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TELANGANA EXTENDS LOCKDOWN UNTIL MAY 29

194 deaths in a day, infections surge to a new high, but still doubling in 12 days, says govt

'Pending Bengal data adding to the case count'

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

IN THE highest single-day surge so far, 3,875 new cases of the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) and 194 deaths were reported across the country on Tuesday.

While the daily case count has remained over 2,000 since May 2 — it was 2,573 (83 deaths) on May 4; 2,487 (73 deaths) on May 3; and 2,411 (71 deaths) on May 2 — the last 24 hours have seen a sharp spike.

Health Ministry officials attributed this to inclusion of pending data from West Bengal, which reported 296 cases and 98 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Among the other states that reported a sharp rise in cases on Tuesday were Maharashtra (1,567 new cases), Tamil Nadu (527), Gujarat (376), and Delhi (349).

While the third phase of the nationwide lockdown is scheduled to end on May 17, Telangana has become the first state to extend it until May 29. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao

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A special train carrying over a thousand migrant labourers pulls into Dankuni Junction in West Bengal Tuesday. Partha Paul

Excise hiked on fuel, but retail prices will not rise

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

THE GOVERNMENT Tuesday announced a Rs 13 a litre hike in excise duty on diesel and a Rs 10 a litre hike in excise duty on petrol in an attempt to shore up revenues as demand remains subdued due to the lockdown. Finance Ministry officials said the hike in excise duty, which comes into effect Wednesday, will not result in an increase in retail prices for the consumers.

This is the second hike in excise duty on fuel in two months by the Centre and comes after a hike in value added tax by several states over the last few days.

A government notification said the special excise duty on petrol was hiked by Rs 2 a litre to Rs 12 a litre and by Rs 5 a litre to Rs 9 a litre for diesel. Road cess on both petrol and diesel has also been increased by Rs 8 a litre to

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Admissions under critical care see sharp fall under Ayushman Bharat

February-April: Cancer procedures down 57%, cardio 76%, obstetrics 26%

PRABHA RAGHAVAN & AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

THE COVID pandemic and the lockdown that entered its 42nd day on Tuesday have adversely affected people's access to medical care across the country, hindering even the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana's (AB-PMJAY) ability to cater to critical patients below the poverty line.

According to data provided by the National Health Authority (NHA), the number of treatments for 825 types of unique critical non-Covid procedures by both private and government facilities across the country dropped over 20 per cent between February and April. The number of procedures performed in these packages came down to 1,51,672 from 1,93,679 during this two-month period.

Within this, cancer-related procedures dropped around 57 per cent between February and April; cardiology by 76 per cent and procedures in obstetrics and gynaecology were down nearly 26 per cent.

Emergency room packages requiring less than 12 hours of stay also dipped around 33 per cent between February and April. These procedures have been grouped into 21 categories and other procedures in this list include general surgery and medicine, urology and neurosurgery.

Even when it comes to respiratory symptoms identified with Covid-like symptoms, procedures

EXPLAINED Hospital challenge

FEAR AND lockdown are keeping patients away. But once easing begins, they will return to hospitals for key procedures. This is expected to add to the burden if the Covid curve continues to steepen.

PROCEDURES UNDER NON-COVID PACKAGES

MONTH	ALL PACKAGES
February	1,93,679
March	1,88,116
April	1,51,672

Source: National Health Authority

by both government and private healthcare facilities dropped by nearly 80 per cent, according to separate preliminary National Health Authority (NHA) data.

This when the government's flagship healthcare scheme had expected its empanelled private hospitals to shoulder the burden of treatments like dialysis and chemotherapies. These trends also assume significance amid fears that easing of lockdown will spike case count and stretch the healthcare system.

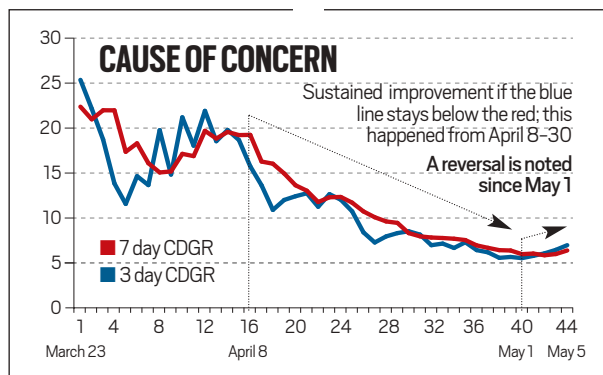
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May 1 marks the beginning of early trend of reversal in dipping Covid growth rate

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

AS INDIA records the biggest single-day jump in numbers for both Covid-19 cases and deaths, data now indicate an early trend of reversal in gains made in the second half of April.

According to figures shared by the Union Health ministry, the 7-day compounded daily growth rate (CDGR) of Covid-19 cases started dipping on April 8. The



overall downward trend continued till May 1 when the curve started rising again. Since May 3, the 3-day CDGR curve has remained above the 7-day CDGR.

The CDGR factors in daily fluctuations and is more representative of the trend. To reflect a consistent improvement in checking the coronavirus spread, the more recent 3-day CDGR should stay below the 7-day CDGR, signifying an incremental reduction in the daily case rate.

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Not having Aarogya Setu on phone is a punishable offence, say Noida police

ASHNA BUTANI
NOIDA, MAY 5

THE GAUTAM Budh Nagar Police has made not having the Aarogya Setu app on one's phone a punishable offence.

Those living in the district, which includes Noida and Greater Noida, as well as those entering from outside, need to have the app installed on their smartphones, according to an

CORONA COUNT

46,711 CASES | 1,583 DEATHS

13,161 RECOVERED

11,91,946 samples have been tested as on May 5

order circulated on the night of May 3 and in force from the following day.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Govt declares dates: JEE July 18-23, NEET July 26

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

A MONTH after the Union government deferred all competitive tests scheduled in April, May and June due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the HRD Ministry Tuesday made the first major announcement to bring higher education back on track.

The JEE (Main), the gateway exam for admission to the NITs, will be held over five days between July 18 and July 23. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for undergraduate medical programmes will be held on July 26. Originally, JEE (Main) was scheduled to be held between April 7 and April 11, and NEET on May 3.

Asked why the ministry decided to push the two entrance

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In Dehradun, migrants line up to open post office a/c for Bihar's ₹ 1,000 scheme

LALMANI VERMA
DEHRADUN, MAY 5

SHOBHA DEVI, Token Number 72, took her spot inside one of the white squares outside the General Post Office (GPO) near Ghantaghar in Dehradun. Her husband Rajkumar Pasnath queued at another post office, the Saharanpur Chowk, around



Shobha Devi waits outside Dehradun GPO. Lalmani Verma

3 km away.

The couple are among several people, mostly from Bihar, who have been queuing up over the last few days outside post offices in Uttarakhand to open accounts to avail of the Bihar government's Rs-1,000 cash transfer scheme. The Bihar government had announced the scheme for migrants from the

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J&K HC: Is costly darbar move between Jammu and Srinagar still acceptable?

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, MAY 5

THE JAMMU and Kashmir High Court on Tuesday asked whether the "hopelessly fiscally deprived Union Territory" could afford to continue with the 147-year-old practice of the bi-annual movement of the 'darbar' between

Jammu and Srinagar.

A Bench of Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Rajnesh Oswal listed several reasons why the practice of shifting the civil secretariat and other government offices between the two capitals of the erstwhile state should be discontinued. The court did not, however, issue any direction to the government.

"Can any Government afford the annual expenditure of at least Rs 200 crore (as disclosed and many more hundreds of crores of rupees of undisclosed costs) to sustain and perpetuate an arrangement of bi-annual shifting of its Capital two times a year, which originated in 1872 from the discomfort of the then Ruler

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THE PANCHAYATI FRONT
BY MANI SHANKAR AIYAR
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WORLD



FRANCE'S FIRST VIRUS CASE MAY HAVE BEEN IN DEC

BRITAIN'S DEATH TOLL CROSSES THE 30,000 MARK
PAGE 8

Israel Minister announces a 'significant breakthrough'

HARINDER MISHRA
JERUSALEM, MAY 5

ISRAEL'S DEFENCE Minister Naftali Bennett has said that scientists at the country's main biological research institute have made a "significant breakthrough" in developing an antibody to the novel coronavirus. Researchers have wrapped up the development phase, and moved to patent and mass produce the potential treatment, the Defence Ministry said.

