

## Govt changing law to stop attacks on health workers: 7-yr jail, Rs 5 lakh fine

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

AMID INCIDENTS of violence against healthcare personnel deployed in fighting COVID-19, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday cleared an ordinance to make such attacks a cognizable and non-bailable offence, with a maximum jail term of seven years and a fine of Rs 5 lakh.

Briefing reporters on the Cabinet decision, Union Information and Broadcasting

Minister Prakash Javadekar said the ordinance to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, will cover all healthcare personnel, including ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers at the community level.

According to the proposed amendments, if the injuries inflicted are not grievous, the jail term may range from three months to five years, and the fine from Rs 50,000 to Rs 2 lakh. In case of serious injuries, the jail term may range from six months to seven years, and the fine from

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Amit Shah, Harsh Vardhan interact with the IMA. P71

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



## 9.9% SHARE FOR MORE THAN Rs 43,450 CR Facebook picks stake, Jio set to tap into vast WhatsApp user base

Deal will boost JioMart, take it to 3 crore small kirana shops, says Mukesh Ambani

**PRANAV MUKUL & SANDEEP SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

IN THE largest FDI in the Indian technology sector, US Internet giant Facebook will be buying 9.9% stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's digital unit Jio Platforms Ltd, for \$5.7 billion (more than Rs 43,450 crore). While helping Reliance pare its debt of nearly Rs 3 lakh crore, the deal will also give the oil-to-telecom giant access to the over 400 million data base of WhatsApp, as it seeks to jumpstart its commerce business under JioMart. Facebook, in turn, makes its long-awaited foray into Indian telecom space.

The deal has come at a time when global mergers and acquisitions have hit roadblocks due to the COVID-19 crisis.

RIL said that concurrent to the investment, Jio Platforms, Reliance Retail Ltd and WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook, have reached an agreement to "further accelerate" business on JioMart. Under this, the company said, it would offer consumers the ability to access the nearest kirana, which can deliver products and services after transactions via JioMart using WhatsApp.

"In the very near future, JioMart and WhatsApp will empower nearly three crore small Indian kirana shops to digitally transact with every customer in their neighbourhood. This means all of you can order and get faster delivery of day-to-day

**BIG INDIA NUMBERS**

**388 million**  
Jio subscribers

**400 million+**  
WhatsApp users

**241 million+**  
active Facebook users

*Industry estimates, Oct 2019*

### EXPLAINED Win-win, digital push

THE FIRST major non-distress deal during the pandemic is part of the debt-reduction plan of India's biggest corporate entity — and could lead to the accelerated launch of Reliance's e-commerce plans on the JioMart platform. For Facebook, the partnership could help it navigate the regulatory environment, including for initiatives such as WhatsApp Pay.

items from nearby local shops. At the same time, small kiranas can grow their businesses and

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## Facebook-Jio collaboration will be visible first in e-tail

**NANDAGOPAL RAJAN**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

In the first consumer-facing offering to come out of the Facebook-Reliance Industries deal, the two entities will collaborate over the JioMart e-commerce platform. While details are not available, it is possible the mart will use WhatsApp's business features to quickly bring local stores on board to reach out to customers.

In a call after the announcements, Facebook's VP and Managing Director for India, Ajit Mohan, said the "entire energy" is on trying to figure out how they could help small businesses in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, and the resulting lockdown in India.

"We will really start to explore multiple areas of collaboration," he said, adding they would look at how to "open new doors" and "new avenues". "We have articulated that the first major collaboration involving JioMart, which is essentially to help small businesses, there are about 60 million small businesses in India. And we do believe there is the opportunity to help them connect with their customers and help people locate stores and merchants, locate the product," Mohan said.

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## Affluent in OBC, SC/ST not letting quota benefits trickle down, review lists: SC Bench

**ANANTHAKRISHNAN G**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

POINTING TO concerns within the OBCs and the SC/STs that reservation benefits are not reaching the truly deserving among them, the Supreme Court Wednesday said the government is "duty-bound" to periodically review the process in order to ensure that the benefits "trickle down and are not usurped by" the affluent in these categories.

Ruling as unconstitutional a January 2000 order of the Governor of the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh which provided 100 per cent reservation to ST candidates for posts of school teachers in Scheduled Areas, a five-judge Constitution Bench said: "Now there is a cry within the reserved classes. By now, there are affluent and socially and economically advanced classes within Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is voice by deprived persons of social upliftment of some of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes, but they still do not permit benefits to trickle down to the needy. Thus, there is a struggle within, as to worthiness for entitlement within reserved classes of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes."

The Bench, comprising Justices Arun Mishra, Indira Banerjee, Vineet Saran, MR Shah and Aniruddha Bose, agreed with Senior Advocate Rajeev Dhavan that the lists of those entitled to reservation must be revised from time to time.

"In our opinion, it was rightly urged by Dr Rajeev Dhavan that the Government is required to revise the lists. It can be done presently without disturbing the percentage of reservation so that benefits trickle down to the needy and are not usurped by those classes who have come up after obtaining the benefits for the last 70 years or after their inclusion in the list. The Government is duty-bound to undertake such an exercise as observed in Indra Sawhney... and

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**GOING BACK TO A NEW SCHOOL**  
BY AMEETA MULLA WATTAL  
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Women workers at a MNREGS site in Chaksu near Jaipur on Wednesday. Express

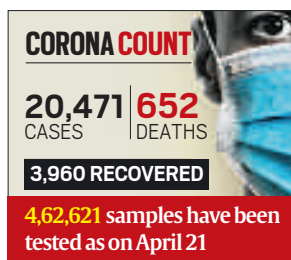
## Ten-fold jump in Rajasthan MNREGS numbers, more than double in Maharashtra as curbs ease

**DEEPA MUKHERJEE & VIVEK DESHPANDE**  
JAIPUR, NAGPUR, APRIL 22

AT LEAST two states have seen a sharp jump in MNREGS numbers in the past few days amidst the extended lockdown.

Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, who also holds the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj portfolio, told The Indian Express on Wednesday that in six days, the numbers in the state had gone up from 62,000 on April 17 to

6.08 lakh on April 22. In Maharashtra, MNREGS Commissioner Ranga Nayak reported an increase in the rural employment guarantee scheme from about 40,000 on April 12 to



over 1 lakh now. Pilot said the surge had been particularly sharp since some restrictions due to the coronavirus spread were eased on Monday. "We started planning from April 17, before the modified lockdown started, to ensure that maximum work was generated under the MNREGS. Within days, we have registered an increase of 10 times with the current figure of engaged workers being 6.08 lakh."

Government data shows that the total number of MNREGS labourers rose from 62,000 on

April 17, to 2 lakh, 2.5 lakh, 3 lakh, 4.5 lakh and 6.08 lakh over successive days. Pilot said the only way to revive the rural economy now was through MNREGS wages. "We have made more than 99% of due payments. Our emphasis is to give them maximum individual work, rather than community work, to ensure social distancing," he said.

On Wednesday, he inspected MNREGS work sites falling under the jurisdiction of the Chaksu panchayat samiti near

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## Governor says no takers for Bengal Covid toll, Mamata targets Centre

**RAVIK BHATTACHARYA, ATRI MITRA, SANTANU CHOWDHURY**  
KOLKATA, APRIL 22

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday put the blame squarely on the Centre for dispatching faulty COVID-19 testing kits, and came down heavily on it for sending two teams to assess the situation on the ground.

Addressing a press conference, Banerjee said if there was a health hazard, then the state was not responsible. "They are showing an attitude they would have been happy if there were more COVID-19 cases in Bengal. Rapid test kits sent to the state have



**'NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE CM TO HAVE AN IRON CURTAIN WITH RAJ BHAVAN'**  
JAGDEEP DHANKHAR  
WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

now been withdrawn because they were faulty. Thankfully, our

health department ordered some kits which came very useful. If there has been a health hazard here, then we are not responsible for it. Whose fault is it? We have to conduct timely tests. If we fail to do so, then patients may die," she said.

She said "canards are being spread Bengal is not conducting enough tests". But she held the Centre accountable for sending only 2,500 kits against 14,000 sought by the state. The ICMR, she pointed out, supplied three types of test kits — rapid testing kits, BGI RT-PCR kits, and antigen kits. "The rapid testing kits and BGI RT-PCR kits were both withdrawn as per communication from National Institute of Cholera

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**WEST BENGAL**

**WOMAN WITH COVID GIVES BIRTH TO VIRUS-FREE BOY**  
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## Palghar lynching: Sarpanch says she watched attack for 2 hrs, NCP leader couldn't control mob either

**KAVITHA IYER**  
GADCHINCHLE (DAHANU), APRIL 22

THE LYNCHING of two sadhus and their driver has set off a political war of words in Mumbai between the Opposition BJP and the government. On the ground in the forest, though, is a story of how local officials, including an NCP leader and former MLA candidate, a sarpanch and the police could do little to check a mob fired by a dangerous rumour mill.

