Raghav Mehrotra, a researcher at Aajeevika Bureau, an organisation that works with migrant labourers, what connects all the migrant workers in the region now is that they have all lost their jobs and wages. "In the communities that we work in, migrant workers typically work in small garment workshops. They stay at the site of work and rely on local dhabas for their daily food. We have managed to get them basic ration by transferring money to their nearest grocer, but cooking the food is a real challenge," he said.

Many migrant workers have banded together to ask for help. Manas Raut from Odisha lives and works in Rabale on the outskirts of the city. Raut said he and 70 other workers from his State were provided aid after they sent a distress call on the Internet. Many set up their own helpline numbers. "None of



Migrant workers begin to walk to Madhya Pradesh from Mumbai. (Below): Migrants from Delhi in Lucknow. • ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY/PTI



our employers have been in touch with us. We are struggling to make both ends meet during this lockdown," he said.

The lockdown has also exposed the lack of a safety net for migrant workers. For instance, many construction workers found that they were not eligible to receive funds under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Fund. Gopal said several contractors he knew had left for their homes after realising that there was going to be no business. "None of them have picked up my phone in the last one week," he said.

A shelter for nobody

In Uttar Pradesh, 10 days after the Prime Minister's announcement, facilities such as the Jaypee Sports Complex on the Yamuna Expressway, the largest of its kind created by the U.P. government in Gautam Buddha Nagar to provide shelter to migrant workers possibly stranded in the sprawling district, lay vacant. The complex has the capacity to accommodate 2,000 people.

Sprawled over approximately 12 acres en route to Agra, the camp consists of an estimated 57 large tin sheds, some designated 'family sheds', all lined with wooden panels to protect occupants from the sweltering summer. The sheds have mats with clean white sheets, bedding, sanitation and potable water facilities. There are separate toilets for men and women. What the complex lacks since it became ready on March 30 is something very significant: the very people for whom it exists.

"No one is coming here. What can be done about it? It looks like all of them have left. But when the administration decided to set up this camp it must have done so based on some logic," said an official associated with the upkeep of the camp, the largest among the 28 created over 60 kilometres between the U.P. border, which commences at Noida, and Jewar, where India's largest airport is scheduled to come up. The State administration had sought to put arrangements in place to provide shelter to 6,050 migrant workers according to an order issued on March 29 evening.

These measures, in addition to ap-

peals made by the Chief Ministers of U.P. and Delhi and the Prime Minister himself, seemed to have been too little too late. Most such shelters in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district, sources in the U.P. government familiar with developments in this regard said, were either vacant or had "very thin occupancy". In the capital, though there was significant occupancy at such shelters, food arrangements could only be made incrementally over several days.

A trickle and then a deluge

On the night the Indian Railways announced that all passenger trains would be suspended, there was a trickle of migrant workers – most of them daily wage earners who no longer had the means to sustain themselves and the family members accompanying them. The trickle turned into a deluge at certain points by March 28 – places in Anand Vihar in Delhi bordering U.P.'s Ghaziabad; in Manesar, Faridabad and Gurugram in Haryana; and in Noida and Greater Noida in U.P.

While a majority of the migrants were seen boarding buses already overflowing with passengers, hoping against hope to reach their homes hundreds of kilometres away, others, sources in the government said, had walked endlessly on highways linking States before the borders were sealed. They walked along the banks of the Yamuna river, through the wilderness of U.P., and through unused railway tunnels before being told that the borders were shut.

Those who had tried and failed, over two consecutive days when the lockdown was eased in U.P., to find any means of travelling home returned to their rented accommodations to live a life of uncertainty. Some from States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, located far away from the NCR, decided to stay back. "We first thought of going. Even if the trains were not operational we thought

we would take buses. We packed our bags and went to Zero Point because our family begged us to try and travel somehow as things seemed to be getting worse. But there were no buses except to Agra and they were mostly full. It would have taken us weeks to get to Kolkata. So we came back," said Pradeep Haldar, employed as a security guard in Greater Noida.

"Did you see what they (the police) are doing to people looking for buses? I shudder to think how many times they will beat my husband and me if we try going to Ranchi. And what for anyway – getting on those crowded buses will expose us to the risk of contracting the infection," said Manju Kumari, a resident of Jharkhand, employed as a house help in Greater Noida's Omega-1.

On March 28 morning, a Saturday, Zero Point on the Yamuna Expressway was packed with migrant workers who chose to put their urge to reach home above the need to practise social distancing lest they contract SARS-CoV-2. They were there as the district administration had announced that 200 State-run buses had been arranged to ferry commuters to various locations in the rural parts of U.P. every two hours from the area. Bound mainly to Agra, Aligarh and Lucknow, migrant workers and their families thronged to the location to try their luck at boarding any vehicle, en route home, till midnight.

Manish Kumar, who was employed at a factory in Kasna and was among the hundreds seeking to inch closer home, in his case to Kanpur, said: "Any form of transport which takes me anywhere close to my destination from here will do at this point. I'm going to die soon anyway. If I stay here it will be of hunger; there is no one here to even beg for food. Everyone's pockets are empty. If I contract the infection I can at least die on my own soil."

Families carrying whatever they could get their hands on before under-

taking their journey lined the boundary wall of the highway as small groups of civil society volunteers offered them vegetable biryani, sealed cups of water and hand sanitiser.

Animesh Kumar, an out-of-work factory hand who sought to travel to his home in Bihar's Munger, was among them. "Things are really bad here. You know what is happening; then why do you keep asking? I've told you I'm on my way. I have nowhere else to go, I will come home soon, trust me," he assured his mother over the phone as he broke down. "They should have allowed us to come here two days ago," he complained when asked what was wrong and if he needed any assistance. "For two days – first in the morning and then in the evening – I tried to come here so I could catch a bus or use any other means to go home. The police beat me every time I tried to reach the expressway on both days. I will get on any bus, any vehicle; I'll start walking from wherever it drops me," he said.

After many hours, having realised the futility of their efforts, many decided to return to their rented accommodation. Anand Kumar, who operates a pan shop in the Alpha-1 area near the transit hub of Pari Chowk, was engaged in an animated discussion with his roommates Sunil Kumar Gupta and Gupta's sibling, Anil. "They are charging ₹1,000-₹2,000 per passenger and the buses themselves are jam-packed. Where will you people sit? What if you get infected," he asked the Gupta siblings.

At the end of a four-hour-long wait, Sunil and Anil decided to abandon their effort to find a ride. According to a police official deployed on duty near the point, they were not among the "fortunate" ones who had been able to find transport till midnight on Saturday. "What's the point of being stuck with nothing on either side of Zero Point," Sunil asked. "Let's go back home," he told Anil and Anand as they began their five-km-long walk back "home".

On Monday morning, as strict enforcement of the lockdown returned to the area, the same police personnel who were trying their best to assist migrant workers board the buses used their batons and sticks to "persuade" hapless migrant workers to go to shelter homes.

As those like Ram Kumar and his family of seven, who had travelled from Manesar and could reach Zero Point in Greater Noida only on Monday morning, sought to try their luck, Sunil and Anil were busy persuading their landlord against throwing them out since they would be late with the rent this month. "We were able to convince him; both of us pooled in some money. It looks like it will be enough to tide us through the lockdown till April 14," Sunil said on Thursday, almost a week after he tried – and failed – to keep his

promise to his mother that he would return home.

Not quarantined

U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath instructed officials to prepare a list of migrants who had started moving into the State last week. He said they must be identified, medically inspected and put under home quarantine if they were suspected of having the virus.

However, officials on the ground find it difficult to contain the people in these quarantine homes. In districts like Sultanpur, Rae Bareilly, Hapur, Hathras and Azamgarh, the police have lodged cases against people for jumping quarantine. In Sultanpur, 26 persons of a 115-capacity quarantine home fled after jumping from the second floor of the building using a bedsheet. All of them were later located. In Lakhimpur Kheri, a Dalit man who had returned from Gurugram was found hanging in the field after the police allegedly beat him up for jumping quarantine. The matter is under probe.

In Hathras, the quarantined persons gave the panchayat secretary the slip when he left the premises after dinner. While a number of migrants said they underwent thermal screening at the bus station of their native district when they deboarded, many slipped under the radar. A group of migrants from Sitapur district returning from Gurugram on March 29 said they went straight to their homes without getting screened as they arrived in the wee hours. "Our bus arrived at 3:30 a.m. There was nobody there," said Shivpal Singh. No official approached him either, he said. Another migrant in Gorakhpur district narrated a different story, however.

After reaching his village, the locals forced him to get a medical test done before allowing him entry, even though he didn't show any symptoms, he said. As a bargain, he later decided to stay under quarantine in his house and not at the primary school built outside the village.

As efforts to control the pandemic continue, U.P. has witnessed a sharp rise in figures over the past week, coinciding with the entry of migrants and the revelation of the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi.

Meanwhile, in Mumbai, apart from the pandemic and the economic situation it is a bleak future that worries people. For the construction workers of Mumbai, the peak season consists of the months of March, April and May as construction activity stops once monsoon starts to set in. With most of the season lost in the crisis, several workers will have to head back home. Digambar, who had come to the city in hopes of earning some extra money, said that he would be taking the first train back. Gopal agreed with him. "There is no question of staying back. The city will be half empty once the trains start," he said.



A community effort: Civil Defence personnel distributing meals to daily wage labourers and the homeless at the Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya Hari Nagar in New Delhi on Friday; medical students who returned from Bangladesh leaving for home after completing their quarantine in Srinagar; police officials during a patrol in Bikaner; and Mumbai police in protective gear checking vehicles on the Western Express Highway in Kandivali. ■SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR, NISSAR AHMAD, PTI & ARUNANGSU ROY CHOWDHURY

Six Navy ships, medical teams on standby

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

As part of India's measures to assist neighbouring countries in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, six Navy ships have been kept ready and five medical teams are on standby for deployment to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan when required, the Defence Ministry said on Friday.

"Twenty eight fixed-wing aircraft and 21 helicopters of the Indian Air Force (IAF) are on standby at various locations across the country for transporting essential supplies," the Ministry said in a statement. Its fleet is being used to assist in transportation of essential supplies, medicines and medical equipment.

The six naval ships with medical teams and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief kits onboard are on standby for assistance at Visakhapatnam, Kochi and Mumbai, a defence official said.

Five viral testing labs at armed forces hospitals, which can carry out the COVID-19 test, have been made part of the national grid, the ministry said.

The armed forces are running six quarantine facilities at Mumbai, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Hindon, Manesar and Chennai — where 1,737 people have been handled.

25,000 Indians stuck abroad, but govt. wants them to wait

MEA says move is important to ensure safety of the 'larger community'

SUHASINI HAIDAR NEW DELHI

Twenty-three-year-old Rahul V., an MBA student in East London, first heard about Air India flights coming to the United Kingdom from a British government website he has been tracking for the past two weeks, ever since India banned travel for passengers from the U.K. due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The student from Hyderabad, one of hundreds stranded in the U.K., among the about 25,000 Indians stranded in different parts of the world, says he felt let down when he was informed that the flights would go back to India empty as the government has refused to lift its strict ban on any passengers, including Indian citizens, to enter India.

"The British government is bringing its people home, despite the pandemic, it's just sad that the Indian government isn't doing the same," he told *The Hindu*, disappointed that despite several flights being operated to the U.K. from April 4 by the national carrier, he cannot return home on them.

No change in rules

Indian missions in several other capitals are facing similar questions from thousands of Indian citizens who are stranded and need to return. Air India announced



SRINAGAR

BIKANER

MUMBAI



No entry: The government said it would not allow passengers to fly till the lockdown ends. ■REUTERS

on Thursday that it would operate chartered flights to Paris, Frankfurt and London for citizens of the U.K., Germany, France, Canada and Ireland. In Germany, dozens of students recorded a video

COVID-19

taped appeal to the government, offering to pay full fare if Air India flights would accept passengers on the way back. However, the government says it will not change its decision to not allow any passengers, including Indians, to fly here from about 37 SARS-CoV-2-affected countries, until the lockdown ends, as it is due to, on April 15.

"We are asking stranded Indians to stay put wherever they are in view of local restrictions as well as travelling restrictions to and within India. This is good for their own health and safety as well as that of their family

and larger community," a Ministry of External Affairs official told *The Hindu*.

Among the Indians stranded worldwide are students whose universities are shut down, business travellers who were unable to return in time before the lockdown, and tourists who were stopped from boarding when the Indian travel bans went into place. The MEA did acknowledge that some of them had been stopped wrongfully, as airlines read the travel deadlines over-zealously or misinterpreted them, but pleaded helplessness at changing the rules for their return.

Significant backlog

Officials also point out that it will take some days to clear the backlog of passengers given their numbers, depending on how quickly regular commercial flights will be allowed to resume. Many of the passengers will need as-

sistance as they have spent money buying tickets on airlines that cancelled flights and are unable to afford another full fare ticket. Finally, there remain questions about quarantine requirements for all those passengers returning home, given the limited quarantine capacity in India, and the Ministry of Health would have to take a decision on whether they can return right after the lockdown is lifted.

"Most of the students here are desperate now, and have no money. They are willing to do any job, even if it means catching the virus, because they are struggling to survive," said Mr. Rahul, one of the several students *The Hindu* spoke to.

Reaching out daily

On the Indian High Commission's helpline, and social media portals, several students like Mr. Rahul call or write in everyday, describing their problems, including details of ailing parents back home, health problems they have, trouble with the long supermarket queues for food, and difficulties in finding accommodation. Officials say they are coordinating their requests as much as possible, and have had to reach out to local NGOs and food aid groups as well as Indian student associations to help.

Questions over foreign donations for PM-CARES

Income, expenditure details unknown

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ NEW DELHI

The government has sent conflicting signals over the question of foreign donations to the new Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund.

Initially, Indian ambassadors were directed to mobilise donations from abroad with SWIFT code, with SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) code details made available in order to accept such contributions. However, the Centre has now seemed to take a step back, indicating that foreign funds would be accepted only from individuals and foundations, with details of foreign donations unavailable for now.

The PM-CARES Fund also does not seem to have any website with details of objectives, income and expenditure as yet, raising concerns about its transparency and accountability. Repeated queries on these issues sent to a senior official at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) remain unanswered.

Public charitable trust

PM-CARES is a public charitable trust launched on March 28 as a "dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like the one posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide



Indians were directed to mobilise donations from abroad with SWIFT code.

relief to the affected," according to the original press statement.

That statement, as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first tweets on PM-CARES, included both an IFSC code as well as a SWIFT code. However, the donation link on the PM's website now says that "account details for foreign donations will be available in 2-3 days". Only the IFSC code is available on the donation link.

Government sources now say that the "PM CARES Fund will simply accept donations and contributions from individuals and organisations who are based in foreign countries." They pointed to an official statement in August 2018 that contributions from "NRIs, PIOs and international entities such as foundations would be welcome."

While this seems to indicate that the PM-CARES Fund will not accept foreign funds from governmental or corporate sources, it does seem prepared to accept unlimited tax-free donations from Indian corporates.

COVID-19: EU official speaks to Shringla

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Friday held a telephonic discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic with the Secretary General of the European External Action Service, Helga M. Schmid. The discussion came in the backdrop of a large scale evacuation of European Union (EU) citizens from major Indian cities over the past week.

"They exchanged notes on the situation and respective efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU and India as well as coordination in the framework of G20, SAARC, etc," said a source familiar with the exchange between the two top diplomats. EU has been part of India's global dialogue to contain the crisis.

India and EU skipped a summit in March as the COVID-19 crisis exploded across the world leading to the suspension of international travel. While several major EU countries have evacuated nationals from India, Indian citizens continue to remain in major European destinations as India has suspended commercial air service and declared that no citizen will be evacuated without a pre-flight COVID-19 test. Apart from the continental Europe, a large number of Indians remain stranded in East European countries.

