

DELHI SAYS MAKE ONLY CONTAINMENT ZONES RED, OPEN UP REST

Wary of lifting lockdown, states ask Centre for more authority in categorising zones

Economic activities have resumed, will gain further steam now: Modi

LIZ MATHEW, ABANTIKA GHOSH, DIPANKAR GHOSH, MANOJ CG & SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



FIFTY DAYS into lockdown, while most states demanded further easing to resume economic activities, they were undecided about completely lifting the lockdown on May 17. While some states sought the authority to decide zoning of districts into red, orange and green categories, some wanted more flexibility to modify lockdown guidelines within their jurisdiction.

In the fifth meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, chief ministers of at least four states — Maharashtra, Punjab, Telangana and West Bengal — were of the view that the lockdown which came into effect on March 25, should be extended. States including Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Andhra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu had reservations on allowing inter-state transport, be it rail or air, and wanted to be consulted before a decision is taken. Bihar Chief Minister Nitisk Kumar, in fact, said starting rail services "was a mistake" and that his opinion should have been taken since he was a "former Railways Minister".

The Centre had, on Sunday, announced partial resumption of rail services between New Delhi and several major cities. At the end of the marathon six-hour meeting, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi asked chief ministers to share a broad strategy on how they would want to deal with the lockdown regime in their particular states by May 15. "I want states to make a blue print on how to deal with various nuances during and after the gradual easing of the lockdown," he told them.

Sources present in the meeting said a consensus seemed to be building around a demand by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh that the authority to zone districts into red, orange and green categories be delegated to states with even the BJP-ruled Haryana backing it.

In fact, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said categorisation of red zones should be done on the basis of containment zones, pointing out that the district-wise formula was impractical in a densely-populated city like Delhi. That can be worked

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A child and his mother wait outside a Covid-testing centre of a government hospital in Kolkata on Monday. Partha Paul

Centre is playing politics, acting unilaterally, targeting Bengal: Mamata attacks PM at meet

LIZ MATHEW, VARINDER BHATIA & ATRI MITRA
NEW DELHI, CHANDIGARH, KOLKATA, MAY 11

AMIDST THE war of words between the Trinamool Congress and BJP over the handling of coronavirus in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

attacked the Centre at the video-conference meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, accusing it of playing politics and unilateral decisions.

She took on the PM, Home Minister Amit Shah as well as Central government officials, questioning their actions in the midst of a pandemic. She was among the CMs who opposed the

Centre's plan to dilute the lockdown and start the train service.

Sources familiar with the proceedings at the meeting said Banerjee accused New Delhi of taking decisions without consulting states. "She said that the Centre sends advisories and, before they reach the state, these are leaked to the BJP unit and media," a source said. She also

accused Central officials of holding video-conferences with state officials without keeping her government in the loop. "Don't do politics, Amit Shah saheb," she said.

Unlike on earlier occasions, Banerjee's attack was also directed at Modi, as much as the others.

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TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

LOCKDOWN DAY 48
CASES: 67,152
RECOVERED: 20,916 DEATHS: 2,206
TESTS: 16,73,688 DOUBLING RATE: 10.85**



| KEY STATES TO WATCH | TOTAL CASES | SURGE IN 24 HRS | 7-DAY AVG. GROWTH* | DOUBLING RATE** |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| ■ Maharashtra | 22,171 | 1,943 | 7.96% | 9.05 |
| ■ Gujarat | 8,194 | 397 | 6.06% | 11.88 |
| ■ Delhi | 7,233 | 310 | 6.85% | 10.51 |
| ■ Tamil Nadu | 7,204 | 669 | 13.21% | 5.45 |
| ■ Rajasthan | 3,709 | 106 | 3.98% | 18.11 |
| ■ West Bengal | 1,939 | 153 | 10.18% | 7.08 |

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

CONCERN
TAMIL NADU: Koyambedu continues to add large numbers

CAUTION
ODISHA: Cases being discovered in new districts like Angul

A GLIMMER
RAJASTHAN: Slowest growth pace among top 10 with max caseload

Based on daily data released by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Indian Council of Medical Research and state governments

Balance security, rights, says SC as it rejects 4G for J&K

ANANTHAKRISHNAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

DECLINING PLEAS for restoration of 4G Internet services in Jammu and Kashmir, the Supreme Court Monday said the "peculiar circumstances" in the Union Territory required "delicate balancing" of "national security concerns and human rights". It also underlined that "outside forces are trying to infiltrate the borders and destabilize the integrity of the nation".

The bench of Justices N V Ramana, R Subhash Reddy and B R Gavai ordered constitution of a Special Committee, headed by the Union Home Secretary, to "immediately determine the

EXPLAINED
Ball back in court of officials

THE UNION Home Secretary and J&K Chief Secretary, who were respondents in the two orders challenged by the petitioners, will now be in the SC-mandated Special Committee which will decide the demand for 4G restoration in the UT. In effect, the ball is back in the court of authorities who imposed the curbs in the first place.

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Pooled testing for zero-case dists as norms are eased for home isolation

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

WHILE THE number of fresh novel coronavirus (Covid-19) cases in the last 24 hours touched a new high at 4,213 on Monday, including 97 deaths, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has decided to carry out pooled testing in all districts —including those which have not reported any case so far — as part of its nationwide surveillance plan.

The ministry has also revised home isolation guidelines, specifying that "there is no need for testing after the home isolation period is over".

It has said that the "patient under home isolation will end home isolation after 17 days of onset of symptoms (or date of sampling, for pre-symptomatic cases) and no fever for 10 days."

The earlier guidelines stated that such patients will end home isolation if symptoms are clinically resolved and the surveillance medical officer certifies him/ her to be free of infection after laboratory testing.

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Trains from today will run at full capacity

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

INDICATING THE government's strong intent to return to normalcy, the Railway services starting Tuesday will run to full capacity, while leaving it up to the passengers to maintain social distancing on board, and to states to decide the protocol on arrival.

Within 20 minutes of the bookings opening Monday, the Howrah-New Delhi train was



Preparing for train services after 51 days, at New Delhi Station Monday. Praveen Khanna

sold out. In no time at all, it was fully booked for the next five days. The same was the story with the Mumbai-New Delhi route. "By 9.15 pm, 30,000 PNRs had been generated and reservations made for more than 54,000 passengers," a Railway spokesperson said.

However, there were problems with the Railway software as it tried to account for the irregular trains. The booking facility had to be put off for two hours

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Aarogya data only for health needs, to be deleted in 180 days

AASHISH ARYAN & KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE AAROGYA Setu Data Access and Knowledge Sharing Protocol released on Monday states that the personal data of the app's user, which includes contacts and location, must be permanently deleted after 180 days "from the date on which it is collected", and data can only be used for health purposes.

The protocol, developed and released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), reads: "NIC (National Informatics Centre) shall collect only such response

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Mandating use of app illegal: Justice Srikrishna

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI MAY 11

FORMER SUPREME Court Judge B N Srikrishna, who chaired the committee that came out with the first draft of the Personal Data Protection Bill, termed the government's push mandating the use of Aarogya Setu app "utterly illegal".

"Under what law do you mandate it on anyone? So far it is not backed by any law," the former judge told *The Indian Express*.

On May 1, the Ministry of Home Affairs, in its guidelines af-

ter the nationwide lockdown was extended, made Aarogya Setu App mandatory for employees of private and public sector offices. It also asked local authorities to ensure 100% coverage of the app in containment zones. The guidelines were issued by the National Executive Committee set up under the National Disaster Management Act (NDMA), 2005.

The Noida police then said that not having the Aarogya Setu application would be punishable with imprisonment up to six months or fine up to Rs 1,000.

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In Bengal's paddy bowl, yield of late harvesting due to lockdown: wages up

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & JOY PRAKASH DAS
PURBA BURDWAN, MAY 11

YADAV GHORUI has rarely been this busy during harvest season. He is one of eight farm labourers who have been called in to work on a one-bigha field in his Ajapur village in Burdwan, about 100 km from Kolkata.

"These are happy times for us. Last year, I got Rs 200 and two



Lockdown, lack of cheap migrant labour mean harvest has spilled over from April. Partha Paul

kg of rice every day that I worked; this year I have been getting Rs 350 and two kg of rice. Our batch of eight is booked for the entire month. Everyone is in a rush now. Work began a week ago and now we harvest, bundle the paddy and dehusk the grains in two days straight. We work at night too," said Ghorui, who lives with his wife and two children in the village.

The rabi crop, known as Boro Dhan in Bengal, is sown in November and is usually harvested by April. But this year, the

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Janki

FROM PAGE ONE

Centre is playing politics: Mamata

A source present at the meeting said Banerjee made her anger evident right from the start, taking off by saying, "You are sending advisories one after another, without even consulting anyone. Amit Shah could have spoken on the phone, but instead he sent me a letter."

While Bengal was being targeted, the Centre was over-riding decisions of BJP-ruled governments, including on labour laws, Banerjee said, specifically mentioning Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Asserting that West Bengal was doing its best to combat the virus, the CM said "surrounded by international borders and other bigger states", the state had "too many challenges to deal with".

According to top sources in the state government, Banerjee said, "When we are cooperating with you, why are you attacking us? Why is it always Bengal?... The Centre is working according to a script... Nobody ever asks our opinion. Don't bulldoze the federal structure... All states should be given equal importance and we should work together as Team India."

Sources said that Tripura CM Biplab Kumar Deb took on Banerjee for her remarks. When his turn came, Deb said the debate on "bigger and smaller states" had ended in 2014 (the year Modi became the PM), but the Bengal CM had resumed such talk. He also praised Modi and Shah's efforts to "strengthen the economy of the Northeast region".

The Centre has criticised West Bengal several times on its Covid-19 management, including its level of testing and its mortality rate, which at 13.2% is the highest in the country. It has also questioned the state government's decision to not allow movement of goods through the India-Bangladesh border, saying it could adversely impact New Delhi's commitments to the neighbouring country.

Sources said the last straw for Banerjee was the row over the movement of migrant labourers, with the state on Saturday questioning a letter by Union Home Minister Amit Shah that reportedly accused it of not facilitating the return of its residents from outside West Bengal. "A furious Chief Minister decided to not hold back at the video-conference with the Prime Minister."

4G for J&K

necessity of the continuation of limiting mobile Internet to 2G speed in the region.

The Secretary, Department of Communications, and Chief Secretary of J&K will be part of the committee.

The bench asked the committee to examine the contentions of, and the material placed herein by the Petitioners as well as the Respondents and "also examine the appropriateness of the alternatives suggested by the Petitioners, regarding limiting the restrictions to those areas where it is necessary and the allowing of faster Internet (3G or 4G) on a trial basis over certain geographical areas".

The petitioners, including Foundation for Media Professionals, had sought restoration of 4G Internet, citing the lockdown. They said the present 2G service was not enough for children to access online classes or for patients to consult doctors online. The lower service speed, the petitioners said, had also affected businesses dependent on the online mode.

The bench referred to its earlier decision in the Anuradha Bhasin case in January this year wherein it ordered review of restrictions placed in J&K in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019.

Ordering formation of the Special Committee, the bench said while in the Anuradha Bhasin case it had said "under the usual course, every order passed under Rule 2 (2) of the Telecom Suspension Rules restricting the Internet is to be placed before a Review Committee which provides for adequate procedural and substantive safeguards to ensure that the imposed restrictions are narrowly tailored", it was, however, "of the view that since the issues involved affect the State, and the nation, the Review Committee which consists of only State-level officers, may not be in a position to satisfactorily address all the issues raised".

The bench said "although the present orders" restricting mobile Internet speed "indicate that they have been passed for a lim-

ited period of time, the order does not provide any reason to reflect that all the districts of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir require the imposition of such restrictions".

It said "one of the criteria for testing the proportionality of the orders is the territorial extent of the restrictions. In view of the observations made in Anuradha Bhasin... for meaningful enforcement of the spirit of the judgment, inter alia, the authorities are required to pass orders with respect to only those areas, where there is absolute necessity of such restrictions to be imposed, after satisfying the directions passed earlier".

The bench said "a perusal of the submissions made before us and the material placed on record indicate that the submissions of the Petitioners, in normal circumstances, merit consideration. However, the compelling circumstances of cross-border terrorism in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, at present, cannot be ignored".

It said "national security concerns and human rights must be reasonably and defensibly adjusted with one another, in line with the Constitutional principles".

It referred to statistics of terror attacks and loss of life in the region after August 5 and said it "will have to consider the above in its analysis". It also referred to the government's submission on Pakistan's designs on J&K.

On the plea that online classes, medical consultation were being affected by the current 2G service, it said "while it might be desirable and convenient to have better Internet in the present circumstances, wherein there is a worldwide pandemic and a national lockdown. However, the fact that outside forces are trying to infiltrate the borders and destabilize the integrity of the nation, as well as cause incidents resulting in the death of innocent citizens and security forces every day, cannot be ignored".

In its affidavit, the government had pointed out that there was no restriction on fixed-line broadband Internet.

On the petitioner's argument that orders passed by the authorities showed non-application of mind, the bench "noted that the authorities have been taking steps towards easing of Internet restrictions taking into account the prevailing circumstances" and "this can be seen from the fact that initially only whitelisted websites were allowed, before Internet access to all websites was provided on broadband, and finally to post-paid and verified prepaid mobile users as well, although at 2G speeds".

Pooled testing for zero-case dists as norms are eased for home isolation

With the total case count touching 67,152 (2,206 died, 20,916 recovered), it has already crossed the government's projection of 65,000 cases by May 15, as shared with the states earlier.

According to the Health Ministry's data, 216 districts had not reported any case till last week. The ministry plans to include such districts in its countrywide surveillance, which will be carried out in 10 health facilities (6 public, 4 private) in each district.

Both high-risk (healthcare workers) and low-risk (non-ILI Out Patient Department patients and pregnant women) groups will be selected.

"There is a need to establish systematic surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 infection in all districts of the country. This surveillance will be in addition to the routine testing as per current testing guidelines. Besides the facility-based surveillance, ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research)/ NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) in collaboration with key stakeholders and state health departments is initiating a population based sero-survey in selected districts representing the case detection across the country," says a document on district-level facility-based surveillance for Covid-19 issued by the Health Ministry.

According to the plan, 100 samples will be collected from high-risk groups and 50 each from the two groups of low-risk population each week.

"Throat/ nasal swabs to be collected for RT-PCR tests. Samples should be tested in a

States still wary of lifting lockdown

upon and the number of zones can be revised based on the ground situation. But the non-containment zones should be opened up, he said.

Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa wanted to do away with the district-wise red, orange and green zones, and instead have only strictly cordoned containment zones. In non-containment zones, he said, commercial activities including public transport should be allowed. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan sought powers to decide on lockdown guidelines after assessing the prevailing situation in the state.

"Several CMs made the point that as people implementing the measures on the ground, the states are more attuned to the actual situation and thus while it is alright for the Centre to share the broad criteria, the actual categorisation should be left to them. Many also said there were flaws in the Centre's list," said a source present at the meeting.

A fresh list of districts in the three zones was circulated, only to be recalled by the Centre within minutes, said sources.

Sources said the PM asked states to make their own policy, decide on zonal restrictions, activities to be allowed in containment zones, and outside. He made it clear that there would be no full-fledged opening of the railways; but need-based and slow. "He also said till a vaccine was found, maintaining social distancing — of 2 metres — was

one-time pool of 25. Results of this sample pooling is only for surveillance purposes. It should not be used for diagnosis of individual patients. In addition to throat/ nasal swabs, blood samples should be collected for detecting IgG antibodies for ELISA testing. In subsequent rounds, IgG ELISA based testing of serum samples will replace RT-PCR based testing for surveillance purpose," says the document.

The surveillance will be carried out in partnership with district and state health administration, IDSP (Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme), NCDC, ICMR institutes, community medicine departments of medical colleges and public health institutes.

Meanwhile, at the daily briefing, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal reiterated that India had not reached the stage of community transmission.

"Our policy has been to implement containment strategies with extra stringency wherever more cases are detected. Some clusters have been found, and in some cases, in some particular locations, relatively large outbreaks have also been noticed. The AIIMS Director had said that if we do not do containment properly, transmission rates will go up. It is important to continue the containment strategy with rigour to prevent the country from going into community transmission," he said.

While 3,277 new cases and 128 deaths were reported on Sunday, the daily count was 3,320 new cases and 95 deaths on Saturday.

Agarwal also sought to allay concerns on the possibility of infection spreading in AC trains, which are set to resume from Tuesday. "Centralised AC can be used, but there is a need to monitor flow of air. If there is any aerosol-induced spread risk, we can travel without AC too," Agarwal said.

He denied that there was any effort to map Covid risks by community. "Please spread the right information, we will get the disease if we violate guidelines. Covid does not see religion," he said.

Trains starting today will run at full capacity, states to decide arrival norms

after starting at 4 pm Monday, and till Monday night, most of the 15 trains (or 30 up-and-down routes) could not take bookings.

While several states expressed apprehension at the resumption of passenger trains at this time, during the video-conferencing with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, Railway officials said the Special Rajdhani would run as scheduled, and there was no instruction to curtail the list of destina-

the only weapon against Covid. He also said pre-Covid and post-Covid are two different worlds and India should look out for new economic opportunities," said an official.

In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Modi stressed on teamwork, compassion and statesmanship while dealing with the crisis. Pointing out that India's approach has gained global recognition, he said the country has a "clear indication as to the geographical spread of the pandemic in India" and that officials have understood the operating procedures right up to the district levels.

Economic activities have already resumed slowly but in the coming days, the process will further gather steam, Modi said. While Yeddyurappa said all domestic and international travel should not be permitted at least till the end of May, Vijayan was of the view that domestic flight services could be resumed with special guidelines, except from the containment zones. Medical tests could be conducted at the airports and those with symptoms should not be allowed to travel, he said.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik, one of the first to seek an extension of the lockdown in the previous meetings, did not press for it on Monday, but stressed on the need for broad principles at the national level and decentralised implementation by local administration.

"They will run full," a Railway spokesman said.

The Shramik Special trains that started last week to take migrant labourers home had fixed maximum capacity at 1,200. But the Railway Ministry order on the operation of the Rajdhani-like trains Monday makes no such mention, with officials saying passengers will be advised to maintain social distancing on board as well as at stations. Incidentally, the capacity of Shramik Specials has also been raised now to full, to around 1,600.

As reported earlier, the passengers on board the trains, which will run after a gap of 51 days, would be required to bring own food and blankets, reach the station 90 minutes prior to departure, and keep their masks on. The passengers will also be "advised" to have the Aarogya Setu app on their phones, though it is not a precondition to travel.

Passengers will be given hand sanitisers on entry and exit and allowed to enter stations only if they don't display symptoms and clear thermal screening. This is why the direction to reach the station 90 minutes before departure.

While the 15 trains have been designated Special Rajdhani, with premium fares and speed, pre-packed snacks, biscuits and water bottles will be available on board only against payment, like in budget airlines. The food charge hence won't be built into the fares, unlike in Rajdhani. Since some of the journeys are longer than 24 hours and the lockdown means stalls at stations will be shut, officials said passengers are advised to bring food from home. IRCTC sources said the reason for not providing full-meal service was the likely difficulty in procuring resources in the lockdown.

The Railways won't be supplying linen — pillow, sheets and blanket — either, while keeping the on-board temperature a little higher for comfort. This is also in line with apprehension that an air-conditioned environment can ease the spread of the virus. The Railways has modified the temperature to be maintained following discussions with own health professionals as well as the Health Ministry, sources said. It has also been decided that the A-C in the coach will refresh the air 12 times an hour, which officials said was akin to what was being followed in international trains, like in China, following Covid-19.

The trains will not have on-board housekeeping staff owing to the scarcity of contractual labour amid the restrictions. Passengers will be advised by onboard staff to keep the coaches clean, officials said.

