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THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2020, KOLKATA, LATE CITY, 10 PAGES

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## 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 non-bailable offence, with a maximum jail term of seven years and a fine of Rs 5 lakh.

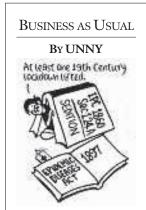
Briefing reporters on the Cabinet decision, Union Information and Broadcasting

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 iail term may range from six months to seven years, and the fine from **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 



Amit Shah, Harsh Vardhan interact with the IMA. PTI



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 9.99% 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 iumpstart its commerce business under JioMart, Facebook, in turn, makes its long-awaited foray into

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



THE FIRST major nondistress 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 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 have articulated that the first major collaboration involving lioMart, 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. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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

Affluent in

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 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 teach ers in Scheduled Areas, a fivejudge Constitution Bench said: "Now there is a cry within the reserved classes. By now, there are affluents 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 strugtitlement within reserved classes of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes." The Bench, comprising

Justices Arun Mishra, Indira Banerjee, Vineet Saran, MR Shah and Aniruddha Bose, agreed with Senior Advocate Raieev 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 Raieev 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 CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

### Ten-fold jump in Rajasthan MNREGS numbers, more than double in Maharashtra as curbs ease CORONA COUNT **DEEP MUKHERJEE** & VIVEK DESHPANDE JAIPUR, NAGPUR, APRIL 22

Women workers at a MNREGS site in Chaksu near Jaipur on Wednesday. Express

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

Rajasthan Deputy Chief 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

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA,

**SANTANU CHOWDHURY** 

**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

Addressing a press confer-

ence, Banerjee said if there was a

health hazard, then the state was

not responsible. "They are show-

ing an attitude they would have

ATRIMITRA,

on the ground.

KOLKATA, APRIL 22

3,960 RECOVERED ,621 samples have been tested as on April 21

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

Governor says no takers for Bengal

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 crease 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 or

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 ing," he said.

On Wednesday, he inspected MNREGS work sites falling under the jurisdiction of the Chaksu panchayat samiti near **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

## 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 BIP 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

On a normal April evening,

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.

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** PAGE 4

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 **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

**GOING BACK TO A NEW SCHOOL** 

BY AMEETA MULLA WATTAL



'NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE CM TO HAVE AN IRON **CURTAIN WITH** RAJ BHAVAN'

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR

now been withdrawn because they were faulty. Thankfully, our

health department ordered ful. 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

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

**WEST BENGAL** 

**GIVES BIRTH TO** VIRUS-FREE BOY PAGE 3

been happy if there were more COVID-19 cases in Bengal. Rapid test kits sent to the state have



**INSIDE** 

TRUMP BACKS OFF **BROAD IMMIGRATION BAN AFTER ANGER** 

**UK PM UNDER FIRE OVER HANDLING OF VIRUS CRISIS** PAGE 8

**WOMAN WITH COVID** 

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

**PRITAM PALSINGH** 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 Iairam 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

"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

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

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 iail 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.

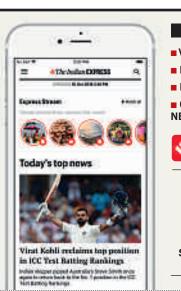
The court directed that Rahat "will not leave the State of Haryana without permission of the court and ordinarily reside in his place of residence".

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.

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#### SACHIN TENDULKAR'S 'DESERT STORM', THE INNINGS THAT INSPIRED A GENERATION

Sachin Tendulkar, then just 24 years old, smashed a thunderous 143 against Australia in Sharjah on April 22, 1998. This knock would come to be known as the 'Desert Storm' in the coming years.

#### VIDEO OF THE DAY



'HONOUR CONVOY' IN **MANGALURU** 

Mangaluru police have organised an convoy to salute health workers

#### **EXPRESS OPINION**



**ACTOR DIA MIRZA ON** THE CORONAVIRUS

An invisible virus has acted as a leveler, writes

## **EXPRESS** AUDIO

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

**NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY** 

Reporters detail how health workers are facing increased pressure, how stigma is driving attacks, and why IMA demanded a change in law to protect them

## **FROM PAGE ONE**

#### Changing law

Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. The investigation into the attack must be completed within a month.

The amendments will also apply to harassment by landlords and neighbours. The penal provisions can be invoked in case of damage to property, including a clinical establishment, a facility identified for quarantine and isolation of patients, and mobile medical units.

"The Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 manifests our commitment to protect each and every healthcare worker who is bravely battling COVID-19 on the frontline. It will ensure safety of our professionals. There can be no compromise on their safety," Prime Narendra Modi tweeted

Modi is scheduled to hold a video conference with chief ministers on April 27 to discuss the COVID-19 situation.

Home Minister Amit Shah, who held a meeting with doctors and members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) along with Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday, tweeted: "PM@narendramodi's govt is committed to protecting those who are protecting India during these challenging times. Bringing an ordinance to end violence against our doctors & health workers is a testimony of the same. Safety and dignity of our doctors at their work place is non-negotiable.

The IMA, which had earlier threatened a protest, has decided to withdraw it.

In separate letters to states, Union Ĥome Secretary Ajay Bhalla and Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan asked them to ensure the safety of healthcare workers.

Meanwhile, with 1,486 new cases and 49 deaths being reported in the last 24 hours, the tally is now 20.471 cases (3.959) recovered) and 652 deaths.

And, a day after asking states not to use the rapid antibody tests for two days pending field validation, following complaints of varying accuracy, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reiterated that these tests should be used only for the purpose of surveillance.

"Globally also, the utility of this test is evolving and it is currently being used for detecting the formation of antibodies in individuals. These test results are also dependent on field conditions. As noted by ICMR, these tests cannot replace the RT-PCR test to diagnose COVID-19 cases. ICMR has assured assistance to collect data from various states to assess the scope and extent of utility of these rapid antibody tests in field conditions, and ICMR shall keep advising the states on a regular basis," the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

In a letter to state chief secretaries, ICMR ADG Dr G S Toteja said: "I would again reiterate that antibody rapid tests are largely to be used as a tool for surveillance with respect to formation of antibody in persons exposed to the virus.

In an addendum to the existing testing strategy, the ICMR has now said that "pregnant women residing in clusters/containment area or in large migration gatherings/ evacuees centre from hotspot districts presenting in labour or likely to deliver in next 5 days should be tested even if asymptomatic."

In his letter, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla urged states, UTs and district authorities to "take strict penal action against the offenders who obstruct government health officials, or other health professionals and/or related persons, who are authorised under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, in the discharge of their lawful

"A few heinous instances of unruly behaviour by people have also been reported in some parts of the country where the family and relatives of medical professionals, suspected to have died due to COVID-19 infection, were prevented from performing the last rites of the deceased. In such cases, adequate security should be provided, and stringent action should be taken against such offenders," he said.

States have been told to appoint nodal officers to redress such safety issues.

Listing the Centre's initiatives to safeguard the health and safety of doctors. Sudan wrote: "Doctors and health professionals are in the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. The skills and spirit of service among these professionals places them in a unique position to save people from the disease. It is of utmost importance that adequate measures are taken for ensuring their safety."

Sudan also said that orders for 1 crore sets of personal protective equipment (PPEs) have been placed with the 50 newly approved domestic manufacturers, and 5.11 lakh PPEs have been sent to the states so far.

#### Sarpanch

including two in the Union Territory of Dadra-Nagar Haveli, initiated a calls-whistles-torchlight flashes system of communicating during all-night vigils.

So when a Maruti Eeco drove past Gadchinchle around 8 pm on April 16, the men of Gadchinchle, Divshi, Dabhadi, Talavli and Rudana were ready. with torchlights and bamboo

The Eeco, with victims Mahant Kalpavruksha Giri (70) Sushilgiri Maharaj (35) and driver Naresh Yelgade, was taking State Highway 73 off the Dahanu-Iawhar Road, en route to Surat, likely to duck the Mumbai-Gujarat highway checkposts enforcing the sealing of state borders.

The Eeco was stopped barely 1 km from Gadchinchle, at a lockdown barricade manned by guards from Dadra-Nagar Haveli, and turned back.

Gadchinchle Sarpanch Chitra Choudhari lives exactly between the border point and the Maharashtra forest department checkpost outside which the lynching occurred. Her home perched on a small slope, she heard the car passing in the quiet of night and then heard it as it turned around and passed, back in the direction it came from where a couple of dozen men stood, tense and armed.

A commotion erupted soon, it was around 8.30 pm, she recalled, and she went to the spot. 'There were men from our village and from nearby villages, it was a thick crowd screaming around the car. It was impossible to reason with them. I was trying to pull one back and then another, but the men were screaming at me too. They told me I was free to hand over my children's kidneys to the men in the car — they had absolutely no doubt who these outsiders were. The WhatsApp messages had said the kidnappers could be impersonators, performers, dressed even as policemen,' Choudhari told The Indian

Multiple eyewitness accounts concur that the mob, having seen only the rare vehicle along this road during the days and none after dusk, thought it had stopped crimi-

Choudhari, 35, in her second term as Sarpanch, laments that she could do little. "For the two hours that I was there, the mob was raining stones and shaking the car, but the men inside were still unharmed," she said. She

tap into vast WhatsApp user base create new employment opportunities," RIL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh

Ambani said Wednesday.

The deal also opens up WhatsApp's entire user base for Reliance, including the customers on rival telecom platforms. "With WhatsApp firmly entrenched as the dominant OTT messaging platform in India, Jio will now have a channel for promoting their other digital services directly to the customers of their competitors. Moreover, over time it's also possible to expect Jio to  $use\,the\,WhatsApp\,relationship$ to try convert Bharti (Airtel) and Vodafone Idea customer to their network," Bernstein Research said in a note.

With its largest investment yet in India, the Californiabased Facebook has finally succeeded after multiple attempts to get into Indian telecom space. Iio Platforms Ltd owns broadband, enterprise broadband and narrowband internet-of-things businesses, as well as a bouquet of digital

in enterprise value (which includes the market capitalisation of a company as well as the debt and cash on its bal-Since the deal with Reliance is only for a minority

apps. The transaction puts Jio

Platforms at around \$66 billion

Facebook picks stake, Jio set to

stake, neither Facebook nor RIL is bound in any way to an exclusive arrangement. So, apart from Jio, Facebook can look at similar partnerships on other platforms, including within . WhatsApp. In 2015, the social media giant had attempted to offer free Internet services to Indian cus-

platform, but the plan was foiled by telecommunication regulator TRAI, which disallowed differential pricing. Now, as per a banker, "Not only does Facebook get a readymade platform with a huge customer base, it may

tomers under its FreeBasics

The move to part with a

stake in Jio Platforms is in line with Reliance's plans to divest shares in its units to bring down the company's debt, while enhancing its equity value, in case it goes in for an initial public offering. The company's outstanding debt as on September 30, 2019, was Rs 2.92 lakh crore (\$41.2 billion), while cash and cash equivalents were at Rs 1.35 lakh crore (\$19 billion).

Earlier, Reliance signed an agreement to divest stake in its telecom towers business to Brookfield, and is in talks to sell a stake in the optic fibre business, which has been transferred to an Infrastructure Investment Trust. A top investment banker said that the Facebook deal is in line with Mukesh Ambani's AGM speech last year, where he said he was working with global leaders and would make the company debt-free by March 2021.

"It is a well-thought-out stood that with the scale of his businesses — oil & gas, telecom, digital and retail — there is no

room for error. I understand that Aramco's due diligence is currently on (Reliance plans to sell 20% stake in its refining and petrochemicals business to Saudi giant Aramco) and the RIL Group is also learnt to be working on bringing in a global strategic player into its retail business," the investment banker said. Analysts expect Reliance to

now further expand on the digital front. "Facebook can help Jio move to the next level as they have the expertise, technology and global talent", while relieving its debt concerns, said an analyst with a global research firm. As per the India head of a

global investment banking firm, "What Reliance is doing is creating a permanent business continuity plan. The business will not be dependent now on how successful the next generation is, as it will continue to grow with the strategic partner. It is like succession planning as it covers ceivable risks in the future.

ment is doing this on its own, without any help from the centre. And just see what is the will be directly competing with Governor doing?" each other: in the market the

#### competing in the market. "There will be things where we

**MNREGS** ensure social distancing, medical kits and soaps for labourers. "Even if a person is given work for constructing his own home under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yoiana under the MNREGS, that individual will be paid. Even for community works, we have made sure that the labour force is spread out," he said.

Maharashtra MNREGS Commissioner Nayak told The Indian Express they had started "a very aggressive campaign to provide works to the needy, affected by the coronavirus pandemic". He said they were also focusing on individual works, as large gatherings are not allowed. "But about 20% of the attendance can be attributed to community works as well," he said.

Nayak said they had finalised about 35,000 individual works under 216 categories like digging of wells at farms, making cattle sheds, horticulture work and construction of homes under the Awas Yojana. "I have asked the staff to personally approach the beneficiaries, instead of the other way round, to pro-actively speed up works."