Lockdown lifts Delhi's air quality to a 5-year high

CPCB data shows pollution fell with cities recording a 'good' on AQI

JACOB KOSHY NEW DELHI

The ongoing lockdown has pushed pollution levels in Delhi to a 5-year low and, across India, the number of cities that recorded 'good' on the air quality index (AQI) jumped from 6 — on March 16 — to 30 as on March 29, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board.

PM 2.5, the most dangerous pollutant, measured at the pollution monitoring station in Anand Vihar, New Delhi, ranged from 16 g/m³ - 42g/m³ (microgram per metre cubed) from March 25 to April 1, the first week of the lockdown.

By comparison, PM 2.5 had ranged from 72-187g/m³ during the corresponding period last year, and 72-171g/m³ in 2018.

In 2016, it spanned 49-116g/m³, station data on the website of the CPCB shows.

It wasn't possible to compare the air quality index,

which is a weighted average of the contribution of several pollutants, in this week from that in previous years, as such data wasn't available on the website.

Janata curfew report

The CPCB in a report on the impact of the 'Janata curfew' on March 22, said that on the day before, AQI was 'Moderate (101-250)' in Delhi.

"Overall, up to 44% reduction in PM10 levels was observed in Delhi during March 22-23, 2020, compared to previous day. The PM2.5 reduction was 8% on the curfew day but declined to 34% next day owing to negligible combustion activities on March 22-23, 2020, in and around the city," the report said.

The key factor that triggered the decline was the number of on-road vehicles, which contributed to a 51% reduction in NOx levels and a 32% reduction in carbon monoxide levels during

Capital breathes easy

Since the lockdown, Delhi's particulate matter pollution (PM 2.5) has dropped to levels not seen in the past few years. The table shows the average PM 2.5 levels* in Anand Vihar, Delhi for the first five days after the lockdown. The pollution levels have more than halved on many days compared to previous years

Day	2017	2018	2019	2020
March 25	89.52	72.41	73.02	42.55
March 26	78.3	91.19	72.42	44.99
March 27	118.87	158.88	80.28	25.54
March 28	121.67	171.25	158.64	22.69
March 29	71.95	116.53	187.6	29.11
March 30	103.17	129.45	153.15	31.88

* Small particulate matter of 2.5 microns or less in diameter

March 22-23 as compared to March 21. Unlike in the winter months, Delhi and other regions of the Indo Gangetic Plains generally tend to have better air quality in March, aided by consistent wind and sunlight, which help flush out pollutants.

"The impact of meteorological factors was partially favourable... however the reduction in air pollution can be largely attributed to transport and commercial-industrial restrictions," the CPCB said in its report.

Research studies have attributed the key sources of PM2.5 in summer to be: dust and construction activities (35%), transport sector (20%) and industry (20%).

Lockdown effect

During the lockdown PM10 and PM2.5 levels were reduced by about 35-40%. The cessation of industries contributed to this reduction by 10%, vehicles 10-15% and dust another 10-15%, the organisation calculated.

As on March 29, a total 91



Out of the blue: As traffic came to a standstill in Delhi due to the lockdown, pollution eased up giving way to clear blue skies. ■ V. V. KRISHNAN

Bhopal-based firm to make testing kits

STAFF REPORTER BHOPAL

Bhopal-based 3B Blackbio Biotech (I) Ltd. is going to be the second Indian firm to produce real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 testing kits, after securing the approval of the Centre on April 2.

A subsidiary of KILPEST India Ltd., the firm's production capacity of 10,000 kits a day will give a leg up to testing efforts across the country, after its kits were cleared by the Indian Council of Medical Research. So far, Pune-based My Labs has been supplying kits, besides imports from the United States.

IIT-Roorkee develops ventilator

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Amid the growing demand for hospital ventilators due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IIT-Roorkee has developed a low-cost portable ventilator in association with AIIMS-Rishikesh, which can be manufactured for just ₹25,000.

On Friday, the machine was presented to more than 450 companies and several have expressed interest in commercial production, IIT-Roorkee said. Named 'Prana-Vayu', the closed-loop ventilator can deliver the required amount of air to the patient, with an automated process, controlling the pressure and flow rates.

Allow movement of trucks, Centre tells States

Ensure passage for driver, one person

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Friday wrote to Chief Secretaries of all the States and Union Territories, clarifying that inter-State and intra-State movement of all trucks and other goods vehicles with one driver and one additional person had been allowed.

The drivers should have a valid driving licence. If the vehicle is empty, the invoice, way-bill and other related documents for delivery or pick up of goods should be carried by them. "The movement of driver and one person from their place of residence to truck should also be facilitated by local authorities," said the letter.

All movement of persons with the passes issued by the authorities concerned will be subject to strict adherence to the norms for hygiene and social distancing as required in the context of COVID-19. Mr. Bhalla said as laboratories had been exempted from lockdown restrictions. The category includes the testing laboratories in the private sector for COVID-19 samples. The samples have to be collected through va-



Ajay Bhalla

rious centres and then transported to the laboratories. Therefore, the opening up of temporary collection centres, movement of lab technicians and transportation of samples have also been allowed.

The production, warehousing and transport of essential goods have been included in the exemptions to the lockdown measures and the district authorities are issuing individual passes to the businesses covered in the category. The State and U.T. governments have been advised to issue authorisation letters to companies and organisations having nation-wide supply chains of essential goods. Issuance of regional passes for easy movement of critical staff and workers has also been allowed, said the letter.

Over two fold rise in domestic violence cases: NCW

There is also a threefold increase in police apathy towards women's complaints

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The first week of the nationwide lockdown, which has left many facing job losses, uncertainty over salaries, forced isolation and stressed households, has resulted in a steep rise in violence against women. The National Commission for Women (NCW), which receives complaints from across the country, has

recorded more than a two fold rise in gender-based violence.

The total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March (March 2-8), to 257 in the final week of March (March 23-April 1). Complaints of rape or attempted rape have risen sharply from two to 13, while cases of domestic violence have increased from 30 to 69

over the same comparative period. Simultaneously, there has been an almost three fold increase in police apathy towards women's complaints, with the NCW receiving 16 complaints on the issue as compared to six earlier.

Similarly, complaints relating to the "right to live with dignity" too have doubled, rising from 35 cases to 77.

Such cases could pertain to discrimination on the basis of gender, class or caste

or all three of them combined.

Activists believe that these may only be the tip of the iceberg, as many women will not be able to reach out because of restrictions on movement and lack of privacy inside homes.

Jagori, a Delhi-based NGO, which runs helplines for women victims of violence, has, in fact, experienced a 50% drop in calls.

"Women need to be at ease to make calls for help," said Jaya Velankar, director,

Jagori. "They need privacy, when they are certain that they will not be discovered by their family. But when the entire family is at home, it is difficult for them to call the helpline," she added.

"Lockdown can't mean that you save me from a virus, but you expose me to other forms of violence," said Senior advocate and women's rights activist Vrinda Grover. She said that groups will be making a representation to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on the issue.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU - NAMAKKAL MUNICIPALITY
Roc No : 14381/2016/E/1
CORRIGENDUM ON NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION
1. Last date for submission of Application addressed to : The Commissioner Namakkal Municipality, Namakkal
2. Date and time of Opening of the Application
3. Last date for submission of Application addressed to : The Commissioner Namakkal Municipality, Namakkal

RFQ already invited on	RFQ postponed to
Online : 08.04.2020 upto 14.00 hrs Offline : 09.04.2020 upto 15.00 hrs	Online : 12.05.2020 upto 14.00 hrs Offline : 13.05.2020 upto 15.00 hrs
09.04.2020 - 15.30 hrs at Municipal Office, Namakkal	13.05.2020 - 15.30 hrs at Municipal Office, Namakkal

The RFQ may be downloaded from the Official Website https://tenders.gov.in upto 12.05.2020, 14.00 hrs.
DIPR/ 1591 / TENDER/2020 Commissioner, Namakkal Municipality.

Tablighi Jamaat link to death in Dharavi

A 56-year-old garment shop owner tested positive from Baliga Nagar and died on Wednesday

**STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI**

The Mumbai police have *prima facie* found out that the first person who died of COVID-19 at Dharavi had come in contact with around 10 Tablighi Jamaat members who had attended the gathering of the sect in Delhi. The police, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and health officers will have to find out every place they visited in the city, including in Dharavi, before they reportedly left for Kerala if they test positive.

On Wednesday, Dharavi reported its first case, a 56-year-old garment shop owner from Baliga Nagar, and the person died on the same day. On Thursday, a doctor from Wockhardt Hospital living in the area also tested positive. He might have contracted the disease from his hospital as Wockhardt has so far reported at least two confirmed cases. A conservancy worker who did not live at Dharavi but had worked there had also tested positive, leading to concerns over whether Dharavi would become a hotbed.

In the case of patient 1, the police believe that he had come in contact with some



A hotspot: A man standing in front of his shanty at Shahu Nagar, Dharavi, on Thursday. ■PRASHANT NAKWE

Tablighi Jamaat members. Five men and five women who came to Mumbai on March 22 after attending the meeting in Delhi had stayed



at Dharavi. The men stayed at the local masjid, while the women stayed in a flat owned by patient number 1. The police believe they left for Kozhikode on March 24.

Three couples went by air and the other two went "by other means." While the police believe that the deceased spent time with them, it is not yet clear if any of them have been tested positive. The police are in contact with their counterparts in Kerala.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone V) Niyati Thaker said, "It appears the deceased had come in contact

with Tablighi members. They left around March 24 and are suspected to have gone to Kerala. It seems the deceased provided them his flat. It is possible that they came in contact with several residents of the area. Now we have to trace each and every person but for that people need to co-operate."

Assistant municipal commissioner of G North ward Kiran Dighavkar said, "We

are trying to establish the link of where the first patient got the virus from. Things will become clearer once the reports of his close contacts are in. If at all the people coming from Delhi were carriers of the virus, we will have to find out where they ventured in the area or even the city, who they came in contact with and screen all of them. It will be challenging."

Cases on foreign Tablighis can delay their exit: experts

MHA directs States to book 960 blacklisted individuals

**VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI**

A directive from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) asking States to register criminal cases against foreign members of the Tablighi Jamaat could prolong their stay in India by up to five years.

On Friday, Joint Secretary MHA Punya Salila Srivastava reiterated that States have been asked to register cases against 960 blacklisted foreigners and that "this stage the question of deportation does not arise" but whenever it happens it will be done as per health protocols.

Police in a quandy Police in different States are divided on registering cases against the foreign members under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, punishable by up to two years and Section 14 of the Foreigners Act, 1946, punishable by up to five years.

Several police officers *The Hindu* spoke to said there was no point in arresting the foreigners as their visas have been cancelled, they have been blacklisted, and as per legal requirements they would have to be deported as soon as they are fit to leave the quarantine centres.

According to a MHA statement, from January 1, about 2,100 foreigners visited India for Tablighi activities. Among those blacklisted are 360 foreigners linked to Tablighi who have already left India.

The 960 blacklisted foreigners who are in presently in India include four Americans, nine British, six Chinese, three French, 379 Indonesian, 110 Bangladeshi, 63 Myanmar, 77 Kyrgyz, 75 Malaysian, 65



At risk: People who attended the Delhi event being taken to a quarantine facility in Ahmedabad on Friday. ■PTI

Thai, 33 Sri Lankan, 12 Vietnamese and nine Saudi Arabian nationals.

Officers in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Police, however, insisted that the foreign workers will be arrested and sent to jail. The police in Delhi report directly to the MHA and Uttar Pradesh is ruled by the BJP. Uttar Pradesh Police has registered 35 cases in 15 districts under Section 14 of Foreigners Act against the foreign Tablighi members.

Common FIR

A senior Delhi Police officer told *The Hindu* that a common FIR has been registered regarding the congregation at Markaz (centre) in Delhi's Nizamuddin area in March and any future arrests will be made under it.

Police in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra — the States where the foreigners dispersed to from the Nizamuddin Markaz in March, have not registered any case so far. A senior police officer in M.P. said the police has located about 68 foreign Tablighis in and around Bhopal and they had been placed in a quarantine.

"If MHA has cancelled

their visa and they are in quarantine then we cannot register any case against them. Due to the ongoing lockdown they have not committed any crime. The legal process is to deport them as soon as they leave the quarantine after all medical check ups," said the officer.

Shifted to hospital

A Tamil Nadu police officer said 125 foreigners traced in the State have been quarantined in mosques and a few who showed symptoms have been shifted to hospitals. "They will be served 'leave India notice' after they come out of the quarantine; maybe cases can be registered against those who provide them logistic help," he added.

Former Uttar Pradesh DGP Prakash Singh said if their visas are cancelled then they should be deported as soon as possible.

"Government should give priority in deporting them and getting rid of them....registering a case means that trial might go on for years. It is essentially for public consumption that government is taking harsh measures," Mr. Singh said.

Six more CISF men at Mumbai airport test positive

The total number of infected personnel has gone up to 11; 147 inmates of Panvel camp isolated

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NAVI MUMBAI**

Six more men of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), posted at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai, tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday, taking the total number of infected personnel to 11.

A total of 147 personnel

who shared the Panvel camp with these men have been isolated, and the entire Kalamoli camp has been sanitised. "The first CISF person to test positive has since recovered and his tests have come negative," CISF spokesperson Hemendra Singh said. The 11 personnel were in a stable condition.

Panvel Municipal Corpo-

ration (PMC) Commissioner Ganesh Deshmukh said that after five CISF personnel were found to be positive on Wednesday, 147 of the remaining personnel at the Kalamoli camp were isolated at MGM Hospital.

"Of the 146 tested, six were found to be positive and the remaining negative, making a total of 11 CISF em-

ployees positive. Of the 11 positive, 10 are staff and one is a helper. It is suspected that they had contracted the virus during an air-lifting operation. Their routine included going to work from the Kalamoli camp to the Mumbai airport and back to the camp. Hence, we do not see any other possibility of contracting the virus. The

CISF camp has been sealed and sanitised by us," Mr. Deshmukh said.

Konkan Divisional Commissioner Shivaji Daund said the staff at MGM Hospital would continue to be quarantined there. "Two wings in the hospital have been dedicated to the CISF staff who have been quarantined there," he said.

NSA invoked against four Indore residents

Case relates to attack on health workers

**STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL**

The Indore district administration in Madhya Pradesh on Thursday invoked the National Security Act, 1980, against four persons accused of instigating residents of a locality to throw stones at health workers on Wednesday.

"We have arrested 13 of the accused. The Act has been invoked against four of them," Vivek Sharma, Inspector-General of the Police, Indore Zone, told *The Hindu*.

Pelted with stones

A team of health workers, revenue officials, anganwadi workers, municipal officials and policemen were visiting the Tatpatti Bakhal area of the city to trace the contacts of a COVID-19 patient when they were pelted with stones, said a note issued by

the Collectorate.

The administration invoked Section 3(2) of the Act and passed an order to move the four accused to the Central Jail, Rewa.

"Such persons are not humans, they are enemies of humanity. Attack on paramedical staff and doctors, who are risking their lives to save people's lives, will not be tolerated," Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said.

On Wednesday, a case was filed against unidentified persons under Sections 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 336 (Act endangering life or safety of others), 145 (Joining or continuing in unlawful assembly, knowing it has been commanded to disperse) and 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code.

SC issues notice to govt. on plea for free testing

Petition challenges price cap

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the government to respond to a petition seeking free COVID-19 testing facility at all laboratories, including private ones.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao issued notice on a plea by Delhi resident Shashank Deo Sudhi, who challenged the legality of a March 17 advisory that caps the price for testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus at ₹4,500 in private labs and hospitals.

Mr. Sudhi has argued that the advisory was both discriminatory and a violation of the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"It is extremely difficult for the common citizen to get himself/herself tested in the government hospital/labs and [there] being no al-

ternative in sight, the people are constrained to pay the capped amount to the private hospital/labs for protecting their lives," the petitioner contended.