On Monday, the Home Ministry also listed its guidelines about the train journeys. One of the points said: "The movement of the passenger(s) as well as the driver of the vehicle transporting the passenger(s) to and from

Punjab Chief Minister Singh said states should be allowed great flexibility in micro-planning, with MSMEs permitted to function even in red zone districts with proper safeguards. "The exit strategy should focus on fiscal and economic empowerment of the states, which are responsible for the real action directly impinging upon the livelihood and social health of the common man," said a statement quoting Singh as having told the Prime Minister.

Singh was joined by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in demanding more financial resources from the Centre to fight the pandemic, particularly with the economy on the downhill.

While Singh sought urgent funds to meet at least 33 per cent of the state's committed liabilities and grants for three months to meet revenue shortfalls, Baghel lent voice to his demand to let states increase their borrowing limit under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act 2005 (FRBM Act) from 3% of GSDP (gross state domestic product) to 4% Kerala reiterated its demand for raising the fiscal deficit limit and sought more funds with lower rates of interest.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said the pandemic cannot be contained unless the lockdown continued, but advocated a gradual lifting. "Thackeray said, 'we are ready

to live with corona, but we are not sure whether the virus is ready to live with us,'" said a source who was also part of the meeting. Telangana CM K Chandrashekhara Rao too said strict curbs should continue.

Andhra Pradesh CM Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu said the Centre should continue to get more investments to the Northeast.

While there was no consensus on lifting the lockdown, a minister from a state who was present in the meeting said, "There does not seem to be any clarity on the issue of opening up; probably states are playing it safe right now. Most of the conversation so far has been on migrants and the special trains."

Another senior minister from a state said the tone and tenor was akin to a "cat and mouse game". "Most indicated they want some relaxations but are stopping short of either giving concrete suggestions or advocating a full lockdown," the minister said. While Tripura indicated that the larger lockdown should continue, it called for further easing in districts. Assam too said it was imperative that people do not abandon social distancing, and advocated that some form of the lockdown should be continued.

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Andhra Pradesh CM Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu said the Centre should continue to get more investments to the Northeast.

3 bighas of land in one hour.

In neighbouring Eroar village, Mangobindo Adhikari, panchayat member and local Trinamool leader, said more needed to be done to generate employment. "There was some talk of including harvesting under MGNREGA, but it has not been implemented yet," he said.

In Golsi village, Sheikh Ajijur Rehman, 50, is waiting for the harvester to reach his 30 bigha land. In fields nearby, chain-wheel harvester machines can be seen working tirelessly — cutting, DE-husking and then emptying the grains into mini vans lined up along the road.

"Two days ago, I tried to some a group of 12 labourers from Jharkhand, but police stopped them at the border near Dubrajpur (Birbhum district). The government is allowing labourers to be brought from other districts, but arranging vehicles or a bus to transport the labour is expensive," said Ajijur.

He said he was 15th in the queue for the harvester machine. "It will be around mid-night when my turn comes," he said.

Aarogya Setu

data as necessary and proportionate to formulate or implement appropriate health responses. Further, such data shall be used strictly for the purpose of formulating or implementing appropriate health responses and constantly improving such responses".

The present privacy policy allows the app to retain the data for 60 days after a Covid-19 patient is cured, and for other users, the personal information is removed from the server after 45 days. The new protocol will allow the government to hold on to the data beyond 180 days if "a specific recommendation... is made" by the empowered group on technology, which is one of the 11 empowered group of officers formed to deal with lockdown issues.

The new protocol also allows an individual to request for deleting demographic data, which must be abided by in 30 days.

The new norms, which lay emphasis on anonymisation of data collected by the app, mention that the data can be shared with the "Government of India", and all the agencies that are granted access to the data must use it only for the purpose for which it has been shared and delete it after 180 days.

"In the overall flow, the most important data set is the special surveillance system made by the health department in which states (and districts) can look at the information," IT Secretary Ajay Prakash Sawhney, who head the empowered group, said in a press briefing on Monday. "Also, applications for testing samples with data reaches ICMR's lab portals... all health systems in NIC and the Health Ministry are combined with Aarogya Setu's self-assessment and Bluetooth contact tracing data. Along with NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) data and with the help of IIT Madras, an analytics is done on all this combined data to see what actions can be taken. This is the broad picture of how we organise our data flows."

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) is responsible for collecting, processing and managing all the data collected by Aarogya Setu, which has been downloaded to the phones of 9.82 crore Indians. NIC shall maintain a list of agencies with which the data is being shared.

"This makes it very clear that the intent of the government is only to use this data for COVID-19 related responses and there is no other purpose for which the data has been collected. The purpose is now upfront, and after that period is over, all data will be purged," said Abhishek Vaidya, the CEO of the IT Ministry's National e-Governance Foundation.

"There have been a few concerns about how data is shared, how it is being governed, and under what act it is being shared. So while the Data Protection Bill is pending in Parliament, there was a need to lay down the framework because ultimately what we are saying in the privacy policy about collection purpose and use needed a statutory backing," said Vaidya.

Recently, the Congress raised security concerns about the application by taking up a technical note by hacker Elliot Alderson. The hacker claimed that through the app he was able to access information about people who were infected by coronavirus and felt unwell, among other data points, including people in sensitive offices like the PMO or Parliament.

IT Ministry's Additional Secretary S Gopalakrishnan, who also assisted in developing the protocol, told, The Indian Express: "It is in the same spirit as the Data Protection Bill. This puts clearly the role of NIC, MEITY, etc in handling this data".

Compared with the Data Protection Bill, which is under examination by a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee, the new protocol has a stronger emphasis on anonymisation of personal data when it is shared with third parties. Though the protocol for sharing and processing of personal data have largely been kept unchanged, the new norms emphasize on "de-identifying", which scrubs data of personally identifiable details, and "hard anonymisation".

Mandating use of app utterly illegal: Justice Srikrishna

"The Noida police order is totally unlawful. I am assuming this is still a democratic country and such orders can be challenged in court," he said.

Justice Srikrishna said that the guidelines cannot be considered as having sufficient legal backing to make the use of Aarogya Setu mandatory. "These pieces of legislation — both the National Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Diseases Act — are for a specific reason. The national executive committee in my view is not a statutory body," he said.

In July 2017, while the Supreme Court was still examining whether the right to privacy would constitute a fundamental right, the government had appointed Justice Srikrishna to head the committee on data protection. The committee of experts and officials held public hearings across the country and submitted a report in July 2018, in which it also proposed a draft data protection law. The Bill is yet to be brought to Parliament for approval. The report recommended that "processing of personal data must only be done for clear, specific and lawful" purposes. The committee recommended several rights for the data principal (whose personal data is collected) - from revoking consent granted for processing data, notifying a breach to having their incorrectly processed data rectified by the authorities.

The Supreme Court in the landmark 2017 ruling that recognised the fundamental right to privacy laid down a three-fold test to examine constitutionality of government actions that could invade a citizen's right to privacy. The first condition is that the action taken must be under a law duly passed by Parliament and the government will have to show it had a "legitimate state interest" to violate the right to privacy apart from having considered all less intrusive measures before violating the right.

On Monday, the Aarogya Setu Data Access and Knowledge Sharing protocol was issued, setting up principles for collecting and processing of data. The protocol is an "order" by the Empowered Group on Technology and Data Management set up by the National Executive of the Disaster Management Act.

Justice Srikrishna said that the protocol would not be adequate to protect the data. "It is akin to an inter-departmental circular. It is good that they are keeping with the principles of the Personal Data Protection Bill but who will be responsible if there is a breach? It does not say who should be notified," he said.

In a webinar organised on Monday by Daksh, an advocacy group, he called the new protocol a "patchwork" that will "cause more concern to citizens than benefit."

"It is highly objectionable that such an order is issued at an executive level. Such an order has to be backed by Parliamentary legislation, which will authorise the government to issue such an order," said Justice Srikrishna.

"If it is traced to NDMA, the NDMA has no provision for constitution of an empowered group. (Under) what provision of laws this order issued? I cannot understand... If there is a breach of data here, who is answerable, what action has to be taken and (who is) accountable for the data breach. This should really have been traced ideally to PDP (Personal Data Protection) or through NDMA by an appropriate amendment," he said.

WITH INPUTS FROM AASHISH ARYAN

3 THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL

Allow madrasas, mosques to be used as isolation centres: Imams to community

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 11

ADAY after requesting CM Mamata Banerjee not to lift the lockdown before Eid on May 25, an association of imams has urged Muslims to allow madrasas and big mosques to be used as quarantine and isolation centres.

In a statement, Bengal Imams' Association chairperson Mohammad Yahya said: "Thousands of our Muslim brothers are coming from outside the state. Help them during this moment of crisis. I am appealing to the 2,000 madrasa committees to open their buildings for them and turn them into isolation or quarantine centres." He added, "We may not help thousands of people. But, we can help at least 50... this is not against 'Shariat'. The Darul-uloom-Deoband madrasa has already been opened as a quarantine centre."

In a letter to the CM and the Directorate of Health Services, Yahya said the government should also issue a similar appeal to the madrasa committees.



Women queue up to collect food being distributed by a group of students, at Puipukur slum in Barasat, North 24 Parganas, on Monday. Residents of the area, which has been declared as a containment zone, complained that they did not get any relief from the government. Shashi Ghosh

5 more dead; few app-based cabs, buses to run in Kolkata and suburbs from tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 11

THE NOVEL coronavirus claimed five more lives in West Bengal in the last 24 hours. The toll in state stood at 190, among which 118 people succumbed to coronavirus, while the others died due to co-morbidity, the Health Department said on Monday.

Also, 124 more people tested positive for coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the total number to 2,063. The number of patients discharged from the hospital in the last 24 hours was 82, while the total number of recovered patients was 499. The number of active cases increased from 1,337 to 1,374.

According to the health bulletin published by the state government, 4,201 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. The cumulative number of samples tested in over a month was 47,615. As many as 6,689 people were still in the government quarantine, while 23,296 in home quarantine.

On Monday, Transport Minister Suwendu Adhikari announced that skeletal bus service and app-based cab service will start operation from Wednesday, connecting the nodal points of Kolkata with the adjoining areas. The services will be available for emergency purposes as well as for the frontline workers and returnees/migrants who are travelling by roads or airlines. However, not more than 20 people can board the bus at



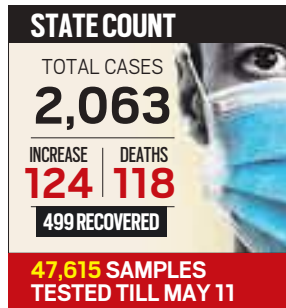
Suwendu Adhikari

the same time.

He also said that the app-based cabs will operate only for those associated with fighting the pandemic or emergency services, both in the government and private sectors. Also, patients who need emergency treatment or health check-up, including chemotherapy, radiation and dialysis, can avail the service. One person can accompany the patient. However, both the two persons will be allowed to sit only in the back seat of the cab, he added.

The app-based cabs may move within the Kolkata Metropolitan area, which is under the administrative jurisdiction of Kolkata Police, Bidhannagar Police, Barrackpore Police and Howrah City Police Commissionerates. The vehicles will not be permitted to enter any containment zone, said the minister.

The riders should obtain e-pass from the online portal and should furnish it to the driver. The rider should also carry authentic documents while travelling. A movable protective transparent sheet will be put up between the driver and rider. The driver should wear mask, gloves and face shield and should mandatorily provide hand sanitiser to riders before starting the journey. The riders



| CONTAINMENT ZONES IN WEST BENGAL | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Kolkata | 338 |
| North 24 Parganas | 92 |
| Howrah | 76 |
| South 24 Parganas | 30 |
| Hooghly | 23 |
| Paschim Medinipur | 6 |
| Jalpaiguri | 4 |
| Purba Medinipur | 3 |
| Malda | 3 |
| Nadia | 2 |
| Darjeeling | 2 |
| Purba Bardhaman | 1 |

Source: www.wb.gov.in

should also wear mask and other safety gears.

Meanwhile, the state government on Monday gave orders to increase the workforce from 15 to 50 per cent in the tea gardens and bidi factories.

Oppn parties press govt to bring back stranded migrants from other states immediately

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 11

THE OPPOSITION parties, including BJP and Congress, mounted pressure on Trinamool Congress government to bring back migrants immediately. While Medinipur MP and BJP state president Dilip Ghosh planned to send a list of migrants to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Congress planned to launch an app for their return.

Criticising the state government, Ghosh said, "I had written letters to chief secretaries of 12 states in April and sent them a list of 11,790 migrant workers from Bengal stranded in those states. I had also sent that list to the West Bengal chief secretary as well. However, TMC leaders have recently challenged me to provide information on stranded migrants. Therefore, I am mailing to the state government a list of 3.29 lakh migrants who want to return to the state. Nearly 90 per cent of them are gold jewellery craftsmen. I hope that the government will take this list into account."

The BJP leader also slammed the state government for running only two trains so far for migrant workers.

"Till date, the state government ran only two trains for migrant workers. Now it has been learnt that eight more trains will run for them. The Centre had given consent for running 16 trains to West Bengal. So far, 10 requisitions have been made. Six

more trains can be arranged if the state government desires it," added Ghosh.

Meanwhile, Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury and his team are creating an app to prepare a list of names of migrant labourers who want to return to the state. According to Chowdhury's team, the app will also include names of migrant workers from other states who are stranded in West Bengal.

"This will help us compile the names and send it to the state government. We have already received applications of more than 1.50 lakh people who want their names to be included in the list. The app will act as a database of such workers, which will contain their personal and residential details," said Chowdhury.

"The Centre is planning to resume passenger train services from May 12. We don't have any problem with this decision. However, we feel the government should accord highest priority to the safe return of stranded labourers and pilgrims," Chowdhury, the former minister of state for railways, said.

The Union government should learn to set its priorities right, he stated.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Centre has not been able to come up with concrete policies... It has to act decisively rather than resorting to knee-jerk reactions," the veteran Congress leader said.

The Indian Railways had on Sunday announced that it would

gradually recommence passenger train operations from May 12, initially with 15 pairs of trains.

All passenger train services were suspended ahead of the imposition of the nationwide lockdown on March 25.

"When the COVID-19 pandemic was spreading fast during the first and second week of March, we had pleaded with the government to close down Parliament, but it didn't listen. It was busy removing the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh to seize power. Once that was done, the lockdown was imposed," Chowdhury said.

Meanwhile, speaking on the uncertainty looming over the Monsoon Session of Parliament, Chowdhury said it is for the government to decide when and how to resume proceedings, while suggesting that the members could take the virtual route.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had said on Sunday that the Monsoon Session of Parliament, which normally begins in the last week of June or in the first week of July, may still be held on time, amid concerns that the coronavirus pandemic may delay its start.

"It is for the government to decide if it wants to resume Parliament. It can also explore the option of holding proceedings on a virtual platform, where representatives can accordingly place their views," Chowdhury added.

WITHPTIINPUTS

Violence in Malda and Hooghly over pandemic fears, 42 held

Cops not taking action against people of particular community, says BJP MP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 11

TWO INCIDENTS of violence were reported from different parts of the state late on Sunday night in connection with fears about the spread of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). While one clash broke out in Malda district, the other occurred in Hooghly.

The residents of two villages in Malda district's Harishchandrapur block fought each other late on Sunday night after almost 12 people in one of the villages tested positive.

The 12 from Manikbari village, who are from a particular community, had returned from Ajmer in Rajasthan last Tuesday. After news spread about their infection, the residents of neighbouring Chandipur sealed their village with bamboo fences, sources said.

The people of Manikbari protested as they are dependent on the market in Chandipur for essentials. On Sunday morning, the residents of the two villages got into an argument over the restriction.

Late in the evening, a group of people from Manikbari allegedly attacked some people in Chandipur. They allegedly broke the bamboo fence and ransacked several homes. Several villagers were thrashed.

The police said six people had been arrested. "The situation is under control now. We are investigating the matter. Section 144 of CrPc has been imposed in the area," said a senior district police officer.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar expressed concern about the situation, and urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the police to take stern action against the guilty.

"Worrisome incident at Chandipur, PS Harishchandrapur, district Malda calls for utmost restraint by all. Administration and police @MamataOfficial [Mamata Banerjee] must act detached with no political overtones and tone intelligence. Community leaders must come forward for promoting peace," he tweeted late on Sunday night.

In another tweet, the Governor said any such "flare up" at a time the state is facing "unprecedented challenges" would not be in national interest. "Appeal @MamataOfficial to

lead from the front and put on hold activities #TroikaMAP in the larger interest of State. Politics only post Covid-19."

Trinamool Congress leaders were not available for comment.

The second clash of the night broke out between two groups in Bhadreswar in Hooghly district. According to sources, five people from a particular community in the region's Telenipara area had tested positive recently, and people there were seen roaming around freely. When a group protested, the clash erupted. Several houses in Telenipara were ransacked, and bombs were hurled. Several vehicles were vandalised, and some shops were set on fire.

A huge police contingent was deployed to bring the situation under control. The police have intensified patrolling, and arrested 36 people.

"Situation is absolutely under control. Area domination and route march is going on led by CP of Chandannagar police commissionerate Humayun Kabir. Around 36 persons have been arrested," said Additional Director General (Law and Order) Gyanwant Singh.

On Monday, BJP MP Locket Chatterjee claimed she was stopped by the police from visiting the area. "The police are not taking action against people belonging to a particular community, while lockdown norms are strictly enforced on others. This is the true face of the Mamata Banerjee government," she said.

In response, Trinamool Youth Congress's district president Shantanu Banerjee accused the saffron party of politicising the incident.

"The police have controlled the situation and have taken all action against those involved in the incident. Mamata Banerjee government believes in law and order, and gives it priority without discriminating on the basis of caste, community, and religion," he said.

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh condemned the violence in both Malda and Hooghly.

"Members of a particular community were tested positive. When police went to conduct further tests they protested. Even bombs were hurled at policemen and the incident took a communal colour. Shops and houses were ransacked. The state government must take immediate steps," he said.

Ensure migrants don't walk on roads, tracks: Home Ministry to states

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

AGAINST THE backdrop of mishaps that killed migrant labourers walking to their homes amid the lockdown, the Centre has asked states to ensure that the labourers don't hit roads or rail tracks to reach their homes. The states have been asked to counsel those walking on the roads and put them in shelters.

In another order, the Centre has asked states not to restrict movement of doctors and other healthcare workers as it could jeopardise efforts to fight the Covid-19 outbreak. The development comes after many cities such as Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Faridabad recently stopped doctors from commuting to Delhi.

Drawing the attention of states to a meeting held by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba to review the operation of buses and special trains for migrants, the MHA let-

ter has said, "In the meeting, the situation of migrant workers walking on the road and on railway tracks was noted with great concern. Since their movement by buses and Shramik special trains has already been allowed to enable their travel to native places, all State/UT Governments should ensure that migrant workers do not resort to walking on road and on railway tracks. In case they are found in such condition, they should appropriately be counselled, taken to nearby shelters and provided with food, water etc. till such time they are facilitated to board the Shramik special trains or buses to their native places."

The Centre has also asked states to cooperate with the Railways in running more 'Shramik' special trains.

"I urge upon you all to allow receiving of all Shramik special trains without any hindrance and facilitate faster movement of stranded migrant workers to their native places," the letter said.

In liquor logjam, Punjab ministers get Chief Secy to stay out of meeting

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, MAY 11

TWO DAYS after a confrontation between Punjab Chief Secretary Karan Avtar Singh and several ministers, the official was forced to stay away from a Cabinet meeting called to decide on an amendment to the excise policy aimed at giving relief to liquor contractors.

Karan Avtar Singh proceeded on half-day leave, authorising the next seniormost IAS officer in the state, Home Secretary Satish Chandra, to chair the meeting. As per rules, the chief secretary is the cabinet secretary; Karan Avtar Singh is also Financial Commissioner (Taxation) and the administrative secretary of the Punjab Excise Department.