Maharashtra has also issued orders to publish the list of these beneficiaries at government offices such as that of the collector, zila parishad CEO, sub-divisional officers, tehsildars and gram panchayats. The state is also trying to clear rejected online wage transactions on a "war footing", Nayak said.

**MNREGS** Raiasthan Commissioner P C Kishan said the demand for the scheme is expected to increase in the next few months, with even relatively affluent villagers seeking jobs after loss of income during the lockdown.

#### OBC, SC/ST

as constitutionally envisaged. The Government to take appropriate steps in this regard," it

On the 2000 order, the Bench said "the G.O.Ms. No.3/2000 providing for 100 per cent reser-

have got worrisome inputs vation is not permissible under about PDS being hijacked politthe Constitution, the outer limit ically, ration dealers being subis 50 per cent as specified in jected by ruling party workers to Indra Sawhney". In 1992, a Constitution Bench coercive mechanism and distribution taking place in a politiof the Supreme Court, ruling in cised manner under token is-Indra Sawhney & Others vs sued by the workers of the ruling Union of India, capped the total party. This hijacking is a very permissible reservation at 50 poor reflection on the public per cent. functionaries and they will have "A reservation that is permisto be held accountable for their lapses, failures and inaction in

official duties," said Dhankhar.

Firhad Hakim said, "With all re-

Minister herself took strict ac-

the secretary. The government

is trying hard to normalise the

rationing system," Hakim said.

in the number of Covid 19

deaths, Hakim said, "The gov-

ernment has no intention to

suppress the facts. The Governor

is always in tune with the voice

of opposition, especially BJP. The

state government is continu-

ously fighting against Covid 19

and the Chief Minister has hit

the streets herself to spread

awareness. The state govern-

Regarding the discrepancies

Responding to these allega-

sible by protective mode, by making it 100 per cent would become discriminatory and impermissible. The opportunity of tions, Mayor of Kolkata and state public employment cannot be **Urban Development Minister** denied unjustly to the incumbents, and it is not the prerogaspect, I challenge the honourable tive of few. The citizens have Governor to show me a single equal rights, and the total exclucase where the TMC or anyone sion of others by creating an opattached to the party has done portunity for one class is not any corruption in regard to the contemplated by the founding rationing system. In the hard fathers of the Constitution of lockdown situation, may be India. Equality of opportunity there was some problem in disand pursuit of choice under tribution system. But that is not Article 51-A cannot be deprived of unjustly and arbitrarily," it corruption. After getting information from public, the Chief "By providing 100 per cent tion against the department and

reservation to the Scheduled Tribes has deprived the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes also of their due representation. The concept of reservation is not proportionate but adequate, as held in Indra Sawhney. The action is thus unreasonable and arbitrary and violative of provisions of Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India. It also impinges upon the right of open category and Scheduled Tribes who have settled in the area after 26th January 1950," the Bench said.

Rejecting the state's arguments, the Bench said "there were no such extraordinary circumstances to provide a 100 per cent reservation in Scheduled Areas. It is an obnoxious idea that tribals only should teach the tribals. When there are other local residents, why they cannot teach is not understandable. The action defies logic and is arbitrary. Merit cannot be denied in toto by providing reservation".

The Bench was hearing a challenge to the decision of the Andhra Pradesh High Court that upheld the government order. Given the circumstances, it, however, allowed the request not to quash the appointments already made, but warned against making such provisions in the future.

It noted that a similar government order was issued by Andhra Pradesh in 1986 which was quashed by the State Administrative Tribunal and an appeal before the Supreme Court was dismissed as withdrawn in 1998. "After withdrawal of the ap-

peal from this Court, it was ex-

pected of the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh not to resort to such illegality of providing 100% reservation once again. But instead, it issued G.O. Ms. No.3 of 2000, which was equally impermissible... It was least expected from the functionary like Government to act in aforesaid manner as they were bound by the dictum laid down by this Court in Indra Sawhney... and other decisions holding that the limit of reservation not to exceed 50%. There was no rhyme or reason with the State Government to resort to 100% reservation. It is unfortunate that illegal exercise done in 1986 was sought to be protected by yet another unconstitutional attempt by issuing G.O.Ms. No.3 of 2000 with retrospective effect of 1986, and now after that 20 years have passed. In the peculiar circumstance, we save the appointments conditionally that the reorganised States i.e. the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana not to attempt a similar exercise in the future. If they do so and exceed the limit of reservation, there shall not be any saving of the appointments made, w.e.f. 1986 till date", the bench said in its judgment.

#### wireless broadband, home have avoided the big hurdle of plan and is being executed to spending time on getting apperfection. It must be underprovals for doing business in

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

Anshuman Thakur, head of strategy at Reliance Jio, said during the call: "As we come to the post-COVID era, and the economic recovery that we're all hoping for, there is a lot that we can do together, and so the

timing has been appropriate." Thakur described the deal as a "long-term partnership", and said the initial products would be focussed on small and medium enterprises as well as

left a little after the police ar-

up along with her husband

Shevak for questioning around

2 am later that night, and asked

to name those involved in the vi-

olence. "Now the families of

those arrested are threatening

me, the women came here and

said my house should be broken

down. That's why I placed a new

sign saying 'Sarpanch' on my

door two days back — at least if

there's an attack on me some

people may see the sign and

leader Kashinath Choudhari,

Palghar Zilla Parishad member

and the party's losing candidate

from Dahanu in the 2014

Assembly election, said he ar-

rived a little after 10 pm. with the

second batch of policemen, af-

ter first stopping at Kasa police

station about 9.30 pm. "We saw

lockdown roadblocks along our

way, and when we reached, the

mob kept asking how this Eeco

had escaped the roadblocks.

When they try to go somewhere

their vehicles are seized, and this

car appeared to be circling the

area," he told The Indian Express.

member, her husband and

women from a hamlet across

the road, said the NCP leader's

arrival appeared to energise the

mob, and some began to chant:

'Dada aala, Dada aala' (big

brother is here). The NCP man is

seen in the video clips of the in-

cident, wearing a T-shirt, stand-

that he tried to calm the people

but by then, the Eeco had been

upturned. "Police tried their

best, but the men were drunk,

unwilling to reason. Still, we

managed to get one sadhu to sit

He told The Indian Express

ing back from the assailants.

The sarpanch, who is a BIP

Nationalist Congress Party

back off," she said.

Chitra Choudhari was picked

rived, in two batches.

the merchants, "where we can go in with the products that they understand well already".

One hurdle for using WhatsApp will be the fact that the just over a million Indians currently have access to the WhatsApp Pay feature which is yet to get regulatory clearance. However, Reliance has JioMoney, which could be integrated into the JioMart product to make payments seam-

inside the chowki because he

had been injured and put the

other two in another police vehi-

cle. But suddenly, when police

were escorting the man from

the chowki into the police vehi-

cle, the attack began again, and it

was over in minutes." The NCP

leader said there was no politi-

cal motive to visiting the spot,

and he confirmed that the BJP

sarpanch had tried hard to calm

the crowd. "But the police were

also attacked and beaten, and

we couldn't do anything," he

and the probe: the arrival of the

police when the victims were

unharmed and their subsequent

murder in their presence. The

Kasa police station's official ac-

count is that suspensions and an

enquiry are ordered. Local po-

licemen said their men were

vastly outnumbered by the mob

baying for blood, and their at-

tempt to dispel rumours didn't

had tweeted warning people

against spreading rumours —

about coronavirus and other

subjects. On April 11, the Palghar

police registered a case against

the admin of a WhatsApp group

in Boisar after receiving a com-

plaint about a communally of-

fensive message on a WhatsApp

group. Dahanu MLA Vinod

Nikole of the CPI(M) said there

were at least two previous near-

lynching incidents, one at Sarni

Patilpada involving a doctor on

April 14, and one at Waki vil-

lage involving railway officials,

work over the last month to as-

sure the people that they are

safe and that the rumours are

fake, and had the police come

prepared after the experience of

"Had the police done some

around the same time.

On April 9, the Palghar police

work.

That is key to the tragedy —

Thakur said Facebook will have a seat on the board of Jio Platforms, along with an observer seat. "Facebook will be

and trust. However, Thakur clarified that the investment or the partnership or collaboration did not mean that the companies

entities are independent of our largest partner, that is an each other in every respect," he expression of the commitment Which means that once it gets clearance, WhatsApp Pay will compete directly with

the previous incidents, the

lynching could have been pre-

vented," Nikole told The Indian

men with the search for others

continuing, the villages have al-

most emptied out, the men re-

portedly hiding in the forest

around Gambhirgad, the escarp-

ment opposite the village that

ers occupied by only women or

senior citizens. Among the 110,

at least 14 are from Chowkipada,

a little farther inside from

Gadchinchle. The police said

from home, and those who did-

n't have also had to run," said

Sevanti Borsa, mother of ac-

cused Rustom Borsa. "If they're

not released by the time the

lockdown ends, we're going to

Some residents are also fol-

lowers of godman Guru

Narendra Maharaj, and wear

badges and medallions bearing

his photo. "We would never

harm a sadhu," said Sakur

Gavit. "We would bow our

from Goregaon posted in the

village, men sheltering from

But Gadchinchle itself does

not have even a police chowki.

The sarpanch said it often

takes two hours for men from

the Kasa police station, 35 km

away, to arrive. The forest

chowki has a guard, who made

the call to the police that night.

Outside, the remnants of those

three hours lie, shattered glass

from the Eeco and police vehi-

cle, an assortment of slippers,

patch of blood.

the afternoon sun in tents.

There is now a police unit

heads to them."

starve without any income."

"Those who did it ran away

nine accused are juveniles.

Many homes are locked, oth-

gives it its name.

With the police arresting 110

(Facebook and Jio) would stop

Antigen kits are not being supfar." said Baneriee.

pandemic," she said.

Meanwhile, in an interview to The Indian Express, Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor of West Bengal, raised a red flag over the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state. "There are no takers for the COVID-19 death figures on account of the series of discrepancies by the state government. The concern of the political parties, the medical fraternity and citizens is well premised. The trust deficit on this count between the government and the medical fraternity as also between the government and the people has attracted national and global focus. The concept of Audit Committee, unheard of so far. has worsened the

He also took a critical view of the state's critical public distribution system during the lock down. "From all over the State, I

## **Bengal Covid**

JioMoney. Also, Jio has messen-

gers that compete with

WhatsApp for user attention.

plied to hospitals in the state so "Everyday, they (Centre) are

telling us what to do and what not to do, sending people to look into the law and order situation and whether lockdown is being imposed or not. They are sending people to find out whether people in Bengal are getting rations or whether they are being able to take a bath. They are also sending us strongly-worded letters. We can also send them letters. But that's not the point. Our government is doing the best it can to stem the spread of the

Her comments came a day after a war of words broke out between the state and the Centre over the arrival of two central teams in Kolkata.

wooden sticks, and a drying

situation," he said.

# THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL



Masks Out

A roadside installation of statues on national integration now have masks to create awareness on coronavirus, in Kolkata on Wednesday. Partha Paul

## 'It is not appropriate for the chief minister to have an iron curtain with Raj Bhavan'

AMID ALLEGATIONS of the state government's effort to hide actual numbers regarding COVID-19 positive cases and deaths, involvement in alleged PDS scam, and keeping BJP MPs under 'house arrest', Governor **JAGDEEP DHANKHAR** tells RAVIK BHATTACHARYA that the state government should synergistically work with the Centre.

#### What do you think of the Centre sending two teams to Bengal to evaluate lockdown enforcement in seven districts (COVID-19 hotspots)?

COVID-19 is to be faced unitedly, fully supporting our health warriors. Coronavirus is secular, non-discriminatory and adversely impacts all, irrespective of ideology or status. In the country, the fight against this menace to civilisation is being spearheaded by the prime minister with vision and imagination. It is required of all to be in cooperation mode.

I have appealed to all in the state to extend full support to the state government. I have requested the state government to synergistically work with the central government. Central teams have come after due thought process and under a legal regime that binds us all. The Supreme Courtorder, dated March 31, is required to be followed by all, and that mandates — "...we trust and expect that all concerned viz., State Governments, Public Authorities and Citizens of this country will faithfully comply with the directives and orders issued by the Union of India in letter and spirit in the interest of public safety."

This is no time to dictate actions by political or otherwise considerations.

#### CM Mamata Banerjee has said sending central team 'without valid reason might not be consistent with the spirit of federalism'. What is your opinion on this?

I am sure the CM will revisit her stand in the light of the legal provisions of the SC order and offer full cooperation to the central teams, so that the miseries of people can be mitigated and the sharpness of the fight against

**CHEER AMID GLOOM** 



**JAGDEEP DHANKHAR** WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

COVID-19 be enhanced. All are bound by constitutional same. While I have not appreciated the stand of the CM in not performing her constitutional duties, even qua my office. looking into the seriousness and sensitive situation, I continue to be in request mode. There has to be realisation by her. Bureaucracy must not be emasculated or in supine mode.