"The respondents are completely insensitive and indifferent to the plight of the common citizens of the country who are already financially burdened on account of [being] completely locked down with no possibility of "the lockdown being lifted in the near future, he added.

In the alternative, the petitioner asked the court to direct the government to "ramp up the testing facilities at the earliest, given the escalating mortality and morbidity rate across the country".

Mr. Sudhi said ideally the tests should be conducted under NABL-accredited pathological laboratories.

Plea seeks minimum wages for migrant workers

SC expresses concern over their plight, asks Centre to respond by April 7

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court has expressed concern over the plight of migrant workers, especially in the unorganised sector, during the lockdown and asked the Union government to respond by April 7 to a petition demanding that Central and State governments pay them minimum wages.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, through videoconferencing, took a serious note of a petition filed by activists Harsh Mander and Anjali Bhardwaj, who said the declaration of the 21-day national lockdown without prior information "precipitated an unprecedented humanitarian crisis" for migrant workers, resulting in their mass exodus to their



Perilous state: Workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar staying at a workshop at Mazgaon. ■EMMANUEL YOGINI

home towns.

The petition said the Centre and the States should, either jointly or severally, take responsibility to pay migrant workers at least a week's wages for their sustenance.

The Bench took *suo motu* cognisance of a letter sent by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra highlighting the condition of hundreds of migrants stranded without jobs and essential items during the lockdown that started

from March 24. It is an attempt to enforce social distancing to prevent the infection from spreading among the general population.

Mass exodus

However, shortly after the lockdown declaration, a mass exodus of panicked migrant workers was witnessed. They were moving from the metros, where they had come for work, to their home towns. The government has maintained that the panic was caused by 'fake' news. The Disaster Management Act, 2005, mandates the Centre and the States to pay compensation to those who have suffered losses during a disaster. The law requires the government to prepare a national plan to combat the disaster.

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States get ₹11,092 crore for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday approved the release of ₹11,092 crore under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) to all the States to take measures for containment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funds were allocated to the States on the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission.

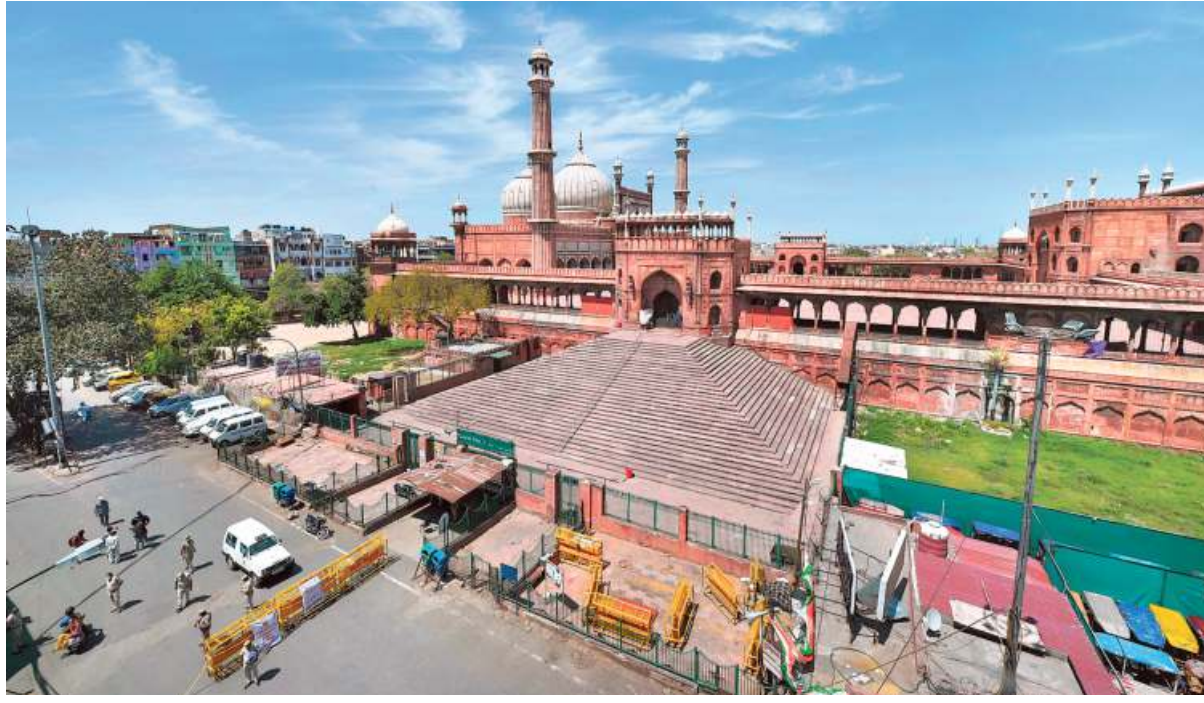
Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot suggested to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday that the Centre release ₹1 lakh crore to tackle the pandemic and the ramifications of the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video-conference with Chief Ministers, "the Central Government has released in advance its share of the first instalment of SDRMF for the year 2020-21, amounting to ₹11,092 crore, to augment funds available with the State governments," a statement by the MHA said.

Maharashtra which has reported the highest number of cases has been allocated ₹1611 crore. Kerala with a higher number of cases, however, has been allocated ₹157 crore, lower than most States, including Uttar Pradesh which gets ₹966 crore, Odisha ₹802 crore, Rajasthan ₹740 crore, Bihar ₹708 crore, Gujarat ₹662 crore and Madhya Pradesh ₹910 crore.

The SDRF is the primary fund available with the States to meet the expenditure of immediate relief to the victims of disasters.

All quiet



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look during Friday prayers amid a lockdown in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic in Delhi. —PTI

Slum dwellers struggle in Delhi

Without ration cards, many cannot avail govt. benefits like increased allocation

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Laxmi has been a widow for the last 40 years, but this is the closest she has come to despair. Three months ago, a cataract operation forced her to quit her job as a domestic worker. Now, the COVID-19 lockdown prevents her from getting any work. And without a ration card, her meagre pension of ₹2,000 per month leaves her flirting with starvation.

"I applied for a ration card more than a year ago and they gave me this parchi," says the 66-year old, showing a faded and much-folded piece of paper. "But they told me there is a quota for rations

in Delhi, so I cannot get on the ration list until someone else has dropped out."



The 66-year old lives in a tiny windowless room in Jagdamba Camp, a basti in south Delhi's Sheikh Sarai area. Her corrugated metal roof has failed to keep out the unseasonal rain, leaving her bed and the broken concrete floor damp and musty.

"I only have my daughter, who is also a widow with five children of her own to bring up, so I can't expect much from her. Sometimes, she gives me a few rotis," she says.

While the spotlight has been on the plight of migrant workers hit by the COVID-19 lockdown, there are lakhs of long time residents in Delhi's bastis and slum settlements who do not have ration cards either and cannot benefit from the government's promise of a free and increased ration allocation.

Jagdamba Camp has 2,000 registered voters, with a total population about triple that number. Cramped into tiny flats linked by narrow, twisting alleys, and sharing communal toilets, the residents are aware that any COVID-19 infection could sweep unchecked through the basti. Shanti Devi tries to keep

her three grandchildren indoors due to the fear of the virus. However, her son, the family's sole earner who gets about ₹300 per day as a labourer, has lost his livelihood due to the lockdown and the family has no ration card or pension. The family still has to pay ₹3,500 rent each month for their two-room home.

"We want to protect the children from this disease they are talking about, but what is the use if they die of hunger instead?" she asks.

The family cannot even apply for a ration card, as they do not have any residence proof or any identity documents.

Over 7,000 fishermen from A.P. stranded in Gujarat's Veraval

They are stuck in their boats anchored at the harbour

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

The countrywide lockdown forced by the COVID-19 pandemic has left thousands of migrant fishermen from Andhra Pradesh stranded at the Veraval fishing harbour in Gujarat, one of the country's largest.

"More than 7000 fishermen, mostly migrant labourers from Andhra Pradesh and a few hundred from villages in Saurashtra region are stranded at Veraval due to the lockdown," Ritesh Fofandi, a community leader and owner of Samudra Sea Foods company, told *The Hindu* from Veraval.

They are stuck in their boats that have been anchored at the harbour after they returned from deep sea fishing expeditions.

According to Mr. Fofandi, there are around 4500 fishing boats or trawlers at Veraval harbour on the Saurashtra coast. "Boat owners have made arrangements for their food, but the problem is that all of them have to live on



The fishermen had returned from deep sea fishing expeditions.

the boats as there are no other arrangements to shelter thousands of people," he said.

Around 10-12 workers live in a mid sized trawler, where social distancing is impossible to maintain. They do practically everything, from cooking and eating to bathing and sleeping, on the boat.

He said that these workers can only go home after train services resume. There is no other means of transportation as their villages are over 2000 km away.

When the government imposed the lockdown to contain the spread of Coronavirus epidemic, most of these workers would have been in mid seas. When they returned to the harbour, everything was shut.

"No fishing trips because of lockdown, as fish processing has stopped. Transportation has been affected, no ice is being produced to store the fish stock... the entire supply chain has been derailed," a leading marine food exporter from Overalltruly told *The Hindu*.

Normally, migrant fishermen return to their native places from May onwards and come back in August for the next fishing cycle. Fishing activities are not allowed during the monsoon.

Gujarat, as the country's largest seafood producer, draws thousands of migrants, called "Madrasis" locally, from Vizianagaram, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam to work on mechanised fishing trawlers from August to April every year.

Treat patients with compassion: Mamata

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

COVID-19 patients should be treated with care and compassion, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Friday. She urged doctors to provide a yeoman service to them.

The total number of coronavirus patients went up from 34 to 38 in the past 24 hours in the State.

Ms. Banerjee appealed to

people to come together and stamp out the virus. Officials were running into resistance while raising exclusive hospitals for COVID-19 patients. Hospitals were not too keen to treat these patients.

"Please do not do this. The job is to provide selfless service. Do we expect that the patients would not visit the hospitals?" she said.

"Even people are not letting [the authorities] cre-

mate the bodies of the coronavirus victims. I am told by experts that the deceased cannot carry the virus..." she said.

Ms. Banerjee said the government had opened 206 quarantine centres, where 5,165 persons had been admitted. While 3,218 were discharged, 1,892 were under treatment. The Health Department designated 59 hospitals for COVID-19 patients.

INTERVIEW | ROHIT KUMAR SINGH

'Ruthless containment' is key to controlling virus spread

'Despite the hardships, people have accepted our strict decisions, and are complying with the guidelines'

Rohit Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical & Health), steers the huge health workforce in Rajasthan, which is toiling round the clock to tackle COVID-19 and control the spread of the novel coronavirus. He discusses the strategies to deal with the situation in an interview to Mohammed Iqbal in Jaipur on Friday.

What are the special steps the Medical & Health Department is taking in Rajasthan to tackle COVID-19, which are different from other States?

"Ruthless containment", which we have adopted at the hotspots of infection, is the key to controlling the spread of coronavirus. Despite the hardships, people have accepted our strict decisions, and are complying with the guidelines. You have to weigh what you want – people's comfort or spread of the disease. We also went to

all households in the affected areas for screening. For example, we touched 40 lakh people in the worst-affected Bhilwara district, while the figure for the entire State is 4.16 crore.

Did the screenings lead to identification of COVID-19-positive cases?

After going to every individual in Bhilwara district and asking them about symptoms, we identified 14,000 people who had influenza-like condition. We kept track of them and if anyone

showed the COVID-19 symptoms, along with a history of contact or travel, he or she was isolated. We have followed a very structured standard operating procedure.

What is the purpose of the 11-day-long "all down curfew", which has started in Bhilwara on Friday?

We wish to cover every person who might have been left out. The figure of recovery of COVID-19-positive people in Bhilwara is very encouraging. Of the 26 infected persons, 17 have recovered. The strategy is: Don't let the virus spread and treat the people who are already infected. The government is working on both fronts.

Will the random sampling also help prevent the



There were some instances of attacks on doctors because of the emotional and social issues involved

community spread?

Because of the nature of the disease, there might be the people hovering around in the sub-clinical stage. They may not be showing

symptoms, but they are carriers. The community sampling involves rapid test, instead of a diagnostic procedure. If there is a probability that someone is carrying the virus, we start isolating them and go for confirmation.

After Bhilwara, the Ramganj area in Jaipur has emerged as a major hotspot. How are you tackling the situation there?

Ramganj is our bigger worry now. The character of the area is different, as it is densely populated and has small and congested houses. People live there in close proximity, and it is not possible for them to maintain social distancing. We have been carrying out an intense contact tracing there since the

first case was detected and have asked the people to keep distance from the suspected cases. Only today, two bus-loads of people were sent to an isolation facility after being asked to live separately for some days until the disease settled down. The good news from Ramganj is that no COVID-19-positive person has come up in the 170 tests we conducted since Thursday.

Are Tablighi Jamaat members who have returned to their native places or travelled to different towns after the attending the Delhi event emerging as a greater risk?

Tablighi Jamaat members are, indeed, a big risk. The infection has emerged in the districts such as Dholpur,

Bharatpur, Churu and Tonk, which were earlier unaffected. Tonk is a big hotbed now, with 17 cases. But the saving grace is that they have been largely identified. We have persuaded them to give details about where they went and whom they met. Our attempt is to isolate them and test them.

Were there some instances of attacks on doctors and health workers who went to the affected areas in the State?

There were some instances because of the emotional and social issues involved in this entire scenario. But the situation has improved with the protection given by the police to the teams of the Medical and Health Department. I have received reports

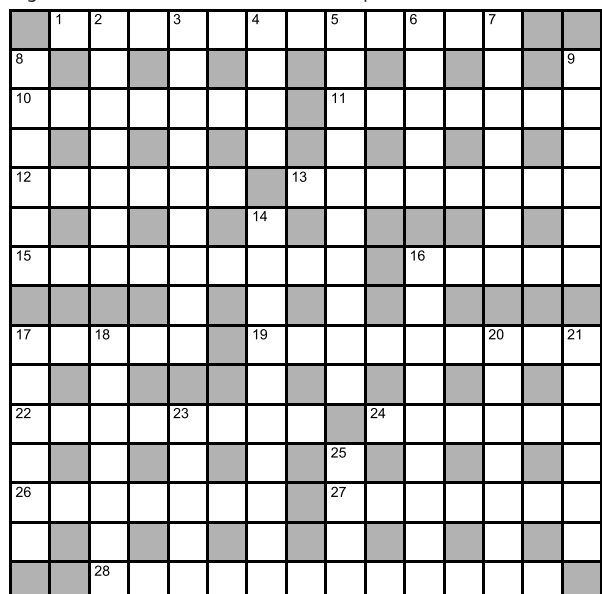
that the people gathered in large numbers to get screened at several places when they were convinced about the exercise.

Will the situation be under control in Rajasthan by the time the nationwide lockdown is lifted?