The ministers, while authorising Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh to decide on the relief to be given to contractors, unanimously refused to at-



Said would not attend if Karan Avtar Singh (left) was present

tend any Cabinet meeting in the future if it was conducted by Karan Avtar Singh.

The issue was raised by Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal, who told the CM that he would not join any meeting of which Karan Avtar Singh was part. Badal was supported by Technical Education Minister Charanjeet Singh Channi and Transport Minister Razia Sultana. The chief minister is then learnt to have asked the other ministers if they agreed, and received a unanimous answer in favour. Amarinder then asked for the development to be recorded in the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting.

In the evening, a government statement said the ministers had

left the decision on the excise policy amendment to the CM. The chief secretary was not available for a comment.

After the Cabinet meeting, Badal told reporters, "We left it to the CM. He is the excise and taxation minister of the state, and he would see if this is a profitable or loss-making amendment."

Badal added: "On the unofficial agenda of Karan Avtar Singh's behaviour with us the other day, the way he had spoken to us and exhibited a body language that does not befit of his office, I made it clear that if he continues to come for the meetings, I would not be a part of those. Channi supported my decision and then the CM asked the ministers to record it officially. We all have done it that we will not attend any meeting of which the CS is part."

This, Badal said, was not about his ego. "Just seven weeks ago, I lost my mother. My father is very sick and is in the hospital. A person who has seen death so

closely has no ego left. My decision is in the interest of the state. I am loyal to the interests of Punjab," he said.

Before the meeting, the ministers had got together to decide their course of action. Cabinet Minister Tripath Rajinder Singh Bajwa is learnt to have counselled restraint, telling his colleagues that they should not do anything that could spoil the image of the government. Badal, however, is learnt to have stood firm, and declared that he did not mind even going alone on the matter.

The ministers had then decided that commenting on the policy would amount to insulting the chief minister, and that they would authorise him to take a call on the issue.

The question of home delivery of liquor too was raised at the meeting, a government release said. A few ministers opposed the proposal saying it would bring a bad name to the government, but the final decision was again left to the CM.

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NOTICE

With reference to recruitment advertisement No. ESSO/INCOIS/RMT/4/2018 published in leading newspapers and uploaded on INCOIS website www.incois.gov.in, it is for information to all concerned that the recruitment process for the post of Manager (Post Code - 01) is cancelled due to administrative reasons.

Director, INCOIS

Officials behind J&K curbs to decide if these will stay

APURVA VISHWANATH NEW DELHI, MAY 11 WITH THE Supreme Court in- structing a Special Committee to look into demands for restoration of 4G service in J&K in view of the lockdown, the ball is back in the court of the authorities who, to begin with, were behind the im- position of these very restrictions. The high-level committee will be headed by the Union Home Secretary who, incidentally, signed

the March 24 order of the Union Home Ministry under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 — one of the two orders challenged before the Supreme Court and the MHA, through its Secretary, was Respondent 2 in the writ petition filed by Foundation for Media Professionals. That order directed the Ministries and Departments at the Centre, State, and Union Territory level to take effective measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the country, and

contained guidelines for the lockdown of the country. The second order to be chal- lenged was issued on March 26 by the Jammu and Kashmir govern- ment, restricting Internet access to only 2G speed in the Union Territory. It was signed by Principal Secretary Shaleen Kabra. The J&K Chief Secretary, who was Respondent 1 in the writ pe- tition, will also be on the Special Committee along with Secretary, Department of Communication. In its ruling, the SC found it "ap-

propriate to constitute a Special Committee" to examine the "con- tentions of and the material placed herein by, the Petitioners as well as the Respondents". "Whether the right to a well- functioning and effective inter- net is an essential service and a basic necessity, that can be re- stricted, in times of an epidemic (such as COVID-19) and a nation- wide lockdown that has put a complete halt to the movement of people" was one of the chal- lenges before the court.

Delhi Police questions Express reporter over Saad audio clip report

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE DELHI Police questioned a reporter with The Indian Express for around three hours on Monday in connection with the report 'Tablighi FIR: Police probe indicates Saad audio clip was doctored'. The reporter also submitted a prepared statement with a copy of the Bureau of Police Research and Development's guide/booklet "A guide for law enforcement agencies" on "how to spot and investigate" fake news. The Tablighi Jamaat chief's audio is referred to on page 10 of the BPR&D's guide/booklet under the head- line "Fake news and disinforma- tion vectors". The guide/booklet was pulled down within a day of be- ing posted online. When con-

tacted by The Indian Express on Sunday, BPR&D spokesman Jitendra Yadav said: "There are some corrections being made in the booklet. It will be uploaded again after that." Special Correspondent Mahendra Singh Manral was directed to attend the of- fice of the Delhi Police Crime Branch in Sector 18, Rohini. He was served a notice on Sunday evening under Section 160 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, with the police in- voking powers of an officer to require attendance of wit- nesses. On May 9, The Indian Express reported that an initial investi- gation by the Delhi Police Crime Branch found that an audio clip mentioned in the police FIR against Markaz Nizamuddin head Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, which suggested he had asked Tablighi Jamaat members not to

follow social distancing norms and prohibitory orders, may be "doctored" and stitched to- gether using several audio files. The Delhi Police called the report "factually incorrect... purely conjectural" but on Sunday evening sent a notice to the City Editor and Chief Reporter, requiring the reporter to join the probe Monday or face legal action under Indian Penal Code Section 174 — it can result in a prison term and fine. The notice under Section 160 CrPC was sent on the day The Indian Express published the Delhi Police's rejoinder with its own response that the report was based on conversations with sources and officials aware of the probe against Maulana Saad, and that calls and a mes- sage to Special CP (Crime) Praveer Ranjan last Friday for his comments before publica- tion received no response.

MAHARASHTRA COUNCIL POLLS Uddhav files papers, has assets worth Rs 143.26 cr

VISHWAS WAGHMODE MUMBAI, MAY 11

MAHARASHTRACouncil Uddhav Thackeray Monday filed his nomina- tion papers for the May 21 Leg- islative Council elections, declaring assets totalling Rs 143.26 crore. Uddhav is the first Shiv Sena chief and second Thackeray, after his son Aaditya, to contest elections. Monday was the last day to file nominations for election to nine seats of the Legislative Council. Apart from Uddhav, Sena's Neelam Gorhe, NCP's Shashikant Shinde and Amol Mitkari and Congress's Rajesh Rathod filed the nominations. As per the affidavit, Uddhav and his wife Rashmi have movable assets worth Rs 61.89 crore. He has a total of Rs 2.05 lakh cash in hand. Uddhav, who has been seen driv- ing a high-end vehicle, does not own a car as per the affidavit. The couple own immovable assets valued at Rs 81.37 crore. This includes agricultural land in Raigad district and non-agricultural land at Murshet in Ahmednagar. They own two residential prop- erties at Bandra (East) in Mumbai, spread over 49.00 sq ft and one in Bandra (West), spread over 14,000 sq ft — valued at Rs 53.02 crore as per the existing market rates.

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD. (A Government of India Undertaking) OPEN E-TENDER (SINGLE PACKET SYSTEM) INVITATION NOTICE Name of Work: Design, Engineering, Supply, Transportation, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 110 KV EHT Power Supply Arrangement from KPCTCL Receiving/ Grid Substation at Mardeshwar (Near Mardeshwar Railway Station) to KRCL's Traction Sub-Station at Mardeshwar along with Bay Arrangement and Underground Transmission Line Equipped with Switch Gears, EHT/HV/LT Power / Control Cabling etc. at Mardeshwar in the State of Karnataka. Notice No: KR/CO/EL/MDRW/T/120 dt 12/05/2020. Completion Period: Four Months. Estimated Cost: ₹ 5.63,72,672/- including GST. EMD : ₹ 4,31,900/-. Last Date & Time for Online Submission of Tender : 02/06/2020 upto 15.00 Hrs. Opening of Tender : On 02/06/2020 at 15.30 Hrs. Amendments / Corrigendum if any, would be posted on IREPS website only. Submission of Tender Documents : Through IREPS. Manual Tender Documents shall not be accepted.

Office of Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle P.W.D. Pithoragarh National Competitive Bidding (E-tendering) Letter No 1485/63 M 03/2020 Date 8-05-2020 Short Term Tender Notice The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available form date 15-05-2020 & onward on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in

WATCO OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, WATCO Ground Floor, Unnati Bhawan, H.B. Colony, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar-751007, Odisha, India Telefax:- +91-674-2391444 E-mail-mail@watcoodisha.in, md@watcoodisha.in INVITATION FOR BID (IFB) Bid Identification No. WATCO (W)-04/2020-21 Dtd. 08.05.2020 WATCO No. 1021 Date: 08.05.20 1. Name of the work : Supply installation and commissioning of Mobile Laboratories for testing of Drinking Water Quality. 2. Estimated cost : Rs. 116.13 Lakh 3. Period of completion : 30 (Thirty) Days. 4. Date & time of availability : From 11.00 AM of Dt. 14.05.2020 to of bid document in the 5.00 PM of 29.05.2020. 5. Last date / time of receipt : 5.00 PM of 29.05.2020 of bids in the portal 6. Date & time of opening of : 12.30 PM of 30.05.2020. technical bids 7. Name and address of : Managing Director, WATCO the Officer Inviting Bid Telefax:- 0674-2391444. E-Mail- maild@watcoodisha.in md@watcoodisha.in 8. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the web site "www.tendersodisha.gov.in."

ODISHA STATE SEEDS CORPORATION LTD (A GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING) SANTARAPUR, BHUBANESWAR- 751002. Tel-MD 0674- 2340573, Fax-2340096 website- http://www.osscltd.in PURCHASE OF QUALITY PLANTING MATERIALS/SEEDS FOR THE YEAR 2020-21 INVITATION FOR BIDS No-OSSC/MKTG-14/2020 Managing Director, Odisha State Seeds Corporation Ltd. invites tender from Govt. Agency like National Level Corporation/State Level Corporations/Govt. of India Undertaking/Agency/Agriculture Research Institutes/Private Producer/Suppliers on Item Wise Contact basis in Double Cover System through ONLINE MODE ONLY for the works below.

SALEM CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ROC NO. SSSL/1402/2020 RE-INVITATIONS FOR BIDS Date: 11.05.2020 I 1. Channel Strengthening and Stone Pitching work carried out from TVS Burial Ground to Pallapatty Lake in the ABD area of Salem City Municipal Corporation Estimate Cost Rs. 1000.00 Lakhs II Bid document and other information available at www.tntenders.gov.in, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.salemcorporation.gov.in Tender document can be downloaded from the above website. III Date, time and Venue for Re-Tender Procedures. Submission of bids - 16.06.2020 upto 3.00 P.M. Opening of bids - 16.06.2020 at 3.30 P.M. DIPR/ 1771 /TENDER/2020 Commissioner, Salem Corporation

RajCOMP Info Services Limited (RISL) C-Block, 1st Floor, Rajana Bhawan, Tikli Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur. RISL invites bids from the eligible bidders for the following: NIB No./Date/ Unique bid no. Particulars Estimated Cost/EMD Start of work/ Last date 7935/ 05.05.2020/ (RIS2022) Entering into rate contract for House Keeping, Facility Management and Comprehensive Maintenance Services in different RISL locations in Rajasthan Rs. 10,00,00,000/- 05.05.2020 05.05.2020 Details can be seen on the website: http://www.rajanabhawan.com, http://www.rajanabhawan.com, http://www.rajanabhawan.com, and bids are to be submitted through http://www.rajanabhawan.com. Raj Sarwad/C/20/146 General Manager

OFFLINE TENDER Sealed tender in two bid system against Offline NIT No. 10/HDA/ECU-EL/EC/2020-21 is invited by HDA for supplying, providing and installation of 5 nos. 'Sample collection kits' for Covid-19 at different places in Purba Medinipur district. Last date of submission of Tender - 18.05.2020 upto 2.30 PM. Information in detail is available in the office. CEO, HDA, City Centre, Post-Debhog, Haldia, Dist. Purba Medinipur

ONLINE TENDER (e-Tender) in a two bid system against NIT No. 01/HDA/ECU-EL/EC/2020-21 is invited by HDA for 'urgent supply, delivery, testing, commissioning of nos. Portable type Ventilator for different govt. Hospital of Purba Medinipur district'. Date of document downloading- 12.05.2020-19.05.2020. Last date of bid submission-19.05.2020 up to 2.30 P.M. Visit website for detail information- www.hda.gov.in / www.wbtenders.gov.in CEO, HDA City centre, Post-Debhog, Haldia, Dist. Purba medinipur

NMDC Limited (A Government of India Enterprises) (An ISO-9002 Company) BAILADILA IRON ORE MINE, KIRANDUL COMPLEX Kirandul-494 556, Distt. South Bastar Dantewada, Chhattisgarh Gram: IRONORE, FAX 07857-255226, 255227, 255225 CIN - L13100TG1958GO1001674 No. Ser(Mech)/BIOM(K)/5134/2020-21 (Dated: 09.05.2020) PRESS NOTIFICATION BIOM, Kirandul Complex, Kirandul, invites SEALED TENDERS in TWO BID SYSTEMS for the following work(s), from firms meeting the PQC requirements. The Tender Documents can be purchased from the Office of Deputy General Manager (Finance), NMDC Ltd., Kirandul Complex, Kirandul, on any working day during office hours (Wednesday is weekly rest day). Sale of Tender Documents will be available at Kirandul only. However tender documents can be downloaded from the Website mentioned below.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION ORGANISATION OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RWS&S DIVISION, ANGUL: AT: TALCHER At- Baghuabole, Po.- Hatatota, Talcher, Dist- Angul, Pin-759100 (Ph. No./Fax- 06760-240762, E-mail- gerwssang@gmail.com) National Competitive Bidding through e-procurement Bid Identification No. 01/EE/RWSS/ANGUL/2020-21 Dt. 04.05.2020 (DMF) The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Angul: at: Talcher on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Item Rate/Percentage bid through e-procurement in double/single cover system according to norm of e-Procurement system in on-line mode. Nature of Work : Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes. 1. No. of Tenders : 4 Nos. 2. Tender Paper Cost : Rs. 6,000.00 to Rs. 10,000.00 3. Value of work : Rs. 10.56 Lakhs to Rs. 120.78 Lakhs 4. Class of Contractor : "A", "B", "C" & "D" Class 5. Date & time of availability : 15.05.2020 at 13.00 hours to 26.05.2020 of bid document in Portal upto 13.00 hours 6. Date & time of seeking : 20.05.2020 upto 13.00 hours tender clarification 7. Date & time of opening of : 27.05.2020 at 11:00 hours in the office of tender & verification of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Angul: at: Talcher original document 8. Time of completion : 2 (Two) to 10 (Ten) Calendar Months 9. The bidders have to participate in online bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 10. Corrigendum if any shall be publish in the above website only. Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Angul at Talcher 25019/11/0001/2021

UTKAL GOURAV MADHUSUDAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, AT- BACKSIDE OF S.P. OFFICE, PO/DISTRICT RAYAGADA- 765001 (ODISHA) TELEPHONE No. 06856-222073 Advt No. 355 / Date 09.05.2020 TENDER CALL NOTICE Sealed two bid tender is invited from reputed manufacturers / authorized dealers / registered suppliers to supply, install and commission machinery/ equipments for mechanical, electronic & telecommunication, electrical and civil engineering departments of this Institute. The tender documents can be obtained from the Office of the Principal, UGMIT, Rayagada (Odisha) from 12.05.2020 at 11 A.M. to 30.06.2020 upto 4 P.M. or may download from the website: www.ugmit.org / www.deterodisha.gov.in. The last date of receiving the bid document either by Speed Post/ Registered Post / By Hand is on dated 01.07.2020 by 11.30 A.M and opening of bid is on the same day at 12.30 P.M. For detail information please visit the above website Bid documents without having requisite B.D. will be rejected our rightly. Further the undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any of the tender without assigning any reason thereof. Sd/- Principal I/C, UGMIT, Rayagada 14048/11/0001/2021

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Government of India Ministry of Road Transport & Highways Through Government of Karnataka Public Works, Ports & Inland water transport Department (NATIONAL HIGHWAYS) Office of the Executive Engineer, National Highway Division, Vishweshwarnagar, Hubballi Tele/Fax : 0836-2357420 & 0836-2357577 Email : eenhdb@rediffmail.com No/EE/NHD/HBL/NH-63/112.80-128.850/NIT/2020-21/87 Date : 08-05-2020 NOTICE INVITING TENDER (Two Cover System) The Executive Engineer, National Highway Division, Hubballi on behalf of the Chief Engineer, N.H. Bangalore invites bids from eligible bidders for the following project on Single stage Two cover system through the website : www.eprocure.gov.in on EPC mode.

TAMILNADU MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD. No.417, Pantheon Road, Egmore, Chennai-600 008. Phone : 28191890 / 28190259; Fax: 044 -28190636 E-Mail: equipment.tnmsc@tn.gov.in INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING – TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE 1. The Tender due date sare extended as follows: 1) Tender No.PKG1/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/RAD/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Digital X-ray Machine (4), Digital Radiography with Fluoroscopy (8), Mobile X-ray -100 mA (9), Computed Radiography Machine (5) & C-Arm Machine (19) 2) Tender No.PKG2/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/MAM/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Digital Mammography System (3) 3) Tender No.PKG3/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/USG/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Ultrasound Machine (5), Ultrasonogram Colour Doppler with 3 probes (18) & Portable Ultrasound Machine (6) 4) Tender No.PKG4/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/END/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Upper GI Endoscope Entire Set (13), Video Duodenoscopy with ERCP accessories entire set (10), Video Colonoscopy Entire Set (12), Endoscopic table (20), Endoscopic Washer disinfecter (13), Video Bronchoscopy (Flexible) (2) & Ultrasilum Video Gastroscopy (6) 5) Tender No.PKG5/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/RIG/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - FESS Complete Set with Microdebrider (11) & Laparoscope (High Definition) (8) 6) Tender No.PKG6/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/OPE-I/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Multipara Monitor (4), Multiparamonitor with IBP (4), Multiparamonitor with ETCO2 (18), Defibrillator (15), Anesthesia Work Station with monitor (18), Anesthesia Work station (20), Operation Theatre fracture Table (with ortho attachment, C-arm compatible) (17) & Operation Theatre Table (with General Surgery attachment) (10) 7) Tender No.PKG7/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/OPE-II/TNMSC/ENGG/ 2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Operation Theatre LED light (18) 8) Tender No.PKG8/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/HEM/TNMSC/ENGG/2020, dt.04.02.2020 - CRRT Complete (Inclusive of bed, RO, consumables 30 kits) (16) 9) Tender No.PKG15/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/CAR-III/TNMSC/ENGG/ 2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Echocardiogram with 3D TEE probe (7) & Echo Machine (4) 10) Tender No.PKG16/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/CAR-IV/TNMSC/ENGG/ 2020, dt.04.02.2020 - Electrophysiology and Ablation System (3), Intra Vascular Ultrasound (3), Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) with FFR (5) & Rotablator (5)

TAMILNADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED KAGITHAPURAM - 639 136, KARUR DIST. TAMIL NADU Phone: 04324-277 001 (10 LINES) E-mail: purchase.pulp@tnpl.com.in NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Government of Odisha, e-Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) Bid Identification No. S.E.Dki.(R&B) 01/2020-21 Email Id- sedklpww@gmail.com /dt. The Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in double cover system to be received in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road works as detailed in the table below: 1. Name of the work : Road & Bridge works 2. No of works : 06 (Six) Nos 3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 1,03,44,178/- to Rs. 7,51,34,629/- 4. Cost of tender paper : Rs 10,000.00 5. Class of contractor : 'B', 'A', 'Special' & 'Super' Class 6. Period of Completion of work : 02 (Two) to 11 (Eleven) Calendar months 7. Date and time of availability of bid Document in the website : From Dt. 15.05.2020 to 16.00 hours of Dt. 29.05.2020 8. Date of opening of bid : Dt.30.05.2020 at 11.30 hours The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal: www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. Sd/- Superintending Engineer Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal 34132/11/0001/2021



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SIMPLY PUT

New reasons why masks help

A series of new studies has reinforced the case for wearing masks as a preventive. A look at the findings on their utility in possibly eliminating Covid, reducing lockdown periods and blocking out droplets

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS, TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA & AMITABH SINHA
 PUNE, MUMBAI, MAY 11

AFTER INITIAL debate, the utility of masks during the Covid-19 pandemic seems widely accepted now. The dominant scientific opinion says masks are very useful, and even relatively simple home-made masks can offer a great degree of protection against the novel coronavirus. In the last few days, several new studies have reinforced this advice with fresh evidence. These studies say the spread can be contained significantly if a large proportion of population begins to use these masks.