The Indian Express spoke to several local residents, eyewitnesses, police and local officials to reconstruct the sequence of events that led to the murders right under the nose of the police. On a normal April evening, 400 men would not have gathered in minutes on the highway alongside this remote village on the border of Maharashtra and Dadra-Nagar Haveli in Dahanu taluka, Palghar, 150 km from Mumbai.

Since the Covid outbreak, the summer's seasonal labourers are



A roadblock outside a village near the attack site in Palghar district of Maharashtra. Kavitha Iyer

### INSIDE

**MINISTER PUTS OUT LIST OF ACCUSED, SLAMS OPPOSITION**  
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at home, there's no work on the farms, and in the 600-odd households that make up the twin villages of Gadchinchle and

Divshi, the lockdown did little to check the spread of rumours.

For days preceding last week's lynching of the three men, rumours of kidnappers and organ-harvesters had been flying thick on WhatsApp — all false; there have been no incidents of kidnapping or theft of organs.

Yet, like in several other villages in Dahanu, men of five villages around Gadchinchle

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## PAGE 1 ANCHOR Jail terms on hold, convicts to be tracked via WhatsApp, Google Maps

**PRITAMPAL SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

WITH MORE than 3,000 convicts across Delhi being granted bail or furlough to prevent overcrowding in jails in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, the Delhi High Court has devised a new way of making sure convicts mark their attendance — via WhatsApp video call and through Google Maps.

In three different orders temporarily suspending jail terms of three convicts, Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said the step has been taken "in view of the

dire need of decongesting prisons, considering the unprecedented public health emergency existing at this time".

Justice Bhambhani ordered that the convicts, Ompal, Rahat and Babu Lal, make a video call to the investigating officer or share their live location via WhatsApp so they don't have to visit the police station every week.

"The appellant will make a video call every Friday between 11 am and 11:30 am to the IO, and in case the IO is no longer in service or is otherwise unavailable, then to the SHO of the police station where the case was

registered. (The appellant will also 'drop-a-pin' on Google maps, so that the IO/SHO can verify the appellant's presence and location," state Justice Bhambhani's orders in all three cases.

In the case related to Ompal (41), the judge ordered that "this court is persuaded to grant to the appellant interim suspension of sentence for a period of 45 days". As per the prosecution, Ompal, while working as a driver of a van that loaded money in ATM machines, had stolen Rs 51 lakh by administering drugged food to those accompanying him. He is serving



To decongest Tihar, jail terms are being suspended. Renuka Puri

eight years in jail. Ompal has sought interim suspension of sentence for two months, on the ground that he has a boy aged 14 and twin girls aged two. He told the court that his wife had taken up a teaching job, but since the school was closed, she was not being paid and was unable to sustain the family.

The court suspended Rahat's jail term until July 17, while Babu Lal will stay out of jail for three months.

The court, in three different orders passed on April 20, also said: "Considering the prevailing lockdown, the furnishing of

surety as a condition of bail, is dispensed with at this stage."

Rahat (30), in judicial custody since March 4, is serving six months in jail for rash and negligent driving, which led to the death of a person riding pillion on a scooter. His counsel contended that Rahat would be exposed to avoidable and grave health risk in prison.

The court directed that Rahat "will not leave the State of Haryana without permission of the court and ordinarily reside in his place of residence".

Babu Lal (73) is serving 10 years in jail term for sexually abusing a minor. While granting

him relief, the court said, "Although the record shows that the applicant has only been in prison since February 24, 2020, and that he has been convicted of heinous offences under the POCSO Act, in the unprecedented circumstances of a public health emergency and the consequent need to decongest prisons... this court is persuaded to grant to the appellant interim suspension of sentence for a period of three months."

"The appellants shall furnish to the Jail Superintendent their cell phone number, which is kept active and switched on at all times," the court said.











## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# Going back to a new school

Post-pandemic, a shift in mindset will be needed — to teach and learn



AMEETA MULLA WATTAL

## THE WAY FORWARD

Despite fiscal concerns, more government support is needed to mitigate economic fallout. Centre must spell out a strategy

IT IS DIFFICULT at this stage to accurately assess the cost of the disruption in economic activities due to the lockdown, but it will be severe. As reported in this paper, according to some estimates, the 33-day lockdown in this financial year, April 1 to May 3, which essentially translates to a loss of 23 full working days, will lead to an economic contraction this financial year. To be sure, the government has relaxed the lockdown restrictions on some activities post April 20. But a pick up in these segments is likely to be muted, driven in part by disruptions in supply chains, labour and logistical issues and the fall in end-consumer demand. Even after the lockdown is fully lifted, economic activities are unlikely to return to normal in the near term. The impact of job and income losses, especially those in the informal sector, consumer behaviour — discretionary spending may take a hit — risk aversion by firms and banks, and continuation of social distancing norms, among others, will determine how economic activity shapes up after the lockdown. Much will also depend on the depth and breadth of the policy response.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has undertaken a series of measures aimed at easing the economic and financial fallout. However, the central government's response, so far, has been limited — India has one of the strictest lockdowns in the world with one of the thinnest covers of social protection. The first government package aimed at ensuring a steady supply of food grains and easing of cash woes of vulnerable sections. But with investment activity and exports expected to remain depressed, and the economy likely to be largely reliant on government spending and restricted household consumption, more fiscal support is needed.

There are fiscal concerns. The combination of a sharp slowdown in growth and government tax revenues will itself push up the fiscal deficit beyond what has been pegged to maintain current levels of spending. Add to this the requirement to support the economy and the deficit will widen further. The severity of the slowdown necessitates more government support. In fact, government spending may well have to be front-loaded. Sectors which have been hit the hardest such as MSMEs, airlines, hotels, exports will have to be provided relief. Failure to do so will result in job losses, and a rise in bankruptcies, throttling the financial system, making even a gradual recovery more difficult. The Centre may want to keep the power dry for the "unknowns" that may yet arise, and may favour opting for several rounds of measures, calibrating its response as the situation unfolds. But it is also necessary for it to spell out a broad strategy on how it intends to support the economy.

## PAY THE PIPER

Regulators in Australia and France show the way: Dominant digital platforms should not freeloader on media content

DIGITAL PLATFORMS COULD be pushed off the catbird seat if regulatory moves afoot in Australia and France find resonance in other countries. For over a decade, they have leveraged news provided by the media to drive traffic to their search engines and social hubs, and simultaneously leveraged their dominance to avoid paying for the content. They have argued that they send back clicks to the media, which can be monetised, but the inequality is stark. Australian treasurer Josh Frydenberg reports that almost half of the online ad spend in his country goes to Google, about a quarter to Facebook and the rest to all publishers combined. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) had sought a voluntary code to ensure more equity, but the conversation languished, and then the devastating effect of the coronavirus pandemic on ad revenues of the press lent a sense of urgency. Now, the ACCC will submit a draft mandatory code to legislators by July, forcing platforms to share ad revenue, pay for original content, and give publishers access to user data, ranking algorithms and policies for displaying news.

Earlier this month, France became the first nation to invoke an EU copyright reform requiring payment for news snippets reproduced from local publishers, but Google retaliated by threatening to withdraw news services from France. The competition watchdog, which believes that this constitutes misuse of market dominance, has forced it to negotiate with news providers while it investigates further. In 2014, Google had made good a similar threat against Spain, and does not offer its news product in Spain even now.

While the financial crisis in media has brought matters to a head, saving the press is not the principal concern, since the Australian government has already extended support. This is about market morality, and the objective is to erase an old inequality which has allowed platforms to transform themselves into trillion-dollar companies, literally at the expense of the media, whose content drives traffic to them. Generators of news and creators of opinion should be paid for their pains not because they have an absolute right to life, but because if they died, platforms would fall back on content generated on social media by individuals, interest groups and communities, and the problem of fake news would be amplified. While moves to make platforms pay for news are obviously about market morality, they are finally about the health of societies.

## OIL SPILL

Oil price crash may wreak economic havoc. But there are ways of making the best of a bad time

MIDAS, KING OF Phrygia, the tale from ancient Greece goes, turned everything he touched into gold. This was no blessing, since Midas starved to death — you can't eat a medium of exchange. And a store of abstract value is of little use in meeting basic biological needs. Till recently, the parable was widely thought to be a cautionary tale about greed and chasing wealth. Turns out, it might have been a prophetic allegory about the coronavirus pandemic, or even the need for a balanced economic diet.

The price of (crude) oil — "black gold", people unoriginally call it — has dropped to below -\$40/barrel on Monday in the US. And the price of Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, traded below \$20/barrel on Tuesday, approximately two-thirds lower than it was in January before the outbreak of COVID-19. In the US, producers are paying consumers to take the slick off their hands. Oil isn't worth the barrel it comes in. This is, of course, an economic disruption, an over-supply problem that could wreak Midas-level havoc on the economy. But, till that happens, for those who can, there are ways to make the best of a bad deal.