I believe the situation will come under control, unless an unforeseen incident like the Nizamuddin centre's infection takes place. Before the Tablighi Jamaat cases were detected, we were reasonably in control till April 1. But these cases will be controlled, as they are very defined and structured. We are handling the entire set of Tablighi Jamaat members, not just those who attended the Delhi event, to be on the safe side.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12901

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Vulcan)

15 Financial expert more positive after change of rate (9)

5 Tree part figure reproduced (10)

16 Try a flavour (5)

6 Top advocate in city (5)

17 With vacation starting off, knit (5)

7 Monroe, say, with a basically cool hairdo (7)

19 King's photo gets strong criticism (9)

8 Without leader, group making noise (6)

22 Leaves one woman after another (8)

9 Thrash horse in pen (6)

24 Simply occupied by training in public (6)

14 Pressure on an emperor to develop a particular empire (6,4)

26 Drink, breathe, drunk (4,3)

16 Ending anecdote with silence, say (9)

27 Free-range eggs consumed with aromatic herb (7)

17 A line about your old-fashioned dignitary (6)

28 Accomplishments native scheme brought about (12)

18 Country, not a large one (7)

20 Put an end to being jazzy – leaves out perhaps an ornament (7)

21 Old country with pricey, lonely housing (6)

3 Teens seen rioting in this state (9)

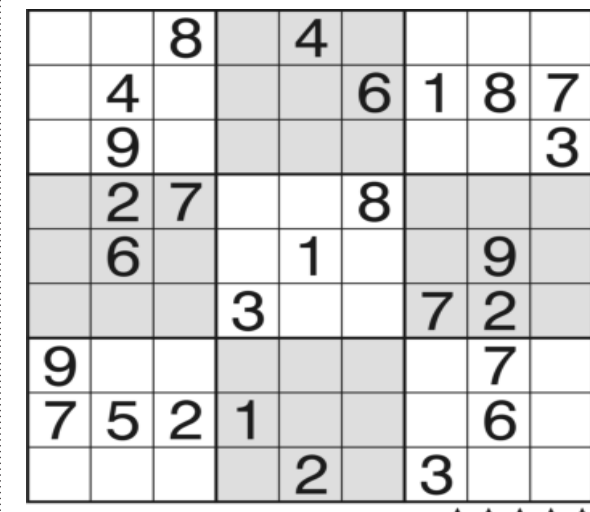
23 Suit and tie (5)

4 Do nothing during paid leave (4)

25 Finally completed an over (4)

- ACROSS
- 1 It is wavering in a frenzy state (4,8)
- 10 English club magazine (7)
- 11 She flies from Scandinavia to Romania (7)
- 12 Quarters in a vessel where dogs are kept (6)
- 13 Corrupt nationalist leader's government ending after 10 years (8)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12900

C	O	Y	O	T	E	R	E	A	S	O	N		
H	O	E	C	S	H	E							
B	E	A	U	S	H	O	R	T	B	R	E	A	
N	N	T	M	E	O	R							
E	N	I	G	M	A	P	R	E	S	U	M	E	
A	L	T	A	M	D	S							
K	I	L	L	D	E	E	R	S	P	I	E	T	Y
L	A	S	O	E	M	B	A	R	G	O	E	S	
B	H	S	E	F	I	N							
M	O	L	E	S	K	I	N	F	L	E	E	C	
U	S	I	T	I	L	O							
U	N	F	O	R	E	S	E	E	N	O	A	R	S
D	U	R	O	E	P	E							
S	E	T	O	S	E	A	D	D	E	R	S		

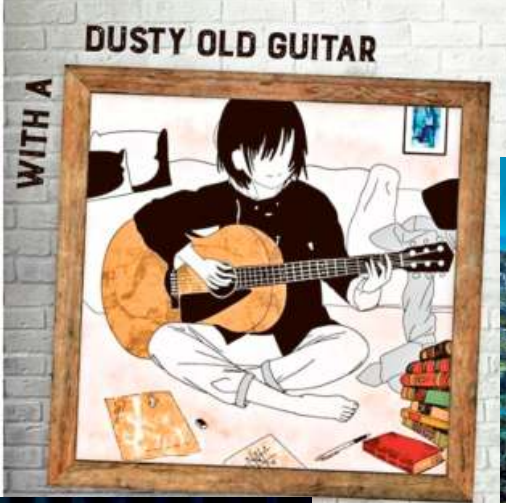
Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	6	7	9	2	3	8	5	1
3	1	9	8	5	7	6	4	2
2	8	5	1	4	6	9	7	3
1	4	2	7	6	8	5	3	9
7	9	3	5	1	4	2	6	8
8	5	6	2	3	9	4	1	7
9	2	4	6	7	1	3	8	5
6	7	8	3	9	5	1	2	4
5	3	1	4	8	2	7	9	6

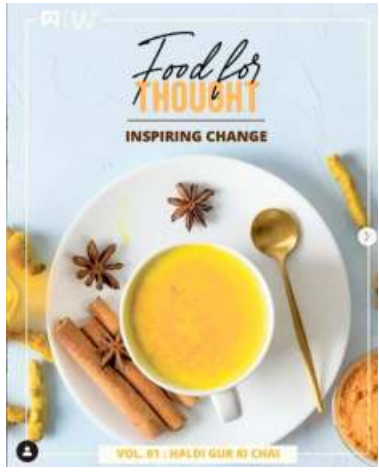
To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code



Getting creative on social media is likely the best way for brands to stay engaged... without taking advantage of the situation



Doing it right?
(Clockwise from left) Maldives Tourism's campaign; Ben Clymer of Hodinkee; hand sanitiser manufactured by Goa Brewing Co; ITC Group's message of hope; and a poster from the Kati Patang brewery Instagram page. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Coronavirus: not a marketing HOOK

MAGANDEEP SINGH

Recently, while cruising the world on my hand held from the comfort of my wingback, I was almost thrown right off it! I had just read that Patek Philippe, the holy grail of the watch world, would be selling online. In the larger scheme, I know the internet hasn't been around too long.

But for an industry (and certain brands) that has long outlived and survived the French revolution, two World Wars and a Great Depression, the fact that the most coveted of manufactures in the field would be succumbing to the clime of the times and acquiescing to online sales is a sign of just how bad things are.

For many watch collectors and even

for nifty businessfolk, if they weren't taking the COVID-19 threat seriously earlier, this has come as the undeniable reckoner.

Buying a Patek is not an off-hand purchase that you do while pottering about on your phone in the middle of the night like, say, some rubbish fitness belt or a home massage kit. It is an occasion, one that is marked by many a praise that the store folk will shower on you for your fine taste (and fat wallet) and oft accompanied by a bottle of sparkler going pop somewhere in the background. To simply make a PayPal transaction to acquire such a celebrated timepiece, you'd have to be stinking rich and absolutely spartan at the same time.

But they aren't the only ones. Rolex,

people are now debating, might joint the fray. Hodinkee, the online portal and marketplace for luxury watches, is hiring people who may have lost jobs in the real space, providing online space for brands to sell their wares, as also putting the works of various writers in the spotlight, all in a bid to 'keep things moving along'. There are discounts but there is also a contribution from all sales towards funds to fight against coronavirus.

Many other brands are already gearing up to reach their consumers in unprecedented ways. Luxury always has it tough because when budgets get tightened, the first thing to go is spending power and the list of wants gets relegated. I may desire to own a flashy watch or a pen, but right now I need to

ensure that I have medical emergency funds ready for the days ahead - and we're unsure of the duration of this beast. Indulgences therefore need to be monitored.

Time to build brands

In the last month, two great international watch events got canned, the Olympics stands postponed, the fashion seasons have been derailed, even Apple and Google are debating when and how to launch their next models. The virus has certainly hit us where it hurts worst and in a manner that no one predicted. Since no business or industry can afford to be blasé about the state of things, this is where brand building comes in. Even if it doesn't have the ring of a Gabriel Garcia Mar-

quez novel, the indomitable human spirit will find ways to conjure up marketing in the time of COVID-19, because inasmuch as this pandemic is bad for sales and profits, in the long run, it is a great time to earn some brand cred through socially woke campaigns.

The time, thus, is rife for creating equity through contributions to noble causes - from liquor brands manufacturing sanitisers (Diageo, Goa Brewing and Paul John are doing it) to cooking meals for the stranded (ITC hotels and Cafe Lota come to mind), from making online courses free or discounting them heavily (BarSmart, Fondation de Haute Horlogerie), to creating virtual classrooms for everything from guitar lessons to fitness sessions. Even a sector like travel is finding ways to connect. Portuguese tourism is pushing on with their #CantSkipHope campaign (to replace #CantSkipPortugal) and Maldives has #VisitMaldivesLater. Alcohol brands, notwithstanding the non-availability of their product, which does put a damper on everybody's never-ending weekend, are using this time to generate traction - like the #AloneTogether posts on the pages of brews like Beeyoung and Kati Patang. Bira91 went a step further and managed to send out 'Stay-home' hampers just before the lockdown was enforced.

The escape route

Meanwhile, most online stores - from sneakers to luxury goods - are offering huge discounts to keep buyers spending. The marketing messages have been one constant emphatic barrage. And there are other more generic trends, which will surely get picked up by brands to cash in on, from Dalgona coffee to

home recipes from famous chefs, or working into a fitness routine (where Mynta will advise you what to buy, from a yoga mat to noise-isolating headphones).

The online space and all its apps have never had a more captive audience. Online engagements are fine-tuning themselves to become the chasm of escape, to give someone a chance to virtually get away momentarily and distract themselves from the ennui of their immediate confines, to be able to live and think freely even when the walls are closing in. Zoom, the video-conferencing app, has seen more downloads in a month than TikTok and WhatsApp will, combined!

Of course, money certainly makes the whole episode easier and it is a position of privilege to be able to even contemplate all such 'getaways'. For example, Ethos watches has announced one of the most tempting online sales ever with discounts as high

as 50% on some very exquisite and rare timepieces. They have managed to reach me through personal calls, messages, emails, and even online adverts. They know their target client and they understand the urgency of the moment. And inasmuch as I know a fabulous deal when I see one, I also know that I shouldn't (and can't) splurge right at this moment, but I am enjoying the warm gratitude that at least I am in a position to be tortured with such ephemeral first world issues rather than anything that's remotely immediate and threatening.

In the meantime, brands have little else to do but sit and wait this pandemic out, a curious case where our helplessness and inaction are the most effective tools in combatting this menace, even as it sends the economy and society into free fall.



Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss. The event preview and calendar will resume in a few weeks.



Kid lit central

The wizarding world is as active as ever during the lockdown, albeit with online activities. **Harry Potter at Home**, a new hub on the official website, is aimed at first-time readers, and features quizzes, puzzles and more. For Potterheads of all ages. On wizardsworld.com. Popular children's author **David Walliams** (*The Boy in the Dress* and *Gangsta Granny*), will be sharing an audio story a day for the next 30 days from his best-selling *The World's Worst Children* short story collections. At worldofdavidwalliams.com/elevenses.



Happiness and learning

What do we think will make us happy? Yale University's most popular course, **The Science of Well-Being**, is now available online for free. In these anxious times, it will engage you in a series of challenges designed to increase your own happiness and build more productive habits. On coursera.org. For the IT executives, software giant **Oracle** is now offering free access to its online courses and cloud certification. Topics covered include cloud infrastructure and autonomous databases. Available till May 15 on oracle.com.



The VR life

Discover the most magical place on Earth, from the comfort of your couch. Head to YouTube for a treasure trove of 360-degree and **virtual reality rides**. Get off Splash Mountain without a drop of water on you. Ride the most expensive roller coaster for free. And if the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror gets too scary, simply close your eyes. If you are missing the great outdoors, check out **Everest VR**, which gives you a series of first-person challenges to reach the top of the world. VR headset required. Details: solfar.com/everest-vr



Music from the couch

The iHeart Concert, hosted by Elton John earlier this week, had a star-studded list of celebrity musicians including Billie Eilish, Shawn Mendes and Lizzo. But it was the **Backstreet Boys** who went viral with their performance of the hit song, 'I want it that way'. In other music news, Michael C Hall, who played Dexter Morgan in the TV series, **Dexter**, is now fronting an indie rock band called **The Princess Goes to the Butterfly Museum**. Their first single, 'Come Talk To Me', and their debut EP are now available on all music streaming platforms.



Movie nights

There has never been a better time to watch movies - **Parasite** is now on Amazon Prime Video, while **The Platform** on Netflix is getting rave reviews. The American Film Institute has launched the **AFI Movie Club**, a daily virtual gathering, which kicked off with a video from director Steven Spielberg. Each day, AFI will choose an iconic movie for the world to watch together. So far, the list has featured *The Wizard of Oz* and *Moulin Rouge*, among others. You can also work your way down their **100 Years, 100 Movies** list at your own pace.



Art rules

Bengaluru-based creative event space, **Bloom and Grow**, has moved their roster of events online. Join them for yoga sessions, DIY crafts and more, via Zoom. Details are updated on their Facebook page. For more information and the schedule, send a WhatsApp message to 7259280949. **RainbowFish Studio** from Chennai is offering new courses starting every Monday for a variety of age groups. At ₹3,000 per child. Details and registration on rainbowfishstudio.com. 9952018542



Weekend goes live

The Hindu Weekend is hosting a series of live, interactive sessions on our Instagram handle. Today at 11 am, we will host filmmaker, fashion designer, poet and artist **Muzaffar Ali**. The 75-year-old will talk about finding hope in art, design and creativity during these trying times. At 9 pm, columnist **Vasudha Rai** will conduct a white light meditation and yoga nidra - with schedules going haywire and insomnia a common complaint, she will address ways to get a good night's sleep. @thehinduweekend



The South Bank Show: JG Ballard (YouTube)

JG Ballard (1930-2009) was one of the finest and most prescient writers of speculative fiction. In brilliant novels like *High-Rise*, *Crash* and *The Drowned World*, Ballard seemed to anticipate the pitfalls of techno-capitalist excesses around the world. In a 40-minute 2006 episode of *The South Bank Show* (a regular art and culture show on iTV), Ballard is extensively interviewed about his themes and influences, as well his prognosis for some of the most complicated problems of the 21st century. This really is a must-watch for all science fiction fans (added bonus being Ballard reading some of his best lines in his sonorous voice).

Gore Vidal: The United States of Amnesia (Netflix India)

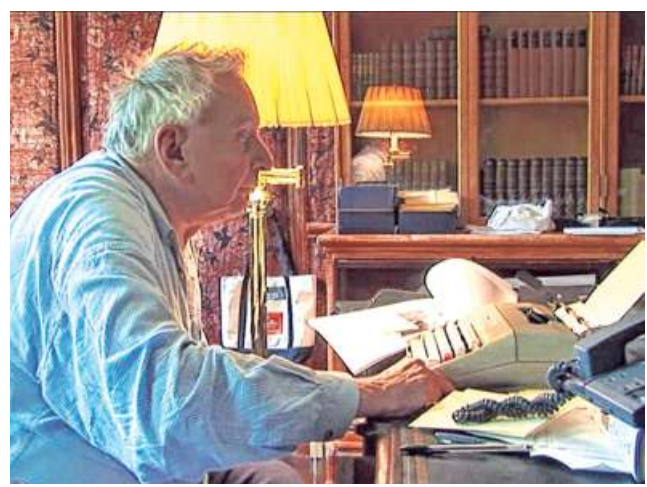
Gore Vidal (1925-2012) was nothing if not controversial - indeed, he was downright offensive, misogynistic and tone-deaf towards the end of his life, like the time he called the 13-year-old girl raped by Roman Polanski "a young [prostitute] who got upset". He was also, as it so happens, an accomplished writer of both fiction and non-fiction. In his seven-part *Narratives of Empire* novel series (1968-2000), for example, Vidal gives us a sweeping, large-scale indictment of America's militaristic ways. In *The United States of Amnesia* (2013), a candid Vidal talks about the highs and lows of his six-decade-long career (including fun sideshows like the time he acted in a Fellini movie, and much later, played a science fiction villain in the Hollywood film *Gattaca*, alongside Uma Thurman).

Love books, biopics and real footage? Here are five documentaries to watch now

Literary icons on FILM

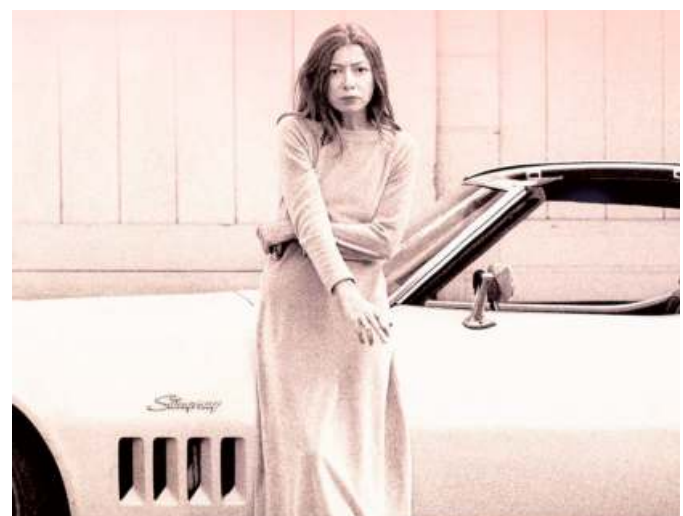
ADITYA MANI JHA

After a friend and I watched *Manto* on the large screen a couple of years ago, we were talking about how literary documentaries were difficult to come by in India. Now, thanks to Netflix and company, this has changed significantly. Given the current lockdown, here are five literary documentaries you can watch online.