Impact of masks, quantified

In one study, researchers from universities in Arizona, Harvard and Sydney have, using mathematical models for population in New York, shown that if 70% of people wore an effective professional mask every time they ventured outdoors, the pandemic could be eliminated from the city. The same result could be achieved in the entire US, if at least 80% of the population regularly used masks.

Even low-quality home-made masks could lead to significant reduction in the spread of the disease, though other interventions would also be required in that case to achieve elimination, the study said.

"Using face-masks in public (including low-efficacy cloth masks) is very useful in minimising community transmission and burden of COVID-19, provided their coverage level is high. The masks coverage needed to eliminate COVID-19 decreases if the masks-based intervention is combined with strict social distancing strategy," the researchers have said in their study.

The study also found that up to 45% of the deaths projected in New York over the next two months could be prevented if 80% of the people started using some sort of mask.

"It will be another 12 to 18 months until mass vaccination or herd immunity finally becomes a reality. In the meanwhile, we need to start respecting the mask, change our



Even home-made masks are effective to an extent, studies show. Photo shows migrants in Vadodara, waiting for passes to travel home. *Bhupendra Rana*

behaviour and start getting used to this new face accessory on an immediate basis," said Dr Sundeeep Salvi, vice-president of the Indian Chest Society and member of several task forces and committees appointed by central and Maharashtra governments to help tackle the pandemic.

Dr Salvi said the fact that even home-made masks have been found to be quite effective, everyone should start using it. "We now seem to have a solution that is simple, readily available, can be made at home, and is cheap and reusable. Masks, however, need to be worn properly, with a tight fit, and for all the time you are out, otherwise they would not offer any protection," he said.

More masks, shorter lockdown

Another study, actually a review of available scientific literature, said that for preventing community transmission of the disease, home-made masks were adequate, even if these were about three times less effective than professional surgical masks in blocking transmission of smaller particles.

It said mask usage by a large proportion of the population could help in reducing the

lockdown period as well. "When used in conjunction with widespread testing, contact tracing, quarantining of anyone that may be infected, hand washing and physical distancing, face masks are a valuable tool to reduce community transmission," lead author Jeremy Howard said in an email response.

But he warned that use of masks must not lead to people ignoring physical distancing rules. "We don't know exactly what the risk reduction (due to masks) is. It is important that people with symptoms stay home, because masks don't work as well with coughing as with speaking. In general, the further away you are, the safer you are, and adding a mask makes you safer too," Howard said.

"I would expect the lockdown period to be shorter when masks are universally worn," he said, warning that if people stop wearing masks, the probability of a "second wave" in winter was "greatly increased".

Dr Jagmeet Singh, professor of cardiology at Harvard Medical School, said the big value of masks was in the fact that it offered two-way protection. "When people step out of their homes, they should consider others as possibly infected, and themselves as possible conta-

gion. If they wear a mask, there is a two-way protection. They prevent the possibility of infecting others, and also protect themselves."

Keeping droplets out

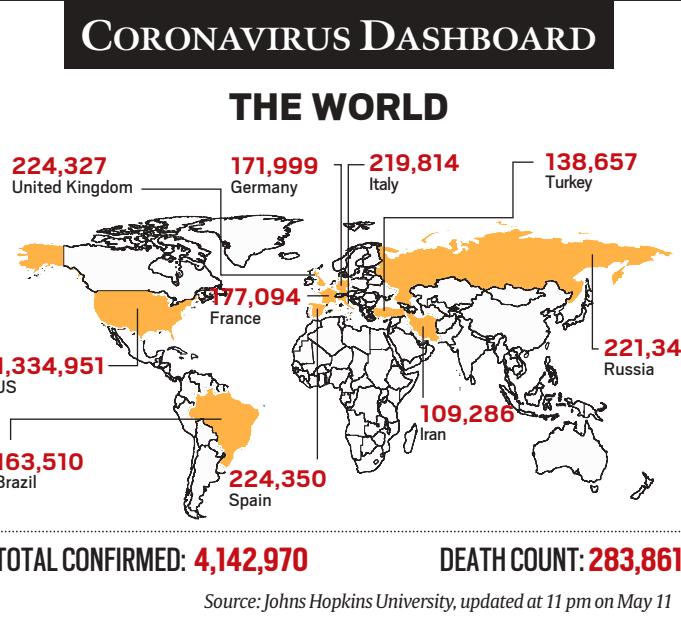
In another study, Indian researchers from government and private institutions simulated the aerodynamic flow of particles from the mouth during coughing/sneezing (or speaking loudly) to show how masks could help in blocking airborne transmission of the virus.

"Without a mask, a turbulent jet forms (during the time of coughing or sneezing), and droplets with a broad size distribution are ejected. Large droplets (greater than about 125 microns in diameter) fall to the ground within about 2 metres, while turbulent clouds transport a mist of small aerosolized droplets over significant distances (approximately 5 metres). A loosely fitted simple cotton cloth mask qualitatively changes the propagation of the high velocity jet, and largely eliminates the turbulent cloud downstream of the mask. The spread of the ejecta is also changed, with large droplets trapped at mask surface," the study said.

This study found that while large droplets coming from the mouth were trapped by the mask, smaller ones get transported to much shorter distances, less than 30 cm as compared to about 2 m in the absence of a mask.

Within one minute of sneezing by a person who had not worn a mask, approximately 37% of the potential viral load in the ejecta was found deposited on the floor, within 2 metres of the person, while the remaining 63% remained suspended in the air, between 2 metres and 5 metres from the individual. However, when a mask was worn, about 70% of virus-laden droplets were deposited on the mask, while those that escaped could potentially take the virus no farther than 1.5 metres, the study found.

"Virus particles stay suspended within 1.5 m of the person, but this suspended concentration falls off sharply after that distance," the study said, while concluding that the results suggested that airborne transmission from infected persons could be greatly reduced by wearing a simple cotton mask and maintaining a "strict physical distancing of two metres".



Why men more vulnerable: now, a link with key enzyme

OVER THE pandemic, researchers have come up with various findings — and hypotheses — about why men seem to be more vulnerable to Covid-19 than women. Now, a new study has suggesting the reason may be related to the concentration of a key enzyme in the blood of men and women.

The paper, published in the *European Heart Journal* on Monday, looks at the concentration of the enzyme ACE2 in blood. The role of ACE2 in Covid-19 is already established: It responds to the novel coronavirus and enables it to infect the human cell. The new, large study of several thousand patients

search had suggested that RAAS inhibitors might increase ACE2 concentrations in blood plasma, thereby increasing the risk of Covid-19 for cardiovascular patients taking these drugs, but the new study indicates that this is not the case.

Limitations

In a statement describing the study, the European Society of Cardiology discussed its limitations. The study looked only at ACE2 concentrations in plasma, not in tissues such as lung tissue, so they cannot be sure that concentrations in the blood are similar to those seen in tissues. It is the ACE2 in lung tissues that are thought to be key to lung infection.

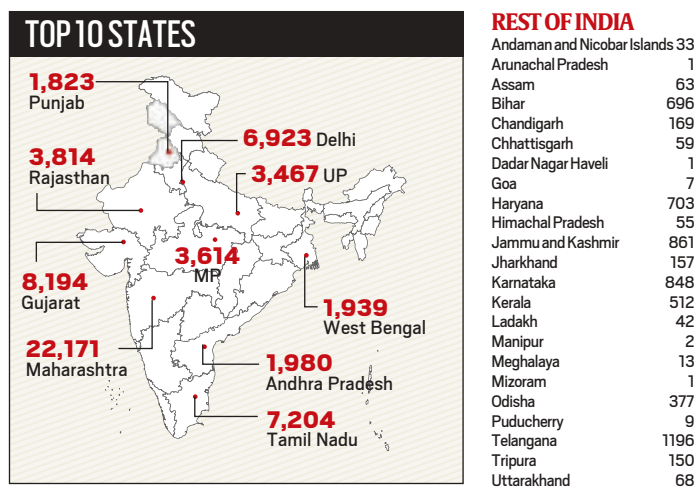
Also, the Cardiology Society statement said, the study cannot provide definitive evidence on the effects of RAAS inhibitors in Covid-19 patients. Its conclusions are mainly restricted to heart failure patients, and the patients did not have Covid-19.



PAPER CLIP
 NEW RESEARCH

Source: European Society of Cardiology

INDIA COUNT: 67,152 (2,206 DEATHS)



Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 11. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. 20,917 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 32 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

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

Covid & summer: still an unsettled question

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
 NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE ARRIVAL of summer may have raised hopes that the novel coronavirus will not survive the temperature, but new studies have observed that there is still no statistically significant data to link epidemic growth with latitude and temperature. Even previous research that linked the spread with latitude, temperature and humidity, in fact, had noted that this correlation did not establish causation, and various other factors were not accounted for.

No temperature link found

A recent study by Canadian researchers looked at a prospective cohort of 144 geopotential areas worldwide (3,75,609 cases) with at least 10 Covid-19 cases, and local transmission by March 20. It concluded that epidemic growth was not associated with latitude and temperature, but may be associated "weakly" with relative or absolute humidity.

The study, published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, excluded China, South Korea, Iran, and Italy. Most of the ar-

ea examined were in the northern hemisphere, near sea level, with temperate climates; the median temperature was 12.8°C and the median relative humidity was 69.0%.

The study projected that "seasonality" is likely to play "only a minor role", and stressed that public health interventions — school closures, restricting mass gatherings, social distancing — "appear to have a major impact".

Associations not significant

This Canadian study is in concordance with three other studies from China. The most comprehensive of the three, published in the *European Respiratory Journal*, was conducted by the researchers of Fudan University. It examined data from 224 cities in China (including 17 in Hubei province).

It calculated the basic reproduction number (R0) for 62 cities with more than 50 cases, then used R0 to assess the association of temperature, relative humidity and ultraviolet radiation with the spreadability of Covid-19.

After adjustment for relative humidity and UV, the study found temperature held no significant associations with cumulative incidence rate. Again, it found that spreadability

did not change with increasing UV exposure. "This is quite similar with MERS epidemic in the Arabian Peninsula where MERS cases continue when temperatures are 45°C," it said.

Ultraviolet exposure

In contrast to the Fudan researchers' findings, ecological modellers at the University of Connecticut have suggested that "ultraviolet light was most strongly associated with lower Covid-19 growth rates". Their study is pending peer review.

This study, too, said "uncertainty remains high" throughout the summers "in the absence of control, and that "aggressive policy interventions will likely be needed in spite of seasonal trend". The study suggests that in the absence of intervention, the pandemic "will decrease temporarily during summer, rebound by autumn, and peak next winter."

The researchers used data from 128 countries and 98 states or provinces, and examined the weekly rate of increase in the number of infections as a function of weather. The variables used: temperature 2m above land surface, relative humidity, absolute humidity, and incoming UV radiation at the land surface.

Seasonal variation

The Connecticut researchers' study predicted Covid-19 will "oscillate between the northern and southern hemisphere" based largely on seasonal variation in UV radiation and temperature without continuing interventions. "Based mostly due to variation in UV and temperature, our model predicts that COVID-19 risk will decline across the northern hemisphere this summer, remain active in the tropics, and increase in the southern hemisphere as days shorten and UV declines." Yet it added: "However, uncertainty remains high and the probability of a weekly doubling rate remained >20% throughout the summer in the absence of control. Consequently, aggressive policy interventions will likely be needed in spite of seasonal trends."

Despite initial suggestions that seasonality would strongly control Covid-19, the researchers said weather only explains 17% of the variation in Covid-19 growth rates. "Undescribed factors at the level of political units were just as important as weather (19% of variation), and much of the variation (64%) remains unexplained," the study said, calling for further studies on the subject.

How will the pandemic play out? Some possible scenarios, from research

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, MAY 11

FOR THE last several months, the key questions on everybody's mind have included how long the Covid-19 pandemic will run, and whether the disease will resurface season by season. Two new studies, first reported in *The New York Times*, project various shapes the Covid-19 curve can take.

One study, published in *Science*, projects that winter outbreaks will probably recur. It suggests prolonged or intermittent social distancing may be necessary into 2022 to prevent the case load from exceeding critical care capacities.

The other study is a viewpoint published by the US Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP). It projects various conceptual courses that the pandemic "wave" may take. These are based on historic patterns of previous pandemics as well as the findings of the paper in *Science*.

The bottomline: the pandemic will not leave anytime soon. "The broad conclusion of both studies was that SARS-CoV-2 will not go away on its own and that with control measures in place we can protect health care capacity but then move more slowly to herd immunity, if herd immunity is possible (we still don't know how long immunity will last).

For this reason it will be many months and likely several years before the virus moves through the population in a region with significant transmission and significant control measures," Marc Lipsitch, epidemiologist at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, told *The Indian Express*, by email.

Lipsitch is a co-author of both studies. A look at the projections:

How social distancing helps

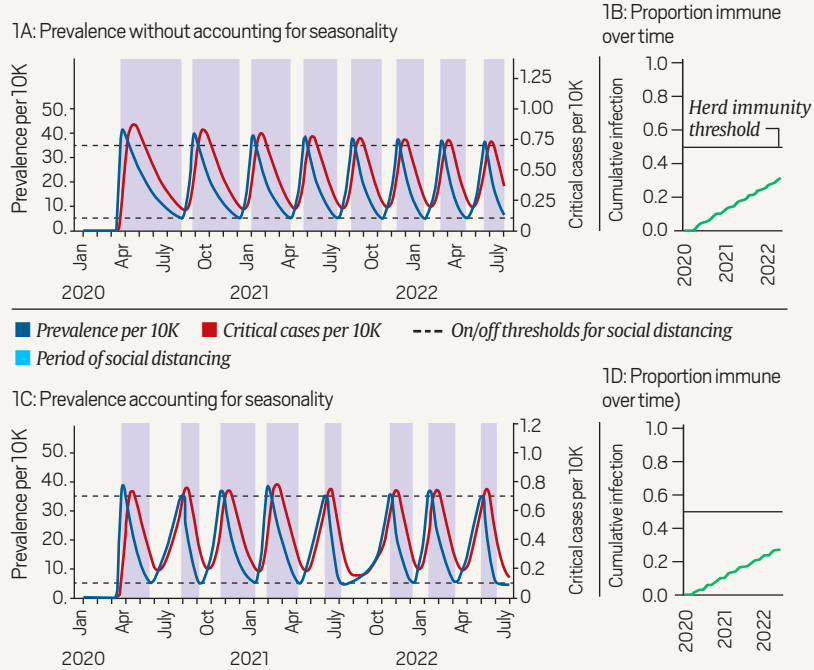
The study in *Science* used US time series data for two other coronavirus infections (OC43 and HKU1), made estimates for seasonality and immunity, and prepared a model for SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

The charts in Figure 1 have been reproduced from the paper in *Science*, with minor modifications. Chart 1A plots a time series for prevalence of total cases and critical cases per 10,000. The dotted line represents a prevalence threshold for enforcing/removing social distancing measures, while the blue bars represent the period of social distancing. On the right, Chart 1B projects the corresponding cumulative progress towards herd immunity.

Charts 1C and 1D are to be read the same way. The difference is that the second pair of charts accounts for seasonality of outbreaks, while the first pair does not.

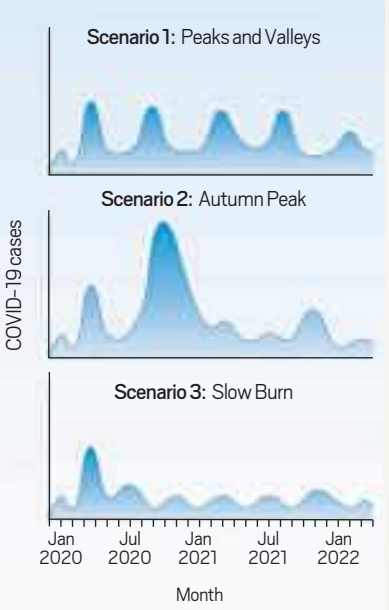
"We projected that recurrent wintertime outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 will proba-

Figure 1: Outbreaks amid intermittent social distancing



Charts 1A and 1C project a time series based on the time and the stage when social distancing measures are intermittently enforced. On their right (1B & 1D), the corresponding proportion of the population immune over time, heading towards a herd immunity threshold. In Figure 2, the charts look at conceptual wave scenarios. Source: *Science* (Figure 1), CIDRAP (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Possible pandemic wave scenarios for COVID-19



bly occur after the initial, most severe pandemic wave," the researchers wrote.

While the graphs reproduced here are for scenarios with current US critical care capacity, Lipsitch made it clear that this is not a projection of exact trajectory even for the US but a description of a policy and its broad features. "Other regions may have different levels of transmission (India seems to be showing less transmission than many expected, for reasons that are unclear), different seasonality, and different control policies," he said.

Waves, as a concept

Projecting several scenarios for the future of the pandemic, the CIDRAP viewpoint summarised these as shown in Figure 2.

SCENARIO 1: The first wave in spring 2020 is followed by a series of repetitive smaller waves through the summer, and then consistently over a 1- to 2-year period, gradually diminishing sometime in 2021.

SCENARIO 2: The first wave in spring 2020 is followed by a larger wave in the autumn or winter of 2020 and one or more smaller subsequent waves in 2021.

SCENARIO 3: The first wave in spring 2020 is followed by a "slow burn" of ongoing transmission and case occurrence, but without a clear wave pattern. This pattern may vary geographically and may be influenced by mitigation measures in place.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BACK ON THE RAILS

Resumption of limited train services is welcome, will test ability to move towards calibrated reopening of all transport networks

LESS THAN TWO weeks after starting special services for migrant workers stranded in different parts of the country to go back home, the Indian Railways has announced that it will resume passenger trains between Delhi and 15 other cities. The trains will have only AC coaches, the fare will be equivalent to what is charged for a Rajdhani Express journey, bookings will be made online. By focusing on premium services, the Railways seem to be targeting a small fraction of the about 20 million passengers who rely on rail transport every day under normal circumstances. At the same time, the national transporter has indicated that it is open to starting more "special trains". For an economy that has come to a grinding halt after the seven-week lockdown, these are much-awaited signals. Getting passenger trains back on track is an apt follow-up to the graded easing of the lockdown announced on May 1.

The Railways have clarified that passengers will need to wear masks and undergo screening at the station. But given that asymptomatic people constitute a large part of the COVID-19 transmission chain, the Railways and state governments will have to remain alert, exercise utmost caution. They will have to be vigilant about passengers observing social distancing protocols at the railway stations and during the journey. The importance of these measures cannot be overstated because the trains will ply between some of the COVID-19 hotspots — Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata.