#### On social media, you have criticised the alleged house arrest of BJP MPs during COVID-19 outbreak. What should have been done?

MPs have critically significant role to play, more so during crisis period. Curtailment of their activities, inspired by political motivations, is unwholesome reflection on governance. I invited attention of the government to this aspect and the response of the state leaves everything to be desired. The cryptic response calls for stern action and that is engaging my attention. What an ironic situation that while one MP can feed thousands in a day and for days together, the others can't step out to discharge public service. This dichotomy is alarming and cannot be overlooked.

What is your take on opposition parties, including BJP and CPM, challenging the

number of COVID-19 positive

#### cases and deaths?

There are no takers for the COVID-19 death figures on account of the series of discrepancies by the state government. The concern of the political parties, medical fraternity and citizens is well-premised. The trust deficit on this count between the government and medical fraternity as also between the government and people has attracted national and global focus. The concept of Audit Committee, unheard of so far, has worsened the situation... people need to know the ground reality and such information is bound to generate seriousness in people towards observance of lockdown protocol and social distancing.

I have urged the government that a credible sharing of information will go a long way in sharpening our fight.

#### You have talked about 'PDS scam' in Bengal during the lockdown and stated that it is getting bigger. What should be done?

From all over the state. I have got worrisome inputs about PDS being hijacked politically, ration dealers being subjected by ruling party workers to coercive mechanism and distribution taking place in a politicised manner under token issued by the workers of the ruling party. This hijacking is a very poor reflection on the public functionaries and they will have to be held accountable for their lapses, failures and inaction in official duties.

#### TMC MPs have criticised your

stand. What is your response? All my actions are dictated in the interest of people of the state of West Bengal, and I would continue to work in that direction. The script that I follow emanates from the Indian Constitution...

Surely it is not appropriate for the CM to have an iron curtain with Raj Bhavan. Disregard of constitutional norms and objections at her end are just not condonable. I have repeatedly urged her to reflect. CM is acting in an undemocratic fashion by ignoring the Constitution that indicates

> Full interview on www.indianexpress.com

## 'Governor, BJP sing same tune... Bengal thinks he is partisan'

Dhankhar's recent criticism of the state government, including

#### Governor's remarks at a time the state government is fighting against the spread of COVID-19 in Bengal?

Mamata Banerjee is appealing everyone to fight the coronavirus unitedly, and the Prime Minister is appealing in the same tune, the vindictive attitude of the Governor [Jagdeep Dhankhar] is discouraging thousands of people who are with the Chief Minister at the time of this crisis. It is not clear if the constitutional position is being used on behest of a political party.

#### The Governor has criticised the state government for allegedly putting BJP MPs under house arrest. Your reaction?

The BJP MPs themselves have broken the ethics of the lockdown. One MP returned from Delhi, Instead of staying in quarantine for 14 days, he directly went to his constituency. More or less, all BJP leaders are doing the same.

#### The Governor has spoken about a "PDS scam". Your response?

took strict action against the department and its secretary after coming to know of some problems from the public. The government is trying hard to normalise the rationing system to fulfil the commitment of the Chief Minister.

The Governor and the Opposition have alleged that

allegations of a PDS scam.

With all due respect, I challenge the honourable Governor to show me a single case of corruption in the ration system in which the Trinamool Congress or anyone attached to the party is involved. Because of the lockdown, there may be some problems in the distribution system, but that is not corruption.

The Chief Minister herself

Minister and Kolkata Mayor FIRHAD HAKIM talks to ATRI MITRA about Governor Jagdeep

# What is your opinion on the

When Chief Minister

#### the state government has not tested enough, is suppressing facts and mishandling the The government has no in-

tention of suppressing facts. The Governor and the BJP are singing the same tune. Why should the government hide facts? It is fighting the pandemic along with the people, and whatever remedies are being taken are by the government and not the Governor. The government is not receiving any sort of support from the Centre.

THE EXPRESS

INTERVIEW

FIRHAD HAKIM

STATE URBAN

DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

& KOLKATA MAYOR

#### **Trinamool Congress MPs** have talked about lodging a complaint against Dhankhar in the Lok Sabha, accusing him of being partisan. Your thoughts?

In a democratic process, MPs have to act according to whatever the party feels. Not only the government or the party, entire West Bengal thinks the Governor is acting in a partisan

#### On numerous occasions, the Governor has refused to sign **Bills, forcing Assembly** sessions to end abruptly...

The only role of our honourable Governor is to satisfy the honourable Home Minister of India. To do that, and carry out the instructions of the BJP, the Governor is doing the same again and again.

#### **32 MORE CASES IN LAST 24 HOURS**

# **Central teams blame** state for impasse, say officials elusive

Lack of testing kits reason for low test numbers: Chief Secy

#### **RITIKA CHOPRA &ATRIMITRA**

NEW DELHI, KOLKATA, APRIL 22

THE TWO Inter-Ministerial Central Teams (IMCTs) tasked with assessing West Bengal's handling of the coronavirus pandemic in seven districts could not do any meaningful work for the third day, with the state government ignoring the Kolkata team's request for a detailed presentation on nine points, and inspection visits to 12 hotspots, nine COVID-19 hospitals, six markets, and four quarantine centres across Kolkata, Howrah, East Midnapore and North 24 Parganas.

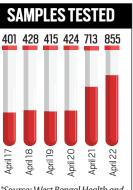
The North Bengal team, tasked with monitoring preparedness in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri, too, could not move out on Wednesday. However, the team had its first briefing in three days from the Jalpaiguri Commissioner on the overall status of the outbreak in the three

The impasse continued even as state Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha claimed that the scarcity of viral transport medium (VTM) and RNA extraction kits from the Centre was the main reason behind the low testing numbers in the state, and announced 32 new cases had been detected since Tuesday. He said the problem was aggravated by the defective kits the state had received from the Union government.

The central teams, however, said the state was not moving fast enough on its requests. Some of the subjects on which they had sought a presentation from the state health department are testing scale, testing facilities, availability of personal protective equipment(PPE) for health workers, availability of ICU beds, ventilators and oxygen supply, the incidence of COVID19 among health workers, and the process of determining the cause of death for COVID19 patients.

"We haven't heard from them the whole day today. This is our third day here, and we haven't done anything meaningful vet," a member of the IMCT led by Additional Secretary Apurva Chandra said.

In a letter to Chief Secretary Rajiv Sinha on Wednesday morning. Chandra also requested information about the method of identifying COVID-19 suspects and quarantining them. "The IMCT would also like to under-



\*Source: West Bengal Health and Family Welfare Department



stand any problems faced by the state government in implementation of the lockdown orders, availability of testing kits etc and support required from the Government of India in this regard," added the letter. Chandra said during his

team's field visits they should be accompanied by "relevant officers of the health department, local bodies, and other departments involved in implementing the health and disinfection measures apart from supply of essential commodities, operation of quarantine centres and the management of the relevant hospitals", and not a police officer. On Tuesday, the IMCT had been accompanied by a state police officer of ACP rank during its hourlong tour of Kolkata to assess the implementation of the lockdown.

Chandra sent the letter after the state administration sought to de-escalate the confrontation with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Trinamool Congress government had initially questioned the deployment of the IMCTs, and suggested it "might not be consistent with the spirit of federalism".

Later on Tuesday, Sinha said the administration was "cooperating" with the teams, but also reminded that the central teams should have informed the state of their arrival in a "proper manner".

On the first day after landing in the state, the Kolkata IMCT led by Chandra had visited the office of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, and held a meeting with the Chief Secretary at state secretariat Nabanna. The detailed presentation by

the state health department was scrapped Tuesday morning and the team was provided a liaison officer by the state only in the evening, following which it visited five to six areas in the city. The group, however, did not step out from the car for a physical inspection.

In the first two days, the North Bengal team could neither manage to meet any officers of the state government nor conduct any inspection visits.

Meanwhile, Rajiva Sinha said the 32 new cases were reported from Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, Asansol and Siliguri, With six patients being discharged, the total active positive cases since Tuesday is 26. "The total active positive case in the state till today is 300," he added. The official said most of the

cases were a result of family contacts. "If we segregate these families then we will be able to control the spread," he added. "Total tests done so far here are 7,037. In the last 24 hours, 855 tests were conducted.'

Though he blamed the Centre for the low testing numbers, saying the Narendra Modi government had provided an insufficient number of kits — 10,000 overall, with only 2,500 VTM and 3,456 RNA extraction kits — the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry refused to accept the government's rationale. The Centre pointed out that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had asked all the states at the very beginning to procure the VTM and RNA kits locally.

"Many are saying that we are  $hiding \, facts \, and \, not \, doing \, enough \,$ tests," Sinha reiterated. "It's not true that if we conduct more tests, more positive cases will be detected. For example, today we tested 855 samples, but only 32 people tested positive for COVID-19. We are happy with the data."

After the lockdown was im-

posed, nearly 400 samples used to be tested on an average every day. But in the last two days, the figure has jumped to over 850, sources said. "Initially, we had five laboratories, now we have 12. This has helped us in carrying out more tests," said the Chief Secretary, adding that in the last three to four days, they have "increased tests" as it had received "sufficient number of VTM and RNA extraction kits from market".

## Four cops injured during protest over ration distribution

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** KOLKATA, APRIL 22

FOUR POLICEMEN were injured in the city of Baduria in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday after local people hurled stones at the police when they tried to lift a road blockade imposed in protest against alleged irregularities in the distribution of ration supplies.

Local people claimed that the violence erupted when the police started using batons to disperse the protesters.

"Our personnel received reports that some locals had put up a road blockade at ward number nine of Baduria Municipality," said a senior district police officer. "They rushed to the spot to lift the blockade. However, locals pelted us with stones and four of our personnel have been injured. We are looking into the matter.'

The police said 21 people were detained in connection with the violence.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed that the incident was not related to her government's ration distribution programme.

The Baduria incident that

took place today is not related to the state government's ration distribution event," she told reporters. "In many places, NGOs and political parties are also helping people [by providing ration] with their own money. The amount of ration to be distributed among the people depends on their capabilities. The government ration, which includes 5 kg rice, is being distributed to the people once a month. This is being done without any problem.'

Food Minister Jyotipriya Mullick blamed the BJP for the violence. "I have heard about the incident," he said. "BJP leader from ward number nine of Baduria Municipality led the protest. He was instrumental in orchestrating the road blockade. I have asked the police to take action against him as per law."

leader Bhattacharya dismissed the alegation. "Whenever the government

fails to control people's unrest, it points fingers at the BJP," he said. "This is nothing but a political conspiracy. We don't support assault on policemen. But today's situation went out of hand because the police failed to ensure law and order. It is their failure.'

## WATCH

Supriyo

**CORONA** 

#### posts video of 'dead patient', sparks row Kolkata: A video tweeted

by Union minister Babul

Supriyo of a dead patient allegedly lying in the isolation ward of a state-run hospital here has stoked a controversy with the Bengal government questioning its veracity and asserting that the opposition BIP "specialises" in spreading fake news. Supriyo claimed that it was in the public domain and urged the TMC to urgently investigate the matter. "This is a shocking video... Since this VDO is in the public domain, I wud request Honble WBCM @MamataOfficial to conduct a thorough enquiry into it & release the FACTs asap," he said. Senior minister and TMC secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said, "We have to first check whether the video is true or fake, as we all know that the BJP specialises in spreading fake videos." **PTI** 

#### Woman with Covid gives birth to virus-free boy "From the very first day, we and gave birth to a baby boy



Nurses with the newborn and his mother. Express

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** KOLKATA, APRIL 22

A WOMAN admitted to a hospital in the city of Uluberia in Howrah district with the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has given birth to a boy who has tested negative for the virus.

The woman had mild breathing problems when she was brought to Sanjiban Hospital on April 13. She was immediately moved to the isolation ward, and monitored continuously.

constantly monitored the mother," said the hospital's Director Subhasis Mitra. "We frequently made multi speciality efforts, and monitored the pregnancy and foetal heart sound regularly.'

The hospital set up a special team comprising a gynaecologist, a paediatrics specialist, and

"We avoided caesarean delivery and preferred normal delivery in this case," said Mitra. "On April 20, she had labour pain weighing two kg and 700 grams. Both mother and boy are doing Hospital authorities said the

baby was also in the isolation ward, and they were allowing the mother to breastfeed him. "We are very cautious," said

Mitra. "We are strictly monitoring the child. The mother has also been asked to maintain safe distance. We are not allowing any visitors. The baby's father also saw him through video con-

# 4 EXPRESS NETWORK

# Sample testing shift: In Maharashtra, 'Enough foodgrain in private labs overtake govt facilities

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M** 

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

MAHARASHTRA, WHICH has emerged as the ground zero of the coronavirus outbreak in the country, has become the first state where the number of samples tested at private facilities has overtaken those at government labs — by nearly double on Tuesday alone.

With 5,221 cases so far, the highest in any state, Health officials are banking on largescale testing as a key tool to isolate and contain the spread, And, according to official figures available Wednesday morning, Maharashtra has tested 82.304 samples so far, of which 41.794 – 50.78% – were done in the private labs.