Joan Didion: The Centre Will Not Hold (Netflix India)

Joan Didion (*Play It As It Lies*, *The Year of Magical Thinking*) was among a bunch of American writers in the 70s who made significant stylistic breakthroughs in journalism and book-length non-fiction, often employing novelistic techniques. The resultant 'New Journalism' remains an influential style with longform specialists. Didion has written some very moving books about her own family life, so it's fitting that *The Centre Will Not Hold* was made by her nephew, the actor Griffin Dunne. It is fascinating to see the now 85-year-old Didion talk about her salad days, covering California micro-cultures in the late 60s and early 70s, the stuff of novels like *Inherent Vice*.



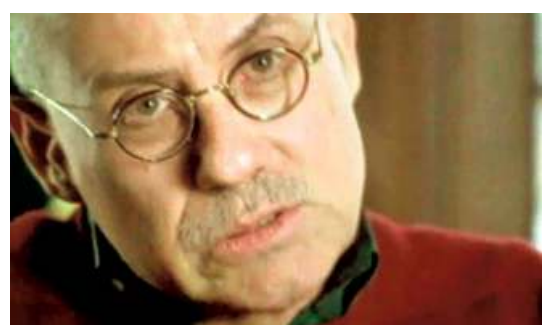
Ted Hughes: Force of Nature (YouTube)

This 1998 BBC documentary was released a few months after Hughes, one of the best-known British poets of all time, died. Its chief strength is the line-up of writers, editors and poets who talk about Hughes throughout the film - Al Alvarez, John Carey, Simon Armitage and so on. Fair warning: in the best British stiff upper lip tradition, it tries to downplay Hughes' cheating, philandering, emotionally abusive ways during his marriage with the American poet Sylvia Plath.



James Ellroy: Feast of Death (YouTube)

The celebrated author of *The Black Dahlia*, *LA Confidential* and dozens of other blockbuster crime novels opens up in this (surprisingly) thrill-a-minute 2001 documentary, structured like one of Ellroy's whodunits. At the heart of many of his novels lay the decades-old, unsolved murder of Ellroy's own mother. From this starting point, the film explores several aspects of the creative process, in particular how one fictionalises real-world experiences, especially traumatic ones (without sacrificing one's mental health).



Diets in times of disequilibrium

As food prices rise, and the supply of produce is controlled, we must find a way of eating, mindful of the context and our own privilege



SUNALINI MATHEW

For the first time in years we have been stirred by images of migrant workers attempting to cross borders within our country, hungry and powerless. Perhaps it is because we have finally had the time to feel. In our comfortable homes, we have experienced empathy, some guilt, a great deal of thankfulness, and a sense of responsibility in the way we procure food and eat. We are finally measuring our lives in coffee spoons – not a bad thing in times like these.

“It is a good time to reflect on what we are eating,” says Manjari Chandra, a functional nutritionist in Delhi. She talks of minimalism when it comes to food, looking at fasting (for 14 to 16 hours) instead of feasting, and building responsible food practices like stopping before we are full or cutting down the number of meals we have in a day. Here is how you can buy and eat more mindfully – taking into account our own nutrition, the health of our community, and our environment, because in the end, everything is connected.

Building immunity

Your only innate guard is immunity, and because we have a long way to go, it is best to try and get this strengthened, says Chandra. It is not like popping a pill though – a couple of bone broths and salads may not imme-

Try to include



diately get you a more robust immune system. “Look at it as working on the terrain.” She means when every part of the body is strengthened, and all your systems are working like they should, it is likely you will have good immunity.

“The immunity function lies in the gut, so those who have constipation, acidity, or any other gut malfunction,

could strengthen it with vitamins (especially vitamin C) and minerals (zinc, magnesium, selenium),” adds Chandra. Again, people who are immune-compromised are those who have hormonal imbalances, endocrine-related disorders like diabetes, and autoimmune conditions. It is important to know that everyone can gradually build immunity.

Onion, ginger, garlic, *tulsi*, pomegranate, and eucalyptus are all anti-viral foods that can reduce the chance of you contracting a viral infection. However, there are no definitive studies on how much of each is good to consume. It is safe to put these in the traditional foods we eat. Star anise can be had in a tea with mint: it has shikimic acid that is used in the medicine Tamiflu to treat the H1N1 virus. Black pepper, asafoetida, and carom (*ajwain/oman*) are also helpful.

Cutting inflammation

Internal inflammation makes you susceptible to disease. Highly processed foods, and a diet rich in refined oils, high carbohydrate, high protein, and simple sugars cause inflammation. Cut down on sucrose-rich fruits that cause insulin spikes.

Dietician Sheela Krishnaswamy says we need to use this time as an opportunity to eat healthy. “Cooking fresh, not ordering in, and not buying processed-packaged food are valuable practices we can take into the days ahead.”

In Goa, where she is based, and fruits are a currently a rarity, (while vegetables are not regularly supplied in the market), she says it is possible to work with what is at home – cereals

Keep in check



and *dals*, changing these up if possible, millets-*dal*, brown-rice-*dal*, wholewheat-*dal*. These give the macronutrients and some micronutrients.

She says it is a good idea to add ghee and/or coconut oil and simple spices and herbs to the food for antioxidant protection. If you can set some curd at home, nothing like it, for beneficial bacteria. The availability of minerals and vitamins in whole sprouted grains, like ragi, green gram, *chana*, goes up and their digestibility increases as starch is partially broken down.

Time to innovate

It is also a time to look around the house and consume all the little bottles of ingredients that we have put on the backshelf. Finish the raw peanuts and the leftover nuts and seeds – do soak them overnight to get rid of the anti-nutrients, which are plant compounds like phytates that reduce the absorption of minerals. And while you are drinking *manjula*, have it with milk – it needs a fat medium to be better absorbed, says Lovneet Batra, a sports nutritionist in Delhi.

FILM REVIEWS

A Tokyo zombie flick done right

The living dead come alive in *One Cut of the Dead*, a Japanese film with rare zest and fun

NAMRATA JOSHI

The real and reel come together fortuitously in Shinichi Ueda's Japanese zombie comedy, *One Cut of the Dead*. The little known film, made at almost zero budget, with a relatively unheard of cast and crew, went on to become a blockbuster in its own right. The ingenuity of the cult hit of 2018, is in how cleverly self-referential it is.

It is about the goings-on at the shoot of a low budget zombie film in an abandoned water filtration plant. The film revels in its own home video feel but also doffs its hat to the grungy aesthetics of film that it's about – a perennially on-the-move camera – among the many improvisations on the set. *One Cut of the Dead* demystifies cinema to a great humorous and humane effect. Freaks, undead corpses, butchering, blood, gore, screams and shouts – all the conventions of a zombie film



On set A scene from the Japanese flick •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

One Cut of the Dead

DIRECTOR: Shinichi Ueda
CAST: Takayuki Hamatsu, Yuzuki Akiyama, Harumi Shuhama, Shinichi Osawa
STORYLINE: A ragtag but resourceful film crew shooting a zombie film in an abandoned water filtration plant is hit by zombies.

are there. But with a twist. Of course there's a 37-minute single-take opening shot. But the biggest strength is the eccentric but likeable characters.

The perfectionist director who, despite the limitation of resources, wants the 43rd take to get the “real fear”

and “true shiver” out of his actress. And the emotional side-story of him and his daughter, the one who truly believes in him and is a true inheritor of his filmmaking legacy.

Telling readers, anything more would be giving the film away. Suffice to say that the chills, thrills, laughter, and cries make the film just what the doctor has ordered to fight the moody blues in the COVID-19 times. But this is also a film whose joy has to be shared in the best of company. If only you could have a viewing party.

One Cut of the Dead is currently streaming on Mubi India

Meditative mysteries

Tales from the Loop, Amazon's new series, is like a string of poetic puzzles

NAMRATA JOSHI

With my limited knowledge of the world of arts, before embarking on the new Amazon series, I had to educate myself on Swedish artist Simon Stalenhag's phantasmagoric works. The characteristic juxtaposition of giant robots, massive machines, mammoth structures and humongous flying saucers against an everyday landscape – cars careening on expressways, kids playing in the field or walking in the meadow with their parents. Stalenhag's work is exquisite, intriguing and enigmatic, a combination of the real and the surreal that enchants even as it confounds.

In that sense the three episodes of *Tales from the Loop* that one got to preview can also best be described as poetic puzzles. The beautifully shot series approximates Stalenhag's visuality. The retro-futuristic scenery is omnipresent in each of the episodes even as human, emotional tales play out at the core. The bizarre backdrop itself may have a remote, distancing effect but the people, their relationships, dilemmas, and feelings are relatable and universal.

Based on Simon Stalenhag's narrative book by the same name, the series is an



Retro-futuristic scenery *Tales from the Loop* is a visual delight •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

assortment of stories involving townspeople (Sweden re-located to small town America) living above the “Loop”, a machine that is supposed to unlock and explain the mysteries of the universe.

The episodes I saw were all to do with reconciliation and underlined with melancholia and also a hope for continuities. The first, about abandonment and coming to terms with it, has young Lorettta (Abby Ryder Fortson) wondering about the nature of her mother's work in the Loop and going on a search herself. One that makes her realise that people and things disappear and get lost and one has to give oneself time to heal from loss. Episode four, has another kid Cole (Duncan Joiner) understanding the meaning of life and death, of the unfairness

of sudden absences of people, all through a mysterious structure called Echo Sphere. And episode six, a new take on an age-old doppelgänger tale, has the security person at the Loop, Gaddis (Ato Essandoh) coming to terms with his own unresolved loneliness and craving for irrational love and fulfillment, by landing into an unknown parallel world. Will this new plane of existence be the answer? Will it lead him to the start of something new?

Like all good sci-fi it's the human aspect that makes an impact, but plenty of the elements of technological fantasy feel more facile than profound. The scientific design and human drama feels at a disjunct at points.

The open-endedness makes science feel almost

spiritual and haunting at points and at others annoyingly inane. The element of the unknown have a touch of *The Twilight Zone* but I thought the eeriness lingered there more chillingly, or perhaps I am another generation of viewer altogether.

The cast is led by the ever-dependable Jonathan Pryce, as the force behind the Loop, an actor who cannot put a wrong foot forward, but it's the two children – Fortson and Joiner – and Essandoh who steal the show.

The narrative moves slowly, and at points the stillness gets immovable. It's an aspect that you feel more intently in these socially distanced days when time seems to be stuck. The calmness, however, is that it also makes you notice the tiniest of details. The poster of

Tales from the Loop

DIRECTORS: Jodie Foster, So Yong Kim, Charlie McDowell, Tim Mielants, Mark Romanek, Andrew Stanton, Dearbhla Walsh, Ti West

CAST: Jonathan Pryce, Rebecca Hall, Paul Schneider, Duncan Joiner, Ato Essandoh, Abby Ryder Fortson

STORYLINE: Based on Simon Stalenhag's narrative book by the same name, the series is an assortment of stories involving people in a small town living above the “Loop”, a machine that is supposed to unlock and explain the mysteries of the universe

Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman's *Summer With Monika* in the local cinema, in the first episode for instance. A nod to flighty women as well as the series' Swedish origins? But how would the film have got released there is still perplexing me.

On a more serious note, the contemplative mood will either make you feel more invested in the stories or may just make you want to get off the ride even as *The Tales from the Loop* tries hard to balance between the bleak and the beautiful.

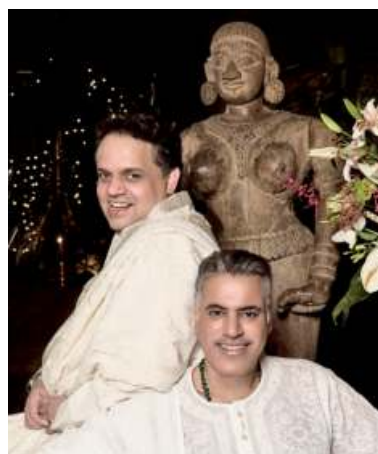
The Tales from the Loop is now streaming on Amazon Prime

India gets its fashion rescue fund

The country's leading fashion bodies come together to help emerging designers during the tough times ahead

SUJATA ASSOMULL

In India, where the textile industry is the second largest employer, the health of the fashion industry is critical to the country's welfare. Earlier this week, Dastkar (a society for crafts and craftspeople) re-opened its Artisan Support Fund. Crafts are a part of India's aesthetic and culture, said chairperson Laila Tyabji in her letter to the media, adding that they are also a vital part of our economy. Her fund will help craftspeople who are home-bound and without markets, buyers or orders. Last week, she had spoken out on how this community is the most vulnerable during lockdown and will continue to be so after the pandemic subsides. Sandeep Khosla of



Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla

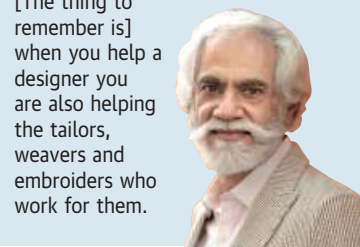
prominent label Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla (AJSK), known for reviving crafts such as *chikankari*, had agreed with her but also pointed out, “If we go bust as designers, we lose the ability to be employers and safeguard our workforce.”

AJSK are paying full salaries to staff despite the lockdown and hope to be able to do this for as long as they can. But what about the ₹1.7 lakh crore Gareeb Kalyan Yojana announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 26, to help the poor tide over the coronavirus lockdown? Fashion designer Tarun Tahilliani says that it is, “...a series of paltry measures that don't address industry and job creation. Collateral-free loans mean there is no security and may

3Qs: FDCI president Sunil Sethi

How large is the fund?

As of now, it is just seed money; it is too early to talk figures. All the money till date has come voluntarily from FDCI board members, including me. Every industry has to help itself now. We have not asked for contributions because we don't believe this is the right time. It is hard to know whether it can be covered as a CSR activity [for corporates] or under the 80G certification [that makes the donor eligible for tax benefits]. Figuring these things out takes time and the lockdown is not making it simple. **How do you plan to disburse the money?** The application process has not started yet. The designers will have a clearer picture of what they need after March 31 [the closing of the year]. **How do you feel the fraternity will benefit?** It is going to be tough times ahead. [The thing to remember is] when you help a designer you are also helping the tailors, weavers and embroiders who work for them.



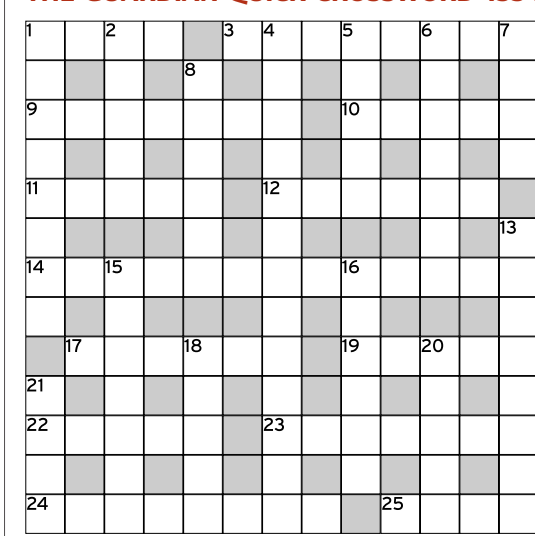
add to bad debts. And EPF is a minimal thing. Frankly, it sounds better than it is.” While a few labels are encouraging pre-orders to ostensibly help their artisans earn and stay occupied at their homes, the situation is grim. “With no cash inflow in the markets, buying will be hugely hurt, especially in this niche segment,” observes Sunil Sethi, president of the industry's apex body, The Fashion and Design Council of India.