Bennett visited the labs of the Israel Institute for Biological Research (IIBR), which has been mandated to develop a vaccine for the virus, in Ness Ziona on Monday. He was shown the "antibody that attacks the virus in a monoclonal way and can neutralize it within the bodies of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Starting tomorrow, Indians stuck abroad to return by air and ships, Kerala on alert

SHUBHAJIT ROY & SHAJU PHILIP
NEW DELHI, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 5

STARTING THURSDAY, India will operate 64 flights until May 13 and use three Navy ships, as part of Phase 1 of an evacuation plan, to bring home nearly 15,000 Indians stranded overseas.

According to a schedule prepared by the Ministry of External Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the first of the 64 flights will carry 209 passengers from Abu Dhabi to Cochin International Airport on May 7.

Another flight will transport 200 passengers from Dubai to Kozhikode the same day.

Navy ships will be used to evacuate people from the Maldives and the UAE.

For Kerala, this poses a new challenge given the large number of expatriates returning home. In the first phase of evacuation, Kerala expects 2,250 people to return. After a review meeting, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan

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BUSINESS AS USUAL



TICKET TO HOME

FROM	FARE/PERSON
US	₹1 lakh
UK	₹50,000
Saudi Arabia	₹25,000
Malaysia	₹20,000
Singapore	₹18,000-20,000
Kuwait	₹14,000-20,000
UAE	₹13,000-15,000
Bangladesh	₹12,000-15,000

Page 1 Anchor In Srinagar, a plan for every pregnant woman, with a gift pack

NAVEEDI IQBAL
SRINAGAR, MAY 5

ANGANWADI WORKER Heena Shafi hands a pregnant woman two packets. One, for the 21-year-old expectant mother carries a hot water bag, towels, a set of comfortable nightwear and slippers. The other is for the baby — a soft, furry pink blanket, wipes, diapers, clothes, soap and few other essentials.

At the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) office at the Old Secretariat in Srinagar, Heena is part of an all-woman team of *anganwadi*

workers who have been reaching out to pregnant women amidst the nationwide lockdown.

With travel restricted, doctors and clinics hard to get through to, and stores and markets closed, Srinagar District Project Officer Zeenat Ara has been using her network of *anganwadi* workers such as Heena, and ASHA workers to ensure no expectant mother or the newborn falls off their radar.

Kashmir has so far recorded 678 Covid cases and seven deaths, and the ICDS team in Srinagar and the administration are taking no chances.

After the death of two preg-

nant women in Anantnag — one who tested positive for Covid a day after she died and the other case still under investigation — Kashmir Divisional Commissioner P K Pole had directed the district authorities to draw up birth plans for pregnant women so that they can be screened for Covid in advance. In Srinagar, all pregnant women, who are due for delivery in the next couple of weeks, will be tested for the virus.

According to the district's current plan, pregnant women from red zones will be taken to the city's Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Hospital, where they



As part of the administration's outreach, pregnant women have been getting gift kits. Naveedi Iqbal

will be tested for the virus. Those confirmed positive will be sent to SKIMS Medical College & Hospital in Bemia, while those who test negative for the virus will be admitted at the city's biggest maternity facility, Lal Ded Hospital.

As part of their outreach, pregnant women have also been provided kits like the one Heena handed over to 21-year-old Sabrina Amir Khan, who had reached the ICDS centre with her husband.

"My husband drives an auto in the city. With this lockdown, there is no public transport and nothing for him to earn," she

said. Her baby is due on May 9 and with markets still closed, she couldn't buy clothes for the baby.

"There are about 1,700 pregnant women on our list of beneficiaries in Srinagar district. Of them, about 588 are close to their due dates. We were informed of a case where a pregnant woman from a different district was forced to give birth in a load carrier. Since then, we have been ensuring that we reach out to expectant mothers and help as much as we can. While we try and deliver these kits to their homes, some also come here and collect them," said Project Officer Ara.

The department began preparing for the kits about two weeks ago, sourcing blankets and other essentials and packing them in separate bags. The kits are in addition to the regular *anganwadi* supplies of rice, pulses and ghee.

With help from the district administration, the team has enlisted five ambulances to assist in bringing pregnant women to hospitals.

The ICDS team in Srinagar is also preparing to provide masks and sanitisers to 45,000 beneficiaries, including young mothers and children below 6.

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THE FOOT SOLDIERS OF KERALA'S COVID

The Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) scouring for people with infections and keeping a stern vigil on their quarantine, on the side helping others and sustaining their community connect

VIDEO OF THE DAY



DELHI POLICE GET PIZZA TREAT

Senior officers of Delhi Police distributed pizzas to the force

CORONAVIRUS



WHY UK'S SIKH DOCS ARE PROTESTING?

At least five Sikh doctors were removed from their usual shifts

EXPRESS AUDIO

Why private hospitals are not joining India's fight against COVID-19?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we take a deep dive and understand the reasons behind it

FROM PAGE ONE

Excise hiked

Rs 18 a litre. The government had on March 14 hiked the excise duty, and road and infrastructure cess by Rs 3 a litre each for both petrol and diesel.

Government sources said the revenue generated from these duties would be used for infrastructure and other developmental expenditure.

In its amendments to the Finance Act, the government had in March increased the cap on special additional excise duty by Rs 8 a litre on both petrol and diesel, taking the cap to Rs 18 a litre on petrol and Rs 12 a litre on diesel. This gave it the flexibility to raise duties on petrol and diesel by another Rs 8 per litre each.

Roughly, every rupee hike in excise duty is expected to yield Rs 13,000-14,000 crore annually. This round of hike in excise duties is likely to result in revenue gain of around Rs 2.85 lakh crore this fiscal.

Retail prices of petrol and diesel had already gone up in Delhi after a hike in VAT by the Delhi government. After the hike in excise duties, the price of diesel jumped by Rs 71 a litre to Rs 69.4 and that of petrol rose by Rs 1.7 a litre to Rs 71.3 in Delhi.

Since the beginning of this year, international crude prices have crashed by around 57 per cent from \$66.25 per barrel to \$28.5 per barrel. Post the hike, the Central and state taxes account for 55 per cent of the price of petrol and 50.5 per cent of the price of diesel at pumps in the capital.

The Delhi government's move came on the heels of VAT hikes on petrol and diesel in Tamil Nadu and Haryana. On Sunday, the Tamil Nadu government raised VAT on petrol and diesel resulting in a price hike of Rs 3.25 a litre of petrol and Rs 2.50 a litre of diesel. Haryana hiked VAT on petrol by Re 1 a litre and VAT on diesel by Rs 1.1 a litre last week.

Aarogya Setu

"All those with smartphones who do not have the application can be booked under Section 188 of the IPC (disobedience to an order duly promulgated by a public servant). After that, a judicial magistrate will decide if the person will be tried, fined or let off with a warning," said Akhilesh Kumar, DCP, Law and Order.

The Section can attract a fine of Rs 1,000 or imprisonment up to six months.

"If people download it instantly, we will let them go. We are doing this so people take the order seriously and download it. But if they do not download it after repeated warnings, we will have to take action," said Kumar.

In case someone does not have mobile data, he said, "we will give them hotspot so they can download it there and then". And if there are other issues such as lack of phone storage, the officer said they will take the person's number and call to check whether they have downloaded the app.

Gautam Budh Nagar Police Commissioner Alok Singh said, "Checks will be conducted at borders and checkpoints at random." Police will also check for implementation when they are out on patrol duty.

"If a person does not have a smartphone, they will be asked to get one or fetch it from their homes," said Singh. "Who does not have a smartphone these days? People may say that they do not have their phones or that their phones are switched off, but we cannot make any exceptions."

Ayushman

Over 21,300 hospitals are empanelled with AB-PMJAY, including Apollo Hospitals Enterprise and HCG in Andhra Pradesh, HCG and Wockhardt Hospital in Maharashtra, Paras Global Hospital in Bihar, and Sir Ganga

Ram and Medanta the Medcity in Delhi NCR. Private facilities account for 51 per cent of AB-PMJAY's overall treatment.

"While our total daily treatments have gone down by more than 50 per cent, essential treatments like dialysis and chemotherapy have only gone down by 10-20 per cent," said Indu Bhushan, CEO, NHA and AB-PMJAY. "This is some consolation, but we were actually expecting them to increase because many of the government facilities are not providing them at the moment. The private hospitals empanelled with us should have been able to take over," he added.

But the sharp drop in procedures is also attributed to the fact that many private hospitals shut down during the lockdown.