Increasingly, scientists, epidemiologists and policymakers in several parts of the world are coming around to a consensus that the coronavirus is here to stay, and nations will have to find ways to live with the pathogen. There is also a growing realisation that societies cannot be in perpetual lockdown — experts have consistently stressed that stringent lockdowns do not frame the endgame against the pandemic. This means that the stay-at-home approach, emphasised during the past seven weeks in the country, must now give way to policies that provide room for people's mobility — albeit cautiously, and taking care to obviate any escalation of the outbreak. It is welcome, therefore, that the resumption of transport appears to be on the agenda of other ministries as well. Last week, the Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs, Nitin Gadkari, indicated that the government is formulating guidelines for social distancing with a view to resuming public transport. The civil aviation ministry must also find ways to resume airline services. The challenges of ensuring social distancing at airports and inside aircraft are, of course, very different from those of enforcing such measures in metros, buses, and trains. Yet the primary goal of the ministries that deal with transport should now be to ensure that society moves to a semblance of normalcy, while ensuring people's safety.

REWORKING THE MATH

Rise in Centre's borrowings indicates extent of fiscal stress. Government must present credible fiscal roadmap

LAST FRIDAY, THE central government announced its revised borrowing calendar for the financial year 2020-21. It pegs the Centre's borrowings at Rs 12 lakh crore, up from the earlier budget estimate of Rs 7.8 lakh crore. This sharp rise in the government's borrowing does not come as a surprise. With economic activity collapsing, and government revenues expected to plunge, maintaining expenditure at the budgeted levels will itself require a significant increase in borrowings. The Centre has not clearly spelt out whether these additional borrowings are meant for plugging its revenue gap, and/or to fund its relief or stimulus package.

Central government finances were under pressure even before the COVID pandemic. In its latest budget, it had projected gross tax collections to grow by 12 per cent (as compared to the revised estimates) to touch Rs 24.23 lakh crore in 2020-21, up from 4 per cent in 2019-20 (RE). But with sluggish economic growth, and concerns over whether the government will be able to achieve even the revised revenue target for 2019-20, these projections were optimistic to say the least. Now, with the sharp deceleration in economic activity, and a quick broad-based recovery unlikely in the near term, the Centre will miss not only its direct and indirect tax targets this year, but will find it difficult to meet even its disinvestment goal of Rs 2.1 lakh crore. With even state governments likely to increase their borrowings this year, markets will be apprehensive of the scale of the general government borrowing programme. The 10-year bond yield rose as much as 27 basis points to 6.24 per cent on Monday in reaction to the revised borrowing calendar, ending the day at 6.16 per cent. The focus will now shift to the RBI and whether it announces an expansion of its open market operations this year. The data so far shows that the RBI has net purchased around Rs 1 lakh crore of bonds this financial year.

Given the magnitude of the changes in the budget projections this year, the Centre as well as state governments would do well to rework their budget math. A re-statement of their budgets would help provide clarity on the state of their finances. Further, the Centre needs to present a medium-term fiscal roadmap, laying out in detail how it expects economic activity to shape up, how it plans to support the economy during this period, as well as a clear path of exiting from the use of any unconventional policies that may be adopted during this period. Such a credible framework would help alleviate concerns.

THE ORIGINATOR

Little Richard created a new sound, broke barriers. His rock 'n' roll was feverish, frantic, uncontainable

IN 1955, WHEN Little Richard released Tutti Fruti with its war cry, "A-wop-bop-a-loo-bop-a-wop-bam-boom!", the African-Americans and the white folks shivered in unison — rock 'n' roll had been around for a while but this rambunctious sound was new. Born with one foot shorter than the other, earning him the nickname Little Richard, Richard Wayne Penniman wasn't the originator of rock 'n' roll (though he'd beg to disagree); the 87-year-old man from Georgia, who died from bone cancer on Saturday, was something more — he was its emancipator.

Was rock music disruptive? Yes, it was meant to be, and Little Richard dialled that intent up to 11 — with a vocal range that could bellow the bass notes and howl out a falsetto, and by playing the piano like it was a percussion instrument, he made rock 'n' roll sound feverish, frantic, uncontainable. All of these qualities were felt by his audiences in his live shows; the show would begin with people segregated according to race, and by the end of the night, Little Richard and his band would bring everybody together on the floor. There would be no James Brown, the Beatles, or Elton John without him, but breaking through walls of race and gender in a country that perceived him as a lesser man is his truest legacy.

Little Richard was also one of the first to celebrate his queerness openly. Sure, there'd been Liberace before him, but with his six-inch high pompadour, the shiny costumes, that pencil-thin moustache that quivered when he sang, Little Richard was one of a kind. By embracing the masculine and the feminine in equal measure, he made it difficult for people to pin him down, to categorise and define him. In 1957, three years after he'd recorded 18 hits and sold over a million records, Little Richard converted to Christianity, renounced his sexuality and went on a hiatus. He'd found god, but take it from his fans, they'll tell you that surely it was the other way around.

Don't call it reform

Industrial Relations Code was a good beginning. But ordinances by states to change labour laws are a travesty



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

INDIAN LABOUR LAWS needed serious reform. But the ordinances being promulgated by state governments are, under the pretext of reform, unleashing a whole-scale assault on labour. By increasing working hours, the state wants to literally break their bodies, their freedom and their dignity. By taking away any serious pretence of grievance redressal, the state wants to immobilise all questions of justice. States want to ensure that labour has no bargaining power left.

Indian labour laws had the unique distinction of representing the state's war on both capital and labour. They were irrelevant to 90 per cent of India's labour force. At best, and very rarely, they protected a small section of it. They created enough distortions to prevent greater formal protections for the labour force. The work of KR Shyam Sundar showed in great detail that these laws were, in his phrase, "not even a paper tiger."

It is a myth that India's labour laws increased Indian labour's bargaining power. As brilliant papers by Aditya Bhattacharjee of Delhi School of Economics showed, Indian labour's wages stagnated, since the 1980s there was a massive decrease in strikes and lockouts, factories with hundred or more workers experienced more variability in employment than smaller firms. So the idea that Indian labour's bargaining power was an obstacle to India's industrialisation is errant nonsense.

Labour law did not protect workers. It was not incompatible with growth. But these propositions are not incompatible with the idea that labour laws can still sometimes unfairly hurt business. These laws were excessively complex. Some laws created rigidities that had nothing to do with labour protection. They disincentivised industry investment in human capital. They created a political economy of rent-seeking. Business has often circumvented these laws. But the very need for circumvention can distort the nature of entrepreneurship and adversely select those who can manage the state, more than genuinely innovative entrepreneurs.

So the Narendra Modi government was right in thinking that these laws needed to be looked at afresh. The Industrial Relations Code was introduced in the Lok Sabha in November 2019. The Standing Committee has just given its report. This was a sensible way to proceed.

Basic necessities like environmental protection, worker safety, hazardous industrial activity, basic rights, require regulation. We have to invest in the state capacity to do them right. We need to reclaim the word reform. 'Reform' should be used only when a particular measure actually achieves a desired objective. Gutting environmental laws is not 'reform'. Designing laws and enforcement that achieve clean air and water is reform. Gutting labour protection is not 'reform'. Designing protection that can protect core interests of workers, respect their bargaining power and at the same time rescue distortions in capital allocation, is reform. What our chief ministers are doing is not reform: It is indolence and authoritarianism.

It allowed room for serious deliberation on first principles, it allowed parliament to take an all-things-considered view of the matter, and would have, if done right, created a labour code fit for the 21st century.

But, instead, we have a four-pronged assault on labour that threatens to undermine the Modi government's own legislation. The first is an assault on constitutionalism. Previous governments have abused the ordinance route. But the brazen use of ordinance to suspend such important provisions of the law, when Parliament is already deliberating on the matter, shows contempt for democracy. Allowing the states to override central legislation, without justification, will create future problems for federalism. Repealing many of these provisions will put India in contravention of ILO conventions and its own laws. And there is also a non-application of mind in many of the proposals. Some states will increase work hours without increasing rate of compensation. Let us say we do want more flexibility in working hours that allow occasionally for 12-hour shifts. What is the objective of flexibility? If it is workers' health and reducing commutes, should such flexibility not still be within a limit of the total number of working hours in the week? Or do we want to barbarically increase the total number of working hours? On constitutionality, democratic propriety, application of mind, the president has a good basis for withholding assent. These ordinances confirm the worst fears that the pandemic emergency will be used to amass arbitrary powers at a time when it is not even possible to protest.

Second, we are seeing a systematic assault on whatever little bargaining power labour has left. We inflict needless duress, indignity and the spectre of poverty on millions of workers by refusing to provide adequate social support. We artificially create a mass army of reserve labour, barely on the brink of subsistence, so they have no option but to work on any terms that are offered. If the government is genuinely worried about what to do with labour who might not want to return to work because both the state and their employers have treated them atrociously, it can easily expand the remit of MGNREGA. But here is the dirty secret for

why governments and employers hate the MGNREGA. Its real effect is that it puts a floor under labour, and marginally improves its bargaining position.

The third is an ideological assault on Indian labour. The narrative build-up has been that India's inability to attract companies leaving China has largely to do with labour. Indian labour's capacity to supposedly obstruct the onward march of Indian capitalism pales in comparison with the state and Indian capital's capacity to inflict damage on the Indian economy. The fourth is the cultivation of an authoritarianism: The more we can punish our own people the more salvation there will be for us. The ease with which we applaud 12-hour working days, the machismo with which we applaud the gutting of grievance redressal, suggests a deeper pathology that might have nothing to do with economics.

Basic necessities like environmental protection, worker safety, hazardous industrial activity, basic rights, require regulation. We have to invest in the state capacity to do them right. We need to reclaim the word reform. "Reform" should be used only when a particular measure actually achieves a desired objective. Gutting environmental laws is not "reform." Designing laws and enforcement that achieve clean air and water is reform. Gutting labour protection is not "reform." Designing protection that can protect core interests of workers, respect their bargaining power and at the same time rescue distortions in capital allocation, is reform. What our chief ministers are doing is not reform: It is indolence and authoritarianism masquerading as reform.

The Industrial Relations Code was a good beginning by the Modi government. The ordinances are a travesty. No country can develop that does not invest in human capital of its citizens, that does not increase the share of labour in the country's wealth, and does not get the balance between capital and labour right. The Modi government can decide whether it wants to write a new and fairer social contract. Or will it unleash a new 19th century barbarism?

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AT HOME IN THE WORLD

In Yogendra Singh's work, historicity and universality went hand in hand



DIPANKAR GUPTA

PROFESSOR YOGENDRA Singh passed away at the age of 87 on May 9. He belonged to the original "gang of five" with Moonis Raza, S Gopal, Rasheeduddin Khan and Krishna Bharadwaj, who established, in 1969, Jawaharlal Nehru University's now-famous School of Social Sciences. They have all gone, and now he has left us too.

Your first image of Professor Singh would likely be that of a rather straightforward university teacher from a regular well-to-do, but rural background. How wrong would you be? Very. If anything, Singh was far from being the stereotypical Indian intellectual. If you wanted to see him at his combative, intellectual best, you needed to excite his theoretical bone. This quiet man would suddenly come alive.

The most dominant image I have of Singh is that of a powerful homegrown social science theorist who could hold his own against the best anywhere in the world. Yet, and this is very significant, Singh was no nativist propagandist who would Indianise social science. He was a strong believer in historicising social theories and contextualising concepts. In his opinion, this is the kind of exercise that would enable one to buttress universal categories and allow for a free flow of science across cultures.

The one time he was really upset with me was when I visited him in 1973, or sometime around then, with an early PhD draft which asserted concepts as if they were truths in themselves. After that dressing down, con-

ducted as always, without a raised voice, my youthful romance with jargon was considerably shaken. The only look of annoyance in him was his furrowed brow, no more: As this was a particularly unusual expression in his case, the message of disapproval was very clear whenever it did happen.

On his ability to link theory with fact, Singh had few parallels. He knew rural India intimately and did not have to self-consciously assert his knowledge of life in the countryside, as some of us do. At the same time, he had also studied Western traditions closely — and as a consequence, they were no longer foreign to him. As he frequently said in class, and in his books and articles, historicity and universality do best when they go hand-in-hand. This position is markedly manifested in all his works and can act as a leitmotif of Singh's enormous contribution to social science knowledge.

For example, he was the first to insist that the debate on caste versus class was an ill-conceived one. They were two different kinds of phenomena, and to believe that one was displacing the other was completely unfounded. Instead, he argued, if we were to examine how caste, as status, relates to other axes like those of class and power, one would be better served.

Sanskritisation, for Singh, had meaning not because it was such an exotic cultural event, but because it was a context-specific expression of a universal principle. Professor M N Srinivas, who popularised the term

"sanskritisation" would have certainly approved of this interpretation. At the same time, there were many, in India and elsewhere, who wrote and peddled "sanskritisation" as if it were a grand "micro fact".

Singh was the quiet sort who didn't toil to be original — he was naturally one. This is why, as Professor K L Sharma, his first PhD student (and, by consensus, Singh's favourite) once said, that when Singh lectured Marx, one thought he must be a Marxist. Likewise, when he taught Weber, it seemed as if he were definitely Weberian. While never the one to aspire to guru status, Singh always espoused how important it was for good theory to be empirically sound.

Nor did he ever make enemies. So, often those who once scoffed at him became his admirers. While others may have fought over Marx versus Weber, or Great versus Little Tradition, or Holism versus Hierarchy, Singh used insights that each provided to enlarge social theory. This is why when his first book, *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*, appeared in 1973, sociologists worldwide at once sat up to take notice of an extraordinary scholar on the horizon.

But those like me were lucky. We got to appreciate Professor Singh in a way only students can. Jawaharlal Nehru University had just begun when I had enrolled as his PhD student, and I am convinced that fate had dealt me a great hand.

The writer is a Delhi-based sociologist

MAY 12, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM FOREIGNERS

IF THE CENTRAL government failed to meet their demands by May 15, the All Assam Students Union would take up the work of identifying "foreigners" on its own, AASU sources said. The AASU has already made a move in this direction. It has entrusted the task of identification to its volunteer force, called the "Swechha Sevak Bahini". The sources set at rest the apprehensions voiced in certain circles that the AASU ultimatum might bring in "forcible expulsion" of the suspected foreigners. But they said the measure would only be taken as a last resort. At present, the blockade of crude oil, petroleum products, jute and forest products is contin-

uing in various parts of the state.

UGANDAN COUP

UGANDAN SOLDIERS TOOK control of the official radio and the post office escalating the confrontation between Army Chief of Staff, David Oyite Ojok, and civilian President Godfrey Binaisa. The soldiers stopped short of an all-out coup. They prevented Binaisa from broadcasting messages on the government radio, but they made no apparent move to place the capital under martial law, or to take over the country. In Nairobi, capital of neighboring Kenya, the Ugandan culture minister, Dan Nabudere, described the soldiers' actions as "a partial coup".

PRESIDENTIAL PERILS

JUSTICE VR Krishna Iyer said that the presidential form of government had a great potential for subversion of democracy in a large and diverse country like India with an indigent and illiterate people. Talking to newsmen in Chandigarh, the Supreme Court judge said nothing had happened in the country to bring about such a drastic change in the form of government. Asked what would be the position in the light of the latest SC ruling striking down two sections of the 42nd amendment, Justice Iyer said any change from the present form of government would have to undergo the test that "it does not violate the basic structure of the Constitution."



7 THE IDEAS PAGE

Seven questions about an app

Centre must address privacy concerns, and ensure greater transparency on Aarogya Setu



M V RAJEEV GOWDA

IN 2017, INDIA witnessed a unique event. A democratically-elected government stood before the Supreme Court and argued that it had complete and absolute right over the lives of its citizens. It asserted that privacy was an "elitist" concern, that its surveillance powers had no constitutional limits and, no fundamental right to privacy was guaranteed by the Constitution. The Court disagreed unanimously.

Twice thereafter, the Narendra Modi government attempted to circumvent the Supreme Court's strictures. First, through the mandatory, expansive and unjustified use of Aadhaar, which was pruned substantially by the Court. And second, by issuing a tender to build a surveillance system in 2018, which was stopped after being brought to the notice of the Supreme Court. The government's latest attempt at circumventing our fundamental right to privacy is the Aarogya Setu app.

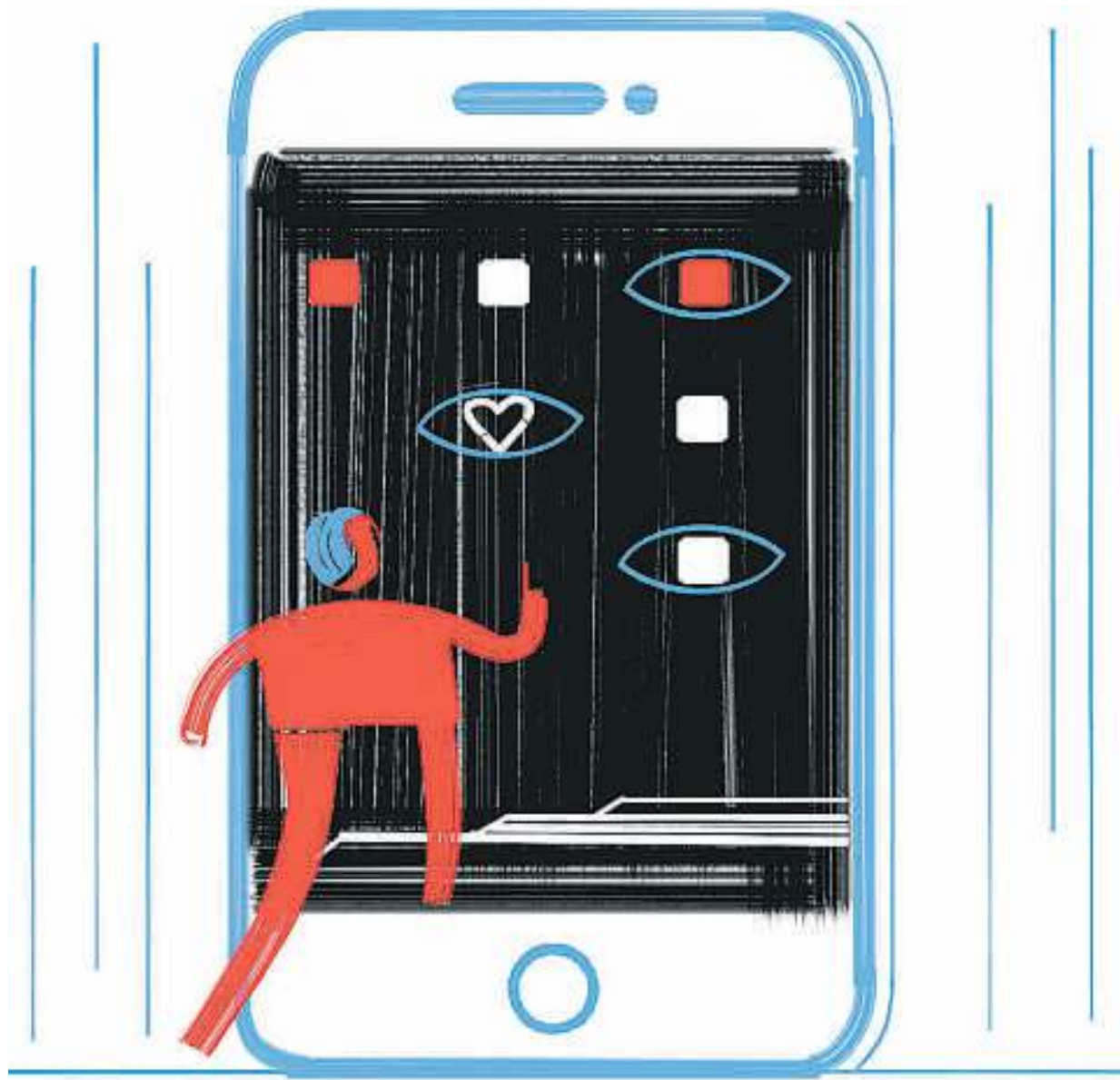
The government claims it has launched this contact tracing app to better equip healthcare authorities to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its historically poor track record on privacy, the lack of transparency about who built and runs the app, and the absence of data protection legislation compound people's anxieties. Especially because the app allows the government continuous access to an individual's location and demographic data. Thus it is imperative that the government answer some burning questions:

First, since the app breaches the fundamental right to privacy, it must have legislative sanction. Instead, the app is being imposed through executive order. Companies are being told that all their employees must use the app, and local governments, building societies and shops are making it mandatory. Why has the government not complied with the orders of the Supreme Court vis-a-vis the need for legislation? Under what legal framework has this breach of privacy been shown to be reasonable?