Fund for emerging designers

The FDCI announced the COVID-19 Support Fund (CSF by FDCI) to “provide financial assistance to small businesses and young designers in need”. According to Sethi, the fund is “a relief fund for greenhorns who most likely will be struggling with production and loss of revenue as they don't possess a consortium of funds”. It is supported by the who's who of the industry, the latest being the L Lakme Fashion Week. “Currently, it means that there is no intent to...have multiple similar actions in the industry,” says Jaspreet Chandok, Head of lifestyle business, IMG Reliance that jointly organises LFW with Lakme. The differences between the rival bodies are well documented. “It is a time for unity.... As the structure of the fund and the usage of it is finalised and shared, we will contribute as well,” Chandok concludes.

The writer is a former editor, luxury consultant and author

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13341

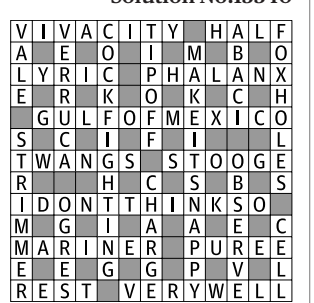


- Across**
1 Battered (4)
3 Power-driven cutting tool (8)
9 Large square-rigged sailing ship (7)
10 Above average in size (5)
11 Averages (5)
12 Talk endlessly about nothing (6)
14 Acid fruit, used for making marmalade (7,6)
17 Representative object (6)
19 Broom made with twigs (5)
22 I'm away (in France?) (5)
23 Supporter of socialism (7)
24 Children up to the age of 13 (3-5)
25 Murder (4)
Down
1 One with a partner too many (8)
2 Latin American dance (5)
4 Large smooth fruit with



- sweet greenish flesh (8,5)
5 Small area surrounded by water (5)
6 Doctor with cutting tools (7)
7 Troubles (4)
8 Container (6)
13 Maths of lines, curves and shapes (8)
15 Body that rises at night to drink the blood of the living (7)
16 Snub (6)
18 Insect – nasty character, undeserving of respect (5)
20 Fire lighter (5)
21 Swindle (4)

The solution will appear on April 6, 2020
Solution No.13340



U.S. reports record 1,169 virus fatalities

Worldwide, confirmed new coronavirus infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 54,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

The U.S. recorded 1,169 COVID-19 fatalities in the past 24 hours, the Johns Hopkins University tracker showed on Thursday, the highest one-day death toll recorded in any country since the global pandemic began.

The toll reflected figures reported by the university between 8:30 p.m. local time on Wednesday and the same time on Thursday. The grim record was previously held by Italy, where 969 people died on March 27.

The U.S. has now recorded 6,069 coronavirus deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Globally, Italy has the highest total death toll, with 13,915 dying of the disease there, followed by Spain at 10,003.

The U.S. also recorded more than 30,000 new cases of COVID-19 in the same 24-hour period, bringing the total number of officially reported cases in the country to more than 2,43,000, according to Johns Hopkins.

The outbreak has snapped the U.S. record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years, while U.S. and European medical workers struggling to save ailing patients on Friday watched supplies of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines dwindle by the hour.

Swift end

Jobs numbers released in the U.S. showed the virus dealt a swift end to the nation's 50-year-long unemployment rate, with employers reporting hundreds of thousands of job cuts in March.

The true picture, though, is far worse, because the government figures do not include the last two weeks, when nearly 10 million

thrown-out-of-work Americans applied for unemployment benefits.

Worldwide, confirmed infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 55,500, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Europe's three worst-hit countries – Italy, Spain and France – surpassed 30,000 dead, or over half of the global toll. From those countries, the view remained almost unrelentingly grim, a frightening portent for places like New York, the epicentre of the U.S. outbreak, where bodies are being loaded by forklift into refrigerated trucks outside overwhelmed hospitals.

Shortages of critical equipment led to fierce competition among buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere. A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to



find masks a "worldwide treasure hunt." Governor Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of ventilators in six days.

With infections spreading, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has asked the Pentagon for 1,00,000 more body bags.

In Florida, hundreds of passengers on a cruise ship where four people died were finally being allowed to disembark after a days-long stand-off. More than a dozen critically ill patients were taken to hospitals, while people healthy enough to travel were taken to the airport for chartered flights home.

One Spanish hospital turned its library into an intensive care unit. In France, space was set aside for bodies in a vast food market. The French prime minister



In short supply: Healthcare workers at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York demanding critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for personal safety and effective patient care. ■ REUTERS

Spain reports 900 deaths

REUTERS
MADRID

Spain's COVID-19 death toll rose to a total of 10,935 from 10,003 on the previous day, the Health Ministry said on Friday, but showed the first fall in a daily death toll since March 26. A total of 932 people died from the disease in 24 hours, down from 950 people in the previous daily toll, the figures showed. The number of cases rose to 1,17,710 on Friday up from 1,10,238 on Thursday, the Ministry added.

said he is "fighting hour by hour" to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive.

France cancelled its high-school exit exam known as the Baccalaureat, a first in the 212-year history of the test.

Some glimmers of hope emerged that Italy, as well as

'German curbs are working'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

Measures taken by German officials to slow the spread of the coronavirus are starting to show effect, Lothar Wiele, the president of Robert Koch Institute for disease control said on Friday. He stressed that restrictions on public life "need to be maintained." He explained that each person who had caught the virus was now infecting only one person on average, where previously that number had been as high as seven.

Spain and France might be flattening their infection curves and nearing or even passing their peaks in daily deaths.

Elsewhere in Europe, officials began talking tentatively about how to lift lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of strained health systems but also bat-

China releases \$56 bn to banks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China's central bank said on Friday it would cut the reserve requirements for smaller banks to release around 400 billion yuan (\$56.3 billion) in liquidity, a move to counter the COVID-19's impact on enterprises. The People's Bank of China said it will also slash the interest it pays on financial institutions' excess reserves to encourage them to use the cash rather than store it with the central bank.

tered economies.

Austria said it will set out a timetable next week for what could be "a slow start-up" of closed parts of the economy. The head of Germany's national disease control centre said he expects that any easing of the lockdown, which this week was extended to April 19, will be staggered.

Google publishes data on people's movements

Users travel information in 131 countries to aid health officials

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
PARIS

Alphabet Inc's Google has published charts showing how the coronavirus has brought hard-hit Italy to a standstill, led to runs on grocery stores around the world and prompted a stark drop in movement of people.

The analysis of location data from billions of Google users' phones is the largest public dataset available to help health authorities assess if people are abiding with government orders issued to rein in the virus.

The reports on users' movements in 131 countries will be made available on a special website and will "chart movement trends over time by geography", according to a post on one of Google's blogs.

Trends will display "a percentage point increase or decrease in visits" to locations like parks, shops, homes



In India, visits to retail and recreation locations dropped by 77%. ■ REUTERS

creation locations such as restaurants and movie theaters plunge 94%. The U.K. had declines of more than 80% while India, which went into a sudden 21-day lockdown on March 25, was also notable at 77%.

"We hope these reports will help support decisions about how to manage the COVID-19 pandemic," the Google execs said.

Like the detection of traffic jams or traffic measurement Google Maps, the new reports will use "aggregated, anonymised" data from users who have activated their location history.

'No identifiable data'

No "personally identifiable information," such as an individual's location, contacts or movements, will be made available, the post said.

The reports will also employ a statistical technique that adds "artificial noise" to raw data, making it harder for users to be identified.

and places of work, not "the absolute number of visits," said the post, signed by Jen Fitzpatrick, who leads Google Maps, and the company's chief health officer Karen DeSalvo.

For example, in France, visits to restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, museums or theme parks have plunged by 88% from their normal levels, the data showed.

Italy and Spain, two of the hardest-hit countries, both saw visits to retail and re-

Pak. mosques remain open as cases rise to nearly 2,500

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

Several mosques remained open on Friday across Pakistan and people offered prayers there despite a government ban on big congregational gatherings in order to curb the spread of SARS-CoV-19 that has killed 37 people and infected nearly 2,500 others in the country.

The Sindh government had announced curfew like restriction from 12 noon to 3

p.m. to stop people from visiting mosques, while the Punjab government had issued fatwa for people to offer prayer in their homes.

The mosques made an announcement urging people to pray at home, but some people defied the instruction and visited mosques, according to reports. Some clerics also encouraged people to attend prayers in mosques.

"The government and

police are making statements to create a sense of fear. Nothing will happen. Karachi is a city of 20 million, the government cannot implement its decision in every nook and cranny, the prayer leader of the Jamia Mosque Quba told *The Express Tribune*.

Majority of mosques in Karachi followed government orders. However, some continued to hold regular prayers.

IN BRIEF



Corona beer producer halts brewing

MEXICO CITY

The Mexican brewer of Corona beer said on Thursday it was suspending production because of the health emergency in the country over the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mexican government has ordered the suspension of all non-essential activities until April 30 to slow the spread of coronavirus. AFP

Israel arrests Palestinian official in east Jerusalem

JERUSALEM

Israeli police arrested the Palestinian minister for Jerusalem affairs on Friday for allegedly violating an Israeli ban on Palestinian political activities in east Jerusalem. Fadi al-Hidimi's office circulated surveillance camera footage showing police searching his home with dogs. AP

Democrats postpone convention

It will be held in mid-August, a week before the event to renominate Trump

REID J. EPSTEIN
KATIE GLUEC
WASHINGTON

The Democratic National Committee on Thursday postponed its presidential convention because of the COVID-19 outbreak, moving it from mid-July to mid-August, and making it the largest political event to be upended by the public health crisis sweeping the country.

The convention will still be held in Milwaukee, as planned, the week of August 17, officials said, a week before Republicans plan to gather in Charlotte, North Carolina, to renominate President Donald Trump. The adjacent dates mean that both parties will be using expert health data from the same time frame to assess the safety of bringing together thousands of people at one event – and, ultimately, deciding whether the benefit



Safety comes first: A file photo of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden at a campaign rally in Detroit. ■ AP

of staging the conventions outweighs the medical risks.

The timing sets the stage for a high-stakes test of wills and judgment over the next four months between Mr. Trump and former Vice-President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic nominee, as the public health crisis paralyses the country through the summer. Neither will want to be the first to cancel his convention.

The decision to postpone the Democratic convention was made over the previous two days, officials involved in the planning said, but the issue was amplified on Wednesday night by Mr. Biden, who called for rescheduling the convention during an appearance on "The Tonight Show."

Tom Perez, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said he did not

consider moving the event to September, after the Republicans', and was averse to conducting a virtual convention that would be less likely to attract hours of television coverage.

Safe convention

"We're going to hold a very exciting and safe convention in Wisconsin to highlight our nominee and to make sure that people know the values of the Democratic Party and what we're fighting for," he said in a telephone interview.

"There are things you can do online, but there is something about the communal spirit that is important and people feed off of," said David Axelrod, a senior official in Barack Obama's presidential campaigns. "From a TV standpoint it's hard to have the same impact if you're cobbling together a series of remotes." NY TIMES

President's family firm faces financial woes

It is seeking to delay loan repayments

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

U.S. President Donald Trump's family company is asking creditors such as Deutsche Bank if it can delay loan payments as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic deepens, *The New York Times* reported on Thursday.

The Trump Organization – the conglomerate of companies created by Mr. Trump and now run by his sons – is, like many others, losing money as the restrictions put in place to lessen the spread of the deadly COVID-19 bring the U.S. to a grinding halt.

The *NYT* said the company contacted Deutsche Bank, seen as the only major lender willing to do business with the company, at March-end for extension of some repayment deadlines. "These days, everybody is



Donald Trump

working together," Mr. Trump's son Eric, the Organization's executive vice-president, said.

The Trump Organization still owes Deutsche Bank several hundred million dollars, according to the *Times*. The group also contacted Palm Beach County to see if it could suspend rent payments on the Trump International Golf Club, a 27-hole course and clubhouse on more than 120 hectares.

Statue of Soviet Gen. removed in Prague

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PRAGUE

A district in the Czech capital, Prague, went on Friday ahead with a plan to remove the statue of a Soviet Second World War commander.

The Russian Embassy in Prague condemned the move, saying it sent a protest note to the Czech Foreign Ministry about the "demolition." General Ivan Stepanovic Konev led the Red Army forces that liberated Prague and large parts of Czechoslovakia from the Nazi occupation in 1945. His monument, unveiled in the Prague 6 district in 1980 when the country was occupied by Soviet troops, has been a source of controversy.

On Friday morning, a crane at the site lifted the statue from its place.

Cuban doctors fighting virus around world

Havana has deployed 593 doctors to at least 14 countries to fight the disease, despite U.S. opposition

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Labelling the doctors and nurses as both exploited workers and agents of communist indoctrination, the U.S. has notched a series of victories as Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia sent home thousands after leftist governments allied with Havana were replaced with ones friendlier to Washington.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a reversal of fortune for Cuban medical diplomacy, as doctors have flown off on new missions to battle COVID-19 in at least 14 countries, including Italy and the tiny principality of Andorra on the Spanish-French border, burnishing the island's international image in the middle of a global crisis.



Medical diplomacy: Cuban doctors and medical professionals prepare to leave for Italy to fight the pandemic. ■ AP/FILE

"I am aware of the position of the United States, but we are a sovereign country and we can choose the partners with which we are going to have cooperation," Andorran Foreign Minister Marça Ubach said.

In the city of Crema in the hard-hit Lombardy region of

northern Italy, 52 Cuban doctors and nurses set up a field hospital with 32 beds equipped with oxygen and three ICU beds.

Symbolic moment

"This is a strongly symbolic moment because the Crema hospital has been going

through an extremely complicated situation from the start," Lombardy's top social welfare official, Giulio Gallera, said at the inauguration last week. "The number of patients who have filled and continue to fill the emergency room and departments has truly put the medical personnel to a hard test."

The U.S. has sought to cut off income to Cuba as part of a tightening of sanctions. And it continues to discourage countries from contracting Cuban medical workers despite the pandemic.

"The government of Cuba keeps most of the salary its doctors and nurses earn while serving in its international medical missions while exposing them to egregious labour conditions," the State Department said on

Twitter last week. "Host countries seeking Cuba's help for COVID-19 should scrutinize agreements and end labour abuses."

Cuba currently has about 37,000 medical workers in 67 countries, most in long-standing missions.

The most recent deployments of at least 593 doctors have also been to Suriname, Jamaica, Dominica, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Venezuela and Nicaragua, some of them reinforcing existing medical missions.

All have been billed as tied to the coronavirus epidemic, even though some of the countries have few confirmed cases so far. None of the agreements or financial terms have been made public.

Bill Withers, who sang 'Ain't No Sunshine,' dies at 81

Three-time Grammy winner succumbed to heart problems

DERRICK BRYSON TAYLOR

Bill Withers, the legendary soul singer behind 1970s hits like *Lean on Me*, *Lovely Day* and *Ain't No Sunshine*, died on Monday in Los Angeles, his family said. He was 81.

The soulful singer and three-time Grammy winner died from heart complications, his family said.

"We are devastated by the loss of our beloved, devoted husband and father," the family's statement said.

"A solitary man with a heart driven to connect to the world at large, with his poetry and music, he spoke honestly to people and connected them to each other," it added.



Bill Withers

The family added, "in this difficult time, we pray his music offers comfort and entertainment as fans hold tight to loved ones."

Mr. Withers was well into his 30s when he began recording music, after growing up in a segregated coal-min-

ing town in West Virginia, serving in the Navy and working as an aircraft mechanic. But during his 14-year recording career, starting with the album *Just As I Am* in 1971, he wrote and performed songs that have become anthems around the world, drawn from gritty blues, R&B and the era's confessional style of lyrics.