"Treatment for some of these non-Covid cases is critical in a population like ours. Around 70 per cent of critical treatment like dialysis and chemotherapies were being provided by the private sector. Now we need to continue those operations," said Bhushan. "This is the time that the private sector should be looking at a welfare maximisation model and not a profit maximisation model. Hopefully this will happen," he had told The Indian Express.

The drop in treatment of respiratory ailments is also evident in the numbers. Severe Acute Respiratory Illnesses (SARI) and Influenza Like Illness (ILI) treatment at private healthcare facilities dropped about 76 per cent between the month of February up to April 27, nearly as much as the 81 per cent drop witnessed in these procedures by public facilities in the country, according to NHA.

"It is too soon to tell why public facilities are also witnessing a similar drop in SARI and ILI cases, but one reason could include the fear of patients to step out of their houses during this time. Some hospitals may also have reduced their operations," said Bhushan.

"There is fear. Unlike in the West, here people do not go to the hospital on their own... All such patients want to avoid that hospitalisation for now as they fear that hospitals are the epicentres of infection," said the CEO of a Bihar-based private hospital.

The NHA is still in the process of collating data on COVID procedures, for which it had announced reimbursement early in April. According to Bhushan, there is yet to be an uptick in private facilities claiming these reimbursements.

"We are not sure why more hospitals have not come forward when PMJAY is footing the bill for Covid-19 testing and treatment, but it is still early days, so we are expecting participation to increase," Bhushan said.

At the same time, the NHA expects to bridge this gap by bringing more private healthcare facilities on board using its Hospital Empanelment Module (HEM)-Lite system to temporarily fast track approvals for empanelments during the pandemic.

Since then, the body has seen hospitals "tricking" in. As of May 4, the NHA has empanelled 53 hospitals, mostly from Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The NHA has also approved new hospitals for empanelment through the regular mechanism — 857 from states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

Rs 1,000 scheme

state stranded across the country. Anusya Prasad, Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Dehradun, said more than 400 postal bank accounts were being opened in Dehradun every day. "Some people who opened accounts last week have been turning up to withdraw money. Others have been coming to open new accounts. Withdrawals are being done daily."

194 deaths as infections surge to a new high

said the state had achieved good control and it was now time to flatten the curve, for which the lockdown would have to continue.

On Tuesday, 11 new cases were reported in the state (all from Hyderabad), taking its tally to 1,096 cases. While no deaths were reported in the last 24 hours, the state's total death toll is 29. The total number of Covid-19 cases in the country has now gone up to 46,711, including 1,583 deaths and 13,160 recoveries.

"West Bengal had not reported cases and deaths since May 1. We realised this during data analysis and we persuaded them to share it. That is why the number of deaths in the state has suddenly gone up from 35 to 133. The surge is not because of easing of the lockdown. The effect of that will take a week to reflect," said an official.

"We are dealing with an infectious disease, so timely reporting of cases and their man-

agement is crucial. This gap was noted in some states where, after due persuasion, it is now being addressed. At the level of the state, it is important that on the basis of cases reported, contact tracing, active case search and clinical management of cases is implemented," Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said at the daily briefing.

Responding to a question on why the daily count was increasing, Agarwal had said on Monday that "infectious diseases spread in geometric progression". He reiterated this on Tuesday, adding that "we do need to get to a level where day-to-day increase is not in geometric progression and the number of cases added daily is less than that, and subsequently to a level when we can increase the doubling rate much higher so that cases remain stable. That is when we (will) see flattening of the curve."

Agarwal reiterated that the lockdown has yielded "very

positive results". "We started with a doubling time of 3.4 days and now we are at 12 days. However, this momentum has to be sustained," he said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the status of India's efforts in vaccine development, drug discovery, diagnosis and testing. "In diagnosis and testing, several academic research institutions and start-ups have developed new tests, both for the RT-PCR approach and for the antibody detection... The problem of importing reagents for testing has been addressed by consortia of Indian start-ups and industry meeting current requirements," an official release said.

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan chaired the 14th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM), which reviewed the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), masks, ventilators, drugs and other essential equipment.

The performance, impact and effectiveness of Aarogya Setu app was also reviewed.

The Health Ministry issued additional guidelines for rational use of PPEs. It also asked states to ensure that both government and private hospitals continue to provide services like immunisation, dialysis, cancer treatment, blood donation, maternal-child healthcare etc, as per the easing of restrictions in various zones.

Punya Salila Srivastava, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, reiterated that the guidelines for workplaces include the liability of the company head if any employee fails to download the Aarogya Setu app. "Offices have to make available adequate masks, sanitisers etc. Companies have to ensure social distancing, enough gap between shifts... registration of all on Aarogya Setu app is responsibility of the institution," she said.

WITHENS, HYDERABAD

Beginning of early trend of reversal in dipping Covid growth rate

As the graph shows, the 3-day CDGR mostly stayed below the 7-day CDGR as the latter nearly halved from 12.39 per cent on April 15 to 6.05 per cent on May 1. On May 4, however, the 3-day CDGR recorded its biggest edge - 0.45 per cent - over the 7-day CDGR since April 14. On Tuesday, May 5, this gap increased to 0.6 per cent.

On Monday, Dr Randeep Guleria, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), expressed concern over the fact that "the curve has not shown a downward trend". A renowned pulmonologist, he is part of the core team of top-officials reviewing and monitor-

ing the pandemic in the country.

The doubling rate of COVID-19 cases slowed down from four days down in the first week of April to 11 days by the end of the month. While this indicates a gradual flattening of the case curve, the absolute numbers of daily new COVID-19 cases are yet to show any dip.

It is important to note that the increase in the 3-day CDGR is not due to easing of the lockdown since May 3. The trend predates the beginning of the first phase of lockdown from May 4, and in any case, the impact of restrictions become evident only with a lag of at least a

week. From the last few days of April, and certainly this month, the daily increase in numbers shows a divergence from the trend that had been holding till at least April 25.

The first four days of May saw the addition of more than 10,000 cases, which, in absolute terms, was more than what was added in the entire 21-day period of the first phase of the lockdown, though that phase had started with a much lower base.

As India increased the number of daily tests from under 5,000 since March to over 70,000 now, the case positivity rate - number positive cases per

100 samples - remained consistent in the 3-5 per cent range. On May 4, the daily case positivity rate of 4.23 per cent (2,572 cases from 60,783 samples tested) topped the cumulative rate of 3.87 per cent (42,835 cases from 1,007,233 samples tested) for the first time since April 26. Tuesday's results confirm the early trend.

The 24-hour death count reported at 8 am on May 5 was 179, more than double the previous high of 83. The jump has pushed the overall case mortality rate - death per 100 cases - to 3.38 per cent, the highest since April 13 (3.46 per cent) when 51 deaths were recorded.

Following the rush at the GPO, people were allowed to open accounts in 30 other post offices. "Five counters have been opened inside GPO alone," Prasad said. Migrants from other states too have been turning up to open accounts in the hope their governments too will start similar cash transfer schemes, he said.

In Dehradun alone, more than 2,000 accounts of migrants labourers had been opened in the last one week, according to Prasad.

Bihar Principal Secretary, Disaster Management, Pratayya Amrit, said over 25 lakh migrants had registered for the scheme and the government has so far disbursed money to about 20 lakh under the CM Relief Fund.

Clutching her Aadhaar card that has her address from Darbhanga in Bihar, Shobha, a domestic help, said she has been out of work since the lockdown began. "My husband sells vegetables, but he has been earning very little. Atta and rice are distributed at the police chowki near our home but that is not sufficient for our family of five. If at least one of us gets Rs 1,000, that will be helpful," she said.

Today is Shobha's fifth visit to the post office. "I came here four times last week but could not enter because they were letting in very few people. So today, I woke up at 3 am, did the cooking and reached at 4.30 pm, though the post office opens only at 8 am. But there were already many in the queue ahead of me," she said.

Her neighbour Kiran Devi, 38, from Katra village in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, stood with her in the queue. Kiran's husband Parmanand, a construction labourer, has been out of work. "I heard from other labourers about this government scheme. I don't know if it is Modi sarkar or Nitish babu who is giv-

ing the money. We are left with no cash. Last week, my father-in-law transferred Rs 20,000 to my neighbour's account. That helped us pay our house rent (Rs 4,000), buy some groceries, and recharge my phone so that my daughter Siyana (a Class 8 student) can join her online classes in school," said Kiran.

Both Kiran and Shobha say they do not want to go back to Bihar, even if the government starts special trains from Dehradun. "What will I do going back? Why put our lives at risk by travelling with others in crowded trains or buses," Kiran said.