The figures show that on Tuesday, private labs tested 4,211 cilities totalled 2,255 in the state.

There are two main reasons for the surge in private testing, a government official said. 'Physicians have been given wider discretion, they can prescribe lab tests for asymptomatic people too. Also, in the case of Maharashtra, a few labs stopped testing temporarily after the Supreme Court ordered free testing for all. They have now resumed in full capacity," he said.

The official was referring to the court modifying its order and clarifying that free tests are only for Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries and economically weaker sections. The court ruled that the Centre's price cap of Rs 4,500 per test would continue for others.

"Private labs, in my opinion, have twice the capacity as that Dharavi is contributing to big numbers coming to private labs," Arokiaswamy Velumani. CEO of Mumbai-based Thyrocare, said. Dharavi has recorded over 180 cases.

Officials also pointed out that Maharashtra has the largest private lab network in the country, with 20 of a total of 87 operational in the state.

In Delhi, meanwhile, only 25% (6,734) of the total 26,627 samples tested are from private labs, up from 19% two weeks ago.

Official figures show that the rise in testing at private labs in Maharashtra has also resulted in an increase in positive cases being reported. In the last one week, the average total positive cases in the state stood at 5.30% of total samples tested as against

number stood at 6.46% for the last week and 5 47% the week before: in private labs, it was 4.085% and 2.97%, respectively.

Mapping the shift, the figures show that private labs tested an average of 3,133 samples per day over the last seven days, compared to 2,175 in government labs. An identical trend was reported the previous week, when private labs tested an average of 2,029 samples per day, as against 1,898 in government facilities.

Official figures from across the month present a stark contrast, and show the pace at which testing at private labs have gained ground in Maharashtra.

On April 9, government labs tested 12,984 samples, 5,091 more than private labs. The trend held over the next week, with gov-

The trend started shifting subsequently in the weeks that followed, with two days recording the maximum gap between

On April 19, 4,241 samples were tested in private labs, compared to 2,389 in government facilities. Tuesday marked the next

In Delhi, similarly, there has been an increase in testing in the 10 approved private labs after the apex court order on April 14.

In the last one week, private labs tested 551 samples per day, on average, against 926 in government facilities — but on April 17 alone, private labs tested as many 2,048 samples. In the previous week, private labs in Delhi tested 152 samples per day, on average, compared to 882 in gov-



Prakash Javadekar. Anil Sharma

## Rs 15,000-cr **COVID** package gets Cabinet nod

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

THE RS 15,000-crore COVID-19 emergency package announced by the government on April 9 got the Cabinet nod on Wednesday. Under the India COVID-19

Emergency Response and Health

System Preparedness Package, the funds will be utilised in three Rs 7,774 crore, sanctioned for immediate COVID-19 emergency re-

sponse. The remaining funds will be utilised for support over the next one to four years "to be provided under mission mode approach", the government said. The package is aimed at slow-

g and containing the spread of coronavirus in the country by developing diagnostics and COVIDdedicated treatment facilities. It will also be used for centralised procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs needed to treat patients. The fund will be used to prop up "resilient national and state health systems to support prevention and preparedness for future disease outbreaks, setting up of laboratories and bolster surveillance activities, bio-security preparedness, pandemic research and proactively engage communities and conduct risk communication activities", the government said.

In the first phase, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the support of all the other line ministries has undertaken several activities including expanding diagnostics laboratories network and increasing testing capacity. The government said that "leveraging on the existing multi-disease testing platforms under National TB Elimination Programme, orders for procurement of 13 lakhs diagnostic kits have been placed to augment COVID 19 testing". A majority share of the package, apart from the mentioned activities, will also go towards "strengthening pandemic research and multi-sector national institutions and platforms for One-Health, community engagement and risk communications and implementation, management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation".

THE EXPRESS

RAM VILAS

PASWAN

FOOD MINISTER

states have started lifting food-

at Rs 22 per kg and wheat Rs 21

per kg under the Open Market

Sale scheme. Any state can buy

grains for distribution among

people not covered under Food

Security Act. There is no require-

ment of auctioning—they can take

as much grain as they require.

Under PMGKY, there was an

announcement of providing

1kg pulses to poor families at

free of cost. Is that available on

There are some problems as

far as supply of pulses are con-

cerned. We have a buffer stock of

pulses but these are un-milled.

There was a problem of milling

these pulses but now that has

been sorted out. Some states have

received supply of pulses, while

others are in the process. We will

ramp up supply of pulses in the

**CENTRAL TEAM VISITS DHARAVI** 

Besides, we are providing rice

grain according to their quota.

godowns, no shortage'

UNION MINISTER of Consumer

Affairs, Food and Public

Distribution RAM VILAS

PASWAN tells HARIKISHAN

SHARMA that there is no short-

age of foodgrain in the country,

and about the steps being taken

to ensure the smooth supply

How will you ensure that the

supply of foodgrain remains

As on April 20, we have a stock

of 524.5 lakh metric tons (LMT) of

foodgrain-289.5 LMT rice and

235 LMT wheat. Besides, procure-

ment has been started for the rabi

crop from April 15, which will in-

about 60 LMT. If we take into ac-

count requirement under the

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan

Anna Yojana, an additional 180

LMT will be required. Thus, we

have sufficient foodgrain in our

godowns. There is no shortage. As

far as lifting of foodgrain and its

transportation is concerned, that

work is being done at war footing.

All employees and workers of the

Food Corporation of India are do-

ing a fantastic job; the Prime

Minister himself has recognised

their efforts. In just 27 days, about

44.58 LMT grain has been lifted

and transported to different parts of the country until Monday.

That's not child's play.

But there are complaints

foodgrain to the poor,

in many states.

regarding non-availability of

particularly migrant labourers

tion regularly. I am in constant

touch with states. I have spoken

to ministers in-charge of food sup-

plies departments of 18 states, in-

cluding UP, Bihar, West Bengal,

Telangana and Tamil Nadu. These

We are monitoring the situa-

Our monthly requirement is

crease the stock further.

smooth in coming days?

across states. Excerpts:

coming days.

Will the Centre extend additional 5-kg foodgrain to the poor under PMGKY beyond 3 months?

As of now, it is up to June. We will assess the situation after that.

#### Some states, including Bihar, have failed to identify about 40 lakh beneficiaries under NFSA-2013. Have you taken up the matter with these states?

Yes, it's true that about 40 lakh people, out of the total number accepted under NFSA, have not been identified as beneficiaries under this Act. I have spoken to Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Modi and requested him to take necessary steps to complete identification of such people. I have also spoken with the CM of Himachal Pradesh. Identifying beneficiaries is the responsibility of states.

#### There is a demand for universalisation of the Public Distribution System. Do you think its time has come?

We want to help the needy. States can give ration to as many people as they want; they can take foodgrain under OMS and use State Disaster Response Fund.

#### There is a demand that NFSA beneficiaries' number, which was fixed on the basis of 2011 Census, should be revised. Will the government take a step in this direction?

The number of beneficiaries under NFSA is fixed as per 2011 Census. According to the provisions of this Act, the revision of the population coverage will happen at an interval of 10 years. The next Census is due in 2021. So, the revision of NFSA beneficiaries' number will be done on the basis of

## Maharashtra minister releases names of Palghar accused, slams 'communal politics'

**MOHAMEDTHAVER** MUMBAI, APRIL 22

MAHARASHTRA HOME Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday released the names of 101 individuals who have been arrested for the lynching of three men in Palghar last week, and reiterated that there was no communal angle to the crime. Deshmukh accused the oppo-

sition in the state of indulging in "communal politics", and mocked their claims as "Mungeri Lal ke haseen sapne" (daydreaming).

After two sadhus — Kalpruksh Giri and Chikne Maharai — from an ashram in Kandivili, Mumbai, and their driver Nilesh Telgade were lynched in the presence of police in Gadchinchle village in Palghar on April 16 night, allegations were made on social media.



Maharashtra Home Minister **Anil Deshmukh** 

that the killers were Muslim. A video of the lynching surfaced on April 19 and quickly went viral.

"I have put out the list of 101 people... not one among them is Muslim. While the incident took place, someone in the video said 'oye bas, oye bas... now stop, now stop... however, it was twisted as... Shoaib bas (Shoaib, stop)... It was given a communal colour and

then communal politics was played using this," Deshmukh said during an interaction on

Over the past few days, both the home minister and Chief Minister Uddhav Thackerav have said the victims belonged to the same community as the attackers. Deshmukh spoke about the alleged misrepresentation of the video earlier on Wednesday, too.

minister posted the names of the 101 accused on Twitter, with the message: "The list of the 101 arrested in the #Palghar incident. Especially sharing for those who were trying to make this a com-

"Palghar mob lynching is a grotesque incident which happened due to rumours on social media about child kidnappers &

In the morning, the home

munal issue.' In another tweet, he said: thieves prowling in the area. A high level inquiry is going on & meanwhile people are requested not to fall for rumours & verify the facts from trusted sources." Deshmukh also posted a link

to a report on the incident by the fact-checking site Boomlive, which included screenshots of WhatsApp messages about childlifters and thieves, which were circulated in villages in the area before the incident.

On Wednesday, Deshmukh said the incident had taken place in an Adivasi area, and had been provoked by rumours of children being abducted. "Within eight hours of the incident, the police had arrested 101 people involved in the lynching from nearby forests and mountains. A special IG is investigating, and the matter has been transferred to the CID,"

#### **CORRIGENDUM**

document downloading and bidding & Time and date of opening of technical bid against PNIet No. 13/EE(PWD)/BLN/2019-20, Dated, 19.03.2020 as communicated vide reference No. F. 7(7)/EE(PWD)/BLN/ DIVN/5359-5426, 19.03.2020 as published https://tripuratenders.gov.in with ID tender

3.00 p.m. on **04.05.2020** instead of **22.04.2020**.

Time and date of opening of technical bid at 4.00 p.m. or 06.05.2020 instead of 24.04.2020.

All other terms & condition shall remain unchanged.

**Executive Engineer** 

Sub: Combined Water Supply Scheme to 165 Rural habitations in 10 Village Panchavats of Tiruppur Union in Tiruppur District under the bulk provision from the proposed Augmentation of Water Supply Scheme to 708 habitations in Annur, Avinashi and Sulur Unions in Coimbatore and Tiruppur Districts. (Construction period: 12 months, Trial Run: 6 months and Paid maintenance: 12 months) - Extension Notification - issued - Regarding

Dated: 28.03.2020

Last date and time of downloading bid documents 20.05.2020 at 05.45 PM Last date and time for receipt of bid document 22.05.2020 at 03.00 PM Date and time for opening of Technical bid All other Terms and conditions in the IFB are remaining unaltered. The Extension Notification also uploaded in the website: www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.twadboard.tn.gov.in Chief Engineer (i/c), TWAD Board, Coimbato DIPR/ 1668 /TENDER/2020 SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS

### (CIN U45203MH2002SGC136979)

8<sup>th</sup> Floor, World Trade Centre -1, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai-400005 **Tel No.**: 022–49212121, **Fax No.** 022–22163814

Email – vcmd@madcindia.org

#### **TENDER NOTICE (Re-invitation)**

MADC invites tender for Selection of Agency for maintenance of airbus H145 helicopter for Government of Maharashtra.

from e-tender portal https://mahatenders.gov.in from 1300 Hrs from 23.04.2020. Further clarifications / corrigendum in this regard, if any will be

Vice Chairman and Managing Director

#### **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** RAIPUR, NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

THE CHHATTISGARH unit of the Congress on Wednesday lodged a formal complaint against Arnab Goswami, editor-in-chief and founder of Republic TV channel. and accused him of "deliberately making inflammatory statements" and using derogatory language against Congress president Sonia Gandhi in his show.

As of late evening, Raipur police were in the process of registering an FIR, officials said.

In Maharashtra, state Youth Congress (YC) president Satyajeet Tambe said he had filed a complaint against Goswami in Sangamner and instructed YC workers to file complaints in all districts. In Nagpur, state Power Minister Nitin Raut's son Kunal, a YC officebearer, filed a similar complaint. Maharashtra's MoS (Home)

Satej Patil said the state government is weighing legal options against Goswami for allegedly inciting communal hatred in the Palghar lynching case, as also defaming Sonia Gandhi.

In Raipur, Chhattisgarh Health Minister T S Singh Deo and state Congress president Mohan Markam approached the police with a formal complaint letter against Goswami. The letter

stated, "His statements are divisive on the basis of religion. He made defamatory comments on the Congress national president, proof of which is available on YouTube."

'derogatory' remarks against Sonia

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope with the central team in Dharavi. Express

FIR against Arnab Goswami over

Singh Deo later tweeted: "I have just filed a complaint against... Arnab Goswami in Raipur for deliberately making inflammatory statements on his channel to invoke hatred..."

A senior Raipur police officer said. "We have received the complaint and are in the process of registering the FIR under Sections 153 (a) (promoting enmity on grounds of religion, race, etc), 295 (a)(deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief). We are starting investigation."