Long after his de facto retirement from recording – he released his last album in 1985, after many battles with music industry executives – Withers executed the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015 by Stevie Wonder. NY TIMES

MARKET WATCH

	03-04-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	27,591	-2.39
US Dollar	76.13	-0.70
Brent oil	33.48	...

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	244.80	0.00
Asian Paints	1520.90	-82.30
Axis Bank	325.45	-33.20
Bajaj Auto	2033.75	-17.35
Bajaj Finserv	4510.75	8.85
Bajaj Finance	2207.50	-11.85
Bharti Airtel	423.95	2.60
BPCIL	317.15	14.20
Britannia Ind	2563.25	-1.60
Cipla	449.20	35.45
Coal India	137.75	-1.70
Dr Reddy's Lab	3146.80	-51.80
Eicher Motors	12680.05	-321.55
GAIL (India)	80.90	5.15
Grasim Ind	454.70	-21.45
HCL Tech	405.80	-7.75
HDFC	1499.55	-83.95
HDFC Bank	813.85	-15.80
Hero MotoCorp	1582.05	-57.60
Hindalco	88.80	-2.85
Hind Unilever	2154.10	-25.55
ICICI Bank	286.65	-24.50
IndusInd Bank	313.20	-29.05
Bharti Infratel	156.40	1.30
Infosys	585.70	-17.10
Indian Oil Corp	79.50	0.55
ITC	177.90	11.50
JSW Steel	140.70	-2.30
Kotak Bank	1140.85	-40.80
L&T	774.65	0.30
M&M	280.70	7.85
Naruti Suzuki	4011.50	-234.85
Nestle India Ltd.	15104.65	-549.90
NTPC	79.55	-1.45
ONGC	69.85	4.10
PowerGrid Corp	156.20	1.60
Reliance Ind	1077.45	-3.00
State Bank	175.50	-11.05
Shree Cement	15783.80	-765.85
Sun Pharma	375.95	32.40
Tata Motors	65.30	-2.65
Tata Steel	253.75	-12.60
TCS	1654.20	-54.55
Tech Mahindra	520.90	9.70
Titan	862.80	-73.25
UltraTech Cement	3041.60	-99.05
UPL	298.10	-7.65
Vedanta	62.80	0.15
Wipro	180.00	-9.50
Zee Entertainment	124.35	3.45

Life turns turtle for MSMEs as lockdown chokes

Transporting men, machines and materials under strict curbs tests the sinews of enterprises located in smaller cities

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

The lockdown ordered to stem the spread of COVID-19 has swept over millions of small and medium enterprises in tier-2 and -3 cities and across India like a tsunami.

Moving people and machines to facilitate work-from-home (WFH) options became a daunting task for many, as per industry executives of some mid-tier firms who narrate their harrowing experience.

In some cases, attempts to prove something as 'essential' turned into debates between business owners and local administrators. Consequently, many enterprises and their employees, across places such as Mysore, Hassan, Udupi, Kochi, Pune, Ahmedabad, Surat, Nagpur, Goa, Jaipur, Coimbatore and Salem suffered in terms of lack of businesses continuity and clarity, physical hardship and mental stress.

"It was nightmarish for many companies operating in Coimbatore and Salem. We were running [around]



The CII has urged all enterprises, which are still suffering connectivity or business continuity issues, to reach out to the industry association for assistance. ■ FILE PHOTO

for permissions to move people and computers. We could easily move people and systems between Bengaluru and Chennai, but in Salem, the rules were different. And eventually, we lost several days of productivity and our employees suffered a lot," explained Chocko Valliappa, CEO of IT services firm, Vee Technologies that employs 5,000 people across Bengaluru, Chennai and Salem.

The situation was in stark

contrast with the promises of many State governments that vie with each other to attract investments to small cities in their regions.

Not enough time

Certain mid-tier firms are of the opinion that the lockdown came upon them all of a sudden though the government would have been contemplating it at least a few days before it's introduction.

"Over 300 of our em-

ployees in Bengaluru and Chennai were thrown out of their respective hostels soon after the lockdown. We arranged some stay for them in Salem and tried to bring them to Chennai. But authorities made us send them back," said Mr. Valliappa, whose company supports hospitals in the U.S. and in India by providing clinical documentation services.

Udupi-based Robosoft Technologies, a UX and UI

application development and digital advisory firm, too, said small firms had suffered huge disruptions after the lockdown.

COVID-19

Robosoft and its arm, 99Games, together employ 600 people across Mangaluru, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Rohith Bhat, founder-CEO of the company said, "Fortunately, we anticipated the trouble slightly in advance. Some of our customers in Japan [gently] alerted us; therefore, three days before the first lockdown call, we started moving our men and machines. But we went through a very tough time."

"Had we waited until the complete lockdown announcement, we surely would have faced huge downtime issues like many others."

CII acts

Realising the gravity of the situation, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) sprang into action. It met the

respective State governments and industries departments to chalk out ways to ensure business continuity for the entire MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) community in the country.

"We discussed a wide array of key topics with the Karnataka government and movement of people, material and machines was one of them," said Ramesh Ramadurai, vice chairman, CII-Karnataka.

The CII has urged all enterprises, which are still suffering connectivity or business continuity issues, to reach out to the industry association for assistance.

Pradeep Bhargava, president of Mahratta Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) said most IT/ITes firms in Pune were able to shift to WFH mode with relative ease; however, other firms, including manufacturing companies, big and small, struggled as the task involved touchpoints with facilities, staff, vendors and customers.

RBI halves trading hours for markets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced market hours between April 7 and April 17 in view of the lockdown.

The call money market, government securities market, currency market, commercial paper market and others that typically open at 9 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. will now be open between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The central bank said the 'unprecedented' situation created by the COVID-19 outbreak has necessitated lockdowns, social distancing and restrictions on movement of people.

"The dislocations have adversely impacted the functioning of financial markets," it said. "To minimise risks and ensure market participants maintain adequate checks and supervisory controls while optimising time resources and ensuring safety of personnel, it has been decided to revise trading hours for various markets," it added.

Foreign investors sell over ₹1 lakh-cr. securities in a month, for first time in history

But domestic institutions save markets the blushes, buying stocks worth ₹55,595 crore in March and arresting a further plunge

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 03

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	75.97	76.29
Euro	81.96	82.31
British Pound	93.35	93.76
Japanese Yen (100)	70.04	70.34
Chinese Yuan	10.71	10.76
Swiss Franc	77.74	78.07
Singapore Dollar	52.91	53.14
Canadian Dollar	53.60	53.83
Malaysian Ringgit	17.42	17.54

Source:Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

RBI needs to monetise deficit, says SBI report

At a time when market appetite is low due to COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to monetise deficit with the Reserve Bank subscribing to the primary issues of dated central government securities, a SBI report has suggested.

The Sensex registered its worst monthly fall in more than 11 years, declining 23% in March, the greatest percentage drop since October 2008

HIGHEST MONTHLY OUTFLOWS		HIGHEST MONTHLY INFLOWS	
Month	Net flows (₹ Cr)	Month	Net flows (₹ Cr)
March, 2020	-118,203	March, 2017	56,261
June, 2013	-44,162	March, 2019	48,751
November, 2016	-39,396	July, 2014	36,046
October, 2018	-38,906	February, 2012	35,228
May, 2018	-29,776	May, 2014	33,778
December, 2016	-27,111	January, 2015	33,688
September, 2018	-21,035	September, 2010	32,668
July, 2013	-18,124	March, 2014	31,663
August, 2015	-17,524	June, 2014	30,705
October, 2008	-17,205	March, 2010	29,438

ASHISH RUKHAIYAR
MUMBAI

For the first time in the history of the Indian capital markets, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have sold securities worth over ₹1 lakh crore in a single month.

As per data from the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), the cumulative net outflow from the debt and equity segments was pegged at ₹1.18 lakh crore in March – more than double the previous high of ₹44,000 crore witnessed in June 2013.

Further, both the equity and debt segments have individually registered new

Currently, the Sensex is trading over 53% lower than the intraday record high of 42,274 in January

highs in terms of monthly outflows of ₹61,973 crore and ₹60,376 crore, respectively.

COVID-19 concerns

According to market participants, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has affected stocks worldwide is the primary reason for such record outflows as foreign investors shy away from riskier assets and also, emerging markets.

The global death toll of the pandemic had crossed the 50,000-mark with more than 10 lakh confirmed cases. In India, the last few days have seen a greater rise in the number of new cases thereby adding to investor concerns.

Incidentally, the impact of the record sales by overseas investors has been clearly visible in the stock markets with the benchmark Sensex registering its worst monthly fall in over 11 years. In March, the 30-share barometer lost a little over 23% (23.05% to be precise) which was the highest since October 2008 when it plunged 23.89%.

Currently, the Sensex, which closed at 27,590.95 on Friday after falling 674.36 points, or 2.39%, is trading over 53% lower than its intraday record high of 42,273.87 touched in January.

Interestingly, buying by domestic institutional investors (DIIs), which include banks, insurance companies, mutual funds and domestic financial institutions, has been acting as a strong counter force to the selling by foreign investors.

As per BSE data, March also saw the highest-ever monthly net purchases by DIIs who bought equities worth ₹55,595.18 crore. This

was again double that of the previous high of ₹26,033.9 crore registered in October 2018.

In the current calendar year, while FPIs have sold equities worth ₹51,832 crore – they were net buyers in January and February – DIIs have bought shares worth ₹74,554 crore.

Meanwhile, the voluntary retention route, or VRR, in debt securities, which was opened up for FPI investments in January, has seen an inflow of ₹4,165 crore in March while hybrid securities saw a marginal outflow of ₹19 crore, according to NSDL data.

Rice exports halted on supply chain disruption due to virus

Thailand seizes opportunity, inflates global prices

REUTERS

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Indian rice traders have stopped signing new export contracts amid the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, as labour shortages and logistics disruptions have hampered the delivery of even existing contracts, industry officials said.

The halt in exports from the world's biggest exporter is allowing rival countries such as Thailand to raise shipments in the short term and lift global prices, forcing millions of poor consumers in Africa to pay high prices.

"Shipments have stalled as transport has become very difficult because of the lockdown. Drivers are not coming and labour is not available at mills and ports,"



said B.V. Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association (REA).

Indian traders have stopped offering quotes to overseas buyers as they are not sure when they would be able to ship their cargoes, four top exporters told Reuters.

India's export volumes have fallen by four to five times, said Prem Garg, chairman of the Lal Mahal Group, which exports rice to more

than 44 countries. About 400,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice and 1,00,000 tonnes of basmati rice, meant for March-April delivery, are either stuck at ports or in the pipeline due to the lockdown, exporters said. New Delhi mainly exports non-basmati rice to Bangladesh, Nepal, Benin and Senegal, and premium basmati rice to Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. As Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar curbed their rice exports, demand for Indian rice surged, but traders are not signing new contracts, said Nitin Gupta, vice-president of trader Olam India's rice business.

Thailand, the only key exporter to offer rice currently, has seen its export prices soar to their highest in seven years this week.

Brent surges past \$33 on output deal hope

OPEC, allies working on unprecedented 10% reduction in global oil production

REUTERS

LONDON

Benchmark Brent crude oil futures climbed to as high as \$34.91 a barrel on Friday on rising hopes of a new global deal to cut global crude supply.

Brent crude futures were up 12.9%, or \$3.9, at \$33.83 a barrel by 6.51 p.m. IST. Brent soared as much as 47% on Thursday for its highest intraday percentage gain on record. It had closed up 21%.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 8.8%, or \$2.23, to \$27.55 after jumping 24.7% on Thursday.

OPEC and its allies are working on a deal for an unprecedented production cut of about 10% of global supply, an OPEC source said.

Oil prices slumped 65% in the first quarter on a demand slump caused by the global COVID-19 outbreak and moves by Russia and



Slick move: A meeting of OPEC+ countries is scheduled for Monday to discuss production cuts. ■ REUTERS

Saudi Arabia to flood the market after their failure last month to extend much smaller OPEC+ supply cuts.

OPEC+ to meet

A meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies such as Russia, a grouping known as OPEC+, has been scheduled for Monday, the

to 15 million barrels per day (bpd) out of total global supply of about 100 million bpd.

Mr. Trump said he did not make any concessions, such as agreeing to a U.S. production cut – a move forbidden by U.S. anti-trust legislation.

Trump-Putin meet

Both Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are due to meet with their respective country's top oil producers on Friday.

Russia and Saudi Arabia both belong to OPEC+, but the United States does not.

"It does appear that momentum is growing for some form of output agreement," said analyst Harlan Matthews at Redburn Energy.

"(But) there are huge obstacles to any output agreement on this scale, and even if it were to be implemented the market would remain chronically oversupplied in the near term."

Third TLTRO for ₹25,000 cr. on April 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

To ensure adequate liquidity in the system, especially in the corporate bond market, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced the third targeted long-term repo operation (TLTRO) on April 7 for ₹25,000 crore.

The central bank announced the TLTROs on February 6 and has pumped in ₹1 lakh crore since then. The TLTRO was announced on March 27. It has so far done two tranches worth ₹50,000 crore and the initial target is ₹1 lakh crore.

The second tranche was conducted for ₹25,000 crore on Friday.

The new issue coming up on April 7 is for a three-year tenor, the central bank said.

M&M drops plan to fund Korean arm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The board of Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. on Friday rejected a proposal to infuse any fresh equity in SsangYong Motor Company (SYMC) to help the Korean auto company tide over a difficult phase.

M&M's board of directors held a special meeting to review investment in SYMC and to discuss capital allocation in the light of the COVID-19 impact. The management and labour union of SsangYong had requested fresh injection of equity from M&M to help the company fund 500 billion KRW (\$406 million) of requirements over the next three years.

Skies clearing for airlines

Some international carriers gear up for limited operations

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

The dark shadow cast by the COVID-19 pandemic on the global aviation industry seems to be gradually wearing away, with some international carriers gearing up either to start limited operations to select destinations to ferry stranded passengers or to commence regular schedules.

While Emirates has announced resumption of flights from its Dubai hub to London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich and Brussels effective April 6, 2020, to carry only outbound passengers from UAE, Etihad Airways, from April 5, 2020, will operate a regular service starting with Seoul Incheon, followed by Melbourne,



Singapore, Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta and Amsterdam.

"These destinations are subject to government approvals," the carrier said.

"To date, these services have covered a number of destinations, including the U.S., Australia, and Sri Lanka. Etihad will continue to offer such services," it said. Emirates said it would operate four flights a week to London Heathrow, and three

flights a week to Frankfurt, Zurich, Brussels and Paris.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, chairman and CEO, Emirates Airline and Group said, "These initial passenger services, although limited to travellers who meet the entry requirements set by the destination countries, will be welcomed by our customers seeking to return home to their countries and families."

"Our network can only be restored with the easing of travel restrictions," he said. Singapore Airlines resumed limited flights to London, Frankfurt and Zurich. In April, a dozen flights each way will be operated to each of these destinations. Now it is operating flights to Los Angeles, Seoul and Sydney.

TAFE gesture to farmers of U.P., Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd. (TAFE) has unveiled a free tractor rental scheme for small and marginal farmers of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for a period of 90 days from April 1 as they are facing distress following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scheme will be available across 20 districts of Rajasthan and 25 districts of Uttar Pradesh, said Mallika Srinivasan, CMD, TAFE.

On offer are 11,000 Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors along with 50,000 implements in Rajasthan and 3,000 tractors and 15,000 implements in U.P.

Bajaj Auto March sales drop 38%

Two-wheeler exports climb 9%; domestic CV sales fall 53%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Bajaj Auto Ltd. has reported a 38% decline in sales of two-wheelers and commercial vehicles at 2,42,575 units for March 2020 compared with 3,93,351 units sold in the same period last year. The lockdown due to COVID-19 spread had impacted sales.

Two-wheeler sales in the domestic market were down 55% at 98,412 units as compared with 2,20,213 units sold in the same period last year. However, the company exported more two-wheelers during this month at 1,12,564 units against 1,03,325 units in the same period last year, up 9%.