Second, what are the safeguards against data theft and other breaches? The app's Terms of Service (TOS) confer blanket limited liability on the government. In cases of data theft, who will be held accountable? How can the government be allowed to operate a huge surveillance system without concomitant obligations?

Third, why is the app not open source? The closed source architecture of the app violates transparency principles and this government's own policies. Singapore's TraceTogether app was made open source, thus allowing researchers and experts to test the architecture and suggest measures to correct vulnerabilities.

Fourth, why is there no protocol for deletion of data? What legal rights do users have over their data and its deletion? Does the government have a right to hold the data and process it in perpetuity? Under the TOS, the government is obligated to delete certain personal data after a 30-day time period. However, there exists no framework to check



C R Sasikumar

compliance of the same. If users have no control over their data, it is a complete violation of their right to informational self-determination and the right to be forgotten.

Ever-changing rules add to the problem. On April 14, the app updated its privacy policy without notifying users, despite the privacy policy explicitly mandating the same. Such actions do not inspire trust.

Fifth, has the app been tested with any groups of users, for example, like Britain is testing a contact tracing app with a limited population in the Isle of Wight? Has the government conducted scenario analyses of how the app can be misused or abused? This is crucial in India given how much stigmatisation has already occurred (communities refusing to bury bodies of COVID patients and an instance of the lynching of a person suspected to be positive). The human touch may be vital, as Kerala has demonstrated, by successfully using old-fashioned manual contact tracing.

Sixth, has the government figured out how to deal with cases of false positives, the possibility of which is acknowledged in the TOS? How well trained are officials who will be making decisions about whom to quarantine? What if the app provokes people to infer incorrectly that someone they encountered a few days earlier was a carrier of the virus? If they attack or stigmatise that person, a faulty algorithm or inference would have jeopardised someone's life. How will

Has the app been tested with any groups of users, for example, like Britain is testing a contact tracing app with a limited population in the Isle of Wight? Has the government conducted scenario analyses of how the app can be misused or abused? This is crucial in India given how much stigmatisation has already occurred (communities refusing to bury bodies of COVID patients and an instance of the lynching of a person suspected to be positive). The human touch may be vital, as Kerala has demonstrated, by successfully using old-fashioned manual contact tracing.

the government deal with such cases?

Seventh, in a country where the total number of smartphone users is around 500 million, is the government going to penalise the remaining (almost) two-thirds of the population for not downloading the app on a smartphone they do not possess or cannot afford?

Across India, there are efforts to build databases of people's health records to enable easier treatment, including through telemedicine. If instances of misuse of the Aarogya Setu app emerge, then people will not trust other government initiatives involving health records, even if they are undertaken with due care, inclusive consultations, and respect for privacy.

The government must address these concerns in an open manner. Contradictory statements from ministers and combative rejoinders to those, like Rahul Gandhi, who raised valid concerns, just worsen the confusion.

When the Supreme Court heard the Right to Privacy case, it marked an unprecedented occasion where the government of India actually argued against the rights of its citizens. Now, it is time to stand up and ensure that, through the Aarogya Setu app, this government does not callously snatch those rights and jeopardise citizens' safety.

The writer is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, and chairman of the Indian National Congress' Research Department

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"China has done a good job in terms of national development and the COVID-19 fight. The process of fighting back US attacks is the process of China's rise being more widely accepted by the world." — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Target WTO

All major economies will be drawn into US-China contestations over international trade.

India must be prepared



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

ABOLISH THE World Trade Organisation is the kind of demand you would expect to hear from diehard opponents of free trade on the left and right extremes of the Indian political spectrum. But it has come in a forceful article published last week in *The New York Times* by a US senator, Josh Hawley, from Missouri.

In his essay, Hawley says the emergency triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic is not a mere health crisis. With millions of Americans unemployed, "it is also an economic crisis. And it has exposed a hard truth about the modern global economy: It weakens American workers and has empowered China's rise". Calling for a sweeping reform, Hawley wants the US to begin by abandoning the WTO. Hawley acknowledges that "under WTO, capital and goods moved across borders easier than before"; but adds, "it is also a hard truth about the modern global economy: It weakens American workers and has empowered China's rise".

Hawley's attack is not limited to the trading system. He takes on the "liberal international order". He decries America's post-Cold War crusade to overturn the system of sovereign states into one without borders and supra-national institutions in the name of lasting peace and "prosperity". "At new order's universal peace never quite arrived," says Hawley. "Instead, the internationalists embroiled America in one foreign war after another. And their liberal economic order fared little better. It sent American production overseas, compromised American supply chains, and cost American jobs, all while enriching Communist China."

Hawley's critique of the WTO and liberal international order was quickly panned by economists and editorialists as wrong in fact and theory. But Hawley is not looking for good grades from his professors. He is making an important political point amidst a major crisis in the US that has come bang in the middle of a general election.

Even without the COVID-19 emergency, the questions of foreign trade and China would have been quite central to Donald Trump's re-election campaign, as they were in the 2016 elections. The choice of former vice president Joe Biden as the Democratic nominee has made trade and China even more important in this election.

Unlike Bernie Sanders, the Democratic rival for the nomination, Biden has been a strong champion of free trade and of

economic integration with China. The Trump campaign is determined to target his record on these two issues to secure the crucial vote of working people in the American heartland. Hawley is simply channelling the essence of this argument, which is expected to be decisive in this election.

As the Trump campaign wips up the theme of "Beijing Bide", the Democrats can't afford to be seen as defending China and will find it hard to be more hawkish than the Republicans. On trade issues, the Democrats are signalling a tilt to the left, but can't afford to break with powerful backers in Wall Street and Silicon Valley, who are deeply committed to globalisation. Trump is eager to probe these contradictions.

After his article in *The New York Times*, Hawley has moved a resolution in the US Senate asking Washington to walk out of WTO. The last time the US Congress discussed such a resolution was in 2005. The House of Representatives had thrown it out with a massive margin of 338-86.

But trade politics in the US have evolved significantly in recent years. Under Trump, the Republican Party has turned from being the champion to a critic of free trade. The Democratic Party, which embraced globalisation since the early 1990s, has seen the erosion of working-class support. Elections this year could reveal if the shifting alignments on trade are now cast in stone and if anti-trade sentiment in America is deep and wide.

In replacing the WTO, Hawley says, "the United States must seek new arrangements and new rules, in concert with other free nations, to restore America's economic sovereignty". This, in turn, involves "building a new network of trusted friends and partners to resist Chinese economic imperialism".

As it takes a fresh look at the global economy battered by the coronavirus, Delhi should pay close attention to Hawley's theme on working with "trusted friends and partners" to restructure international trade. Hawley is not alone in articulating this view. Last week, Reuters reported from Washington that "the Trump administration is 'turbocharging' an initiative to rearrange the global supply chains currently centred on China."

Significant political contestations within the US and between the US and China to reform, reorient or bypass the WTO system are at hand. All major economies will be drawn into this conflict. Hobbled as it was by shaky political coalitions and preoccupied with multiple domestic challenges, India in the mid-1990s struggled to cope with the profound changes in the global economic order. As the world trade system arrives at a contingent moment a quarter of a century later, India is hopefully better prepared.

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RADHIKA JHA

An older injustice

Migrants' vulnerability is newly visible, but not new

INDIA WITNESSED a tragic irony last week when 16 migrants, part of a group of 20 headed towards their villages in Madhya Pradesh and who were hoping to board a "Shramik Special" train, chose to rest on the rail tracks: They were run over by a goods train in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district.

Ever since the lockdown was enforced on March 25, there has been ever-increasing uncertainty about the welfare, if not the basic survival, of the vulnerable sections of the society, many of whom depend on daily wages for their sustenance. This section of the population very often travels from poorer parts of the country to different states in order to earn an income, and have come to be known as "migrant workers".

Right before the pandemic hit, the political discussion in our country was around the issue of illegal immigrants. There were protests in Delhi and elsewhere against the recently passed Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which provides citizenship to illegal immigrants — who are Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Parsi, Buddhist, and Christian from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and who entered India before 2014. Now, in an almost dystopian twist, the debate is around the living conditions of the migrant workers amid the strict lockdown. Articles in newspapers suggest that the migrants have been betrayed. But have they, really? Even a bare glimpse at the treatment doled out to the migrants in the recent past shows that this is how they have always been treated. The current apathy of the states and the Centre shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone.

While in countries like the USA, people are pushing for better living conditions for "migrant workers" — which in their context would refer to immigrants, or people who have travelled abroad from less developed countries to the US — in India we have been unable to provide a basic security net to even fellow Indians. Here, being "Indian" is not qualification enough to be considered as your own. From the "Marathi manooos" movement in Mumbai from the 1960s onwards to the 2012 exodus from Bengaluru of people from the Northeast, there are innumerable examples of the hatred and intolerance displayed by "localities" towards "migrants". Here, there are several boxes that one must check to be included by locals — of caste, class, religion and region — none of which fall in favour of the so-called migrant workers, unfortunately.

It would be unfair to put the entire blame on the government alone. If a government is a reflection of its society, then the current response of the government is only an indication of the position occupied by migrants in society. In a survey carried out by Common Cause and Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), the Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2018, with common people across 22 Indian states, 16 per cent of the respondents said that the police discriminates against people from another state. People in the cities were more likely to feel that the police discriminates against migrants, with 21 per cent respondents from cities agreeing with the statement. On the contrary, SPIR

2019, which was a survey with the police personnel across 21 Indian states, found that 24 per cent of police personnel strongly believe that migrants are naturally prone to committing crimes, while 36 per cent felt that they are "somewhat" naturally prone to committing crimes. In total, nearly 60 per cent of the police personnel held the opinion that migrants are naturally prone to committing crimes, in other words, they are "born criminals". What this indicates is that even though the people, overall, may not — to a large extent — feel that the police is discriminatory towards migrants, the police, when asked a direct question, did indeed display a discriminatory attitude against migrants.

According to the 2001 Census estimates — figures which are nearly two decades old — there were 41 million migrants from other states in India. Yet, the percentage of inter-state migration in India is low compared to several other countries. A cross-country comparison of internal migration rates between 2000 and 2010 across 80 countries ranks India in the last place in terms of the rate of migration. While it has been established through several studies that migrants help improve the economic conditions of both the source as well as the destination, in India, there appears to be a conscious policy restriction which deters inter-state migration. A comparative analysis of seven states on migration-friendly policies, compiled in the Interstate Migration Policy Index (IMPEX) 2019, ranks popular migrant-receiving states on policy indicators pertaining to health and sanitation, housing, social

benefits, identity and registration, political participation, children's rights, education and labour markets. Of the seven states studied, Kerala ranks the highest, while Delhi ranks the lowest. However, even in Kerala, considerable improvement is needed, particularly in areas such as political inclusion and non-discriminatory access to housing, the study notes. The lack of policy measures to ensure the welfare of migrants coupled with discriminatory policies surface in the form of much lower rates of inter-state migrants compared to intra-state migrants (or migration within a state). A 2018 World Bank study found that households with some form of identification proof were less likely to have a household member migrate across states, thus suggesting that inadequate portability of identification documents for social welfare benefits deters households from sending migrants across states.

What remains, then, are poorly urbanised states with high levels of inequality and discrimination. Despite the high level of dependency on these very workers, first we disenfranchise them from coming into our cities and towns. And then, in times of crisis, we do not let them return home. While the states and the Centre bicker over who will bear the cost of the train rides for the migrants, the workers will continue to take the journey of hundreds of kilometres on foot, and will continue to die. And we, as a society, will continue to not care.

The writer is a research executive at Common Cause. Views expressed are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LABOUR REFORM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Reform for labour' (IE, May 11). The suggestion to increase shifts instead of increasing working hours made in the editorial is practical. It will also help to space out workers in line with social distancing norms. It would also be a good idea to reduce superfluous public holidays as well as the alternate Saturday-offs in order to make up for two months of lost output. This boost to production and subsequent rise in wages should improve the demand situation and bring our GDP to a respectable level.

SB Bhalarao, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Reform for labour' (IE, May 11). Myriad extant labour laws to safeguard the interests of workers and employees have failed to protect their interests. The lion's share of our economy is in the informal sector. Draconian labour laws deter enterprises from becoming formal and subject themselves to rent-seeking by inspectors. Doing away with impractical laws shall encourage moribund businesses to get back on their feet and new enterprises to come forward.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

SENSIBLE IDEA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'One fund, two safety nets' (IE, May 11). The kind of economic paralysis that the prolonged lockdown has caused cannot be cured by playing around with credit-flow, interest rates and loans' repayment schedules. The writer's suggestion of using citizens savings through the issuance of treasury bills is a sensible one and can

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de-stress both employers and employees. This shall not only help the government in containing deficit financing but also recharge the economy that has terribly run out of steam.

SK Prabhakar, Gurugram

BE CREDIBLE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Misinformation goes viral' (IE, May 11). In the pre-social media era, people in India did not trust government media instinctively and turned to the BBC. Subsequently, this trust was reposed in private media for some time. However, with crass politicisation and commercialisation of print as well as electronic media, the people have no choice but to turn to social media for information. If our government and private media once again start giving news impartially, the menace of misinformation will be reduced.

HN Bhagwat, Chiplun

PANDEMIC WATCH



In Seoul. Reuters

SOUTH KOREA
Govt scrambles to contain nightclub cases

Seoul: South Korean officials scrambled on Monday to contain a new outbreak, searching for thousands of people who may have been infected in a cluster of cases linked to nightclubs and bars in the capital Seoul. South Korea has been lauded for its quick, effective action on its epidemic, significantly reducing the rate of new infections in recent weeks, but the resurgence of cases has raised worries about a second wave. Officials reported 35 new cases, the second consecutive day of new cases of that magnitude and the highest numbers in more than a month.

NEPAL
8 returnees from India test positive

Kathmandu: Nepal has reported 11 new cases, including eight who returned from India, taking the total number to 121, authorities said Monday. Nepal is among the nations that has the least number of cases with no deaths. According to the Ministry of Health and Population, the new cases involve 10 men from Kapilvastu in Western Nepal and one from Dakneshwari Municipality-3 of Saptari who tested positive, taking the total tally to 121. Eight of the 10 cases confirmed Monday were those who returned to Nepal from India last month.

SAUDI ARABIA
Saudi triples taxes, cuts \$26 bn costs

Dubai: Saudi Arabia announced Monday it was tripling taxes on basic goods, raising them to 15%, and cutting spending on major projects by around \$26 billion as it grapples with blows from the coronavirus pandemic. Saudi citizens will also lose a bonus cost-of-living allowance that had been in place since 2018. "We are facing a crisis the world has never seen the likes of in modern history, a crisis marked by uncertainty," Saudi finance minister and acting minister of economy and planning, Mohammed Al-Jadaan, said.

METROS, STORES OPERATE
as France implements partial reopening

More countries emerge from lockdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, MAY 11

Plastic spacing barriers and millions of masks appeared on the streets of Europe's newly reopened cities Monday, as France and Belgium emerged from lockdowns, the Netherlands sent children back to school and Spain let people eat outdoors.

All faced the delicate balance of trying to restart battered economies without causing a second wave of coronavirus infections. Fears of infection spikes in countries that eased their restrictions have been borne out over the past few days in Germany, where new clusters were linked to three slaughterhouses.

In loosening up the country's lockdown, German authorities have spelled out a specific level of infection that could lead to the reimposition of restrictions. Other countries have been vague about what would be enough to trigger another clampdown.

With Monday's partial reopening in France, crowds formed at some Paris metro stations, but the city's notorious traffic jams were absent. Only half the stores on the Champs-Élysées were open.

Parisian hairdressers planned to charge a fee for the disposable protective gear they will have to give customers. Walk-ins will be a thing of the past, said Brigitte L'Hoste, manager of the Hair de Beauté salon.

Roughly half of Spain's 47 million people shifted into looser restrictions, beginning to socialise, shop in small stores and sit outdoors at restaurants. Its biggest cities, Madrid and Barcelona, remained under lockdown.

Spanish hotels reopened with

VIETNAM
Kindergartens and primary schools re-opened on Monday in the latest step to lift curbs, although international commercial flights and dance clubs and karaoke bars remain banned, the nation has seen no community infections for nearly a month

AUSTRALIA
Several states in Australia announced plans to lift a few restrictions. Victoria, Western Australia, New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia and Australian Capital Territory announced measures such as relaxing crowd bans and reopening some establishments

precautions — but also financial bleak prospects — because people aren't allowed to travel outside their provinces and few flights from overseas.

In Greece, Smaragda Petridou was out buying beauty products from a cosmetics chain. "Look, I'm not afraid to go in when the protection measures are being adhered to," she said. "We'll shop, what can we do? So the shops can survive too."

In Belgium, Brussels' City2 shopping mall reopened, and "everyone was impatient to open their shops, see their customers, so it is a relief despite the tremendous work they did to adapt their shops, to create paths with entries and exits for customers," said manager Jurgen De Gelas.



Commuters at a train station in Paris on Monday. France has made mask usage in public transport mandatory. Reuters

Britain's new guidelines lead to confusion

REUTERS
LONDON, MAY 11

THE UNITED Kingdom has one of the world's highest official COVID-19 death tolls and, after criticism that he was slow to impose a lockdown, Johnson is wary of triggering a second wave of infection.

"Our challenge now is to find a way forward that preserves our hard-won gains while easing the burden of lockdown," Johnson said in a statement.

Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said the government had been issuing con-



Boris Johnson in London on Monday. Reuters

flicting guidance that did not answer the public's basic practical questions about going back to work. "What the country needs at this time is clarity and reassur-

ance, but at the moment both are in pretty short supply," he said.

After weeks of declining to tell the British people to wear face coverings, the government said they should be worn in enclosed spaces where distancing is impossible.

There was a lack of detail, though, on what employers should do to ensure the safety of workers. Lawyers said some employers were confused about who should be working and when. Trade union leader Len McCluskey said Johnson had confused people. "Millions of people this morning will be completely dumbfounded," McCluskey said.

EXPLAINED
Different directions

ONE OF the key criticisms about the UK government's approach is that a lack of clarity could result in different parts of the UK following their own approaches. The new 'stay alert' message is seen as confusing and lacking in specifics. Thus, some regions said they will stick to the previous 'stay-at-home' message.

US prepares case against China for trying to hack research on virus vaccine

DAVID SANGER & NICOLE PERLROTH
WASHINGTON, MAY 11

THE FBI and the Department of Homeland Security are preparing to issue a warning that China's most skilled hackers and spies are working to steal American research in the crash effort to develop vaccines and treatments for the coronavirus. The efforts are part of a surge in cybertheft and attacks by nations seeking advantage in the pandemic.

The warning comes as Israeli officials accuse Iran of mounting an effort in late April to cripple water supplies as Israelis were

PENCE, TASK FORCE ISOLATE AFTER EXPOSURE

Washington: Vice President Mike Pence is self-isolating after an aide tested positive for the coronavirus last week, joining three of the nation's top scientists in taking protective steps after possible exposure. Dr Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of

Allergy and Infectious Diseases, placed himself in quarantine over the weekend, along with Dr Robert Redfield, director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Dr Stephen Hahn. NYT

confined to their houses, though the government has offered no evidence to back its claim. More than a dozen countries have re-deployed military and intelli-

gence hackers to glean whatever they can about other nations' virus responses. Even American allies like South Korea and nations that do not typically stand out for

their cyberabilities, like Vietnam, have suddenly redirected their state-run hackers to focus on virus-related information, according to private security firms.