But Mohan Kumar, 54, and Ravi, 31, of Sitamarhi district in Bihar say they will leave the first opportunity they get. "I feel anxious here without work and cash. I decided to open the bank account because it will be useful for future transactions. Last week, my brother transferred Rs 500 to my roommate's account. That helped me refill our LPG cylinder," said Mohan, a construction worker who came to Dehradun from Bihar five years ago.

He said he decided to open an account in the post office because "I cannot imagine entering these big, private banks. I am not even sure they'll let me in. Anyway, they ask for a lot of documents. Here in the post office, they only ask for an Aadhaar card and a thumb impression and a minimum balance of Rs 100".

(WITHIN PUTS BY SANTOSH SINGH IN PATNA)

JEE, NEET

tests to July, a senior officer told The Indian Express. "The thinking (behind this schedule) is that there will be no restrictions on the use of public transportation by then and candidates will be able to reach test centres easily."

As many as 9 lakh candidates

have registered to take JEE (Main) exam and approximately 16 lakh for NEET. According to sources in the National Testing Agency (NTA), JEE (Main) results will be announced July-end and NEET results are expected August-end.

The fresh dates, announced by HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal in a webinar with students on Tuesday, indicate that the nationwide lockdown has upset the entrance exam calendar by almost three months. This could mean that many higher education institutions may only be able to start classes for first-year students by September-end or first week of October. The indicative calendar issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) last week had proposed the new academic calendar for the fresh batch to commence in the first week of September.

With JEE (Main) scheduled mid-July, JEE (Advanced), Pokhriyal said, would be held in August. IIT-Delhi, which is organising JEE (Advanced) this year, will decide fresh dates based on when NTA announces JEE (MAIN) results. Candidates aspiring to appear for JEE (Advanced) have to first qualify JEE (Main).

"We usually need two to three weeks from the date of the JEE (Main) results to conduct JEE (Advanced). After the (Advanced) exam, the results usually take two weeks and then we need almost a month to complete the counselling process," said JEE Chairman Sidharth Pandey.

JEE (Advanced) is likely to be held on August 23. Pandey acknowledged that the new session for first-year students at IIT-Delhi could start later than what was initially planned, that is September 7.

Similarly, according to NTA sources, the new academic year for new students across medical

colleges is expected to begin in October. "If results are announced August-end, then the counselling process will take a month. That will push the new year to October," said an NTA officer on the condition of anonymity.

The IIT Counselling process also hinges on when CBSE and respective state boards announce results for the Class 12 Board exams. To seek admission to one of the IITs, aspirants who have cleared JEE (Advanced) should also be secured at least 75 per cent marks in their Board exams or they should be in the top 20 percentile of their respective Board results. Pokhriyal said Tuesday that CBSE's latest schedule will be announced later this week.

Indians to return

said: "Kerala has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure that Covid-19 test is held for all passengers before they take the flight to India. We have reminded the PM that India brought back passengers stranded in Italy and Iran after Indian medical teams went there and subjected the evacuees to the Covid-19 test. If the Centre is not ready, we are willing to send medical teams."

"If one or two on board the flight has the virus, all passengers will be at risk. This will increase the risk of spread of infection not only in Kerala but across the country. It is important that our brethren reach home. But we cannot make any relaxation in safety measures and laid-down protocols. We have asked the Centre to review its decision," Vijayan said.

Between May 7 and 13, India plans to operate 10 flights from the UAE, seven flights each from the US, UK, Bangladesh and Malaysia, five each from Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Kuwait and the Philippines, and two flights from

Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

Of the 64 flights, 15 would be to Kerala, 11 each to Delhi and Tamil Nadu, seven each to Maharashtra and Telangana, and the rest to Gujarat, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh.

Indians in "distress" will be given priority. The MHA listed categories being brought back first: "Laid off migrant workers, short-term visa-holders with expiry of visas, persons with medical emergency, pregnant women, elderly, those required to return to India due to death of family member, students."

Tickets for these flights, which will be operated by Air India, will have to be purchased by the passengers.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told reporters: "How we ramp up operations after the first week depends on factors like our experience of the first week - the states' readiness to receive people on these flights in terms of quarantine centres and hospitals, and the behaviour of the virus. For those who are genuinely stranded and are not in a condition to pay, the government will also look at their case."

Separately, the Indian Navy deployed three ships Monday night for operation Samudra Setu. While INS Jalashwa and INS Magar set sail for the Maldives to start evacuation from May 8, another vessel, INS Shardul, left for Dubai.

Sources said this plan may turn out to be the country's largest evacuation operation. While the numbers are dynamic, they could go up to 2 lakh Indians - the only playbook New Delhi has in terms of scale, is the 1990 airlift of 1.7 lakh people from Kuwait following its invasion by Iraq.

The MHA on Monday said "medical screening of passengers" would be done before a flight. "Only asymptomatic passengers would be allowed to travel," it said.

"On reaching the destination, everyone would have to register on the Aarogya Setu app. Everyone would be medically screened. After scrutiny, they would be quarantined for 14 days, either in a hospital or in an institutional quarantine on payment-basis, by the concerned State government. COVID test would be done after 14 days and further action would be taken according to health protocols. State Governments are being advised to make arrangements," it said.

Worried, Kerala has already changed its quarantine strategy. All passengers, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, who reach airports in the state will have to undergo seven days of quarantine in a government-sponsored facility. On the seventh day, they will be subjected to the RT-PCR test and those who test negative will be sent home for another week of quarantine.

Chief Minister Vijayan said the government will bear the cost of the quarantine. "As there is no testing abroad, we are forced to examine all."

As many as 4.42 lakh people from Kerala have registered their names with the state agency for the welfare of expatriates.

The state disaster management authority and the PWD have identified 2.50 lakh beds across Kerala for quarantine purposes. Of these, 1.63 lakh beds are ready to use. Vacant houses, where people can be placed under isolation, have been identified by local-self-government bodies.

— WITH PRANAV MUKUL, KRISHNA KALSHIKIN NEW DELHI

Pregnant woman

Srinagar Deputy Commissioner Shahid Choudhary, who is also the chairman of the district ICDS committee and first planned the outreach, said, "While all our efforts are fo-

cusssed on addressing the coronavirus outbreak, we are also ensuring that expectant mothers and those with pre-existing conditions do not suffer in any manner. This system is being institutionalised, that's why we are pre-empting their requirement and reaching out to them with the help of the ICDS network."

Darbar move

of Jammu and Kashmir with the harshness of the winter in Kashmir?" the Bench asked.

"More so, is this acceptable in a hopelessly fiscally deprived UT with severe underdevelopment and people deprived of bare basics which are essential part of their fundamental right of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India?"

The question of the movement of the darbar came up during the hearing of two writ petitions, including one registered in public interest by the court, seeking directions to the governments at the Centre and in the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, to take steps to evacuate all Indians including students stranded in Iran due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Counsel for one Dr Zahoor Hussain Mir, out of whose representation the Chief Justice the PIL had arisen, had on April 10 expressed concern over the advisability of the impending move to Srinagar of the administrative machinery, equipment, and thousands of government personnel in the middle of the pandemic.

Mir's counsel Faisal Qadri, pointed out that the darbar move would put unbearable strain on the already-inadequate medical facilities in Kashmir, and endanger the lives of people. Mir's daughter is a student of medicine at Tehran University.

Referring to information provided by various departments of the UT government, and after hearing the Additional Advocate General for the UT government, counsel for the petitioners, and the amicus curiae appointed by the court, the Bench observed that the UT government's order, issued on April 17, postponing the formal opening of the darbar in Srinagar from May 4 to June 15, reflected the apprehensions expressed before it.

"The COVID-19 crisis and the impending darbar move thus, admittedly raised valid concerns, about the adverse impact of the move on the efforts of the authorities for containment of the COVID-19 infection which were underway in Srinagar, which required examination," the Bench said.

Israel Minister

those ill", the minister's office said in a statement.

The statement said that the antibody's development had been completed and that the institute was in the process of patenting the find. "... In the next stage, researchers will approach international companies to produce the antibody on a commercial scale," it said.

"I am proud of the institute staff for this terrific breakthrough," Bennett said, adding that "their creativity and the Jewish mind brought about this amazing achievement". The labs are supervised directly by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.

In March, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, quoting medical sources, had reported that scientists at the institute had made a significant breakthrough in understanding the biological mechanism and qualities of the virus, including better diagnostic capability, production of antibodies for those who already have the virus, and development of a vaccine.