Companies and nations with the deep pockets and reservoirs of hope that the "fundamentals of the global economy are strong" could simply get paid to take care of the surplus. Imagine, if you will, the electoral success for the government that hands out free fuel ahead of the first post-corona poll. For individuals, too, hoarding is an option. The downside is that a favourite topic of small talk may be denied to people, who, stuck at home already, have little of interest to report on awkward video chats with long-lost friends. There's no more discussing how expensive petrol has become. But perhaps the money they are saving thanks to a crash in fuel prices could be used to douse the many sorrows of isolation, and invest in a conversational lubricant. It's now cheaper to buy a beer.

"NO MORE PENCILS no more books/ No more teacher's dirty looks/ Out for summer/ Out till fall/ We might not come back at all/ School's out forever.../ School's out with fever".

It seems these lyrics of Alice Cooper have come back to haunt us.

Since the middle of March, millions of students have been out of school, because of the COVID-19 lockdown. This has also affected more than one lakh students, who could not complete their Class 12 board examinations.

Today, even after a month of announcements and extensions, it is difficult to predict when schools will restart. Schooling is supposed to look after the emotional, social and behavioural health of children, which is diametrically opposite to social distancing.

Presently, teachers are trying to engage with online teaching and learning. The technology may vary across schools and states but as educators, we have to look at the implications of these new learning processes for our learners.

From live TV broadcasting of academic subjects, video interactions, online theatre, to working with special needs learners, it is all about embracing learning "anywhere anytime". It is apparent that technological evaluation systems, touchscreen paper corrections, digital books and smart boards have become the new reality.

Going forward, in the new post-pandemic environment, what will be required is a huge shift in mindset — both social and emotional. A new approach is needed to teach in this altered online paradigm.

Unfortunately, as far as the education of the rural poor students is concerned, they inhabit the bottom of a digital abyss. Governments will have to think very seriously about allocating more money in the budget for technical education in schools.

However, wherever students have been involved with online learning, their responses have been very good — this has strengthened the resolve of teachers across the country, and has inspired them to work harder.

But the role of the teacher has not been fully understood during this crisis. Teachers are as important as health workers because they are looking after the mental, emotional and social health of children at home. Although it is too early to judge how the learning trajectory will be affected by online teach-

ing, it is very clear that future transformations will ensure that classroom transactions are complemented with novel technological tools. The new challenge is, how to keep thousands of children out of school if their parents are allowed to return to their work spaces — even if in a staggered manner. And, whenever this happens, who assumes responsibility for a child's safety and learning at home?

Within this new school/learning paradigm, it will have to be seen how best to engage the children not only in education but in socialising with their peers, creating safe zones to play, and, how to also provide meals and support families which are working. In India, home-learning on a large scale will be a challenge, essentially because of non-availability of equipment and network-connectivity issues, and the fact that parents may not be in a position to facilitate home-learning.

We need to ensure that teachers come back to work so that hands-on training can happen — since many of them may not be technologically adept. For many teachers, their entire world has changed: From traditional teaching tools to juggling with gadgets and software, they are relying only on their personal understanding.

If school opens in July or even later, 3,000 children cannot simply come back. A post-pandemic school plan is essential and has to be prepared. With a staggered opening, the government and school leaders will have to think of novel methods by which children can be assimilated back into the school setting. And this has to be looked at bearing in mind the normal school calendar. Perhaps the new education policy needs to be revisited quickly and recalibrated.

Some practical things that can be done are: Cleaning and sanitising the classrooms and areas where children converge regularly; increasing the medical staff and counsellors in schools; planning a new school calendar where any event with large gatherings of students/parents is avoided, that is, sports days, annual days and parent teacher meetings. There can be cancellation of excursions and inter-school events within and outside the city; reworking of school timings and putting in place of student attendance on a rota basis. School walls could have colourful, pictorial depictions and slogans that sensitise students on basic cleanliness and hygiene such

as washing hands, and social distancing — although too many displays of pandemic visuals should be avoided as it creates anxiety in the minds of children. We need to ensure the building of a strong parent-school partnership, if social distancing has to be understood and implemented; conduct periodic workshops by psychologists, medical practitioners and counsellors to help sensitise the students, enabling them to understand the situation.

When students return to school, they will be the least prepared for any form of traditional testing — all such testing measures should be put on hold at all levels and there should be more emphasis on instruction and emotional development. Particularly, the students in pre-primary and primary — in the age group of three to 10 — will find it very difficult to get into a routine because they would have been out of school for over six months. At the primary level, when children return, they should be allowed to have their own learning options — creating personalised portfolios and project-based learning is important.

This will enable the children to find a sense of academic freedom, which they would have missed in the restricted confines of their homes. As far as senior students are concerned, we have already lost 2020 and this situation may stretch to 2021, as far as regular school learning is concerned. Hence, it is imperative that when dealing with senior students, we should help them understand the importance of resilience and mental strength in order to face climatic change, disease, natural and man-made disasters and even rapid technological changes.

The pandemic has truly reiterated the much clichéd skills of the 21st century: Decision making, problem solving, ability to innovate and, most importantly, adaptability.

These are extraordinary times, and we need extraordinary measures. The states and boards will have to, perhaps, look beyond traditional board examinations not only for the current year, but also for 2021. There is no doubt that returning to school after this pandemic will truly be a disruptive learning exercise at all levels.

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GURU PRAKASH

## AMBEDKAR, IN OUR CRISIS

Even amid pandemic, caste atrocities continue. Representation is key

AS THE COUNTRY faces the coronavirus crisis, there are conversations about the new post-pandemic social order and the circumstances that would shape it. Only a few days ago, we remembered B R Ambedkar on his 129th birth anniversary. Today, it is apt to look again at the dominant social order and the institutions of power, patronage, property and prestige that it has created.

It is sad to see news of caste-related atrocities even during the current crisis, when the society is expected to show social solidarity. The news of a Dalit couple being beaten mercilessly went viral recently. They were assaulted because they refused to sell the land that was rightfully theirs. A video was made of the incident, with caste-related slurs hurled on the couple. Making such a video and spreading hatred requires audacious belligerence on the part of the oppressor. This is the result of a social process, and political intervention alone cannot address this prevailing sentiment.

Social distancing was suggested as one of the precautionary steps to contain the virus. However, in a society like ours, where traditional social prejudices and hierarchies are deeply embedded, discriminatory practices can masquerade as social distancing. Thankfully, voices emerged from the depressed classes from all over the world and

the WHO has had to finally replace the phrase "social distancing" with "physical distancing".

This is an opportune moment for scholars, thinkers and activists from the Dalit community to brainstorm on a roadmap for the emerging Dalit narrative. Raising difficult questions is the need of the hour. Ambedkar himself has not become a subject of intellectual inquisitiveness. Restricting his colossal personality merely to a maker of the Constitution or as a leader of the depressed community is a massive dent to his legacy. His scholarship and deeply meaningful interventions in gender studies, anthropology and economics must also be studied and pursued dispassionately. Policymakers and intellectuals from the Dalit community and beyond must together evolve a mechanism to undertake robust research and produce scholarships on the relatively unexplored dimensions of Ambedkar's thought.

On the political front as well, April 14 (Ambedkar's birth anniversary) and December 6 (his death anniversary) must be occasions for more than rhetorical symbolism. The so-called Ambedkarite politics is losing its sheen and traction among the subaltern masses. Parties with a focus on individuals and families like the BSP and LJP have no meaningful contribution left to make.

The future of Dalit assertion needs to be

primarily focused on representation — real-time representation at key decision-making positions, which has not happened despite making affirmative action a constitutional commitment. Justice C S Kaman, a Dalit judge, was reprimanded by the court, after he made accusations of caste discrimination and corruption against fellow judges. On the other hand, no questions were raised when a group of Supreme Court judges came out and held a press conference against the prevailing processes in the apex court. It is the social capital of the upper caste, under the modern euphemism of a "network", that acts as a safety net emerging from caste-based camaraderie. The mainstream media has the same story. It is next to impossible to locate a subaltern voice in the fourth pillar.

There is an urgent need to get over the phenomenon of "behalfism". No one is entitled to speak on someone else's behalf. For effective representation, having a voice is a prerequisite. For many years, the cause of the subaltern communities was under the custodianship of the upper-class elite. Let us resolve, in the month of Ambedkar's birth anniversary, to ensure social diversity at our workplaces.