A draft of the forthcoming public warning, which officials say is likely to be issued in the days to come, says China is seeking "valuable intellectual property and public health data through illicit means related to vaccines, treatments and testing." It focuses on cybertheft and action by "nontraditional actors," a euphemism for researchers and students the Trump administration says are being activated to steal data from inside academic and private laboratories. NYT

Hong Kong: Over 200 held amid protests



Some arrested protesters. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG, MAY 11

MORE THAN 200 people were arrested during anti-government protests on Sunday night, as per Hong Kong media reports.

Police have not released a tally but said around midnight that they were conducting dispersal and arrest operations after giving repeated warnings. They said the protesters chanted slogans and built barriers to block roads and set fires on some streets.

Pro-democracy movement has shown signs of reviving in recent weeks as the coronavirus threat eases. The government recently decided to allow public gatherings of eight people.

The Apple Daily newspaper said more than 200 people were arrested, and the South China Morning Post put the total at more than 250.

Russia's case count third-highest globally; Putin to ease measures

AGENCIES
MOSCOW, MAY 11

RUSSIA'S CORONAVIRUS cases overtook Italian and British infections on Monday to become the third highest in the world after a record daily rise hours before President Vladimir Putin was due to review the country's lockdown regime.

The official tally surged to 221,344, meaning Russia now has more registered cases than Italy or Britain and only trails Spain and the United States, as the number of new cases of the novel coronavirus jumped by 11,656 in the past 24 hours.

President Vladimir Putin has declared an end to a nationwide partial economic shutdown but noted that some restrictions will remain. Putin, speaking in a televised address to the nation on Monday, said that it will be up to regional governors in the far-flung Russian Federation to determine what industrial plants could reopen starting Tuesday.

He emphasised that it's essential to preserve jobs and keep the economy running provided that workers strictly observe sanitary norms.

Moscow will allow all of its



A temporary hospital in Moscow on Monday. Reuters

industrial plants and construction sites to resume work starting Tuesday, and Putin said other regions may follow the example.

Non-food stores, hairdressers, car dealers and most other enterprises in the services sector remain shut.

Putin emphasised that the restrictions must be lifted gradually to avoid triggering a new wave of contagion.

More than half of all cases and deaths are in Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak.

The country's coronavirus response centre also reported 94 new deaths, taking the overall death toll to 2,009 people. The official death toll remains far lower than in many countries, something Kremlin critics have queried.

Pak Oppn accuses Imran govt of mishandling crisis

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, MAY 11

PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION parties on Monday accused Prime Minister Imran Khan's government of mishandling the coronavirus crisis, as the total number of the COVID-19 patients in the country rose to 31,684.

During a National Assembly session convened after nearly two months, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader



Imran Khan

and former defence minister Khawaja Asif led the criticism. Asif said that the federal gov-

ernment was confused over the issue of how to handle the crisis.

"The current situation that we are in is due to the approximately two months-long negligence showed by the government. When we had fewer deaths, the entire country was completely shut down. Now that we are seeing a dangerous spike in cases, they are easing lockdown restrictions," he said.

He also lashed out at the government's inability to increase testing capacity. "Two weeks ago,

we were told that our testing capacity will be increased to 50,000. But now we are being told that it is only 20,000," he said.

He said that the government was dividing the nation instead of uniting it on one platform.

Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that the federal government was impeding efforts of the Sindh government. He said an ordinance prepared by the provincial government was not allowed by the governor. PTI

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

At least 19 dead in Iran naval training accident

FARNAZ FASSIHI
MAY 11

AN IRANIAN naval vessel was hit by a missile fired from another ship during a military exercise in the Sea of Oman on Sunday, an apparent friendly-fire episode that left at least 19 people dead, Iran's Navy said.

Official details of the incident were scant, and the navy said that 15 other people were injured. But four people with knowledge of the incident said that the ship, identified as the missile boat Konarak, was hit and sunk by a missile from the frigate Jamaran by mistake. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid



The vessel which was struck during the training exercise. AP

reprisal from Iranian officials. "The scope of the incident is under investigation by experts,"

Iran's Navy said in a statement. Iran's military has come under intense global scrutiny since

another mistake with missiles: In January, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps shot down a Ukrainian Airlines passenger plane with two missiles, killing 176 onboard. It subsequently blamed the incident on human error on a night that it launched ballistic missiles at a U.S. military base in Iraq in retaliation of the assassination of a top general.

Iran has also been battling a severe outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, leaving trust between government and public at an all-time low. Iranians have blamed the government for not enforcing an early lockdown to battle the virus and not being transparent about the number of people infected.

The reports of the latest

mishap drew criticism of the government on social media.

"Firing at your own targets, whether military or civil, in such a short space of time is not human error. It's a catastrophic failure of management and command," tweeted Maziar Khosravi, a journalist.

The friendly-fire case occurred on Sunday afternoon in the Sea of Oman, near the Iranian port city of Jask. Iran routinely conducts military exercises in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman with a dual purpose: testing new domestically produced equipment and showcasing its military might as tensions between Washington and Tehran escalate and the threat of military conflict looms. NYT

Afghanistan: Taliban attack on army checkpoint kills 6 soldiers

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, MAY 11

THE TALIBAN attacked an Afghan army checkpoint in eastern Laghman province, killing six soldiers and wounding five, the government said Monday.

The insurgents claimed responsibility for the assault, which took place on Sunday night, just days after US special envoy in new talks with the Taliban in Qatar re-emphasised the need for a reduction in violence.

The statement from the Afghan Defense Ministry said the troops pushed back the at-

tackers, adding that the Taliban also suffered casualties but without providing specific figures.

Last week, US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met with Taliban representatives in Doha, the capital of the Gulf Arab state of Qatar, where the insurgents maintain a political office. He stressed the need for a cease-fire, and after Doha, Khalilzad also visited Islamabad and New Delhi to discuss the Afghan peace process with Pakistani and Indian officials.

On Monday, four bombs, one placed under a garbage bin and the other three by the roadside, went off in northern Kabul,

wounding four civilians, including a child, Afghan officials said.

The roadside bombs were spaced within 10-20 meters (yards) of one another, said Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz. The wounded child is a 12-year-old girl, he said and added that the police are searching the area where the bombs struck.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombings and their targets remained unknown. Both the Taliban and the Islamic State group are active in Kabul and its surroundings and both frequently target the military and civilians.

PANEL PROPOSED CREATING ASSET MANAGEMENT COMPANY TWO YEARS AGO

Lockdown, slowdown: NPAs looming, PSBs put bad bank creation plan back on table

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, MAY 11

WITH NON-PERFORMING assets (NPAs) of banks set to witness a spike in the wake of the lockdown triggered by the pandemic and the economic slowdown, the banking sector is preparing the groundwork for creation of a bad bank to tackle bad assets.

The sector, under the auspices of the Indian Banks Association (IBA), has dusted off a proposal — prepared by a panel on faster resolution of stressed assets in public sector banks (PSBs) headed by former PNB Chairman Sunil Mehta — for submission to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India. This panel had proposed an asset management company (AMC) for resolving large bad loans, called 'Sashakt India Asset Management', two years ago. While bankers are pushing for this, and there is support for the proposal within a section of the government, the broader view in the Finance Ministry is that PSBs are "well-capitalised" and private asset reconstruction companies already exist in the banking system.

A bad bank buys the bad loans and other illiquid holdings of other banks and financial institutions, which in turn will clear their balance sheet. Rating firm Crisil has said NPAs are set to rise by

EXPLAINED

Govt refrained from idea of bad bank

WHILE BANKERS are expecting significant equity contribution from the government towards creation of a bad bank, the Centre has in the past refrained from adopting such a model. The question is: does the nation need a bad bank as PSBs are well-capitalised and private asset reconstruction companies already exist?

150-200 basis points this fiscal as banks turn cautious. "Lockdown will impact collections and resolutions, and thus result in higher NPAs. The gross NPAs would be between 11-11.5 per cent for the base case and it could rise higher."

"Discussions have taken place among banks. A final decision will be taken by the RBI and the government. What's to be seen is whether the government will be ready to put in huge funds re-

FM's meet with heads of PSBs postponed

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's review meeting with heads of public sector banks, which was scheduled to be held via video conference on Monday, has been postponed and a new date will be announced soon, a senior government official said.

Various issues, including credit deployment in the economy, implementation of relief measures announced by the government and interest rate transmission into the economy were expected to be discussed in the meeting. **ENS**

quired to set up the bad bank or AMC. There were talks about creating a bad bank in 2018 and 2009. But nothing happened," said an official aware of the development.

However, the structure of the proposed bad bank is still not clear, though there was speculation it will be a three-tier system involving asset reconstruction, asset management and secondary market. The Mehta committee had proposed an AMC and an AIF

(alternate investment fund) to resolve NPAs over Rs 500 crore.

Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan was against the bad bank concept saying that it created a moral hazard, enabling banks to continue with their reckless lending practices.

However, former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya had proposed two models to tackle stressed assets. The first model is a private asset management company (PAMC) which would be suitable for sectors where the stress is such that assets are likely to have economic value in the short run, with moderate levels of debt forgiveness. The second model is a national asset management company (NAMC) for sectors where the problem is not just one of excess capacity but possibly also of economically unviable assets in the short- to medium-term.

"The proposal of setting up of bad bank was discussed in the past, but it was not found viable as the government infused direct equity into PSBs, while they recognised their NPA levels and made adequate provisioning against them. As of now, our understanding is that PSBs are well-capitalised and private asset reconstruction companies already exist in the banking system. But we will see, let the proposal come to us," a senior government official said when asked about the plan. In last

the three fiscals, the Centre has infused equity of Rs 2.65 lakh crore into state-owned banks.

While bankers are expecting significant equity contribution from the government towards creation of such a bad bank, the Centre has in the past refrained from adopting such a model. Finance Ministry officials did not respond to queries seeking comments for the story.

Many nations, such as the US, Finland, Indonesia, Belgium and Sweden, had set up bad banks. Success of bad banks depends on a number of factors. Chief among these is government support to help banks understand and manage the many regulatory, accounting, and tax issues, and, in some cases, to provide financial backing.

"Again, each country's case is different, depending on the health of its banks, but broadly speaking, governments must smooth the way for the creation of bad banks and clearly establish the extent to which the state will assume the risk of the bad assets," McKinsey said in a report.

Gross NPAs, which were close to Rs 9 lakh crore as of December 2019, are expected to cross the Rs 10-lakh crore mark again by the end of the year. While the RBI has already given three months' moratorium on loan repayments, this is likely to be extended by another two or three months.

Amid concerns over widening fiscal deficit, bond yields rise by 20 bps

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 11

THE 10-YEAR benchmark bond yield on Monday rose 20 basis points to close at 6.17 per cent from 5.971 per cent on Friday, amid worries over a worsening of India's fiscal position.

The Centre last Friday said its total market borrowing requirements will rise by a whopping 53 per cent to Rs 12 lakh crore in the current fiscal, as falling revenues and rising expenses are expected to result in a sharp deterioration in the government's finances. This indicates that fiscal deficit for the year could spurt to 5.5 per cent of GDP, a sharp jump of 2 percentage points from the target of 3.5 per cent, in view of the pandemic.

"At approximately 2 per cent of GDP, this is at the lower end of the expected requirements for additional financing by the government and by no means sufficient to bridge both the revenue gap as well as the discretionary stimulus ahead. This is true even after accounting for the substantial fuel excise tax hike announced recently. That said, nothing stops a further addition to the gross borrowing down the line," said

3 KEY POINTS

1 The 10-year benchmark bond yield on Monday rose 20 basis points to close at 6.17 per cent from 5.971 per cent on Friday, amid worries over a worsening of India's fiscal position

2 The Centre last Friday said its total market borrowing requirements will rise by to Rs 12 lakh crore in FY20, as falling revenues and rising expenses are expected to result in a sharp deterioration in its finances

3 This indicates that fiscal deficit for FY21 could spurt to 5.5 per cent of GDP, a sharp jump of 2 percentage points from the target of 3.5 per cent

Suyash Choudhary, head—fixed income, IDFC AMC.

Alternatively, or additionally, other sources of financing — including a heavier dependence on sh-

ort term borrowing via treasury bills — may be in play. Furthermore, the picture is yet to be clarified with respect to how states' financial distress is to be addressed.

"The size of hike in borrowing notwithstanding, the template for the bond market is clear: this is the biggest growth shock to the global economy in multiple decades and the size of fiscal financing embedded in such a scenario can only be financed by the central bank," Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the rupee on Monday fell 19 paise to close at a one-week low of 75.73 against the US dollar due to fiscal deficit concerns over the government raising its borrowing for FY21. While domestic equities declined, market participants were concerned about the impact of increased borrowing on the fiscal deficit. The Sensex declined by 81.48 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 31,561.22, while the Nifty fell 12.30 points, or 0.13 per cent, to 9,239.20.

Traders said market participants are also awaiting the next round of stimulus from the government to cushion the economic damage inflicted by the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, any cues on the removal or extension of lockdown will be keenly awaited, they said.

IndiGo CEO says airline has 'no interest' in buying stake in Virgin Australia

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

EVEN AS the global aviation industry continues to suffer in the aftermath of travel restrictions put in place to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, news reports suggest that India's biggest airline IndiGo is seeking "to put together an indicative proposal" to pick up stake in Virgin Australia, which is currently undergoing bankruptcy proceedings. IndiGo, however, denied the report.

"We refer to certain media reports stating that IndiGo has expressed an interest in Virgin Australia. We deny the contents of these reports and would like to clarify that IndiGo has not formulated any indicative proposal, nor does it have any interest in this matter," IndiGo CEO Ronojoy Dutta said in a statement.

Industry officials indicated that it was one of IndiGo's promoter, Rahul Bhatia-owned Inter-Globe Enterprises, that was inter-

ested in submitting a proposal to Deloitte, Virgin Australia's administrator. The *Australian Financial Review* newspaper reported Monday that the airline's interest "was in taking Virgin back to its roots as a low cost carrier, and look to return it to profitability by running a lean and mean operation".

According to the report, apart from IndiGo, other parties known to be in the process include Australian private equity firm BGH Capital, global investment giants Bain Capital, Brookfield Asset Management, Oaktree Capital Management, Macquarie Group, Indigo Partners, and the Australian states of Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

Virgin Australia went into administration last month with around \$5 billion (or around Rs 35,000 crore) in debt. As of end-December 2019, IndiGo had net debt of about Rs 20,000 crore. Sectoral experts, however, expect IndiGo's cash reserves to be severely hit due to the ongoing grounding of flights.

₹6,195 crore released to 14 states: FinMin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE FINANCE Ministry on Monday released Rs 6,195 crore revenue deficit grant to 14 states to enhance their resources during COVID-19 crisis.

"The government on May 11, 2020 released Rs 6,195.08 crore to 14 states as the second equated monthly installment of the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. This would provide them additional resources during the Corona crisis," the Office of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tweeted. The grant includes Rs 1,276.91 crore to Kerala, Rs 638 crore to Punjab, and Rs 417.75 crore to West Bengal.

On April 3, the Ministry had released Rs 6,195 crore as the first installment of the 'Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant' to Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand & West Bengal.

BRIEFLY

MCA clarifies procedure on rights issue

New Delhi: The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), in a circular, Monday provided clarity on certain procedural requirements related to rights issues by companies. The MCA said that inability to send notices through postal or courier services to shareholders in the wake of the pandemic would not be viewed as a violation of the Companies Act.

Fee cut for filing charges of offer documents

New Delhi: Sebi, in a notification dated May 8, said it has reduced broker turnover fees and filing charges on offer documents for public offering, rights issue and buy-back of shares. The broker turnover fee has been reduced to 50 per cent of the existing fee structure for the period June 2020 to March 2021, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said.

'India risking economic hara-kiri'

New Delhi: Industrialist Anand Mahindra on Monday said that if lockdown is extended for much longer duration then the country will be "risking economic hara-kiri". **PTI**

Extra borrowing: 'FY21 fiscal deficit likely at 5.8%

After the Centre's move to raise its market borrowing for the current fiscal by ₹ 4.2 lakh crore, foreign brokerage Bank of America estimated the fiscal deficit to come at 5.8% of GDP



● 0.5%: REVISED GDP ESTIMATE FOR FY21, DOWN FROM 1.5% EARLIER

● 5%: OFFICIAL ESTIMATE FOR FY20 GROWTH, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A DECADAL LOW

LIKELY ROUTES OF FUNDING FISCAL DEFICIT:

- Open market operations by Reserve Bank, with new calendar to comfort markets
- Direct monetisation where RBI can directly subscribe to government debt
- Incentivising banks to put their surplus in money markets

OTHER MEASURES FOR REVENUE GENERATION:

- 5% COVID-19 cess for those earning above ₹5 lakh, to yield ₹20,000 crore
- Higher taxes on oil which will deliver ₹1 lakh crore

Extra spending due to pandemic: Due to the heavy dip in growth, the government is forced to spend extra to help restrict the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy

0.50-1 ppt: Range of fiscal slippages of states from their budgeted targets for FY21

All eyes on second stimulus: A second round of fiscal stimulus — which may cost 0.75% of the GDP, as against the first one of Rs 1.70 lakh crore which was 0.35% of the GDP — may soon be announced

Risk of wider deficit: Many experts have backed the move to spend more, in spite of the risk of a wider fiscal deficit which raises concerns on macroeconomic stability

Source: Bank of America/PTI

Economy needs ₹4.5 lakh crore support: Ficci writes to FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

SEEKING IMMEDIATE support for the economy hit by COVID-19, industry body Ficci said an additional fiscal support of Rs 4.5 lakh crore is required at the current juncture besides a quick release of Rs 2.5 lakh crore stuck in refunds and other government payments.

In a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Ficci President Sangita Reddy also made a case for the need to create a self-sufficiency fund for innovation, construction and manufacturing clusters.

As cane dues cross ₹14,200 crore, UP sugar mills petition state govt

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

WITH CANE payment arrears to farmers crossing Rs 14,200 crore, sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh have sought a cash subsidy bailout from the state government to enable them to discharge their outstanding dues.

"In this hour of deep crisis, we look upon you to bail out the industry by way of a cash subsidy. This shall help augment our cash flows, so that crushing operations and cane price payments continue," CB Patodia, president of UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) wrote in a letter to the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. UP mills have, in the current

2019-20 sugar season (October-September) as of May 8, crushed 10,565.49 lakh quintals of cane and produced 120.01 lakh tonnes (1t) of sugar. This is higher than the 10,029.28 lakh quintals of cane crushed and 115.37 lt of sugar produced during the corresponding period of 2018-19.

The 10,565.49 lakh quintals of cane crushed until now is worth about Rs 33,810 crore at the UP government's average state advised price of Rs 320/quintal. Against this, mills have so far paid farmers only Rs 17,838 crore, which translates into outstanding of nearly Rs 16,000 crore. Of that, Rs 14,201.12 crore is the actual dues against the total amount to have been paid within the stipulated 14-day period of taking

cane delivery. The current arrears are more than the Rs 10,609.41 crore owed at this time last year.

In his letter, Patodia said mills are finding it difficult to sell sugar due to the lockdown, which has led to very little or no purchases by institutional businesses. As a result, demand for sugar has fallen to its lowest in decades. Currently, 60 out of the state's 119 operational mills are still crushing, compared to 45 at this time last year.

The last time that a cash subsidy was paid by the UP government was in 2014-15. The then-Samajwadi Party administration had made payments at the rate of Rs 28.60/quintal to farmers who had supplied cane in that season.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Expect financial package from govt in 2-3 days, says Gadkari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

UNION MINISTER Nitin Gadkari Monday said he expects the Centre to unveil a financial package in 2-3 days, observing that the situation "was very bad" despite the three-month moratorium on loan repayments announced by RBI.