It was not immediately clear if the breakthrough presented to Bennett was in addition to progress that was reported in late March. No further details were provided. PTI

3 THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL



Shramik Special Train, carrying stranded migrant workers from Ajmer in Rajasthan, reaches Dankuni on Tuesday. Partha Paul

Over 1,100 migrants arrive from Ajmer: 'It feels good to be home'

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
DANKUNI, MAY 5

STEPPING ON platform No. 4 at Dankuni Junction railway station in Hooghly district on Tuesday, 51-year-old Mohammad Rakim Khan breathed a sigh of relief. He is one of the 1,186 people who on Monday had boarded the Shramik Special Train from Rajasthan's Ajmer to reach Bengal. "I went on a pilgrimage to Ajmer in March but got stuck there after the announcement of the lockdown. Till now we were living in uncertainty. Today, it feels so good to come back home," said Khan while adjusting his skull cap. At 11.43 am on Tuesday, the 24-coach Shramik Special Train carrying 1,186 pilgrims and migrant labourers from Bengal reached Dankuni Junction. This is the first train to bring back people who had got stranded in other states following the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of novel coronavirus. CM Mamata Banerjee Sunday had announced that a special train from Ajmer was arranged to bring back migrant labourers from

Rajasthan. Another train, which will bring back migrant workers from Kerala, is scheduled to reach Berhampore in Murshidabad district on Wednesday. A large number of people were pilgrims who had gone to visit the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. "We were staying at Delhi Gate near Ajmer Sharif. Few days ago, there was an announcement from the Dargah that a train has been arranged for people from Bengal. The local administration got in touch with us and asked us to fill up application forms," said Kolkata-based Khurshid Alam, who had gone to Ajmer on a pilgrimage with his wife and son. According to the returnees, once the forms were filled and applications were made, the local DM office got in touch with them. Cards were issued to each applicant after a medical check-up. "After issuing cards, the officials asked us to go to Ajmer station on Monday morning to embark on our return journey. Another round of medical check-up was done, following which railway tickets were issued to us free of cost," said Farooq Ahmed Khan, 37, a migrant labourer from West

Midnapore's Chandrakona area. After leaving Ajmer at 11.25 am Monday, the train made two brief stops in Kanpur and Dhanbad, where dinner and breakfast were served to the passengers. "At Kanpur station, we were given veg biryani and a water bottle for dinner. At Dhanbad this morning, we were provided with a packet of biscuits, chips and a bottle of water," said migrant labourer Muzammil Haque, who hails from Harishchandrapur in Malda district. After their arrival, the passengers were provided with food packets and a bottle of water at Dankuni Junction. A large number of policemen, RPF and GRP were deployed at the railway station to maintain smooth exit of passengers. After exiting the platform, all passengers had to undergo medical check-up at a camp, set up by the Health Department, outside the station. The returnees will be transported to their respective districts in government buses where the district administration would take a call on the next course of action, officials said.

Trying our best to bring back migrants, says minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 4

THE MAMATA Banerjee government on Tuesday made every effort to reach out to migrant labourers and pilgrims who returned to Bengal from Rajasthan. The returnees were greeted with 'Welcome' placards at the Dankuni station, while flower petals were showered on the train. State ministers Moloy Ghatak and Tapan Dasgupta were present at Dankuni station to welcome the migrant workers and pilgrims. "The Mamata Banerjee government is serious about the condition of migrant labourers stranded in other states. We are trying our best to bring them back. This is the first train to arrive in Bengal with such stranded people. More initiatives will be taken to ensure that others who are stuck outside state are brought back. All these passengers are being provided with food, and buses have been arranged to take them homes in various districts," said Labour Minister Ghatak.

359 PDS DEALERS SHOWCAUSED

7 more dead, 85 more cases in last 24 hours

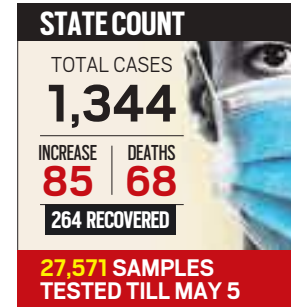
Massive door-to-door surveillance gave us early warning: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 5

SEVEN MORE people died of the novel coronavirus disease in West Bengal on Tuesday, taking the toll to 68. The count is 140 if deaths in which comorbidities have been a factor are included.

Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said since Monday evening, 85 more positive cases were detected, pushing up the number to 1,344. Bandyopadhyay said a total of 264 people had been discharged from hospitals till date after recovering from the infection — 46 of them since Monday evening. The number of active cases at present was 940, he added. "The number of samples tested in the last 24 hours are 2,455, and the total number is 27,571," said Bandyopadhyay, adding that 4,712 people were still in government quarantine while 5,561 people were in home isolation.

The Home Secretary also hit out at the Centre, accusing it of not keeping its promises. "The Central government promised to give one kg of maa-soor dal per family under the PMGKY scheme. So, the state needs 14,530 metric ton of maa-soor dal per month. But the Central government sent only 6,550 MT of maa-soor dal. So, we failed to distribute the daal through ration among the needy families." Bandyopadhyay said the state had already distributed half of the ration within four days. "We have to give ration among the 9.95 crore ration



taken this exercise over the past four weeks. "The surveillance gives us early warning signals and is an important proactive step in fighting COVID-19," she added. The Chief Minister said between April 7 and May 3 more than 5.57 crores household visits were conducted by these frontline workers, and 872 SARI cases and 91,515 IJL cases had been identified. Banerjee said 375 people had been admitted to different health facilities due to these efforts, and "62 of them have tested positive for COVID-19". She added: "The surveillance efforts are ongoing and we will not stop till we together defeat corona in Bengal."

Rs 40-crore liquor sale recorded on Day 1 West Bengal recorded liquor sales of Rs 40 crores on the first day of reopening of standalone shops on Monday, a wine traders' body of the state said. Forty-two days after the lockdown was enforced, the state government allowed only 'OFF' shops to reopen in all the red, orange and green zones, except those located in containment areas from Monday. "The state registered liquor sales of around Rs 40 crores yesterday. Seventy per cent of the states liquor shops located in red, orange and green zones reopened yesterday," said Sushmita Mukherjee, Assistant Secretary of West Bengal Foreign Liquor, ON, OFF, CS Shops and Hotel Owners Association.

TMC: Centre blaming us to cover up its own failings

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 5

THE TMC Tuesday slammed the Centre and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, accusing the Union government of deflecting blame on the state government to cover up "its own incompetence" in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. "The Centre is trying to malign our CM Mamata Banerjee. It sent us faulty testing kits, and the state government is being held responsible for the Centre covering up its own incompetence," said Education Minister Partha Chatterjee. The TMC Secretary General accused the Narendra Modi government of not reacting fast enough when the virus started spreading. "They were busy with Madhya Pradesh. They were busy with the Gujarat tour of US President Donald Trump," Chatterjee added. The ruling party's response came a day after a central team that had been sent to the state to assess the situation in the state blamed low testing, weak surveillance and tracking, and discrepancies in reporting cases were responsible for a 12.8% mortality rate among COVID-19 patients in the state. This was the highest figure recorded in India, it claimed. Minister of State for Health Chandrima Bhattacharya challenged the central team's claim that her department had been withholding information. "We are challenging that [claim], let ICMR prove that we are hiding information. They are trying to portray it as if we are responsible for the increase in cases in Bengal," Bhattacharya told reporters at a press meet. State minister Rajib Banerjee, and MP Shantanu Sen, who is a doctor, also present. "The Centre should concentrate on giving financial packages to states," said Banerjee.

Bankers double credit line to farmers, MSME relief on cards

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 5

AT A time when agriculture and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are floundering due to the coronavirus lockdown, bankers have decided to bail them out. The State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) in Bengal has doubled the Kharif loan outlay to Rs 10,000 crore from Rs 4,400 crore this season. The West Bengal government will request the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to increase the additional credit limit to MSMEs to 30% from the existing 10%. In FY 2019-20, a credit of Rs 74,000 crore was extended to MSMEs. This year, the target has been revised to Rs 90,000 crore. A special SLBC meeting was held on Tuesday over video conference to discuss the action points to provide relief to the affected priority sectors and enhance credit delivery by banks to combat the unprecedented situation arising out of COVID-19. The meeting was presided over by Finance Minister Amit Mitra and attended by bankers



State Finance Minister Amit Mitra

and secretaries. The main thrust of the meeting was to give enhanced credit lending to the priority sectors such as agriculture, agri-allied sectors, MSMEs, fisheries, animal resources development, self-help group, food processing industries and horticulture, and exports, which have been badly affected due to lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. Bankers agreed that Kisan Credit Card loan will be extended to nearly 4.6 million farmers. A number of small and marginal farmers will also come under the fold of KCC. The extent of SHG coverage will also be more than doubled this year — from 5,17,000 to nearly 10 lakh. The loan target to SHG groups has been enhanced to Rs 15,000 crore this financial year. An additional limit of Rs 5,000 crore will also be given to SHGs, subject to a cap of Rs 1 lakh per SHG.