The writer is assistant professor at Patna University and visiting fellow at the India Foundation



## APRIL 23, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

MASS PICKETING BEGINS WHILE OFFICIAL WORK and banking operations were paralysed as the five-day picketing of government offices began in Assam, thousands of people thronged the streets in Gauhati to continue their protest against the "repressive measures" taken by the government last Saturday. An official spokesman said hundreds of picketers had been arrested but there were no reports of any untoward incident from anywhere in the state. The call for picketing had been given by the All-Assam Students' Union and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad on April 18 following the failure of negotiations on the issue of foreign nationals in the state.

BJP ON ASSAM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE of the Bharatiya Janata Party demanded that the army be withdrawn forthwith from Assam and all repressive measures be revoked. The four-page political resolution adopted by the national executive at its first meeting strongly criticised the Congress (I) government's "undemocratic" functioning and said that the "solution to the (Assam) problem should be sought by negotiation and persuasion and not by coercion or repression". "The notorious extra-constitutional sources of power are again in evidence and their operations are even more unashamedly overt. The Prime Minister's son addressing meetings of

high police officials and extending assurances to them as if he is the government in power is only one instance," the resolution said.

IRAN SANCTIONS COMMON MARKET FOREIGN ministers meeting in Luxembourg have decided to take strong diplomatic and economic measures against Iran but are still unsure of the timetable for implementing them, sources said. The measures include economic sanctions against Iran if a series of lesser diplomatic moves fail to influence Iranian authorities to release American hostages at the US embassy in Teheran.

# 7 THE IDEAS PAGE

## An unexpected turning point

Post lockdown, India's economy should not lapse into 'permit raj'. At this crossroads, missteps can change nation's trajectory for decades to come



KAUSHIK BASU

IT IS EARLY to speculate what the world will look like when we emerge from the COVID-19 tunnel. As yet, we cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. We do not know whether a suitable vaccine will be found that will allow us to work and live alongside COVID with little fear — as we do now with influenza — or if no reliable vaccine will be discovered for some years and we will be in the shadow of COVID-19, practising social distancing, conducting frequent tests to make sure we do not have the virus while continuing with our lives and livelihood.

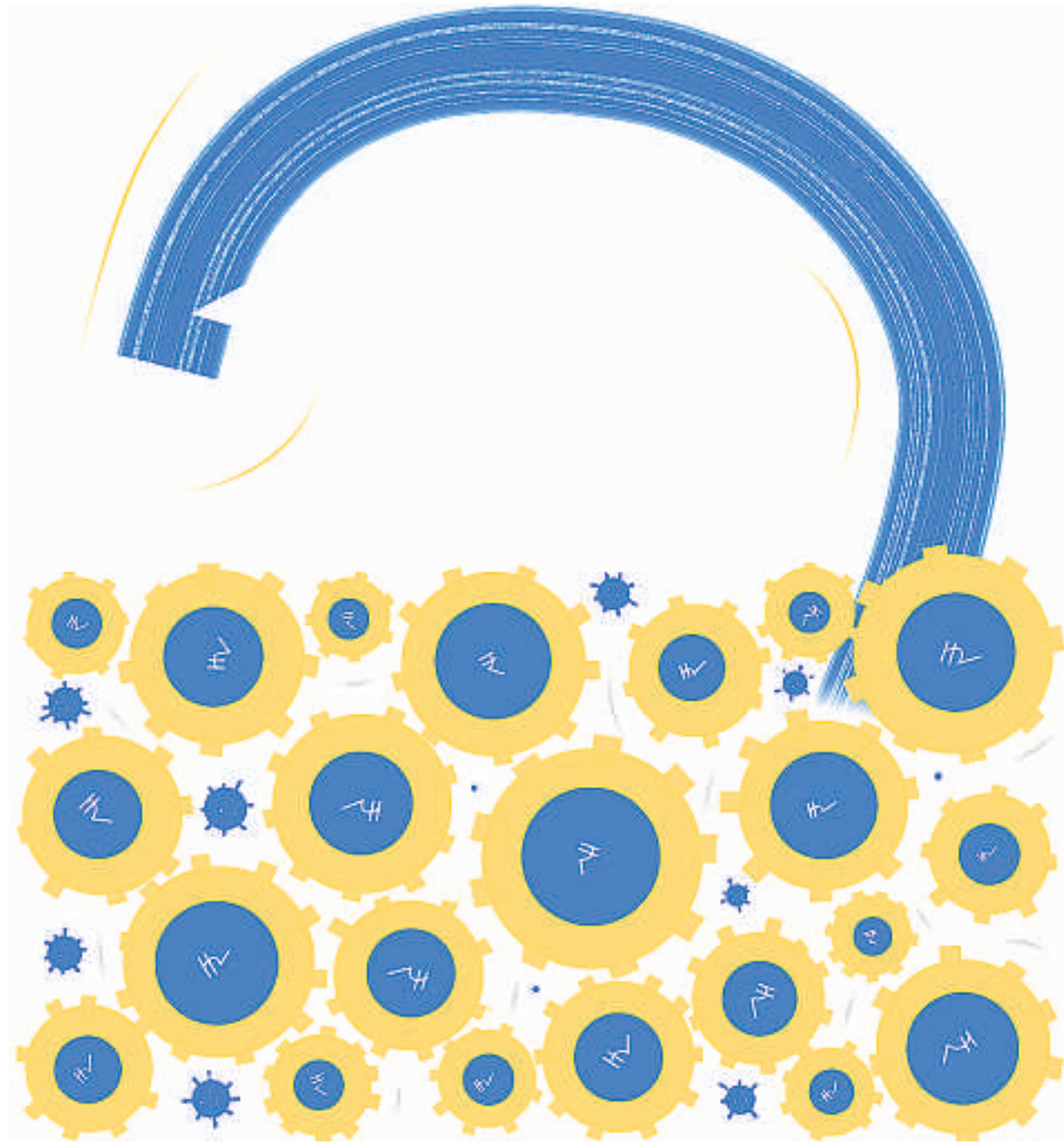
The jury is out on the mysterious ways of COVID-19 and also on the right economic response to it. We know from the history of world wars and pandemics that such catastrophes can turn the trajectories of nations upside down, converting winners into losers, and vice-versa. Yet, despite the uncertainty, it is important to think about future scenarios and try to do the best we can to make sure that the world economy and its constituent nations do well, and people do not suffer unnecessarily. We are beginning to see the early contours of how national economies are doing and we can make some deductions based on these. This, if ever, is the time for people to put aside their differences and work together to confront the challenge faced by humanity.

One critical problem is striking the right balance between curbing the spread of the virus and keeping the economy functioning. We cannot have the poor, the labourers and the migrants bear the brunt of the effort to contain the spread of the virus, and nor do we want to weaken the foundations of the economy so much that we emerge from the pandemic onto an economic wasteland. The choice between lives and economy is also a choice between lives and lives.

India's effort to curb the spread of the virus has received appreciation — not just the state of Kerala, which has got accolades from around the world, but the country as a whole. The incidence of COVID-19 remains low in India. Of every 10 million people, there are as yet five lives lost in India. This is vastly lower, not just compared to Belgium, which tops the list with 5,180 fatalities for every 10 million people, but many other nations, such as the United States with 1,370 fatalities, Spain with 4,550, Italy with 4,080 and the UK with 2,550 fatalities.

To be fair, the low fatality, per 10 million population, is not specific to just India. We have comparably low figures currently in almost all African and South Asian nations. Thus, it is seven for Bangladesh, three for Sri Lanka, nine for Pakistan, two for Tanzania, one for Nigeria, and 0.3 for Ethiopia. No one fully understands these huge differences between Europe and North America, on the one hand, and Africa and South Asia, on the other. This cannot be because these nations are more isolated. Bangladeshis are among the most globally scattered people and Ethiopia has huge interactions with China, but the fatality rates are low in both countries. Why is this so?

The short answer is we do not know. But, nevertheless, we have to take all reasonable precautions to keep the virus contained. It is important to realise that the risk cannot be cut to zero — nothing in life is a zero-risk activity. To defeat the virus, the aim has to be to keep the "reproduction number", or R-0,



CR Sasikumar

down to less than one — R-0 refers to the number of people, on average, who get infected by each infected person. When R-0 reaches less than one in any given region, such as is the case in Kerala, we know that the incidence of the disease is winding down in that region.

The economic policy challenge is about how to come out of the lockdown. This has to be done carefully, but quickly. A study by researchers at the University of Oxford, of the stringency of lockdowns in 73 countries, places India right on top. For a short while, this is worth it, and also impressive for a populous nation like India. But the top rank on the stringency index is not something any country will want to occupy for long. That will have a devastating effect on the poor and damage the nation's long-run economic prospects.

There are studies showing that India's unemployment rate is now at 24 per cent, an all-time high. March also saw the biggest outflow of capital from the nation ever recorded in one month — roughly \$15 billion left the nation. This also happens to be the largest capital outflow from any emerging economy in March. Clearly global players are reacting to the fact that the economy is not functioning. This has weakened the Indian rupee, which is now at an all-time low. Some of these problems are inevitable in this dystopian world; we can deal with these problems for a short while. But if these trends persist, India would end up ceding space to

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other nations in global trade, exports and business, and the suffering will be huge on the working classes.