"We are trying our level best on how we can protect everybody," the Minister for MSME, and Road Transport and Highways said, adding that while Japan and the US governments have announced mega packages, their economies are bigger than India's.

ICICI Bank slashes rates on fixed deposits by up to 50 bps

Mumbai: ICICI Bank on Monday cut interest rates on fixed deposits (FDs) by up to 50 basis points (bps), following similar reductions by state-owned State Bank of India (SBI).

The deepest cuts were made on deposits with maturities of less than one year, with FDs maturing

in one year or longer took smaller rate cuts. A one-year fixed deposit with the private lender will now earn 5.7 per cent, down from 5.8 per cent earlier.

SBI offers 5.5 per cent on deposits of the same tenure, while one-year FDs with HDFC Bank yield 5.8 per cent. **FE**

Twitter to label misleading information on COVID-19

Chicago: Twitter Inc will add labels and warning messages on some tweets with disputed or misleading information about COVID-19, the company said on Monday, as part of a new approach to misinformation that will eventually extend to other

topics.

Twitter's new labels will provide links to more information in cases where the risk of harm from the tweet is not severe enough to be removed but people could be confused or misled, the company said in a blog post. **REUTERS**

EVEN DURING PEAK SEASON, GYMS & FITNESS STUDIOS ACROSS COUNTRY FAIL TO KEEP BUSINESSES RUNNING

No more pumping iron: Burdened by lockdown, fitness industry seeks a way out

DIVYAA & PALLAVI
CHATTOPADHYAY
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

ANMOL MAHAWAR, a 19-year-old boxing trainer and HIIT coach at one of Mumbai's Cult.Fit centres, recently posted on her social media handle about being asked to resign over the phone.

Hailing from Bhopal, Mahawar is the only earning member of her family of four, and was hoping to begin college this year by saving some money. She missed out on studies last year owing to financial constraints. Though she was offered a compensation salary for 45 days, she

said, "I didn't oblige to the request. Over 800 employees have been laid off. It is heartbreaking to see them removing us in a second, when we gave our heart and soul."

Apart from metro cities like Delhi and Mumbai, the fitness chain has a presence in cities like Indore, Amritsar, Kochi, Kota, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Surat, among others. "As many as 90 per cent of the Cult.Fit trainers continue to be with us and have been moved to a fixed plus variable model to tide over the crisis. All employees part of the downsizing have been provided with a significant severance package to help them with the current situation, including extended health insurance for them

and their families," Cult.Fit said.

Pravesh Gaur, who owns the Fast Fit chain of gyms in Delhi and Faridabad, said, "We are looking at a loss of over 30 per cent of annual sales; we have no other option." Each of his gyms employs nearly 20 people, including trainers, cleaning staff and receptionists. While trainers are still on board, he has let go of the rest.

Nikhil Kakkar, COO of Gold's Gym India, says, "Gyms were shut much before the lockdown. In Mumbai, all our gyms closed on March 13. Rent forms nearly 25 per cent of our revenue, and we are seeking waivers, but landlords have not given any assurance yet. Payroll comprises 30 per cent of

MANY RESORT TO ONLINE SESSIONS

■ Of the nearly 24,000 gyms and studios in the country, many are providing online training sessions over WhatsApp, Skype, and FaceTime to prevent business from running completely dry

our cost, while electricity takes up 10 per cent. Payments are also to be made for housekeeping, vaults, security and maintenance of

equipment; there's a thin margin," says Kakkar, who oversees 150 gyms and employs 2,000 trainers.

As the coronavirus pandemic hit the US economy, Gold's Gym — one of the most popular gym chains in the world — filed for bankruptcy on Monday. The 55-year-old company now plans to restructure its 700 centres globally. But Karan Valecha, director and co-founder, Gold's Gym India, assures, "This absolutely does not have any impact on Gold's Gym India as a Master Franchise."

However, Chirag Sethi — who owns Anytime Fitness outlets in Delhi's Malviya Nagar and Saket — says the current state of India's fitness industry is a far cry from

what it was in April last year. He says March and April are usually peak months. "The pandemic has got to a point that people are scared to even enter gyms," Sethi says, adding, "We would normally make a profit of Rs 20-28 lakh every month, but in the last two months, we have registered a loss of Rs 60-80 lakh."

Pratik Kalra, a personal trainer at Fitness First's Noida branch, says, "We had to put the annual membership fee on hold, which will resume only when the gym can resume operations."

According to Fittermy, a web aggregator for fitness outlets, India has around 24,000 gyms and studios. Many of them are providing

online training sessions over WhatsApp, Skype, and FaceTime to prevent business from running dry. But online classes for gyms are what food delivery is for fitness: a patch of their actual sales.

Meanwhile, some have come together for an online campaign to highlight what needs to be done to save the "fitness industry". Kakkar is part of bodyandstrength.com, wherein requests by top fitness professionals and centre heads, including a moratorium on utility bills, GST waiver for coming months and a freeze on rental for the affected months, are posted. Sethi is also part of the online campaign, urging clients to pre-buy memberships to help

sustain gyms, especially smaller ones. He adds they are also urging landlords not to take rentals until the lockdown remains.

Across the world, gyms are bracing for the new normal. For instance, operators of Britain's 4,000 gyms are in advanced plans to reopen once they get the all-clear. Once they reopen, capacity is likely to be reduced by half to maintain the two-metre distancing, while personal trainers will have to offer advice from a distance. Members will be able to use an app to monitor when their gym is quieter and plan their visits accordingly.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Credit awaited

During financial distress, Jr awardees waiting for money promised four months ago

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, MAY 11

EVERY TIME the teenaged Sidak Singh calls his family in Varanasi, he hopes they won't ask him one question in particular: has he received his Rs 1.5 lakh award money and nearly 6 lakh in match fees from the Indian cricket board? His father is a clothes merchant whose small business has been affected by the Covid-19 situation and Sidak knows the money could help tide over the crisis. But it hasn't been credited to his bank account yet. Not just Sidak but many junior cricketers haven't yet received their award money from various age-group tournaments.

In January 2020, at a glittering award ceremony in Mumbai, Virat Kohli had handed the M.A. Chidambaram Trophy to Sidak's father but four months later, the family still awaits the money. On March 11, the BCCI had mailed him a 'payment advice' which stated that they have initiated a credit of Rs 1,50,000 to his account but no cash has been deposited yet in the bank.

"It could be a technical issue, I don't know, but the bank hasn't credited my account. I checked with the bank and they said 'check with BCCI'. Due to the lockdown, the offices are closed and I don't know whom to ask," Sidak told *The Indian Express*.

His father has a cloth shop at Ramnagar in Varanasi but the business has been hit in recent times. "Whenever I get a call from home or I call them, I don't know what to say. I change the topic when the subject of money comes up. Soon they will be out of cash. I am here in Mumbai and can't help much. I checked with friends and they too have not received it, maybe there is some technical issue," the all-rounder said.

Many junior players awaiting award money

It's not only Sidak who is yet to get his due. *The Indian Express* spoke to four other junior cricketers who confirmed that they are yet to receive the award money of Rs 1.5 lakh.

Aryan Hooda (Jharkhand under-16 who was the highest run-getter in the Vijay Merchant tournament), Abhishek Yadav



Sidak Singh, whose father's small business has been affected by the lockdown-induced financial distress, knows the Rs 1.5 lakh award money and nearly 6 lakh in match fees could help tide over the crisis.

(Jharkhand, the highest wicket-taker in the same tourney), Manan Hingraja (Gujarat under-23, who was the highest run-getter in the under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy) and Apurva Anand (Bihar Cricket Association, highest wicket-taker in the under-19 Cooch Behar Trophy) have also not got their money yet.

Sikkim player Milind Kumar, the highest run-getter in the 2018-19 Ranji Trophy season, also confirmed that he is yet to receive the Rs

1.5 lakh award money.

Yadav said his emails haven't elicited any response from the board.

"I sent emails twice but there has been no response. I tried to call but the BCCI office is closed. Due to the lockdown, that money is important for me. My father is Class D employee in Railways and my grandmother is in hospital - the money would have come in handy. My father had to take a loan now," Yadav stated.

Aryan Hooda (Jharkhand under-16 who was the highest run-getter in the Vijay Merchant tournament), Abhishek Yadav (Jharkhand, the highest wicket-taker in the same tourney), Manan Hingraja (Gujarat under-23, who was the highest run-getter in the Under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy) and Apurva Anand (Bihar Cricket Association, the highest wicket-taker in the under-19 Cooch Behar Trophy) have also not got their award money yet.

Like Sidak, Yadav too had received an email from the Indian board office, informing him that the payment has been initiated.

"I told my friend Aryan (Hooda) that it's not showing in my bank account. He told me to wait for one week as it will be credited but it hasn't till date," Yadav said. The Bokaro boy approached his parent association Jharkhand Cricket Association, who advised him to speak to the Indian board as they can't do much in this case. The board has been in the news for not paying dues of players and officials. Domestic players have been complaining that they haven't received season fees for playing in the Ranji Trophy. Recently, board treasurer Arun Dhimal had stated that BCCI will make all the payments soon and that they have been delayed only because of the lockdown.

"The process has started. We have released payments to players, officials and state associations. Because of the lockdown, things are slow. Our staff verifies documents of 150 players and officials daily, after which we send out instructions to release the payments. There could be a few cases where some might have not got match fees, including old dues like gross revenue share, but they will be getting it soon. Those who haven't received payments will be getting it in the coming days," Dhimal had said on Friday.

CHINA 'RESOLUTE' ON NBA BLACKOUT

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said there was no prospect of easing its blackout on NBA matches following a tweet last year by the Houston Rockets' general manager supporting Hong Kong protests. "Regarding rumours (about broadcasting games), we should reiterate we have not had any contact or dialogue with the NBA as of today," CCTV News wrote on Weibo.

In Dutee's relief kit for her village, sanitary pads

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

IT WAS while distributing free ration to the needy in her village, Chaka Gopalpur in Odisha's Jajpur district, that India's ace sprinter Dutee Chand realised she needed to do more for the women she met. So on her next visit, she added sanitary pads to the provisions packet that had rice, sugar and some namkeen.

The Bhubaneswar-based Asian medalist, and the state's top celebrity, thought of giving back to the village after receiving several SOS messages from those she had grown up with. With the COVID-19 outbreak forcing a total lockdown and employment opportunities drying up, Jajpur looked towards Dutee. And she didn't disappoint, arriving in her SUV loaded with groceries and sanitary pads.

"People need all the help they can get during this Coronavirus pandemic and food is on the top of everyone's mind. But we do forget there are other essential things, which people need but may not talk about openly," Dutee told *The Indian Express*.

"Sanitary pads are very important for the health and hygiene of women. But in villages, it is not available at the moment and women won't talk about the shortage. Also, they can't afford it now because no household has income and whatever money they have, they use it for food. Sanitary pads cost Rs 50 to Rs 60 per packet at least. Medical shops are also shut most of the time near my village."

Jajpur district has the second highest number of cases in Odisha - 60 including 58 active ones - as per the latest update on the website of the state's department of health and family welfare. It accounts for 15.3 per cent of the Coronavirus cases in the state behind Ganjam district with 137 cases, as on Monday morning. On Sunday, Odisha saw 82 new cases, with a number of migrant workers who have returned to the state testing positive.

Dutee distributed the provisions at the village square and took the trouble to go to each house to give the sanitary pads to the women. "I wasn't sure if women would be comfortable coming out to take sanitary pad packets. So, I went to each home," Dutee says, adding that she took all precautions and wore Personal Protection Equipment. "I gave them 1000 packets, with rice, sugar and others provisions. I also



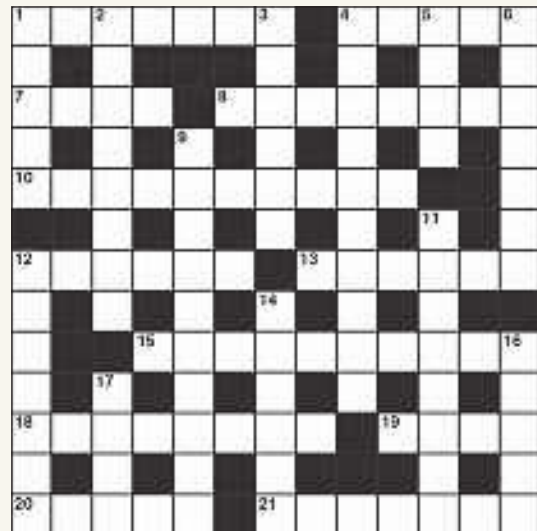
Dutee Chand arrived at the Chaka Gopalpur village with her SUV loaded with groceries and sanitary pads. *Express*

distributed 1,000 packets of sanitary pads. If they need something like sanitary pads, they have to travel at least 5 to 6 kilometres, which is not possible because of the lockdown and people want to be careful and not venture out because Coronavirus cases are being reported. Nobody is going to come and give women sanitary pads in such circumstances because food is understandably a priority," she added.

Dutee paid from her own pocket and also requested the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology in Bhubaneswar, where she is pursuing a degree in law, to help with funds.

Dutee is also part of the official campaign of the state's youth and services department, which advises people to maintain social distancing. 'Stay in today. Come out and cheer for me tomorrow' is the message of a social media post with an image of Dutee lacing up her shoes. "People of every state have to do their bit to ensure the virus does not spread. At the same time, those who are in a good position must help those who need help. In Odisha, I am trying to ensure the right message goes out."

CROSSWORD 4115



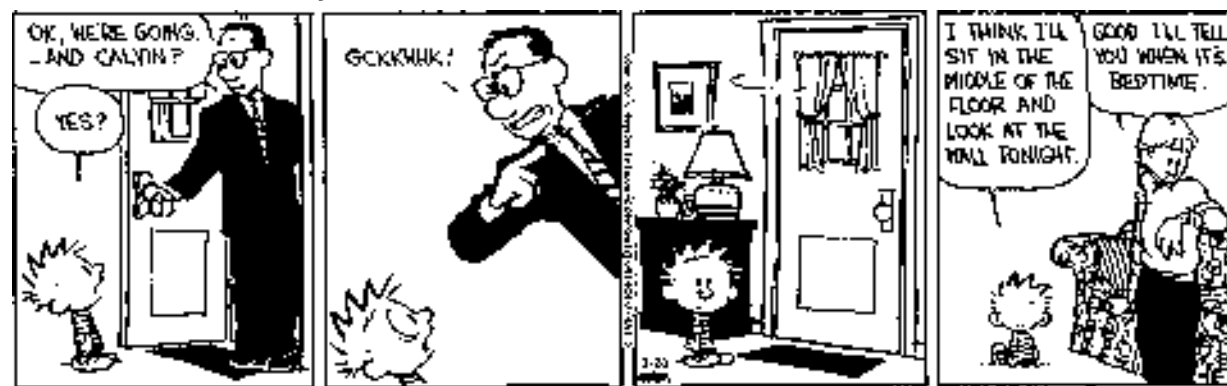
- | CROSS | Down |
|--|---|
| 1 Plant Real setback for Ophelia's brother (7) | 1 Carry out an illegal suspension (5) |
| 4 Swim before one can walk (5) | 2 They may be said to be highly complimentary (8) |
| 7 Blue or white flower (4) | 3 Having nothing to declare? (6) |
| 8 Dog Latin as a composition (8) | 4 A bird goes by air; so do these (5,5) |
| 10 Overbearing attitude of one surrendering? (4-6) | 5 Eager to upset a prima donna (4) |
| 12 Moves stealthily and quietly among Indians (6) | 6 Transport used in Queensland, Australia (7) |
| 13 Owns permits (6) | 9 It just shows what you can get with money (4,6) |
| 15 Accommodation one would normally want at an hotel (6,4) | 11 Enormous deficit in solid fuel (8) |
| 18 Shortened game in these days (8) | 12 The range of a direction-finder (7) |
| 19 Possibly pass for snakes (4) | 14 Consents, but will be a long time coming round again (6) |
| 20 Is back with fresh strength (5) | 16 He gave people the law and doctors directions (5) |
| 21 Sudden blows and screams (7) | 17 New barn for grain husks (4) |

Solutions Crossword 4114: Across: 1 Endearments, 9 Raiment, 10 Erato, 11 Epee, 12 Gives out, 14 Apache, 16 Stream, 18 Outstrip, 19 Hail, 22 Ruche, 23 Pianist, 24 Measurement. Down: 2 Noise, 3 Even, 4 Retail, 5 Elements, 6 Tea rose, 7 Freemasonry, 8 Contemplate, 13 Shutters, 15 Attache, 17 Nipper, 20 Alien, 21 Maim.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

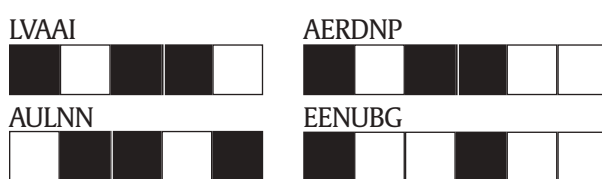


MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLER 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 clue.
Adventure is just _____ - Roald Amundsen (3,8)



SOLUTION: AVAIL, ANNUAL, PANDER, BURICE
ANSWER: Adventure is just pedalling - Roald Amundsen

SUDOKU 4207

Difficulty Level 2s

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4206



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
You can never be totally sure what lies around the next corner. It's one of those classic days for meeting strangers. But will they be tall and dark? Well, a literal reading of your solar chart suggests they could indeed be tall, but fair rather than dark. Keep your eyes peeled.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
As the Sun reaches a cosmic encounter with Saturn, one thing is certain; it is time to formalise all casual relationships, and make sure that your role is so well defined that everyone knows exactly where you stand. If your commitments are fuzzy around the edges, then something is bound to be forgotten.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
The one consideration necessary for emotional and social happiness is that you know when to stand back and let partners take the lead. Frequently it will be important to put your own interests to one side. Perhaps you need to rely a little more on your natural wisdom, and less on what other people think.

CANCER (July 22 - July 23)
You'll have to persist with financial and business questions but do be aware of the underlying psychological issues as well. It looks very much as if you have been making value judgments about particular people, and that you may have been wrong.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
Although the long-term pattern in your chart has much to do with maturity, responsibility and doing the right thing, today's stars have a distinctly irresponsible flavour. If you decide to break out, the choice must be yours. Don't blame anyone else if it all comes unstuck.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
It's a useful moment to consider your physical well-being, cleaning up your diet and sharpening your exercise regime. There's no need to go to extremes, only to follow a sensible middle path. You might even provide a valuable role model for others.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
You are dreaming of a favourite ambition but, if family responsibilities should intervene, it will be children or younger relations who require attention. It's important to lead by setting a firm example rather than merely being negative.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
You're hoping for a bright future. There's a sense of optimism today, but you could be caught between two options. The problem is that they both seem to be rather desirable. Is it not possible to have your cake and eat it? The stars suggest that it is.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
It's a very useful moment for getting others to talk about their hopes and fears, and for taking decisions. It goes without saying that if you're attending interviews or other important meetings, you should put on a display of enthusiasm and originality.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
Financial matters are still important, and there is a slight risk of a disagreement of sorts, most likely around midday. You may concentrate on your moral values, rather than being distracted by what you can or can't afford. That may be taken care of later.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
The Moon's continuing presence in your chart is an excellent indication that you'll be able to substantially lift your morale and increase your confidence. The Moon also obliges you to be more sympathetic to others, even if they have dug their own hole.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
Spend as much time as you like by yourself, and don't let others force you into a corner. If you don't want to be enrolled in a particular job, campaign or cause, don't succumb to emotional blackmail. Try to strike a deal instead, and make sure that you get something out of it.

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