Congress communications in-charge Randeep Suriewala tweeted a clip of Goswami's purported comments on Sonia on

In the clip tweeted by Surjewala, Goswami ostensibly says: "Aapki party aur aapke party ke Rome se aaye hue Italy waali Sonia Gandhi chup nahin rahti. Aaj woh chup hain, man hi man main mujhe lagta hai woh khush hai...woh khush hai ki santon ko sadkon pe maara gaya, jahan pe unki sarkar hai. Report bhejegi woh, woh Italy main report bhe-

jegi main bol raha hoon.dekhiye jahan pe maine ek sarkar bana li. wahan pe Hindu santon ko main marwa rahi hun. Aur wahan se wah-wahi milegi.wah beta, wah..bohot acha kiya Sonia Gandhi Antonio maino."

Goswami did not respond to a message sent to him late on Wednesday evening seeking his comment on the FIR. However, Goswami, who hosts the flagship prime-time debate on his channel, began the show addressing the action by some Congress leaders.

Thanking those who stood by him "ever since Sonia Gandhi threw a tantrum telling her few remaining chief ministers that she wants me immediately arrested", Goswami said, "I have no hesitation in saying to Sonia Gandhi, come arrest me".

Addressing the Congress chief, he said, "Nobody is scared of you or your family any more". He said the "thousand FIRs you are filing across India" showed her "nervousness". He called Raiasthan and Chhattisgarh chief ministers as Sonia's "puppets", who, he said, have been asked by the Congress chief to arrest him.

On Twitter, the top five trends on Wednesday evening were either in support of Goswami or asking for his arrest.

With inputs from Mumbai

### CT/GD SHISHU KUMAR MISHRA

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER** 



brave-heart. On this day, he laid down his life at altar of duty while fighting with militants. His courage and would remain an abiding source of inspiration The force will remain eternally indebted to him for his

(17 June 1973 - 20 April 2020) Fraternity of Army Educational Corps expresses

CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this

Lt Col DS Mahlawat



profound grief and sorrow on the sad demise of Lt Col DS Mahlawat on 20 April 2020. The Officer was posted at Sainik School Gopalganj as Vice Principal Commissioned into Army Educational Corps on 08 December 2001, he will always be remembered for his selfless and dedicatied service to the Corps. We pray to the Almighty to bless eternal peace

to the departed soul and give strength to the bereaved family. Maj Gen Devesh Gaur Addl DGMT (AE) & Col Comdt and All Ranks of Army Educational Corps



RFP for renewal of Group Personal Accident Insurance Cover for select Savings Bank Schemes Bank of India invites RFP from eligible Insurance Companies for renewal of

Group Personal Accident Insurance Cover for Account holders of Select

For details please visit our website at www.bankofindia.co.in. Last date of submission of bid is May 13th, 2020.



### **NLC India Limited**

Due date of opening:11-05-2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR SUPPLIES (e-Tender SI.No.1 to 3) Tender Ref./Scope of Supplies & Qty. Regd.

1. UNIT: M.M. COMPLEX: PTE:ENQ/20-21/000027/MM18 (06) dt. 08-04-2020: Procurement of high strength cartridge type explosives 125 mm dia. **Qty.:** 4000000 Kilograms. **Due date of opening**:08-05-2020 2. PTE: ENQ / 2020-21 / 000028 / MM18 (06) dt. 08-04-2020: Procurement of ordinary Portland cement 43 grade in 50 kg HDPE bags

confirming to IS 8112 or IS 269/Latest. Qty.: 3000 Metric Tons.

3. 20-21 / 000053 / MM10 (01) dt. 13-04-2020: (i) HDPE Pipe 110 mm OD conforming to IS specification (4984/1995 and IS 7328) to withstand a working pressure of 6 kg/sg.cm in length as stated in the technical specification annexure with HDPE long neck, stub ends and M.S slip on flanges, 16 mm thick with epoxy painted both sides and other dimensions as per BS 10. Table-D, with ISI mark on each pipe. Raw material grade PE 63. Wall thickness 7.7 mm to 8.7 mm. Qtv.: 6000 Metres. (ii) HDPE Pipe 160 mm OD of designation PE80, PN6, DN160 conforming to IS 4984:1995/ Latest and to withstand a working pressure of 6 kg/sg.cm in length of 12 meter, with HDPE long neck, stub ends conforming to IS:8008(Part 6): 2003 / Latest and M.S slip on flanges of thickness 16 mm with epoxy painted both sides and other dimensions as per BS 10,

three sides and M.S Slip on flanges with epoxy painted on three sides as per IS:8360/PART I to III. **Qty.: 200 Numbers. Due date of opening**:11-05-2020

**PUBLIC SECTOR IS YOURS: HELP IT TO HELP YOU** 

Table-D, with ISI mark in each pipe, Raw material grade PE 80, Wall

HDPE unequal TEE 6kg/sq.cm with HDPE long neck stub ends on all the

Due to unavoidable circumstances, the last date and time for

Last date & time for document downloading and bidding upto

(Er. Dilip Das) Belonia Division, PWD (R&B) Belonia, South Tripura

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD

Office of the Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, Coimbatore - 641 043.

E.Mail : cewregion@gmail.com. Phone No. 0422- 2447734. Fax No. 0422-2438648
INVITATION OF BIDS - TWO COVER - ITEMWAR TENDER SYSTEM
FIRST CALL - SECOND EXTENSION NOTIFICATION
Extension Notification No. 02/ F.165 RH/ SDO (T3)/ CE/ CBE/ 2020/ Dated : 17.04.2020

) This office IFB No: 11/ F.165 RH/ SDO (T3)/ CE/ CBE/ 2020/ Dated 26.02.2020. ) This office Extension Notification No.01/F.165 RH/SDO(T3)/CE/ CBE/ 2020/

Due to Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) - Infection prevention & control an strative reasons extension notification issued as follows.

## Maharashtra Airport Development Company Ltd.

The tender documents and other details can be downloaded

put only on e-tender portal.

## TAMIL NADU HOUSING BOARD -MADURAI CIRCLE Tender Notice No: 01/2020-21 Sealed tenders with Prequalification System duly super-scribed on the covers with Name of word noe No., Due Date and Name of the Tenderer are invited for the following work so as to reach office.

	k) on the date   mentioned below. The tenders w on the same day in the presence of  the tenderer				s office at 11.3
SI. Io.		Approximate value (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD in Rs.	Tender due date	Period of sale
1	Construction of Amma Thirumana Mandapam at Veerapandi Village in Theni District	,,			15.05.2020 to 21.05.2020
	Time for receipt and eneming of tender on due	data unto 11 00	AM 9 44 5	O A M roope	otivaly Coat a

of the Superintending Engineer, Madurai circle, Ellisnagar, Madurai-16 up to 11.00 A.M (as per office

thickness 9.1 to 10.3 mm. **Qty.: 5000 Metres. (iii)** 160 x 160 x 50 mm (ID) Tender Schedule (Non refundable) - Rs. 15,750/- (including Tax). Further particulars and tende documents can be had from the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Madurai Circle, Ellisnaga Madurai-16. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the tender documents without assigning any reasons therefore. The tender schedule can also be downloaded from the web sit vww.tenders.tn.gov.in at free of cost. /ladurai Circle, Ellisnagar, Madurai-16 Superintending Engine

DIPR/ 1674 /TENDER/2020

hone- 0452-2600 901

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

### SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# What the Jio deal means for Reliance & Facebook

Facebook's purchase of nearly 10% stake in Jio marks its entry in India, improves Reliance's balance sheet, allows each company to gain from the other's reach

AASHISH ARYAN & PRANAV MUKUL NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

FACEBOOK'S PURCHASE of a nearly 10% stake in Reliance Industries' digital business unit Jio Platforms brings one of the world's largest Internet companies on the table with India's largest telecom player. The \$5.7-billion deal, which values Reliance's digital operations at around \$66 billion, pushes the Indian conglomerate ahead in its plans of de-leveraging its balance sheet while accelerating the launch of its new commerce business. Further, it not only marks Facebook's long-pending formal entry into India's telecom sector but also catapults it to a place among the biggest foreign

#### What does the deal mean for Reliance **Industries?**

investors in India's technology space.

Back in August 2019, while addressing the company's shareholders at the annual general meeting, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani had said the group had prepared a roadmap for becoming a zero net-debt company within 18 months. The Facebook deal significantly contributes to that plan by paring about Rs 43,574 crore from its outstanding debt as of September 2019 of Rs 2.92 lakh crore. The other primary contributors to the debt-reduction plan will be a potential \$15 billion (around Rs 1.05 lakh crore) deal with Saudi Aramco for a 20% stake in Reliance Industries' refining and petrochemicals business and Rs 7,000 crore from a 49% sale in its fuel retail joint-venture to British firm BP. However, experts believe the Aramco deal to be under threat on account of the oil prices crash caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Besides the balance sheet de-leveraging, the timing of the deal with Facebook is significant for another reason: online platforms selling essential goods have suddenly witnessed an upsurge in demand. For example, before the outbreak, just 1% of the Rs 80,000-crore grocery market in India was represented by online players. After the lockdown, online platforms started to account for 50% of the grocery demand in the country by some estimates before it corrected. "We're one of the few industries that has got more than enough business but not enough resources," said Hari Menon, CEO of India's largest online grocer Bigbasket.

Experts have said the arrangement among Reliance Retail, Jio Platforms and Facebookowned WhatsApp to offer consumers the ability to access the nearest kiranas, or grocery stores, which can provide products and services to their homes by transacting with JioMart using WhatsApp, has come at a very opportune time. WhatsApp boasts 400 million users in India. Further, using WhatsApp's base also allows Reliance Retail to promote its services to users of Jio's rival telecom players.

What does the deal mean for Facebook? Facebook has been trying for years to get its



Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani and wife Neeta Ambani in Mumbai; (right) Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg during a visit to India.

finger in the Internet pie. In 2015, it had experimented with Free Basics, which provided free access to basic Internet services as a partnership with service providers. However, criticised for being a walled garden, it soon pulled out of the idea after differential pricing was disallowed by the telecom sector regulator.

It had even looked at the possibility of beaming free Internet from the air using a solar-powered drone called Aquila, and enabled low cost high-speed Wi-Fi in some remote parts of India with an initiative called Express Wi-Fi. But data was expensive in those times, and free access to the Internet was envisioned as the easiest way to bring the next billion users online. Then, Reliance Jio happened. It launched with data rates so low that they became the industry standard in one of the largest online markets in the world. Iio alone helped bring 388 million users online, well over a third of what Facebook had planned.

The partnership with Reliance could also help Facebook navigate the regulatory envi-

**20,471** (652 DEATHS)



ronment in India, where it has had several skirmishes with the authorities, including for its major initiatives such as WhatsApp Pay.

#### What does it mean for India's Internet ecosystem?

The deal also marks Facebook's entry among elite investors in India's technology space, joining the likes of SoftBank, Amazon and Google that have together poured in billions of dollars in Indian tech startups and their own ventures over the years. Prior to Jio Platforms, Facebook had invested around \$20-25 million in social commerce platform Meesho in 2019, and participated in a \$110 million funding round for edu-tech company Unacademy earlier this year.

The deal with Reliance also gives Facebook access to the latter's bouquet of digital apps. These include in-house apps such as Jio Money, Jio TV, etc in addition to the young startups acquired by Reliance or its subsidiaries across categories such as logistics, e-commerce and artificial intelligence.

#### What does it mean for Reliance's data localisation principles? In January last year, speaking at the Vibrant

Gujarat Summit, Ambani had stressed that India's data "must be controlled and owned by Indian people - and not by corporates, especially global corporations". "For India to succeed in this data-driven revolution, we will have to migrate the control and ownership of Indian data back to India - in other words, Indian wealth back to every Indian," he had said. While some have raised the red flag over Facebook's track-record on data privacy issues, executives of both companies said Wednesday that data sharing was not a part of the deal. "There will be areas that we will collaborate in but there will be areas where we will potentially not agree with each other," a Jio official said. Facebook, on the other hand, maintained its stance in favour of an open ecosystem for data to flow across boundaries.

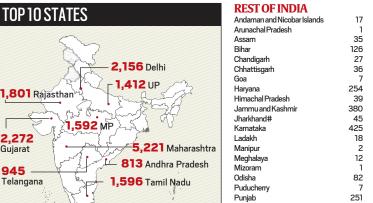
## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK DAILY COUNT OF DEATHS, INFECTIONS 134,635 United Kingdo 95,591 57,999 830,789 83,868

TOTAL CONFIRMED: 2.603.147

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on April 21

**DEATH COUNT: 179.778** 

#### **INDIA COUNT:**



Punjab

Tripura

the Nipah virus in 2018 and 2019.

period of the virus is 14 days.