Once this phase of the lockdown ends on May 3, we will have to start opening businesses, allowing the private sector, especially the informal enterprises and small firms, to operate. There will have to be rules of behaviour in place, such as social distancing, masks, hand-washing, but we have to begin to facilitate poor labourers to reach their place of work, and our farms and factories to function. Also, we have to encourage the rules of behaviour to continue by "participation" and not by bureaucratic "permission". India has a long history of the "permit raj", where all businesses were beholden to the bureaucracy for what they did. This had a tendency to strangle all but a few big firms and had held up the nation's economic growth for long. We have to guard against the risk of sliding back to these old habits — lapsing into these habits can bring an end to India's growth story.

India, and for that matter, all emerging nations, stand at a crossroads. Important missteps, at this unexpected turning point of the world, will not be like the normal mistakes we make and correct. Missteps now can change the course of the nation's trajectory for decades to come.

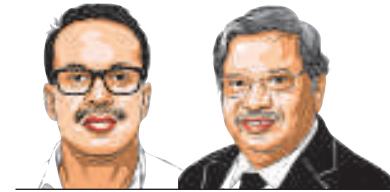
The writer is C Marks Professor at Cornell University and former Chief Economist and Senior Vice President, World Bank

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Estranging potential partners and sowing seeds of distrust with unsubstantiated allegations is a distraction that will not only cost lives but also add to the world's economic woes. — CHINADAILY

## What we can do for the city

From using technology to track COVID-19 cases to setting up community kitchens, battle against pandemic has kindled innovation, ways to connect



KUNAL KUMAR AND O P AGARWAL

COVID-19, A new disease of the coronavirus family, has engulfed almost the entire world. Developed countries such as the US, Spain, Italy, France and Germany seem to have suffered the most. India has managed to keep the number of those infected relatively low, despite its high population density. The government has had to make some hard choices. Saving lives and reducing human casualties was the government's first priority when it imposed the 21-day lockdown — this was extended by 18 days. An unfortunate fallout of this directive was the sudden loss of income for daily wagers, informal sector workers and those employed in the gig economy. The lockdown made things difficult for migrant workers and many of them were forced to start a long walk back home.

During unprecedented crises, such as the one we face today, administrations across the world take time to organise themselves and initiate relief operations. In India, the first task of the administration was to manage the healthcare system. It took time to stabilise the labour force by making provision for food and shelter. At the same time, the battle against the pandemic has kindled our desire to innovate, learn and find ways to connect and support one another during times of social distancing. We have put technology to great use to achieve this, by rapidly setting up data-based monitoring platforms to manage and contain the spread of the virus, to help each other meet immediate needs and cater to our emotional wellbeing, and support the underprivileged financially. Communities, civil society and corporates have come forward to partner the government in rendering public services. Some of these initiatives have the potential for wider deployment.

Among these initiatives is the Surat Municipal Corporation's COVID-19 Tracker App, which helps monitor people under home-quarantine and tracks the health status of those with a recent history of foreign travel. From a hands-on control room, the city maintains a database and tracks more than 8,500 individuals using this application. In Bengaluru, the Brihan Bengaluru Mahanagar Pallike developed a Coronavirus War Room within 24 hours. This 24x7 war room maps every COVID-19 positive case using GIS, tracks healthcare workers using GPS, and draws up containment plans using heat mapping technologies. The city has forged partnerships with academia and private sector technology companies. A COVID-19 data dashboard was launched on April 7. Nagpur's city administration has collaborated with the private sector outfit, HLL Lifecare, to launch a coronavirus app for the benefit of symptomatic citizens. If this app detects COVID-like symptoms in a citizen, it alerts a team of doctors immediately. Similarly, the E-Doctor Seva, a public-private partnership initiative in Agra, offers tele-video consul-

tation facility. People can secure online appointments and have a tele/video call with a doctor. Doctors provide online prescriptions, and in emergency cases, deliver medications to the patients by cabs.

Many cities have also repurposed existing innovations rapidly at little or no cost to offer support during this crisis. For example, in December 2019, the Greater Chennai Corporation was developing a mobile app to crowd-source information on operational flaws in existing civic infrastructure — such as potholes and faulty pipelines. During the lockdown, this app was customised for COVID monitoring. Citizens of Chennai used this app to voluntarily report their symptoms to help the administration map likely cases and take appropriate protective measures.

Several other innovative approaches have been adopted to sanitise and disinfect public places during the lockdown. For example, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has manufactured "Bhelimster", a disinfectant sprayer, in four days. This equipment was deployed in the Melvisharam Municipality, Tamil Nadu, to sanitise streets and areas with a high number of suspected and quarantine cases. The machine uses water mixed with a sanitiser, atomised through a spray nozzle and converted to fine droplets. It can pump out 2,000 litres of disinfectant in two hours and is placed on a vehicle to access narrow lanes.

Rajkot has leveraged corporate social responsibility to avail support from a company, that manufactures agricultural machines, to procure 18 high clearance boom sprayers — used for spraying pesticides on crops. These machines are used to disinfect the city's roads.

Across cities, communities have collaborated to provide essentials to the poor and set up community kitchens. Residents of Raipur set up a food control room within 24 hours of the lockdown. Every day, approximately 15,000 packets of cooked and uncooked foods are distributed to the needy with the help of nearly 104 non-profit organisations, self-help groups and over 10,000 volunteers. In UP, the Lucknow Municipal Corporation has established community kitchens at multiple locations, which feed more than 4,000 people daily. Similar kitchens have come up in Aligarh and Saharanpur as well. In Kerala, 1,255 community kitchens across 14 districts distribute more than 2.5 lakh food packets daily. In Chandigarh, the administration, in collaboration with market committees and the Chandigarh Transport Undertaking, has deployed over 70 buses to transport essential supplies from the central market for distribution to resident welfare associations through 144 licensed vendors.

These initiatives have shown that India's "social capital" — its citizens, civil society, corporates and academia — are its strength during a crisis. Hence, when the Prime Minister called upon us to applaud the frontline workers who are risking their lives to keep us safe last month, the entire country expressed solidarity. This is a time when responsible residents are not asking what their city can do for them but asking what they can do for their city.

Kumar is Mission Director, Smart Cities Mission and Joint Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Agarwal is CEO, World Resources Institute India



RAMESH POKHRIYAL NISHANK

## The test of a nation

India — its people and its leadership — is rising to the challenge of the moment

THE ULTIMATE test of a person's character is not where they stand in times of comfort but how they respond to adversity. The challenge posed by COVID-19 could test the leadership qualities of people on a variety of fronts, ranging from the personal to the organisational.

In India, the entire government machinery has risen to the occasion — it stands tall in the collective fight against the virus, which has brought even global superpowers to their knees. The country has demonstrated remarkable resolve under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In this time of crisis, the prime minister has had the unflinching support of 130-crore Indians. It is a testimony to the PM's leadership skills that a country with so much diversity, and a federal structure of governance, has put up a united front against the pandemic. We have shown the world what "India first" means.

I recall the image of PM Modi — a leader who had received an overwhelming political mandate less than a year ago — appealing on national TV to the 130-crore people of India and pleading with them with folded hands to comply with social distancing norms and the proactive measures taken by

the government to tackle the pandemic. This shows his strength of character, concern for the people of the country and faith in the nation's abilities. It takes a far-sighted leader to anticipate the onslaught of the pandemic and announce measures such as the "janata curfew", enforce a timely lockdown, and undertake capacity building exercises to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic.

As the prime minister of the world's largest democracy, Modi has gone an extra mile to help other nations. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has conveyed his gratitude to PM Modi. Earlier, he had requested India for the drug, hydroxychloroquine, by invoking the Ramayana legend of Lord Hanuman bringing sanjeevani to Lakshman. The prime minister's outreach across continents gives weight to the arguments that India has a crucial role in the changing global order.

The unequivocal compliance of the people to the prime minister's clarion call to observe the lockdown is a testament to his acceptability across the political, social and religious spectrum. His credo of "nation first" has brought a diverse range of people under one umbrella, which, in turn, has strength-

ened PM Modi's resolve to fight the pandemic. He has always given pre-eminence to the safety, health and welfare of the people of the country. All the states have followed the directives and advisories of the Centre in letter and spirit. Never in its history has India witnessed such a high degree of cooperative federalism. Moreover, after an appeal by Modi, people from all sections of society have made valuable contributions to the PM Cares Fund. It is indeed a humbling experience to see young and aspiring sportspersons auction their medals and trophies to contribute to this fight. Old men and women have donated their lifetime savings.