Brother of 'BJP member' held for assault on cops in Tikiapara

Howrah: The police claimed to have arrested the younger brother of a "BJP member" on Monday for his alleged role in the assault of the security personnel who were enforcing lockdown in Howrah district last week. Howrah minority cell chief Zulfiqar Ahmed said the arrested person was no way related to any BJP leader in the district, and termed the allegations as "baseless and politically motivated". The Howrah City Police shared a video on Twitter of a person instigating people to attack police at Tikiapara on April 28. "In Tikiapara incident, 14 people, including one who was seen in the video jumping & hitting a police officer, have been arrested," it said. "The main instigator, who provoked people just before the inci-

dent, has also been arrested. He is a younger brother of a member of Howrah district BJP Minority Cell," the Howrah City Police tweeted. Ahmed said the arrested person was neither a BJP worker nor related to any leader of the saffron party. "This is a baseless and politically-motivated allegation." State Parliamentary Affairs Minister Partha Chatterjee claimed that the arrest proved that the BJP was trying to incite violence in the state and malign the TMC government. "They (BJP) will get exposed whenever they try such tricks," he said. Fourteen people have been arrested so far in connection with the incident, in which two policemen were injured after a mob attacked a team enforcing lockdown at Tikiapara. PTI

EXPRESS Careers

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Application submission opening date: 07-05-2020

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Advt. No.: RGPT/Assam/NTS/01/2020

Assam Centre, Sivasagar of RGPT invites ONLINE applications from eligible candidates for appointment to following permanent positions:

Position	No. of Vacancies	Pay Scale
Assistant Registrar	3 (UR)	L-10 (Rs.56100-177500)
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Assistant Grade-I	4 (3UR, 1OBC)	L-3 (Rs.21700-69100)
Technical Superintendent Grade-I	4 (3UR, 1OBC)	L-6 (Rs.35400-12400)
System Superintendent Grade-III	1 (UR)	L-8 (Rs.47600-151100)
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Technician Grade-I	2 (UR)	L-3 (Rs.21700-69100)

Interested applicants may visit <https://rgpt.ac.in/en/page/nts-rec> for eligibility criteria and apply online.

Opening date: 06-05-2020 Closing date: 30-06-2020

E-XPLAINED by The Indian EXPRESS



44 days of lockdown, over 1,200 deaths, what next?

Tracking India's COVID journey so far, looking at where the curve is headed

with

Dr K Srinath Reddy

President, Public Health Foundation of India; Member, Executive Group of the International Steering Committee of WHO'S COVID-19 Solidarity Trial; Member, ICMR's COVID-19 Task Force

As policymakers warn of a long, grim battle and predict a "new normal" ahead, join us as Dr Reddy explains what it will take for India and the world to coexist with the novel coronavirus.

Dr Reddy will be in conversation with

Monojit Majumdar
Editor, Explained, The Indian Express

Abantika Gosh
Deputy Associate Editor, The Indian Express

7 MAY 2020

07:00 PM

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Mehbooba's detention extended by 3 months

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, MAY 5



Mehbooba Mufti

THE JAMMU and Kashmir administration on Tuesday extended by three months the detention of former CM Mehbooba Mufti under the Public Safety Act (PSA). Mufti has spent nine months in confinement, first at a government guesthouse and then at her residence, since the August 5 clampdown on J&K's political leadership following the revocation of its special status.

The previous order for her detention expired Tuesday.

The detention of NC's Ali Mohammad Sagar and PDP leader Sartaj Madani, both charged under PSA, has also been extended by three months. They too have spent nine months in detention.

The order for Mufti's detention cites "reports received from field agencies and their consideration indicates the require-

ment of continuation of detention". Mufti was first placed under preventive detention and in February, she was charged under the PSA with former CMs Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Both Omar and Farooq were released in March.

With the condition of her detention being to "prevent her from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order", the administration can effectively hold her in detention for a year.

In a tweet from Mufti's Twitter handle, her daughter Iltija said, "Stifling voices of reason has become the norm for the current dispensation esp post illegal scrapping of Article 370. Therefore, extension of my mother's deten-

tion doesn't surprise me. Wishful thinking to assume that by smothering any debate on Article 370, the issue will vanish."

Reacting sharply, Omar tweeted, "Unbelievably cruel & retrograde decision to extend @MehboobaMufti's detention. Nothing she has done or said in any way justifies the way the Indian state has treated her & the others detained."

Hitting out at the Centre, he said, "For a government that is making tall claims about normality in J&K the last few days coupled with the extension of Ms Mufti's detention is proof enough that Modi ji has single handedly pushed J&K back decades."

The NC said in a statement that the extension of PSA detention of party leader Ali Muhammad Sagar is "distressing". PDP leader Naeem Akhtar, People's Conference chairman Sajad Lone and former bureaucrat Shah Faesal are among those who continue to be in detention.



Banita, 30, and her carpenter husband Nandu Mistry, 39, head home to Palamu, Jharkhand on a Shramik Special train from Jalandhar on Tuesday. The couple's twins Supriya and Satyanshu were born on April 9 in their rented room. Anju Agnihotri Chhaba

Special train to Lucknow leaves Bengaluru with 1200, many frustrated

JOHNSONTA
BENGALURU, MAY 5

TWO HOURS before the scheduled departure of the first special train for migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday evening, a group of eight tried to walk towards the little-known Chikkabanavara railway station on the outskirts of Bengaluru. They had heard from friends about a Lucknow-bound train leaving in the evening.

Around 200 metres from the station, being used as a remote starting point for special trains to

prevent surging crowds of anxious people, the group was stopped by two police constables. The train is meant only for those issued tickets, who are being brought from the city in special buses, one constable told them.

In the next 30 minutes the access route to Chikkabanavara station was closed in anticipation of the busloads of UP-bound people working, and based, in different parts of Bengaluru.

"I have come from Belur Cross, 60 km away, hoping to catch the train. I cannot go back now - there is no place to stay. My contractor did not pay my

dues. I just want to go home," said Kishan Singh, 30, from Gorakhpur, who worked as a painter at a constructing site near Nagamangala in Mandya region.

Unable to apply online for his ticket, Kishan said he hoped that "somehow we will be able to board the train". That was not to be, as the Lucknow-bound train left at 7 pm, carrying 1,200 passengers who were brought to the station by 20 state buses. There were painters, carpenters, security guards, construction workers, tile layers, electricians, drivers - most of them young people, working for barely a few months in Bengaluru.

THREE FOR J&K COVERAGE, TWO FOR HONG KONG PROTESTS

5 Indian photographers make it to Pulitzer winners' list

ARUN SHARMA,
BASHAARAT MASOOD &
ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR
JAMMU, SRINAGAR,
MUMBAI, MAY 5

HOURS BEFORE the 2020 Pulitzer Prize winners were announced Monday midnight, Channi Anand had gathered his family in front of his laptop in his Jammu home. "My son Abhay asked me if I was expecting an award. I told him there must be something, because I'd been asked by the office to watch the announcement with my family," he said.

When he heard his name, along with his colleagues from the Associated Press (AP), Dar Yasin and Mukhtar Khan, being announced, tears of disbelief rolled down his face. "It's something I could only dream of," said Anand, who has been associated with AP for two decades.

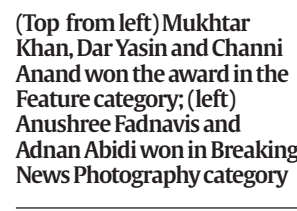
The three photographers from AP were recognised for their work in the Feature Photography category, for their "striking images on



life" in Jammu and Kashmir after the state's special status was revoked. Joining the trio are Reuters photographers Anushree Fadnavis and Adnan Abidi who, along with their colleagues Tyrone Siu, Ammar Awad, Willy Kurniawan, Leah Millis, Athit Perawongmetha, Thomas Peter, Kai Pfaffenbach, Jorge Silva and Susana Vera, were awarded the Pulitzer in the Breaking News Photography category for their coverage of the cit-



izens' protests that rocked Hong Kong last year. Speaking about one of the award-winning images, Fadnavis told *The Indian Express*, "We started following the anti-government protesters, who were running from the police after holding a protest at Hong Kong International Airport. They decided to reach a metro station and disrupt movement of subway trains. On the way, they started blocking roads. It was



then that I saw it was about to rain, and people were trying to get to the airport through the blockades with their luggage. I saw people getting off their cars and walking, some showing their support for the protesters. I took this picture to show the hardship faced by people in the wake of the protest." She added, "It's very humbling and overwhelming to be a part of the team that won the award. The feeling hasn't sunk in yet."

nated as special officer in-charge of COVID-19 in the city.