Besides tracing contacts of positive cases,

Kerala strictly enforced 28 days of home

quarantine although the general incubation

international passengers. Even if someone

managed to skip airport screening, they

would have to deal with village committees,

who kept the health department informed

about fresh arrivals and ensured they re-

mained indoors. In hotspots of Kasaragod

and Kannur districts, some village panchay-

ats even launched call centres, connecting

drawn through GPS data, were released to

help people self-report if they suspected they

might have come in contact with an infected person. Geo-mapping of those under obser-

vation enabled better cluster management.

the state focused on inter-state road and rail

travellers. Those who reached Kerala from

other states since March 8 - and their con-

tacts - were asked to isolate themselves. It's

this strategy that helped the state rein in in-

fections from participants of the Tablighi

Jamaat event in Delhi. While several other

states started acting only when positive cases

from among the Tablighis were reported,

Kerala had already placed around 217 such

persons under observation. Eventually, 20 of

Once flight operations were suspended,

Besides, route maps of positive cases,

those quarantined with the authorities.

From early March, the state screened all

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm. April 22. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with the most cases are listed above. 3.960 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 29 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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

Telangana

## Why India tightened FDI rules, and why it's China that's upset at Chinese investments.

PRABHA RAGHAVAN NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

INDIA RECENTLY revised its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy with the objective of preventing "opportunistic takeovers" of firms hit by the lockdown induced by the COVID-19 outbreak. The move has upset China, which has termed it a violation of international trade principles (The Indian Express, April 21). A look at the move, and the implications:

#### What was the amendment?

On Saturday, the government said firms in neighbouring countries wanting to invest in Indian companies would first need its approval. An entity of a country that shares a land border with India can now invest in firms here "only under the Government route". This also applies to "beneficial" owners — even if the investing company is not located in a neighbouring country, it would still be subject to these conditions if its owner is a citizen or resident of such a country.

While the note did not name any country, analysts see the amendments as aimed at possible Chinese investments. The decision came days after China's central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) had raised its shareholding in HDFC to over 1 per cent. HDFC vice chairman and CEO Keki Mistry had said that PBoC had been an existing shareholder, owning 0.8% as of March 2019.

China's FDI has grown five-fold since 2014 and, as of December 2019, its cumulative investment in India exceeded \$8 billion — "far more" than investments by other countries that share borders with India, according to the Chinese government. A Brookings India paper pegs the total current and planned Chinese investment in India at over \$26 billion.

#### What was China's response?

China has called for India to revise these "discriminatory practices" and treat investments from different countries equally. "The additional barriers set by Indian side for investors from specific countries violate WTO's (World Trade Organization) principle of non-discrimination, and go against the general trend of liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment. More importantly, they do not conform to the consensus of G20 leaders and trade ministers to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep our markets open," said Ji Rong, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in India.

#### What is India's argument? India maintains the policy is not aimed at

any one country and that the move is aimed at curbing "opportunistic" takeovers of Indian firms, many of which are under strain.

"The amendments are not prohibiting investments. (We have) just changed the approval route for these investments. There are many sectors in India that are already subject to this approval route," a senior government official had said, adding that "many" other countries were taking such measures.

#### What have other countries done?

Before India, the European Union and Australia had initiated similar measures. These, again, were seen as being targeted

On March 25, the European Commission issued guidelines to ensure "a strong EU-wide approach" to foreign investment screening at such a time. The aim was to preserve ELI companies and critical assets, notably in areas like health, medical research, biotechnology and infrastructures essential for security and public order, without undermining the EU's general openness to foreign investment.

On March 30, Australia temporarily tightened rules on foreign takeovers over concerns that strategic assets could be sold off cheaply. This followed warnings that distressed Australian companies in the aviation, freight and health sectors could become vulnerable to buyouts by stateowned enterprises, especially China. All foreign takeover and investment proposals will now be scrutinised by Australia's foreign investment review board.

Spain, Italy and the US too have implemented investment-related restrictions, according to Khaitan & Copartner Atul Pandey.

#### Is there any ground for the argument that India's move is discriminatory?

Some experts note that the amendments apply only to bordering countries. "Now, there are different sets of procedures for the same set of investments based on which country the company is investing from. This is where the potential issue of discrimination arises," said a trade expert on condition of anonymity. "While India can discriminate in favour of domestic investment, discrimination against certain countries for non-security reasons may not be seen favourably on the global stage."

There could also be a potential violation of non-discriminatory obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, if the sectors concerned involve services, the expert said. "Most of the other countries that have tightened their investment regulations have done so unanimously, which means that it would apply to all countries."

#### Has India done this before?

The move to impose additional requirements for certain countries is seemingly unprecedented. So far, India has imposed such measures on investments into certain sectors, according to legal experts.

For instance, while FDI in pharmaceuticals had been allowed under the automatic route until 2011, the government had mandated approval for any investment coming into the sector from November that year, said Pandey of Khaitan & Co. "This had happened after the government was alerted to intentions by certain overseas firms to increase investments in India's pharmaceutical industry with an intention to potentially take over these entities. This decision was taken with national health security in mind. After the new government was elected in 2014, the policy was liberalised, but even now investment is only allowed up to 74 per cent under the automatic route," he added.

In 2010, the government banned FDI in cigarette manufacturing following recent announcements by Japan Tobacco that it would increase stake in its Indian subsidiary to 74 per cent from 50 per cent, according to Singh and Associates senior partner Daizy Chawla. In the past, India has also blocked certain FDI investments during bilateral standoffs with China, according to Pandey.

# Behind containment in Kerala: robust healthcare system, effective strategies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 22

BY JANUARY 30, the day India — and Kerala reported its first COVID-19 case, a 23-yearold medical student who had returned from Wuhan, as many as 800 persons with China travel history had already been kept under observation in Kerala.

Kerala, which has to date seen 437 cases, 308 recoveries and two deaths, has consistently stayed ahead of the coronavirus curve, with its 70% recovery rate being the highest in the country. Kerala has so far tested 20,821 samples, also the highest for any state.

What sets its containment strategy apart?

#### Legacy of public health

Much before Kerala became a separate state in 1956, the region had seen several pathbreaking public health interventions. In 1879, the erstwhile Travancore rulers made a proclamation making vaccination compulsory for public servants, prisoners and students. In 1928, a parasite survey, done in association with the Rockefeller Foundation, led to the control of hookworm and filariasis.

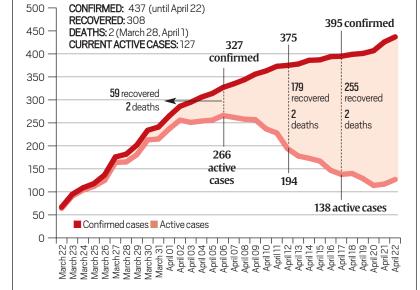
This community health legacy got a further boost as the state's focus on literacy and women's education helped it attain near 100% vaccination levels and develop a culture of personal hygiene. The World Health Organization, in a survey held in 12 countries in 2005, found that hand-washing with soap after defecation had a prevalence of 34% in Kerala, the highest among the states/countries surveyed. So when the state began its 'Break the Chain' campaign during the COVID-19 outbreak — to promote handwashing and use of sanitisers — it only served to reiterate some of those best practices.

#### Health infrastructure

A critical factor in Kerala's COVID-19 battle has been its robust healthcare system, considered on a par with those of many developed countries. În June 2019, Kerala topped all states on the NITI Aayog's annual health index with an overall score of 74.01, more than 21/2 times

that of the least-performing state, UP(28.61). Though Kerala has only been investing 5% of its total state plan outlay on healthcare

### **HOW CURVE FOR ACTIVE CASES DIPPED IN KERALA**



Daily cumulative counts for confirmed cases and active cases over 1 month. On any day, the gap between the two curves (shaded) represents the sumtotal of recoveries and deaths. Data source: Government of Kerala

 $- \, which \, is \, also \, roughly \, the \, national \, average \,$ spending in the sector — its focus on healthcare at the level of Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres has stood it in good stead. With the management of these centres in the hands of three-tier local bodies, many of these have modern diagnos-

tic facilities and offer tele-medicine services. The state's private health sector, once dominated by the Church, has grown rapidly in the last two decades, mainly on the back of investment from NRIs and corporate healthcare groups. At present, Kerala has 142,924 beds in its hospitals, of which the private sector accounts for 93,042.

#### Focus on the front line

On February 1, the state's coronavirus control cells laid out guidelines on testing, quarantine, hospital admission and discharge criteria — a living document that is regularly updated.

Until late January, the state did not have any testing facility and throat swabs of suspected cases had to be sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. But by the first week of February, NIV-Alappuzha got sanction to conduct the tests. Over the last two months, Kerala's COVID-19 testing facilities have grown to 13, ten of those in the government sector.

The state also stepped up its medical facilities, turning defunct hospitals into COVID-19 facilities. So far, 38 government hospitals have been converted into COVID-19 hospitals, and 800 ventilators in public hospitals and 1,578 in the private sector have been identified.

#### **Lessons from Nipah**

While broadly sticking to the protocol set up by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Kerala put in place its rigorous surveillance network, one that had been finetuned to perfection during the outbreak of

#### them tested positive. Social, political participation

Despite the largely bipolar nature of Kerala's politics, almost the entire state would stay tuned to watch Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan address his daily press briefings on the state's tackling of the situation. While Health Minister Shailaja holds daily meetings with district medical officers, the Chief Minister's Office coordinates with other departments such as police, revenue, electricity, etc. Every evening, the CM chairs a review meeting attended by, among others, Dr B Ekbal, chairman of the expert committee on COVID-19.

The Kudumbashree Mission, the state's poverty eradication and women empowerment programme, has been at the frontlines with volunteers pitching in to make masks and launching community kitchens.

WHOEVER CONTROLS THE MEDIA, CONTROLS THE MIND.

-JIM MORRISON

## The Indian **EXPRESS**

∽ FOUNDED By ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## THE WAY FORWARD

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

T 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 pa $per, according \ to \ some \ estimates, the \ 33-day \ lockdown \ in \ this \ financial \ year, April$ . 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 freeload on media content

IGITAL 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 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

IDAS, 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.

# Going back to a new school



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

AMEETA MULLA WATTAL

"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 teachIf 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.

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 postpandemic 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  $age\ group\ of\ three\ to\ 10-will\ find\ it\ very\ dif$ ficult 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 im-

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.

The writer is principal, Springdales School, Pusa Road, New Delhi

## Ambedkar, In Our Crisis

Even amid pandemic, caste atrocities continue. Representation is key

GURU PRAKASH

AS THE COUNTRY faces the coronavirus crisis, there are conversations about the new postpandemic 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

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 upperclass elite.

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 - realtime representation at key decision-making positions, which has not happened despite making affirmative action a constitutional commitment. Justice CS Karnan, 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.

### BIP 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

#### 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.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2020

# THE IDEAS PAGE

#### 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.

— CHINA DAILY

# 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.

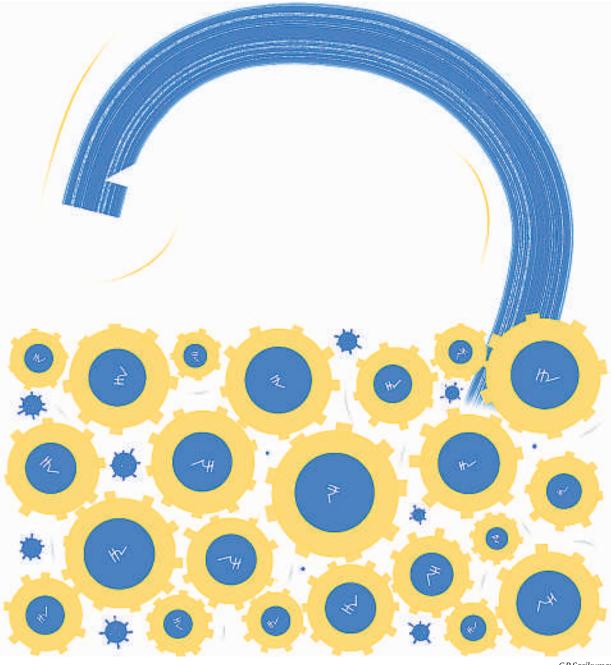
The jury is out on the mysterious ways of COVID-19 and also on the right economic response to it. We know from the history of world wars and pandemics that such catastrophes can turn the trajectories of nations upside down, converting winners into losers, and vice-versa. Yet, despite the uncertainty, 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

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 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

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 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 make 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 databased 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

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 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 COVIDlike 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 consultation 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 "Bhelmister", 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 nonprofit 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



## The test of a nation

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

functioning. This has

weakened the Indian rupee,

which is now at an all-time

Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank

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

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 or sent to The Indian

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

Abhijit Chakraborty, Howrah

spinach were greatly exaggerated.