The crisis has also taught us some important lessons. The real heroes today are the corona warriors who are fighting to ensure that we stay safe, healthy and be with our families. The administrative machinery at all levels and police, health officials and social workers have been on their toes to ensure that we are safe and comfortable. Let us not forget to convey our gratitude to these heroes who work in unsafe environments.

I should also mention that as a Union minister, I closely monitored 20 districts in

Rajasthan which also included Bhilwara, one of the worst-hit districts. During my daily interactions with the district administration and the other officials deployed to combat the pandemic, I found them one step ahead of the crisis in their planning and execution. The data shows that containing the outbreak was a herculean exercise. Around 3,900 survey teams were constituted, which surveyed 4.5-lakh houses, screened 23-lakh people, isolated 18,000 people and tested them in a span of just three weeks.

This could happen because everyone believed that fighting the pandemic is our national duty. There have been some ugly incidents as well. They are unfortunate and undesirable. We must take it as a challenge and support the administration and strengthen the PM in tackling this challenge. The pain and concern in his words and eyes are palpable. We must empathise with his sentiments and regard it our national duty rise to the occasion. Everything we do today will be seen from the prism of "nation first".

The writer is Union minister of Human Resource Development

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### RIGHTS VIOLATED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unfreedom of press' (IE, April 22). Booking a journalist under the UAPA for benign posts on social media is unwarranted. This is yet another example of an overreach of power attained through invoking and misusing an archaic law to silence the voices of dissent.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unfreedom of press' (IE, April 22). The booking of J&K reporter Peerzada Ashiq and photojournalist Masrat Zahra under the UAPA over their published works is blatant harassment and intimidation of the press.

SS Paul, Nadia

### GOODBYE GENE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Cat and Mouse' (IE, 22 April). This passing away of Gene Deitch, the animator of Tom and Jerry as well as Popeye, is a tragedy. For decades, even today, the cartoons were for entertainment for generations. Tom and Jerry, in particular, were an act of genius — without dialogue, the characters still kept you riveted with their hijinks. Popeye, his love for Olive Oil, and rivalry with Bluto, too, is something many children could relate to. Unfortunately, as many of us found out, the powers of

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

spinach were greatly exaggerated. **Abhijit Chakraborty, Howrah**

### NEW NATION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Nation after lockdown' (IE, April 22). It is quite evident that under the guise of the corona pandemic, the ruling dispensation is aiming at mass behavioural changes and favourable collective responses. This will change the character of the nation.

**Shekhar Deshmukh, Mumbai**

# 8 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

## PANDEMIC WATCH



Imran Khan

### PAKISTAN Imran tests negative for coronavirus

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was tested negative for the novel coronavirus on Wednesday, his aide said, as the number of the COVID-19 cases crossed 10,000 in the country. Khan, 67, agreed for the test after Faisal Edhi, the son of late philanthropist Abdul Sattar Edhi and chairman of the Edhi Foundation, who met him last week tested positive for the coronavirus. "I am happy to report that his test is NEGATIVE," government's chief spokesperson Firdous Ashiq Awan tweeted. Awan said the family of the Prime Minister had already tested negative.

### NEPAL India gifts 23 tonnes of medicine

**Kathmandu:** India on Wednesday gifted 23 tonnes of essential medicines to Nepal. Indian ambassador Vinay Mohan Quatra handed over the medicines to Nepal's Minister of Health and population Bhabubhakta Dhakal. A tweet by the Indian embassy said, "The consignment, as a gift from the people of India to the people of Nepal, includes 8.25 lakh dosage of critical medicines". The Nepal army has also initiated purchase of medicines worth Rs 15 million from an Indian public sector undertaking body.

### SINGAPORE Over 1,000 foreign workers test positive

**Singapore:** Over 1,000 foreign workers, including Indian nationals, tested positive for coronavirus in Singapore on Wednesday, taking the total number of infections to 10,141, as the city-state battles a second wave of contagion. The "vast majority" of the new cases are work permit holders residing in foreign worker dormitories, the Ministry of Health (MOH) said in its preliminary release of figures. More than 1,000 foreign workers, including Indian nationals, are among 1,016 new COVID-19 cases confirmed in Singapore Wednesday noon, according to official figures.

### BUSINESS GROUPS' FURY over blanket ban led to change of tack

# Trump backs off broad immigration ban

**MICHAEL D SHEAR, ZOLAN KANNO-YOUNGS & CAITLIN DICKERSON  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 22**

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said on Tuesday that he would order a temporary halt in issuing green cards to prevent people from immigrating to the United States, but he backed away from plans to suspend guest worker programs after business groups exploded in anger at the threat of losing access to foreign labour.

Trump, whose administration has faced intense criticism in recent months for his handling of the coronavirus crisis, abruptly sought to change the subject Tuesday night by resuming his assault on immigration, which animated his 2016 campaign and became one of the defining issues of his presidency.

He cast his decision to "suspend immigration," which he first announced on Twitter Monday night, as a move to protect American jobs. But it comes as the United States economy sheds its work force at a record rate and when few employers are reaching out for workers at home or abroad. More than 22 million Americans have lost their jobs in the economic devastation caused by the virus and efforts to contain it.



US President Donald Trump at a task force briefing at the White House in Washington. Reuters

Trump said that his order would initially be in effect for 60 days, but that he might extend it "based on economic conditions at the time."

"We can do that at a little bit different time if we want," he said of a second executive order that could further restrict immigration. While numerous studies have concluded that immigration has an overall positive effect on the American work force and wages for workers, Trump ignored that research on Tuesday.

"By pausing immigration, we will help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens. So important," the president said. "It would be wrong and unjust for Americans laid off by the virus to be replaced with new immigrant labour flown in from abroad."

Lawyers at the Justice Department were still studying whether the president had the legal authority to unilaterally suspend the issuance of green cards, an order that caught officials off guard, as per people with knowledge of the announcement. **NYT**

### NO NEW GREEN CARDS to be issued by US for 60 days

## EXPLAINED

### Mixed response to the step back

THE DECISION to allow guest worker visas is seen as a concession to business groups, which were up in arms over the prospect of a full immigration ban. A specific refrain was about farm workers, of which immigrants make up a considerable number. Excluding them could add pressure to an already struggling industry, said experts. However, while the concession will please business groups, analysts suggested the move could damage Trump politically, as anti-immigration activists are seen as a significant part of his voter base.

### PRESIDENT LEAVES DOOR OPEN for more restrictive order in future

## Trump threatens to end trade deal if China does not honour it

**LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 22**

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has threatened to terminate the trade deal with China if Beijing did not honour its provisions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic that originated in the country.

While China has reported 82,788 novel coronavirus cases, including 4,632 fatalities, the United States registered over 824,600 cases and more than 45,290 deaths — the highest in the world.

China and the US in January signed Phase-1 of the trade deal as the world's two top economic powers move forward to end their bitter tit-for-tat two-year tariff war that had rattled markets and weighed on the global economy.

The deal, which calls on China to buy \$200 billion worth of US products, is set to move ahead as planned. However, the

### U.S. STATE SUES CHINA OVER COVID LOSSES

**MISSOURI BECAME** the first US state to sue the Chinese government over its handling of coronavirus and the economic losses

**A CHINESE** foreign ministry spokesman dismissed the accusation as 'nothing short of absurdity' and lacking factual or legal basis

**THE CIVIL** lawsuit, filed in federal court, says Missouri suffered tens of billions of dollars in damages, and seeks cash compensation

**A STATEMENT** by the Attorney General read, 'The Chinese government lied to the world... silenced whistleblowers..'

US-China Economic and Security Review Commission in a report said China could invoke a clause in the agreement that allows for fresh trade consultations between the two countries "in the event of a natural disaster or other unforeseeable event".

"If that happens, we'll do a termination and we'll do what I can do better than anybody," Trump told reporters on Tuesday during his daily White House

press conference on coronavirus.

The president was responding to a question as to how confident he is that the Chinese are not going to invoke the natural disaster clause mentioned in the trade deal.

"There is nobody ever been tougher on China than me," Trump said, reiterating that China had been ripping the US off for years till he was elected as the president. **PTI**

## UK PM under fire over handling of virus crisis as deaths cross 18,000

**GUY FAULCONBRIDGE & ESTELLE SHIRBON  
LONDON, APRIL 22**

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday faced a call for an inquiry into his government's handling of the coronavirus crisis after failing to fully explain partial death data, limited testing or the lack of equipment for hospitals.

The British government says 759 more people have died in UK hospitals, taking the total to 18,100.

The government has given conflicting explanations of why it failed to join a European Union ventilator scheme and admitted there have been problems getting health workers enough protective equipment.

"Once we are through this crisis, there will of course need to be an independent inquiry to



Boris Johnson

officially review the government's response to the pandemic," Ed Davey, acting leader of the Liberal Democrats, said.