Gupta, also MD of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd, was made in charge of state capital Gandhinagar on May 1.

In the day's medical bulletin, Principal Secretary (Health) Jayanti Ravi said that the decisions were taken "given the serious situation emerging in Ahmedabad city, and with a view to take care of it".

Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) Pankaj Kumar will "guide and supervise" the Health and Family Welfare Department, according to a government release.

The changes come barely a week after the Vijay Rupani government in the state had re-assigned jobs in the Health Department, placing a senior bureaucrat in charge of 11 teams to contain the spread of the virus, create capacities, and secure availability of equipment and treatment.

Ravi said Mukesh Kumar has already taken charge as municipal commissioner and held meetings with Chief Secretary Anil Mukim and Chief Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Kailashnathan, and senior officials of AMC to "review the situation and initiate implementation activities".

After the decision was declared, Nehra tweeted: "I came into contact with two persons during my field visits who tested positive subsequently. As per guidelines, I have been advised self isolation at home for 14 days."

HANDWARA ENCOUNTER

Citing corona, cops refuse to hand over body of boy killed in 'crossfire'

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, MAY 5

POLICE HAVE refused to hand over the body of a teenager, who died in "crossfire" when militants targeted a joint forces checkpoint in Handwara Monday, to the family.

While this is the first such instance of denial of the body of a civilian to the family, J&K Police said the decision was taken so that funeral crowds could be avoided amid the pandemic.

The body of 14-year-old Hazim Shafi Bhat, who was physically challenged, was buried 40 km from his home, in a graveyard reserved for unidentified militants.

"We requested officials to hand us the body, but nobody listened," Mohammad Shafi Bhat, Hazim's uncle said. "If we want to pray at his grave, we will have to travel to another district."

Kupwara DC Anshul Garg told *The Indian Express* that the decision was taken to avoid funeral gatherings. "The COVID crisis was the only reason. We helped family members attend the last rites

in Baramulla district," he said.

Hazim was buried at Sheeri in the border town of Uri. The graveyard there is reserved for unidentified militants, generally those from Pakistan. This is the first time an identified civilian has been buried there. Mohammad said that government officials arrived at their home early Tuesday and asked the family to travel to Sheeri as Hazim would be buried there.

"We weren't given any option. Several family members, including his mother, had to travel to Sheeri to see his face one last time."

They were told there was an order "from higher-ups" not to hand over the body, Mohammad added. Around 20 family members participated in the funeral.

Hazim was killed on Monday evening in "crossfire" when militants targeted the checkpoint on Baramulla-Handwara road, killing three paramilitary personnel. Initially, it was reported that a militant had been killed in the shootout, but he later turned out to be Hazim.

According to the family, Hazim had gone to graze cattle along with

some relatives and boys from the village. "We were at our orchards when the firing started. Hazim couldn't run, he cannot walk properly. We reached home, but he did not return," said a family member. "At 10.30 pm, we heard he was killed".

While this is the first time J&K Police have denied the body of a civilian to the family, they have since mid-April stopped handing over bodies of local militants to family members to prevent burials in the villages. The decision, police officials said, was taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The government, however, is handing over bodies of COVID patients to their families for burial and last rites.

"After two encounters in April, the families had assured us of limiting the number of people attending funerals, but that did not happen. Large gatherings were reported. We had to register cases and arrest people," said a senior police officer on Tuesday. "We have stopped giving bodies as gatherings could become a reason for COVID-19 spread."

MEMORANDUM

Reference: DNleT No.CE/Buildings/PWD/DNIT/ACE/Project Unit/40/ 2019-20,
Due to unavoidable circumstances the tender floated vide PNEt No.17/EE/Divn.III/PWD(R&B)/2019-20 and communicated vide this office Memo No. 45(04)/EE/Divn.III/PWD (R&B)/9311-377, dated 5th March 2020 is hereby Extended upto 3.00 p.m. on 04-04-2020. All other conditions will remain unchanged.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer
Agartala Division No.III, PWD (R&B)
Agartala, Tripura.

ICA-C/157/20

TAMILNADU MINERALS LIMITED
(An Undertaking of Government of Tamil Nadu)
No.31, Kamarajar Salai, Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005.
Phone No: 28962018, 28911972. Fax No: 2914426524960

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
Only through E-tendering Mode
E-Tendering Portal: <https://tenders.gov.in>
Online tenders are invited in two cover system for the following tender.

Sl. No.	Description	Date of Submission of original Demand Draft for tender fee & EMD
1	Sale of Natural Graphite Flakes and D.E.Fines produced at Graphite Beneficiation Plant, Sivaganga	15/05/2020. Dated: 05.05.2020.
2	Tender No. & Date	1538/VAP/1/2020. Dated: 05.05.2020.
3	Tender ID	2020_TNMIN_163000_1
4	Publishing Date	06.05.2020
5	Bid Document Download/Sale Start Date	06.05.2020 from 10:00 hrs
6	Bid Submission Start Date	06.05.2020 from 10:00 hrs
7	Bid Submission End Date	04.06.2020 upto 17:00 hrs
8	Last date and time of submission of original Demand Draft for tender fee & EMD	06.06.2020 (Monday) upto 13:00 hrs
9	Bid Opening Date (Cover-I)	08.06.2020 (Monday) at 15:00 hrs
10	Bid Opening Date (Cover-II)	Will be intimated later on through Tamil Nadu e-tender portal
11	Tender form fee	Rs.2000/- (Non refundable) (Rupees Two Thousand only).
12	EMD	Rs.1,18,000/- (Rupees One Lakh eighteen thousand only).

DIPR/1732/TENDER/2020 GENERAL MANAGER (FINANCE), I/c.

TAMILNADU TEXTBOOK AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CORPORATION
"EVK Sampath Maaligai" No.68, College Road, Chennai - 600 006.
Phone: 044 - 28275851, 044 - 28278244, Fax No: 044 - 28224493
E-mail: adpur.tntbesc@tn.gov.in / jdtntbesc@outlook.com

Notice Inviting Tender

CORRIGENDUM

Date: 04.05.2020

Pre Bid Meeting, Sale period of tender document, submission of Tender and opening of Tender scheduled earlier for all Cost Free Educational Kits for the year 2020-21 is extended further due to outbreak of COVID-19. It is also decided to conduct Pre-bid meeting through Video-Calling for all items for which Tenders called for.

The details of revised schedule and procedures to be followed can be viewed in the following websites:

a) <http://www.textbookcorp.tn.gov.in>

b) <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in>

Managing Director
Tender Inviting Authority
Tamilnadu Textbook and
Educational Services Corporation
Chennai-6

DIPR/ 1726 /TENDER/ 2020

BASIRHAT MUNICIPALITY

NORTH 24 PARGANAS
NIT No.WBMAD/BASIR/E-09
of 2019-20

Online e-tenders are invited from bonafide Contractors for "Supplying and Laying of HDPE Pipe Line within Basirhat Municipality. Tender Start date: 06/05/2020, 10:00 Hrs. and Closing Date: 19/05/2020 upto 18:00 hrs. For more information, visit: www.wbtenders.gov.in and www.basirhatmunicipality.in
Sd/- Chairman
Basirhat Municipality

BASIRHAT MUNICIPALITY

NORTH 24 PARGANAS
NIT No.WBMAD/BASIR/E-08
of 2019-20

Online e-tenders are invited from bonafide Contractors for "Laying of Rising Main Pipe Line" & Sinking of 6 Nos. Deep Tube Well. Tender Start date: 06/05/2020, 10:00 Hrs. and Closing Date: 26/05/2020 upto 18:00 hrs. For more information, visit: www.wbtenders.gov.in and www.basirhatmunicipality.in
Sd/- Chairman
Basirhat Municipality

DELHI JAL BOARD: DELHI SARKAR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SOUTH)-I
OPPOSITE J-BLOCK MARKET, SAKET: NEW DELHI-110017.
NIT NO. 04/(S-I) (2020-21)

S. No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	Providing/ Laying sewer line from Bikaner Sweet Red light to Mohalla Clinic in Masoodpur Vilage in (AC-45) Mehrauli Constituency under EE (South)-I. (Re-invited)	45,35,722/-	2020_DJB_190429_3 30.04.2020	30.05.2020 upto 3:00 PM
2	Replacement of old/ damaged /silted up internal sewer lines right side of Bank road (Part) & Lal Kuan Mohalla and adjoining area of Lado Sarai in (AC-45) Mehrauli Constituency under EE (South)-I. (Re-invited)	47,14,951/-	2020_DJB_190429_4 30.04.2020	30.05.2020 upto 3:00 PM

NIT along with all the terms & conditions is available on Web Site <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>.