#### 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

Shekhar Deshmukh, Mumbai

# 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-29 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.

#### **BUSINESS GROUPS' FURY**

over blanket ban led to change of tack

#### **NO NEW GREEN CARDS**

to be issued by US for 60 days

#### PRESIDENT LEAVES DOOR OPEN

for more restrictive order in future

# 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 eco-



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

nomic devastation caused by the

virus and efforts to contain it. 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

#### **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.

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

**LALITKJHA** 

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 twoyear 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

Disagreements

push back EU

recovery deal

**GABRIELA BACZYNSKA** 

IT MAY take European Union

countries until the summer or

even longer to agree on how ex-

actly to finance aid to help

economies recover from the

coronavirus pandemic as major

disagreements persist, a bloc of-

pected 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

in June, July," said the EU official,

who is involved in preparing the

even longer: "Political lines are moving ... but it will take time,"

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

still "real reluctance" in some

The official said there was

funds to restart growth.

But a final deal might take

Wealthy, fiscally conservative

leaders' summit.

the official stressed.

"My hope is to make progress

measures effective from June.

A summit on Thursday is ex-

ficial said on Wednesday.

by months

BRUSSELS, APRIL 22

#### **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 citystate 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.

## 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

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 U.S. 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 "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 im-

mediately raised concerns among experts on whether the technology used could help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles. Already, Iran has abandoned

nuclear deal with world powers that President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from in 2018. Trump's decision set off a monthslong series of escalating attacks that culminated

all the limitation of its tattered

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, 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

positive case tral Colombo.

They have to be adequately protected, police said.

The move comes after over 1,000 people were sent for quarantine following the discovery of Bandaranaike Road area in cen-

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.

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.

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.

On a quiet lane that winds

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 Within days, they had be-

come 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

**③** ₹76.68

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### **NET DEBT MORE THAN DOUBLED BETWEEN MAR 2015 AND SEPT 2019**

# After FB's Jio investment booster, RIL in talks with other investors to pare debt

PRANAV MUKUL

EVEN AS its profits and cash reserves have been growing over the years, a big overhang for Reliance Industries (RIL) has been a sharp rise in its gross and net debt. The group saw its net debt more than double from Rs 76,388 crore in March 2015 to Rs 1.57.236 crore by the end of September 2019.

While the proposed deal with Saudi Aramco to sell 20 per cent stake in RIL and the agreement with Brookfield to divest stake in its telecom towers are in the works, Wednesday's announcement of sale of 9.99 per cent stake in Jio Platforms Ltd to Facebook for a consideration of \$5.7 billion (over Rs 43,000 crore) came as a shot in the arm for the group that has been looking to reduce its debt.

#### **DEBT SITUATION OF RELIANCE INDUSTRIES**

	Gross debt	Cash & cash equitable	Net debt
FY15	1,60,860	84,472	76,388
FY16	1,81,079	86,033	95,046
FY17	1,96,599	77,226	1,19,373
FY18	2,18,763	78,063	1,40,700
FY19	2,87,505	1,33,027	1,54,478
FY20*	2,91,982	1,34,746	1,57,236
All figures	in Rs crore; *As o	f September 2019	

A report by Morgan Stanley, which acted as the financial advisor to RIL and Jio Platforms Ltd in relation to the investment by Facebook Inc. said that the stake sale will "lower RIL's net debt by

The decision by the two

companies comes even

as experts have raised

several questions on

and efficacy

The Indian Express

the app's privacy policy

ciently, certain conditions are to

be fulfilled. The first one is that a

good number of tests have to be

performed across the country.

And these patients ought to have

a smartphone with the app, only

then can a cluster be formed for

bigger inter-mobile communica-

tion," a Chennai-based independ-

ent cybersecurity expert had told

ners, Zomato also urged its users

to download the app, which it said

would "go a long way in contain-

ing the spread of COVID-19". "We

also encourage our users to down-

load the Aarogya Setu app. I am

aware of the alleged privacy con-

cerns that some of us have against

using the app. But even if these

concerns were well-founded, it is

a small cost to pay for the sake of

the collective long term," a press

statement sent by the company,

UrbanClap, now rechristened

Urban Company, also said that all

Household services firm

and attributed to Goyal, said.

Apart from its delivery part-

12 per cent and be 1.5 per cent earnings accretive. It could also drive a multiple re-rating as RIL multiples have previously rerated 30 per cent during balance sheet deleveraging cycles."

It also said that if all asset monetisation plans including holdings in energy, telecom and content businesses were to be consum-

lower RIL's net debt and liabilities by 80 per cent, i.e. by \$39 billion".

Edelweiss, in its report on the Jio Platforms-Facebook deal, said, "The transaction allays the Street's concern on RIL's leverage and instils confidence in management's target to achieve zero net debt by FY21. Synergies due to RIL's partnership with Facebook are a known unknown and can drive a significant re-rating for the stock."

There are some who say that

RIL chairman Mukesh Ambani has been working towards a strategy that will not only bring down the group level debt significantly but will also insulate his enterprises from a number of perceived risks. While Facebook's stake purchase in Jio Platforms has been announced, sources say that Saudi Aramco is currently doing its due diligence to pick up 20 per cent

There are some who say that RIL group is also working on bringing a large strategic investor in its retail business too. An investment banker, who did not wish to be named, said that RIL group seems to be working towards safeguarding Ambani's enterprise's interest against any risk going forward by bringing in large strategic players into his businesses.

"Once you have built a big enterprise and the business reaches its maturity, it is good to encash a bit and also see that the business continues without any hassle going forward by roping in a large strategic investor. The deal with Aramco will just ensure that along with providing it with cash to retire some debt." The banker said the deal will be a win-win for both partners and at this time Aramco needs RIL much more and it won't find a better partner around.

## 'It's the death knell for the oil industry ... will also damage budgets of oil exporting nations'

INTERVIEW WITH VIKRAM S MEHTA, CHAIRMAN, BROOKINGS INDIA

in the US became negative. VIKRAM S MEHTA, Chairman of **Brookings India and Senior** Fellow, Brookings Institution, spoke to ANANT GOENKA, Executive Director, Indian Express Group, and UDIT MISRA, Deputy Associate Editor, The Indian Express, about what caused it - and what the

GOENKA: Vikram, it's certainly something that is going to happen just once in our lifetime, isn't it?

MEHTA: Yeah, what happened is a technical issue ... related to the May Futures contract from WTI (crude oil) and basically, you know, all the traders who were holding on to that derivative paper, needed to offload it. They couldn't find anyone to roll it over because of the shortage or constraint on storage. So rather than taking the delivery of the product in May, they just bid low the price, desperate to get rid of that paper. And as you know, normally these sort of contracts get rolled over pretty easily because the differential between, let's say the May Futures and the June Futures, is not that great. But this time around, June Futures was trading at \$20 a barrel and May Futures crashed to -\$37. So the differential was such that no one was actually able to roll it over.

But this technicality reflects a fundamental reality of the market. And the reality is that it's a hugely oversupplied mar-

**GOENKA:** Is it correct that there are certain type of oil producers who are producing at around \$10 a barrel; others, like shale producers, at around \$30 a barrel; and there are some who are producing at less than \$5 a barrel?

MEHTA: You're absolutely right. Some of the fields, the giant fields that have been producing for the last God knows how many years, you can produce at a few cents a barrel.

But I think one has to go one step beyond the marginal cost of production and ask what is the budget requirements of the oil producers. I am going to take a slightly macro view. What is the oil price that oil producers need to break even, to balance their budget?

You'll be amazed, Saudi Arabia needs a price of \$82 a barrel, and the lowest, the most robust of the oil producers, Qatar, requires a price of around \$40 a barrel and, Algeria, at the other end, over \$100 a barrel. So the Saudi oil company Aramco might still be generating a profit. On a standalone basis, its balance sheet is

The fundamentals of the oil industry are not just determined by demand and supply, they are also determined by

geopolitics, by the paper trader — yesterday was all about paper trading. They are also determined to some extent by the exchange rate. Demand has fallen by such an extraordinary level — this quarter, some estimates say it will fall by 30 million barrels a day, which is the entire production of OPEC. Now against that kind of a

any difference. **VIKRAM S MEHTA** 

not going to go under. But since Saudi Aramco contributes 80 per cent of the revenues to the Saudi exchequer, the fact is that Saudi Arabia will have to very quickly draw down from its sovereign reserves if it wants to meet its social and economic commitments, and that's the big issue.

demand destruction, a 10

supply cut, which is what

Saudi and Russia have

agreed to, is not making

million barrels a day

At the industry level, you have the NOCs, the National Oil Companies and then the private companies, and if you were to order the oil companies by size and indeed profitability, you'd find that, probably of the top 20, 16 are NOCs. And then the four like, Exxon and Shell and Chevron and maybe Total; the rest have dropped off that list. Occidental, for example. Its share prices are below value and that's unique. That I think is the reason for saying, you might well have sounded the

Goenka: Am I wrong in my understanding that nobody is producing less because of the fear that if they do they will be forced to not produce at all, or will never be able to go back to the original volumes?

death knell of the oil industry.

MEHTA: The fundamentals of the oil industry are not just

More relaxation in

fundraising norms of

supply, they are also determined by geopolitics, by the paper trader – yesterday was all about paper trading. They are also determined to some extent by the exchange rate.

Demand has fallen by such an extraordinary level — this quarter, some estimates say it will fall by 30 million barrels a day, which is the entire production of OPEC. Now against that kind of a demand destruction. a 10 million barrels a day supply cut, which is what Saudi and Russia have agreed to, is not making any difference.

Point number two is that, if you do reduce supplies, some fields, some reservoirs could get permanently damaged.

#### Goenka: So are we (India) going to see a major reduction in our annual oil

MEHTA: Oh yeah, I haven't done the numbers, but there will definitely be a significant reduction. But on a per unit basis obviously, because the price has fallen. But our demand has fallen as well. The big question is: What are you going to do when the economy starts to pick up again?

#### Misra: As oil prices fall, should the government raise taxes and boost its revenues, or pass on the lower prices to consumers to boost consumption?

MEHTA: I would do the latter, I would actually look to reducing the prices. And I am not saying that initially it will boost demand because that depends very much on economic resurgence. But I think it will be politically foolish, frankly, for the government to continue to charge all of us the same price when the world price has col-

#### Goenka: Is the whole cause of renewable energy, especially in India, a hopeless cause, at these prices of oil?

MEHTA: It's not a hopeless cause because it cannot be and must not be a hopeless cause. So let's hope that no one in government says that. It's going to be complicated by the pr oil, of course, but more by sup ply chain issues.

The China supply chain is broken. That's back to my earlier point that we will have to take a slightly longer-term view of all these issues. If you take a short-term view, you are going to say, yeah, okay, "forget about renewables".

But you'll wake up, two years, five years, from now and you'll find yourself living in a hell-hole once again.

(Edited excerpts. Transcribed by

NEW DELHI. APRIL 22

**AASHISHARYAN** 

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

BRUSHING ASIDE privacy con-

cerns, food delivery app Zomato

founder Deepinder Goyal on

Wednesday said his company was

making it mandatory for its deliv-

ery partners to install the govern-

ment's contact tracing app Aaro-

gya Setu and keep it running in the

background before allowing them

(delivery partners) can only login

to their Zomato Delivery Partner

app if their phone has the Aarogya

Setu app installed, and is running

as a background process on their

of the company had tested posi-

tive for COVID-19, following

which Zomato issued a statement

saving that all the houses which

the person had visited with food

and grocery orders in the past few

days were being kept under ob-

Zomato's decision to make the

istallation of Aarogya Setu

mandatory for its delivery part-

ners comes even as experts have

raised several questions on the

app's privacy policy and efficacy.

While legal experts are of the view

that there is need for further clar-

ity on how the data collected by

the app is stored and used by the

government, cybersecurity ex-

perts doubted the efficacy of the

would be useful in true sense only

if India conducts enough COVID-

Some experts also said the app

"For the app to work effi-

application itself

servation by the authorities.

On April 15, a delivery partner

phone," Goyal said on Twitter.

"We have made sure that they

to log into their own profiles.

Share price of RIL jumped by 12 per cent on Wednesday, before closing at Rs 1,363 per share, with

Aarogya Setu mandatory

**Zomato, Urban Company** 

for delivery partners of

a gain of 10.3 per cent.