"The inquiry must have the strongest possible powers given the shocking failures on protective equipment for staff and the slow response of the government - to get to the truth and to give Boris Johnson the opportunity to answer the increasingly serious questions." **REUTERS**



## WHEN EARTH DAY MEETS COVID

Members of the Environmental Health Citizens' Association of Korea wear masks representing viruses during an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day at Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul, South Korea, on Wednesday. **AP**

## Iran launches first military satellite

**ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, APRIL 22**

IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY Guard said it put the Islamic Republic's first military satellite into orbit, dramatically unveiling what experts described as a secret space program with a surprise launch Wednesday that came amid wider tensions with the United States.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the launch of the satellite, which the Guard called "Noor," or light. The US State Department and Israeli officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment while the Pentagon said it "will continue to closely monitor Iran's pursuit of viable space

### DESTROY GUNBOATS HARASSING U.S. SHIPS: TRUMP

**Washington:** US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he had ordered the United States military to attack and destroy any Iranian vessel that harasses US Navy ships.

"I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all

Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea," Trump said on Twitter.

The order came one week after 11 small armed Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps speedboats swarmed around US Navy and Coast Guard ships in international waters in the northern Gulf. **AFP**

launch technology."

However, such a launch immediately raised concerns among experts on whether the technology used could help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles. Already, Iran has abandoned

all the limitation of its tattered nuclear deal with world powers that President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from in 2018. Trump's decision set off a months-long series of escalating attacks that culminated

in a US drone strike in January that killed a top Iranian general in Iraq, followed by Tehran launching ballistic missiles at American soldiers in Iraq.

As the world grapples with the coronavirus pandemic and historically low oil prices, the missile launch may signal a new willingness to take risks by Iran.

US Army Major Rob Lodewick, a Pentagon spokesman, told the AP that American officials continue to monitor Iran's program.

"While Tehran does not currently have intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), its desire to have a strategic counter to the United States could drive it to develop an ICBM," Lodewick said.

## Lanka intensifies Covid testing in Colombo slums

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, APRIL 22**

THE HEALTH authorities in Sri Lanka have increased testing for the coronavirus in the densely populated slums here after over 1,000 people were quarantined following one positive case in one of the shanties.

With 12 new cases reported on Wednesday, the total number of COVID-19 infections reached 323 in the country. Seven people have died so far of the disease, while 105 have recovered.

"We have increased conducting PCR tests on people from those areas," Anil Jasinghe, Director of General Health

Services said.

The move comes after over 1,000 people were sent for quarantine following the discovery of one positive case at Bandaranaike Road area in central Colombo.

Jasinghe said that over 500 vendors at the wholesale fish market were also subject to PCR tests due to the threat of community transmission. A fish retailer who is a COVID-19 positive had visited the market recently, Jasinghe said.

Police have issued new guidelines for mobile traders who visit residential areas for services during the lockdown.

They have to be adequately protected, police said.

## Disagreements push back EU recovery deal by months

**GABRIELA BACZYNSKA  
BRUSSELS, APRIL 22**

IT MAY take European Union countries until the summer or even longer to agree on how exactly to finance aid to help economies recover from the coronavirus pandemic as major disagreements persist, a bloc official said on Wednesday.

A summit on Thursday is expected to produce only a broad agreement to use the EU's 2021-27 joint budget to help kick-start growth. The bloc's 27 national leaders should also rubber-stamp 500 billion euros of rescue measures effective from June.

"My hope is to make progress in June, July," said the EU official, who is involved in preparing the leaders' summit.

But a final deal might take even longer: "Political lines are moving... but it will take time," the official stressed.

Wealthy, fiscally conservative countries like Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands have rejected calls by ailing southern economies — led by Italy, France and Spain — to sell joint "coronabonds" to raise funds to restart growth.

The official said there was still "real reluctance" in some member states to back the Commission's recovery fund proposal. **REUTERS**



EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen

## 'I THINK IT BRINGS PEOPLE SOME HOPE, A LITTLE BIT OF LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS'

# Closed border can't stop elderly couple: 'Love is the best thing in the world'

**PATRICK KINGSLEY  
MOLLEHUSVEJ BORDER  
CROSSING, APRIL 22**

SHE DRIVES from the Danish side, in her Toyota Yaris.

He cycles from the German side, on his electric bike.

She brings the coffee and the table, he the chairs and the schnapps. Then they sit down on either side of the border, a yard or two apart.

And that is how two octogenarian lovers have kept their romance alive despite the closure

of the border that falls between his home in the very north of Germany and hers in the very south of Denmark.

Every day since the police shut the border, Karsten Tüchsen Hansen, an 89-year-old retired farmer, and Inga Rasmussen, an 85-year-old former caterer, have met at the Mollehusvej border crossing to chat, joke and drink, while maintaining a modicum of social distance.

"We're here because of love," said Tüchsen Hansen, when I visited them last week. "Love is the best thing in the world."

Then he poured another glass of schnapps.

The couple's unlikely romance began in Denmark two summers ago, in slightly less sentimental fashion.

Tüchsen Hansen, carrying a grand bouquet of flowers, was on his way to drop in unannounced on another elderly Danish widow he'd known for decades. But before he reached her house, he met Rasmussen.

Rather taken, he decided against visiting the first woman. Instead, Tüchsen Hansen impulsively gave the flowers to



Karsten Tüchsen Hansen (89) and Inga Rasmussen (85). **NYT**

Rasmussen. He invited her to dinner in Germany and the pair soon grew close, much to the surprise of Rasmussen's three daughters.

Their happy routine came to an abrupt halt on March 13, when the Danish government announced it would close its borders the next day to all but people travelling for work. Frightened she would be locked out of her homeland, Rasmussen hurried back to her house in Denmark, a 15-minute drive away.

Neither knew when they'd next hold the other's hand.

But then they hatched a plan.

On a quiet lane that winds through the flat farmland between their two homes, a few hundred meters from where Tüchsen Hansen was born, the police blocked the road only with a flimsy plastic barrier. It's about halfway between their two homes, so Rasmussen and Tüchsen Hansen have met there for a picnic every afternoon since the shutdown, usually at 3 pm.

In gentle deference to medical advice, they try to avoid physical contact. "The worst thing is we can't embrace each other," Tüchsen Hansen said. "We can't

kiss. We can't make love."

The Danish mayor of a nearby town, Henrik Frandsen, first noticed the couple's routine.

Cycling along the border 10 days after it was closed, Frandsen struck up a conversation with them. Touched by their story, he later posted a picture of them on Facebook.

Within days, they had become regional celebrities, the focus of several reports in local newspapers and radio stations. "I think it brings people some hope, a little bit of light in the darkness," said Frandsen. **NYT**





## HAZLEWOOD WANTS IND SERIES AT ADELAIDE

Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood has suggested the entire Border-Gavaskar Trophy be held at one venue – Adelaide Oval. "The bowlers and batters would probably be happy with that, it's (Adelaide Oval) probably been the best cricket wicket the last four or five years... I wouldn't mind it," he said.

@indianexpress.com

### THOSE MONTHS, THOSE MINUTES

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



In a chat with TUSHAR BHADURI, **HARBINDER SINGH** recalls the story when India reclaimed the hockey gold the last time Olympics were held in Tokyo

READ THE STORY ON [indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com)

# Lower rung gets a helping hand

Governing bodies in tennis get together to set up fund for those struggling due to tour suspension

SHAHID JUDGE  
MUMBAI, APRIL 22

THE GLOBAL lockdown to control the coronavirus pandemic has kept tennis players, particularly the lower-ranked ones, on tenterhooks. The tour – essentially, their livelihood – has been suspended since March, and updates from the world of tennis have been all about the cancellation of tournament after tournament.

Late on Tuesday, however, there was finally one piece of news that sent a wave of optimism among the lower-ranked players. The seven governing bodies of the sport – the International Tennis Federation (ITF), Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), Women's Tennis Association (WTA) and the four Grand Slams – have decided to set up a fund to financially assist players during this period. "Tennis' seven international governing bodies are working together to create a Player Relief Programme to provide assistance to the players who are particularly affected during the COVID-19 crisis. These discussions are progressing well and details are being finalised," read a letter sent to the players by the ITF.

The details of the financial aid are yet to be finalised, but based on a report by *The New York Times*, a pool of over US\$6 million is expected to be formed by the governing bodies. "This is going to be very helpful for the lower-ranked players," says world no. 443 Rutuja Bhosale. "At the moment we are all at home, so the expenses aren't as much because we are not travelling, but you still need to pay for essentials. And there is no income. Basically, we've all been just surviving right now. So, this will definitely help."