Including domestic and exports, two wheeler sales were down 35% at 2,10,976



Braking hard: For FY20, the company saw an 8% decline in total unit sales to 46,15,212. ■ REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO

units against 3,23,538 units sold in the same period last year. Domestic commercial vehicle (CV) sales were down 53% at 18,129 units as compared to 38,972 units sold in the same period last year. CV exports were down 56% at 13,470 units as compared to 30,841 units sold in

the same period last year. In total, CV sales were down 55% at 31,599 units as compared to 69,813 units sold in the year-earlier period last year. For FY20, the firm sold a total of 46,15,212 units compared to 50,19,503 units sold in the previous year, a decline of 8%.

IN BRIEF



South African players symptom-free

The South African cricket team's chief medical officer Shuaib Manjra has said that the players have completed a 14-day period of self isolation after returning from India and they were symptom-free. The team returned from India on March 18 after the ODI series was called off due to the pandemic. But the players will remain in lockdown for the next two weeks. IANS

IOA contributes ₹71 lakh to PM-CARES Fund

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has contributed a sum of ₹71,14,002 towards the PM CARES Fund. IOA also expressed gratitude to all the NSFs, State Olympic Associations and other federations/bodies for extending their support and humble contributions. IANS



UEFA tells clubs to complete the season

UEFA and Europe's top clubs have stated their determination that the current football season should be played to a conclusion and threatened that teams may be excluded from the next Champions League if their domestic competitions are ended prematurely. In a joint letter released on Thursday, UEFA, the European Club Association (ECA), and the European Leagues body representing nearly a thousand clubs in 29 countries, said that they were working on the possibility of playing on into July and August if need be. AFP

FIH extends Pro League suspension

The International Hockey Federation has been forced to extend the suspension of FIH Pro League's second edition due to the pandemic and now plans to hold the ties in July and August, provided the current situation improves. PTI



Infantino says 'nobody knows' when football can resume

FIFA boss Gianni Infantino admitted that "nobody knows" when football can resume around the world. "We all wish that we could have football tomorrow but unfortunately it's not possible and nobody in the world today knows when we will be able to play like before. Our world and our sport is going to be different when we return to normality. We have to make sure that football survives and that it can prosper once again." AFP

Premier League put off indefinitely

Premier League clubs will ask players to take a combination of pay cuts and deferrals amounting to 30 percent of their salary due to the financial crisis caused by coronavirus, the league said in a statement on Friday. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) will meet with league and club officials to discuss the proposal on Saturday. A meeting between the 20 English top-flight clubs also agreed to indefinitely extend the suspension of the season until it is "safe and appropriate" for football to return. AFP

IOC revises qualification deadlines

Athletes now have up to June 29, 2021, to book their berths for Tokyo Games

OLYMPICS

UTTHA GANESAN NEW DELHI

The International Olympic Committee has revised its qualification deadline for the Tokyo Games to June 29, 2021.

Many yet to complete

The 2020 Olympics, postponed by a year due to COVID-19 pandemic, has forced the IOC and International Federations to rework their qualification and tournament calendar. While some of the events, like hockey, have already completed their qualification processes and would not be affected, several, including badminton and track & field were yet to complete the same.

In a communiqué to National Olympic Associations, the IOC has now confirmed the new dates. "The new qualification period deadline is 29 June 2021, and IFs can



Extended wait: A man wearing a face mask takes a selfie next to a Tokyo 2020 Olympics countdown clock that has been adjusted for the new start date of July 23, 2021. GETTY IMAGES

define their own qualification period deadlines, should the deadline be prior to this date. The revised final sport entries deadline has now been set for 5 July 2021," it

said. The IOC also reiterated its efforts to revise an overall final qualification system at the earliest, even as soon as mid-April, but admitted that specifics would only come later.

"We understand that at this time these are unlikely to include the full details on the dates and locations of the specified events, recognising that these will follow later as

the impacts of COVID-19 and its related restrictions become clearer.

"We aim to finalise the adapted qualification systems by mid-April, with the details on specific events to follow when available. The priority remains to reflect, where possible, the allocation method/pathway of the original qualification systems for each sport," it added.

The IOC, while allowing international federations the discretion to tweak their rankings system accordingly, sought to ensure sport-specific balance between protecting those close to qualifying in 2020 and giving the top performers of 2021 a chance to qualify.

It also authorised IFs to decide on the age-eligibility of athletes who may not make the cut in 2020 but do so in 2021. While there is no upper age limit, sports like gymnastics (16 years), football (under-23) and boxing (17) have a minimum age.

PM Modi tells Indian sportspersons to 'boost morale'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged current and former Indian sportspeople on Friday to help "boost morale" and encourage people to adhere to a nationwide lockdown aimed at containing the coronavirus.

Modi held a video conference with 40 stars across various sports, including Sachin Tendulkar, Viswanathan Anand, P.V. Sindhu and Hima Das, his office said. They have a "very important role to play in boosting the morale of the

nation as well as spreading the message of social distancing along with asking people to continuously follow advisories given during lockdown," said Modi.

Face challenges

He said traits learned in sport such as the "ability to face challenges, self-discipline, positivity and self-belief are the essential tools to combat the spread of the virus."

The athletes also "praised the leadership of the Prime Minister in this challenging times," according to the statement.

Ayushi steps it up in tough rifle event

KAMESH SRINIVASAN NEW DELHI

It is the toughest event in rifle and pistol. The rifle 3-position event demands 120 shots during qualification, 40 each in kneeling, prone and standing positions. The reafter, it is a 45-shot final.

Unlike air events, in which youngsters shoot from 10 metres to strike world class scores very early in their career, the 50m event requires considerable experience and expertise.

Remarkable progress

Given this backdrop, the 19-year-old Ayushi Podder has done remarkably well to be among the six shortlisted for the Tokyo Olympics. Ayushi has had impressive scores of 1174 and 1168 in the Olympic trials.

From shooting 1121 in the junior section of the 2018 World championship in Ko-



Ayushi, right, with her father and coach Pankaj and Mehuli Ghosh. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

rea, to scores of 1137 and 1154 in the junior World Cups in Suhb, Ayushi has come a long way in a short time.

"Ayushi is one of the most promising and consistent juniors," says the high performance coach of the Indian rifle team, Olympian Deepali Deshpande.

Ayushi's father Pankaj

Podder, who works with the Railways, is himself a national-level shooter, and internationally qualified coach.

It was Pankaj who initiated Mehuli Ghosh, Commonwealth Games air rifle silver medallist, into shooting, along with his daughter, when he set up the Bull's Eye Academy in 2014.

Groomed for 2024

Having done well at the Khelo India Youth Games, Ayushi was recently inducted into TOPS and is part of the development group being groomed for the 2024 Games.

Ayushi, a brilliant pencil-sketch artist, has also trained in Odissi under Dona Ganguly, wife of former India captain Sourav Ganguly. Now, during the lockdown, she relaxes with Western dance and music, and keeps fit through yoga.

Mixed feelings for Ramanathan Krishnan

Playing now not a priority: Ramesh

WIMBLEDON

RAYAN ROZARIO COIMBATORE

When The Championships was called off a couple of days ago due to COVID-19, many former champions expressed disappointment. Ramanathan Krishnan, who made the world take notice of India with his exploits at the prestigious event in the sixties, shared his views too.

"My immediate feeling about the cancellation was one of joy and sorrow," he told The Hindu from Chennai.

"It's sort of joy to me as it's going to save the players, the spectators and the others involved, from this virus threat. At the same time, it's one of sorrow as the players may have to miss the event for a year," he added.

Huge loss

Krishnan, a semifinalist in 1960 & '61 and who reached a world-ranking of No. 6, said that in a tennis player's career, losing one year of Wimbledon is a huge loss.

"It's so precious not only for the international stars but also for the Indian

players. I feel sad for them because we do not know whether they would carry the same form or confidence next year."

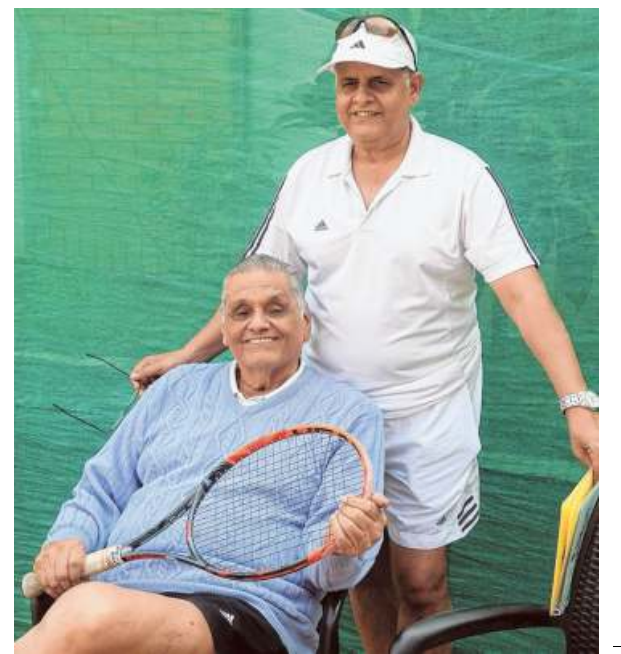
He was quick to add that one must not take a chance with corona. "Good luck to the players," he signed off.

His son, Ramesh Krishnan, who had reached the Wimbledon quarterfinals (1986), said these were quite extraordinary times. "Sorry this has to happen and, in the present scenario, we have plenty on our mind. Also, things are so uncertain that playing the sport is not a priority at the moment," said Ramesh.

The Wimbledon and French Open junior title-winner in 1979, Ramesh said it's going to be tough for all players.

"The main thing is to remain fit so that when things return to normalcy you can get going. For the older players such as Federer and Serena Williams, it's a year lost, which is a lot for them."

Ramesh, a regular visitor to Wimbledon, said, "I was looking forward to my travel this year, but that will have to wait for another year."



Right move: Tennis greats Ramanathan Krishnan and son Ramesh, though feeling sad at Wimbledon's cancellation, have welcomed the decision. FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Ashish Kumar learning from Vijender's game

Aims to better India's Olympic middleweight record

BOXING

Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA

Middleweight boxer Ashish Kumar has not yet met Vijender Singh, but the 25-year-old from Himachal Pradesh draws inspiration from the Olympic bronze medallist.

For Ashish, who booked an Olympic quota place at the Asia/Oceania qualifying event in Amman last month, watching Vijender box is a learning process. "I have never met Vijender bhai sahib, but I like his counterattacks and long-range game," Ashish told The Hindu.

Special weight category

Ashish knows the importance of representing the country in the middleweight category, in which Indian boxers have given fine performances in the last three

Olympics. Vijender bagged the bronze medal in 2008 and made it to the quarterfinals in 2012, Vikash Krishan, a World championships medallist, reached the last eight in 2016.

"My seniors have done well. Our middleweight boxers have set a high standard and I want to maintain this," said Ashish, who has been fighting in this weight category since 2012.

Ashish, who claimed silver at the Asian championships and gold at the Thailand Open, gained his quota place after overcoming some tough times. "I sustained a leg injury. Then, I lost my father. I am happy that, despite this, I could bring cheer to my family with success at the Olympic qualifying event.

"My family, which has some boxers and wrestlers,



Ashish Kumar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

always supported me. My brother Johnny Chaudhary, an international wrestler, has backed me right from the start.

"After my father's death, he did not let me stay at home as the situation could have distracted me. He motivated me saying my father had always wanted me to

compete in the Olympics and win a medal," said Ashish.

Thanking JSW for its support, Ashish said, "When I badly needed a sponsor, they came forward."

Having achieved his first target of qualifying for the Olympics, Ashish wants to make the most of the additional time following the postponement of the Tokyo Games. "I now have more time to make myself stronger and better prepared."

Keeping in touch

In the time of lockdown, Ashish is doing his best to stay in touch with boxing. "We get inputs from our coaches through video conferencing. I stay indoors and do strength exercises and follow the training schedule given by the coaches," said Ashish.

Sinha lends coaching a tech touch

'Best way to stay connected with wards in current times'

CRICKET

VIJAY LOKAPALLY NEW DELHI

In Sunny Days, his best-selling autobiography, Sunil Gavaskar credits his mother for giving him lessons in batting in the balcony of his house in Mumbai. Many cricketers share similar experiences of one of their family members chipping in as a volunteer.

In the current times of lockdown, noted coach Tarak Sinha has kept his wards engaged by using technology to reach out to his students, especially those in the under-15 section.

"I give them lessons through video messages and we interact constantly to ensure the process is maintained in this critical phase for all us," Sinha told The Hindu.

The idea, as Sinha ex-



Tarak Sinha. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

plained, was to keep the youngsters in a state of positive mindset. "Most youngsters, who are kind of outdoor individuals, find it tough to be locked inside the house. They can get restless and also there is this fear of losing focus. This is the best way to stay connected with them," he added.

Sinha's day begins with

planning coaching lessons for batsmen and bowlers; even fielders too. How?

"What I do is I ask them to record a particular action. For batsmen, it can be forward and backfoot defence, execution of shots like cover drive and sweep, which have to be strictly by the book.

"For bowlers, it can be the loading and delivery, and the short follow-through. Obviously much depends on the space available for these kids to record their videos."

Sinha has a big pool of international players from Delhi's iconic Sonnet Club such as Suresh Khanna, Randhir Singh, K.P. Bhaskar, Raman Lamba, Manoj Prabhakar, Atul Wassan, Sanjeev Sharma, Aakash Chopra, Ajay Sharma, Ashish Nehra, Shikhar Dhawan and Rishabh Pant.

Numbers reveal that women's cricket is fast gaining in popularity

The ICC women's T20 World Cup was the most watched event after the 2019 men's ODI World Cup

P.K. AJITH KUMAR KOZHIKODE

Biju George was following the recent women's T20 World Cup closely. That wasn't surprising as he had been the fielding coach of the Indian team till recently.

Biju, though, was stunned to know that all his friends in his hometown of Thiruvananthapuram, too, had watched the mega event held in Australia.

He was in for a bigger 'shock' when the ICC released the viewership figures of the tournament: it was the most watched ICC event after the 2019 men's ODI World Cup. Across the digital channels, there were 5.4 billion viewing minutes in India



Wave of support: Fans at the ground and viewers across the globe made the women's T20 World Cup a grand success. FILE PHOTO

alone. The Indian fans were in for a disappointment in the final, though, as the Women in Blue were compre-

hensively beaten by the host. That match was watched by 86.174 fans. Among them was former India seamer Snehal

Pradhan. "Both Cricket Australia and ICC deserve credit for making the World Cup such a big success," she told

The Hindu. "Though I wasn't surprised that it became such a big hit on television, I didn't expect it would become the ICC's second-most watched event."

Snehal said Cricket Australia had done a lot of work on the ground, while the ICC promoted the World Cup through its digital platforms well. "This World Cup was further proof that women's cricket is fast rising in popularity," she said.

Biju could not have agreed more. "When I joined the support staff of the Indian team, many of my friends did not even know that we had a national team," he said.

"India reaching the final of the 2017 World Cup, riding

on Harmanpreet Kaur's astonishing innings against Australia in the semifinal is, of course, the main reason for the change in fortune for women's cricket here.

"We should also give credit to the huge improvement in quality across the international teams."

Just curious!

Snehal said there was a time when people used to come to a watch a match in India just out of curiosity.

"Years ago, I had played a game in front of a full house at Rajkot, but most spectators were there just to see how the girls played cricket," she said. "That is no longer the case."

Life more important than IPL: Raina

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The IPL can wait till millions of lives which are at risk due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic are saved, felt veteran India batsman Suresh Raina.

Raina has already done his bit in the fight against the deadly virus by donating ₹52 lakh, one of the highest donations among elite sportspersons.

Asked about the IPL, which has been postponed to April 15 but is unlikely to take place in the near future, Raina said "it is all about life" at the moment.

"Life is most important at this point of time. IPL can surely wait."