Source: Company annual report and communication

stake in RIL's refining and petro-

'Migrant wages sent home

Overtaking FDI inflows: Last year, remittances overtook

foreign exchange for low- and middle-income countries

foreign direct investment (FDI) flows as the main source of

set to drop \$142 bn in 2020' Global remittances are set to tumble by \$142 billion in 2020, the sharpest fall in recent history, a report by the

~20%: Fall in money that which would largely be due to a fall in their wages and employment overseas

World Bank estimates

\$714 BILLION: Remittances in 2019, which increased after a dip in 2016 mainly due to low oil prices

\$572 BILLION: Expected fall in remittances in 2020, a decline of \$142 billion

~1 BILLION: Number of migrants who help feed, clothe and shelter up to three people "back home". Of these:

■ 270 million work outside their home countries ■ 760 million are internal

migrants 19.7%: Expected fall in

remittances for low- and middle-income nations, from a record \$554 billion in 2019 to \$445 billion in 2020

regions, due to combined effect of the pandemic and the oil price slump

Europe and Central Asia will

see, the biggest among all



## Sensex, rupee rise; US crude jumps over 26% after Monday's record low

MUMBAI, APRIL 22

THE BENCHMARK Sensex on Wednesday rallied by 2.42 per cent, aided by the 10.3 per cent rally in Reliance Industries (RIL) which signed a deal with Facebook for the sale of 9.99 per cent stake in RIL's subsidiary Jio Platforms for

its partners such as air conditioner repairmen, electricians, plumbers, Rs 43,547 crore (\$5.7 billion). among others, would now have to The 30-share Sensex rose mandatorily install the app on 742.84 points to 31,379.55, while their phones and show it to the the NSE Nifty jumped 205.85 user that they were COVID-19 free points, or 2.29 per cent, to 9,187.30. The rupee, meanwhile, hit 76.91 when they went to their homes for providing any service. at day's low before closing 15 paise

bounded from two days of losses

and US futures surged on Wednesday, bolstered by tentative discussions of additional supply cuts from OPEC producers and US inventory builds that were less dire than some anticipated. As of 1720 GMT, Brent was up \$1.54, or 8 per cent, at \$20.87 a barrel. Intraday, it had fallen to \$15.98, its lowest since June 1999. USWTI crude futures for June delivery rose \$3.09, or 26.7 per cent, to \$14.66 a barrel. On Monday, US futures had closed at a record minus \$37.63 a barrel. WITH REUTERS

up at 76.68 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, Brent crude oil redeal helps surge TUESDAY'S SURGE was

largely in response to the Reliance-Facebook deal with RIL's shares rising 10.3 per cent on the BSE and selling pressure may re-emerge at higher levels. Eventually, COVID-19 updates and signals from the earnings front would dictate the market trend.

## **Labour Secy: Diverting** ESIC money, using it to

THE GOVERNMENT will undertake labour reforms in a big way in the coming months and there will be no hurdles for them, Labour Secretary Heeralal Samariya said Wednesday. He also ruled out appropriating funds of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) for payment of wages to workers or to employers to meet their salary bill amid the lockdown to counter the pandemic.

On the concerns raised by some industry representatives about punitive action against them if their workers get COVID-19, Samariya said no criminality should be associated with this and assured them of taking up the matter at the highest level.

insured persons and employers who are contributing (to this sohas a provision that if an employee is unemployed, then 25 per cent ing money (of the ESIC) to somebody else or paying the wages is want to reduce the contribution measures to give them employment as well as relief.

**HEERALAL SAMARIYA** LABOUR SECRETARY

further so that it (ESI scheme) can run in better way in future." he said during a webinar organised by industry chamber Ficci. At present, an employer con-

tributes 3.25 per cent and employee contributes 0.75 per cent of gross salary towards ESI.

About labour reforms, he said the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has given its report on the Code on Industrial Relations and it would soon submit a report on the Code on Social Security. The Centre has also collected data of migrant workers from states as well as districts. "We are working towards measures to give them employment as well as relief," Samariya said.

He added that he will take up the stimulus for the private sector to meet wages, adding that dedicated transport for workers is a must and the economy needs to move as it is difficult to survive with zero income.

## stressed firms proposed **ENSECONOMIC BUREAU**

MUMBAI, APRIL 22

ATA time when many corporates are facing fund crunch and defaults in the wake of the lockdown and closure of units, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has proposed exemption from making an open offer for the allottees, along with liberal pricing norms for preferential share issues of stressed companies.

The markets regulator has proposed exemption from making an open offer for allottees of preferential issue in stressed comanies if the acquisition is beyond the limit prescribed. To avail this exemption, listed companies need to ensure that preference issue is made to persons/entities that are not part of the promoter or promoter group on the date of the board meeting to consider the preferential issue, according to a Sebi draft paper. India Inc has closed down units across the country and sales have plumneted amid the lockdown.

Sebi has proposed that pricing should not be less than the average of the weekly high and low of the volume weighted average

#### Sebi assures of more steps amid lockdown

New Delhi: Sebi will look into issues being faced by corporates due to COVID-19 and consider more steps to help them tide over the challenges as part of its continuing efforts to make it easier to do business even in such difficult times, the regulatory body's chairman Ajay Tyagi told representatives of India Inc on Wednesday. PTI

prices of the related equity shares on a recognised stock exchange during the two weeks preceding the relevant date. Currently, the determination of the pricing covers a period of 26 weeks or more for frequently traded shares.

It said, "Listed companies that are facing financial stress are generally in need of fund infusion to tide over the stress situation and thereby avoid insolvency or bankruptcy. Such listed companies face certain difficulties in raising capital through conventional means.'

## BRIEFLY —

#### **IGST refunds: Exporters get** extension

New Delhi: The government has extended the alternate mechanism facility for exporters to claim IGST refunds in cases of mismatch in invoice number in GST returns and shipping bill filed with customs till December 31, 2019, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said in a circular. PTI

#### Air Mauritius in voluntary administration Nairobi: Air Mauritius has

entered voluntary administration after coronavirus-related disruptions made it impossible for it to meet its financial obligations in the foreseeable future, its board said on Wednesday. Notably, state-owned airline Air India holds a 10 per cent stake in Air Mauritius with the former's chairman and managing director representing the airline on Air Mauritius' board. **REUTERS** 

#### **VIVAD SE VISHWAS SCHEME**

## Declarations can be filed even where prosecution notice has been issued

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

ration under the scheme, it said.

The CBDT had, on March 4, issued a detailed FAQs on the scheme. In its Wednesday circular, the department has modified the answer to a question pertaining to prosecution cases with a view to "reflect the correct intent of law". "It has now been clarified that where only notice for initiation of prosecution has been issued without prosecution being instituted, the assessee is eligible to file declaration under Vivad se Viswas," the CBDT said.

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU** 

IN ANOTHER set of FAQs on the Vivad se Vishwas dispute resolution scheme, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Wednesday clarified that entities against whom notice has been issued without prosecution being instituted can avail the scheme. In cases where prosecution has been instituted for an assessment year, the prosecution will have to be compounded before filing decla-

In the March 4 FAQs, the CBDT said that where notice for initiation of prosecution has been issued

with reference to tax arrears, the taxpayer has a choice to compound the offence and opt for Vivad se Vishwas. However, the scheme will not cover cases where prose-

cution has already been instituted

and is pending in the court.

"This circular clarifies that where notice for initiation of prosecution has been issued without prosecution proceedings being instituted, the assessee would be eligible to file declaration under Vivad se Vishwas," Nangia Andersen LLP director Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said. Consulting firm AKM Global tax partner Amit Maheshwari said that earlier, there was a lack of clarity on applying for Vivad se Vishwas scheme when prosecution proceedings had been initiated and instituted.

In the Union Budget 2020-21, the Centre had announced the Vivad Se Vishwas. In cases where a taxpayer's appeals are pending before appellate forums, high courts and the Supreme Court, he will have the option to settle the dispute on payment of 100 per cent tax (125 per cent in search cases) and get complete waiver of interest and penalty if he pays by

### COVID-19: **EPFO** settles 6.06 lakh claims, pays out ₹1.9K cr in last 15 days

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

THE EMPLOYEES' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has processed 6.06 lakh claims and disbursed an amount of Rs 1.954 crore in last 15 days in the online facility to allow withdrawal not exceeding the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to a member's credit in the EPF account. whichever is less, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Including settlement of claims, the total disbursal in last 15 days is Rs 3.600.85 crore by processing 10.02 lakh claims, a Labour Ministry statement said, adding that 90 per cent of claims have been settled in three working days. In addition, Rs 481.63 crore

scribers under this scheme, it said. The scheme allowing advance withdrawal was notified on March 27 and the online facility was launched on March 29.

have been distributed by the ex-

empted PF trusts to 40,826 sub-

## pay wages not advisable **ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

"ESIC (fund) is money of the

cial security scheme). It already of wages can be paid ... but divertnot at all advisable because we

# "We are working towards

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2020 10 SPORT

#### 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** recollects the story when India reclaimed the hockey gold the last

time Olympics were held in Tokyo **READ THE STORY ON** indianexpress.com

## 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

# 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 lowerranked 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\$ 5000. 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.

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-yearold 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 200 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 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, "Iust 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. "Hey @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.

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 (fi-

ever," 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

nancially) by now. I'm blessed to have par-

ents to support me, but I can't do this for-

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

**PRESS TRUST 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.

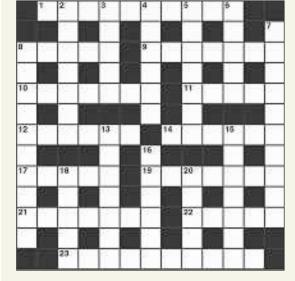
During a recent online hearing in a matter of financial misappropriation of funds, organised by DDCA ombudsman Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma via Skype, one of the body's lawyers, known for his proximity to Tihara, told the apex council members that he had tested positive for novel coronavirus.

"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.

#### CROSSWORD 4099

training for 2021 and thereafter".



### ACROSS

- Recognises and arrests (10) Warning! This woman is
- A welder renovating the sheltered side of a ship (7) One needs pluck to play it
- Daily woman, perhaps (5) 12 Confirm it if a try is made
- correctly(6) Odd stance for a climb (6) 17 Emir's off to see Scrooge
- The art of eating out (7)Studio that is later converted (7)
- 22 Puce-coloured jumpers 23 Priest very disposed to obstinacy (10)

#### DOWN

- The iob of a debt-collector? (7) Wash resin out (5)
- He has a title within his grasp
- 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) 13 Skin specialist (7)
- 15 I'd fill in the result it's obvious (7)
- 16 Educational measure? (6)
- People count on them to send them to sleep (5)
- 20 Those on the wrists are preferable to those on the

Solutions Crossword 4098: Across: 1 Valise, 4 Easter, 9 Shearer, 10 Strip, 11 Reset, 12 Eyesore, 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 Ripped, 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 & HOBBES** by Bill Watterson











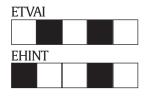


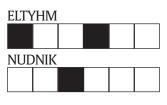
#### **MARVIN** by Tom Armstrong IF MOM AND DAD WON'T LET



### **JUMBLED 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.





Answer: I think; therefore I am. - Rene Descartes SOLUTION: VITAE, THINE, METHYL, UNKIND

SUDOKU

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

Difficulty Level 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 5s = Very Hard; 6s =

i		5				0	3	6
	4	6	7.	_	П		5	
	7			8	2	3	1	
3	6				ij	2		Г
Ι		4						
3		1	9		U,		6	

SOLUTION SUDOKU 418 2 3 7 5 1 9 8 4 6 4 3 7 6 7 8 5 7 6 7 9 3 8 2 4 6 5 1 5 6 8 1 9

#### **DAY TODAY**

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) Mars' intriguing relationship with Neptune is pretty near perfect as far as all work and professional ambitions are concerned, but only if you are able to recognise

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

the difference between the way

the world is on the one hand,

and the way you'd like it to be

you are blessed with a planetary alignment which confers inspiration and imagination. What is more impressive in your chart is the manner in which your creative powers and spiritual aspirations are triggered. You

should always try to see the

best in people. GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Continued close financial matter is desirable, although not essential. When other people abandon their responsibilities, you will be the one who knows where to turn, for you have an amazing wealth of experience to draw on from

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) Your daily planets reveal this to be a

special day if you have proposals to put forward and arguments to win. However, the long-term perspective evokes deep memories and could cause you to reflect on all those things which happened so long ago. Hopefully certain recollections are no longer as painful as they were.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Secrecy is not one of your better-known characteristics, but todav vou really have to keep something to yourself. Don't worry about deceiving partners as long as there is no self-interest involved. It may be, for example, that you keep something from them for their

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) If you are beginning to feel as if you're walking up the down escalator, then

you're probably pretty much in tune with the stars. The secret is to change direction now, before you end up in the wrong place. You won't lose the thread completely, even if other people

BY PETER VIDAL

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) Carry on with all-

important professional moves, regardless of associates' potentially timewasting or disruptive actions. If ou give charitable activities a high priority you will do what the mystical philosophers call 'making merit', with many good

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23) profound role in your chart for many years, so emotional intensity is nothing new. On the other hand, occasionally a new

results in the future.

pitch of excitement is reached and, right now, under the Moon's powerful sway, you may demand a new level of commitment. SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22) Your material and

business interests may have to come first, no matter how much you have to spend or invest. If you have any uncertainties at work, or in any major public ambition, you may

put important developments on hold until the picture CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) Sober Saturn and

jovial Jupiter are activated, reminding everyone that you are much more than the materialistic stereotype of an astrological cliché. Don't be afraid to speak

your mind, or break out of the

rut in which you have

buried yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21- Feb 19) Spare a little time for

your physical wellbeing, and use the opportunity provided by today's lunar

position to clean up your diet and check out a new fitness regime. Don't be perturbed by a financial delay, but keep an eve on other people. just to make sure that they're doing what they said they'd do.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) The Sun is sailing



saying that although colleagues someone, somewhere, is about to hit the roof. Keep your psychic antennae buzzing and try to spot problems before