In addition to the sum proposed by the governing bodies, the ATP Players' Council, headed by world no. 1 Novak Djokovic and also including Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, has proposed further funds to be contributed by players ranked in the top 100 in singles and the top 20 in doubles, based on their rankings. The 20 doubles players are to contribute US\$ 5,000 each, the top five in singles are to chip in with US\$ 30,000 each, ranks 6-10 with US\$ 20,000, 11-20 with US\$ 15,000, 21-50 with US\$ 10,000 and 51 to 100 with US\$ 5,000. All donations to this fund are



India's Rutuja Bhosale, ranked 443 in the world, could benefit from the relief fund being worked out by the sport's governing bodies.

## Federer suggests a merger of ATP, WTA

Roger Federer called for a merger between the men's ATP Tour and the WTA, which runs the women's circuit, as tennis wades through a lengthy coronavirus shutdown. "Just wondering... am I the only one thinking that now is the time for men's and women's tennis to be united and come together as one?" the winner of 20 Grand Slam singles titles said on Twitter. "I am not talking about merging competition on the court, but merging the 2 governing bodies (ATP and WTA) that oversee the men's and women's professional tours..." Rafa Nadal also voiced his support. "They @rogerfederer as you know per our discussions I completely agree that it would be great to get out of this world crisis with the union of men's and women's tennis in one only organisation," said Nadal. **REUTERS**

**At the moment we are all at home, so the expenses aren't as much because we are not travelling, but you still need to pay for essentials. And there is no income. Basically, we've all been just surviving right now. So, this will definitely help.**

RUTUJA BHOSALE  
WORLD NUMBER 443

voluntary, and should all players accept the proposal, it would amount to US\$ 1,050,000. Furthermore, Djokovic is said to be pushing for support to be given to players ranked 250 to 700, with a sum of US\$ 10,000 each. "Outside of 250 is where the real financial struggle is," Djokovic said in a message to a group of players, according to the *New York Times*. "We feel that we all need to get together and help these guys out. Many of them

are thinking to leave pro tennis because they just can't survive financially. Unfortunately, there is a very large amount of players in the group between 250 and 700 that is not supported by federations or don't have sponsors."

While the news has been well received, there is concern that some of the players overlooked for this fund may struggle once the tour restarts. "This is definitely helpful and really something that will uplift players who are suffering, but I hope things are made fair to a greater set of players," says 26-year-old Sidharth Rawat, ranked 438. "At the moment the help will go for 250 to 700, but the person ranked 249 may be struggling just as badly. I'd say the players ranked 250 and above struggle because the ones higher than that mark can earn some money by just making it to the Grand Slam qualifiers."

There's been a lot of speculation that lower-ranked players are struggling to survive the lockdown and have decided to move on from the sport. Since the tour was

suspended in March and till July 13 at least, there has been a sum of approximately US\$ 56,834,845 on the men's circuit, and US\$ 34,224,127 on the WTA tour that could have been earned by players in prize money. These events however, are only for higher-ranked players. The ones who play in the lower tiers are playing for much smaller prize money, which means their savings are just as low.

"If it weren't for my parents, I'd be out (financially) by now. I'm blessed to have parents to support me, but I can't do this forever," says world no. 655 Arjun Kadhe, who at 26, has earned a total of US\$ 94,117 in prize money so far. The thought of financial aid coming in, though, has kept him upbeat.

"That money can be used to invest in tennis, be it training or travel. It'll help getting things started again."

As of now, it's not confirmed who will be getting how much. But for the players, just the beginning of the process gives them hope.

# DDCA secretary in jail, colleagues thought he had COVID-19

PRESSTrust OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI/MEERUT, APRIL 22

CONTROVERSIAL DELHI and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) general secretary Vinod Tihara is currently in jail for allegedly failing to "comply with GST norms" after going "incommunicado" amid speculation that he was self-isolating with symptoms of COVID-19. "A Delhi resident named Vinod Tihara was arrested by Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) wing of Noida on March 17 on allegations of violations of GST norms and is currently in Meerut jail," SSP Meerut, Ajay Sahni, told PTI.

There was no immediate clarity on the exact nature of the violation he has been accused of committing. Tihara is Delhi cricket's representative at the BCCI and an influential figure in state's cricket body. Tihara had been "unreachable" since mid-March leaving DDCA officials, including members of his faction, flummoxed. "For the longest time, we were under the impression that Vinod ji has tested positive for COVID-19. One or two people who contacted his family members were told that he is under isolation. His phone is switched off for the past one month," a senior DDCA office-bearer told PTI.

During a recent online hearing in a matter of financial misappropriation of funds, organised by DDCA ombudsman Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma via Skype, one of the body's lawyers, known for his proximity to Tihara, told the apex council members that he had tested positive for novel coronavirus.

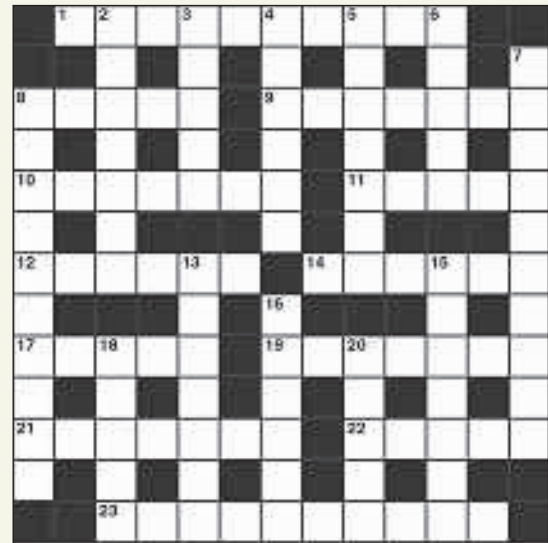
"We all freaked out as we had met Tihara till March 15 at various places. We told him that why weren't we informed as we all needed to quarantine ourselves. He then changed track and said that if you people would have been COVID-19 positive, then you would have known by now. It was very suspicious," the Apex Council member who was suspended that day, said.

In fact, some of the members are now wondering how did a letter signed by Tihara in support of one of the lawyers, whose service was being terminated, get submitted to Ombudsman, when all this while he had been in jail.

# Olympic-bound athletes told to train within India till year-end

NEW DELHI: The Indian Olympic Association decided to ask the Sports Ministry to allow national campers to undergo outdoor training inside major sports centres in the country by following necessary precautions. At the moment, the athletes have been barred from any training even inside the Sports Authority of India facilities. The meeting, held via video conference under the chairmanship of Lalit Bhanot, was attended by IOA President Narinder Batra, Secretary General Rajiv Mehta and Tokyo Olympics Indian contingent Chef De Mission BP Baisya, apart from 62 representatives from various National Sports Federations. It was also decided that Olympic-bound athletes should train within the country till end of the year in order to avoid any risk. The IOA also agreed that the "decisions on extension of contracts for High Performance Directors, chief/head coaches, coaches and other support staff till 2021 or 2024 needs to be done on priority by SAI and the ministry for smooth handling of training for 2021 and thereafter". **PTI**

## CROSSWORD 4099



- ACROSS**
- Recognises and arrests (10)
  - Warning! This woman is dangerous (5)
  - A welder renovating the sheltered side of a ship (7)
  - One needs pluck to play it (7)
  - Daily woman, perhaps (5)
  - Confirm it if a try is made correctly (6)
  - Odd stance for a climb (6)
  - Emir's off to see Scrooge (5)
  - The art of eating out (7)
  - Studio that is later converted (7)
  - Puce-coloured jumpers (5)
  - Priest very disposed to obstinacy (10)
- DOWN**
- The job of a debt-collector? (7)
  - Wash resin out (5)
  - He has a title within his grasp (6)
  - Do they have piercing eyes? Just the opposite (7)
  - Pulls up the grass (5)
  - Sat and gave new privileges for some people (10)
  - Yet it's enough food to go round (6,4)
  - Skin specialist (7)
  - I'd fill in the result - it's obvious (7)
  - Educational measure? (6)
  - People count on them to send them to sleep (5)
  - Those on the wrists are preferable to those on the ears (5)

Solutions Crossword 4098: Across: 1 Volvo, 4 Easter, 9 Shearer, 10 Strip, 11 Reset, 12 Eyegore, 13 Nothing left, 18 Notable, 20 Bravo, 22 Cairo, 23 Sardine, 24 Steady, 25 Fluent. Down: 1 Vestry, 2 Leeks, 3 Scratch, 5 Aisle, 6 Turn off, 7 Rippled, 8 Free-and-easy, 14 Outlive, 15 Liberal, 16 Knocks, 17 Honest, 19 Brood, 21 Abide.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

ETVAI                      ELTYHMH  
 [Shaded squares]      [Shaded squares]

EHINT                      NUDNIK  
 [Shaded squares]      [Shaded squares]

SOLUTION: VITAE, THINE, MIRTH, LINKIND  
 Answer: I think, therefore I am - Rene Descartes

## Difficulty Level 3s

**INSTRUCTIONS**  
 To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

## Difficulty Level

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



## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4187