ISSUED By P.R.O. (WATER)

Adv. No. J.S.V. 20 (2020-21)

Sd/-

(L.L. MEENA)

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (SOUTH)-I

TELANGANA FOODS
(Govt. of TS Enterprise) (An ISO 22000:2005 Certified Company)
Road No.14, IDA NACHARAM, HYDERABAD - 500 076, A.P., INDIA
Email: stores.tfoods@gmail.com Website: tfoods.telangana.gov.in GST No:36AAAT4938R126

Ref.No.TF/PUR/INV-000/751/2015-20 **TENDER NOTIFICATION** Date: 05.05.2020
III. (SCHEDULE-III): Telangana Foods is inviting tender for Roots Blower, Smoke Exhaust System, Ribbon Blender and VFFS Packing Machine details are mentioned below: 1) Procurement of Roots Blower on One-time requirement Basis. 2) Procurement of Smoke Exhaust System on One-time requirement Basis. 3) Procurement of Ribbon Blender on One-time requirement Basis. 4) Procurement of VFFS Packing Machine on One-time requirement Basis. Note: Full Tender Notification & Tender Schedule with Terms & Conditions, Specifications, etc. can be seen and downloaded from Website: <http://tender.eprocurement.gov.in> from 06.05.2020 at 11.00 A.M. onwards and Bid Submission Closing date & time: 27.05.2020 at 01.00 P.M. R.O.No.895-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/2020-21 Dt: 05-05-2020 Sd/- Manager (PPM)

TNPCL TAMILNADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED
Kagithapuram - 639 136, Karur Dist. Tamil Nadu
Ph: 04324-277001 (10 Lines) e-mail: purchase.fuel@tnpl.co.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Tender No.	Material Description	Due Date
202113	Imported Limestone	22.05.2020
000212		

Terms & Condition, Quantity, Tender Fee, EMD are available in tender document at our websites: www.tnpl.com / www.tenders.tn.gov.in
DIPR/1722/Tender/2020

"IMPORTANT"

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GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU - PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Building Organisation - Form of Contract : Lumpsum
Short Time Tender Notice No.3 / VLR - CLE / 2020 - 2021 / Dated : 05.05.2020

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu Sealed Tenders are invited by the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Vellore - 1 for the following works from the eligible Contractors registered in Public works Department of Government of Tamil Nadu, upto 3.00 PM as per office clock on 20.05.2020 under Two cover system (Pre qualification and Price tender). The Prequalification cover (Cover I) alone will be opened on 20.05.2020 at 3.30 PM by the Superintending Engineer in presence of the Tenderers or their authorised agents.

PACKAGE WORKS - Slice 1 : Construction of District Munsif-cum-Judicial Magistrate Court building at Vanur, and Slice 2: Construction of Judicial Officer's Quarters at Vanur in Villupuram District.

The E.M.D. remittance and other details can also be available from the Govt. designated website (<http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in>) and Office of the Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Vellore - 632 001. The tender schedule can be downloaded at free of cost from the above website, upto 19.05.2020 - 5.45 pm.

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C&M) Circle, Vellore-1.
DIPR/ 1737 /TENDER/2020

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Invitation For Pre - Qualification,
International Competitive Bidding with PQ (ICB) on behalf of
Tamil Nadu Urban Health Care Project (Supported by JICA),
THIRD EXTENSION FOR NIT No.32/2019-2020/BCMC/ MW/ Trichy/ Dated: 17.03.2020
FORM OF CONTRACT : Unit Price Contract (LUMP SUM)

Due to administrative reason (for COVID - 19 - Precautionary Measures) the following dates are Third time extended in this office NIT No.32/2019-2020/BCMC/ MW/ Trichy/ Dated: 17.03.2020 for the works mentioned in the Notice.

Details of Bid	Now Extended
Pre-Application Meeting Date	20.05.2020 at 11:00 AM
Pre - Application Available period	09.06.2020 upto 5.45 PM
Pre - Application Submission Close Date	10.06.2020 upto 3.00 PM
Pre - Application Opening Date	10.06.2020 at 3.30 PM

Pre-Qualification Details may be downloaded from the following websites: www.tenders.tn.gov.in (or) www.tntenders.gov.in
Other conditions remain unaltered. SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D., BUILDINGS
(CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, MEDICAL WORKS, TRICHY
E-mail: sepdwmedicaltrichy@yahoo.com
DIPR / 1733 / TENDER / 2020

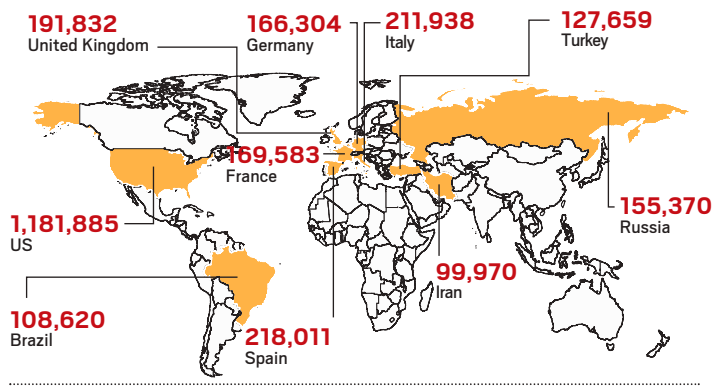


@ieExplained
#ExpressExplained

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

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

THE WORLD



TOTAL CONFIRMED: **3,618,325** DEATH COUNT: **253,381**

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 5

Why some workers face higher income loss risk

A NEW study has flagged a disproportionate risk of income loss during the COVID-19 lockdown, suggesting that low-income workers in developing countries face a higher risk as it is less possible to conduct their jobs from home. The study, by researchers from University College London, Bank of Thailand, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and GRIPS, Tokyo, is published in *Covid Economics: Vetted and Real-Time Papers*.

It used Thailand as a case study. UCL noted, however, that the findings are relevant for other countries with similar labour market structures — specifically, those with a large share of self-employment and low social safety net.

"A substantially larger percentage of people in lower income groups have manual roles, such as construction (10% in Thailand; 11.5% in EU-27) or machine-based jobs, which means they can't work remotely and are without any income. Therefore with-

out adequate government intervention to support income or employment for the poor, the adverse impact of COVID-19 could worsen income inequality," economist Dr Suphanit Piyapromdee of UCL said in a statement.

The researchers found that low-income workers, such as farmers and construction or factory workers, tend to work in jobs that require less physical proximity to other people at work than high income workers, such as office workers or school teachers.

However, as low income workers tend to be in occupations that are more machine-dependent and less IT-enabled, this makes them less flexible to work remotely. The study found 60% of couples from low-income households are in similar occupations (both partners), such as manual labour, compared to 20% of high-income households.

Source: University College London

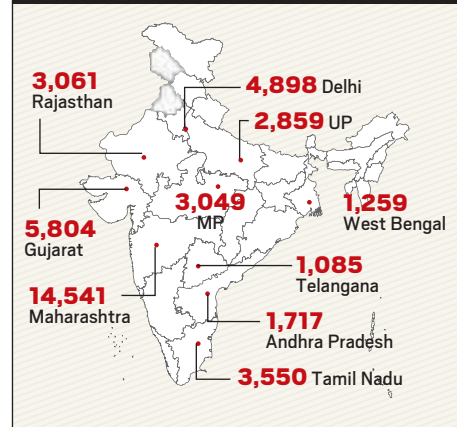


PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

INDIA COUNT: **46,711** (1,583 DEATHS)

TOP TO STATES



REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	33
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	43
Bihar	529
Chandigarh	102
Chhattisgarh	58
Goa	7
Haryana	517
Himachal Pradesh	41
Jammu and Kashmir	726
Jharkhand	115
Karnataka	659
Kerala	500
Ladakh	41
Manipur	2
Meghalaya	12
Mizoram	1
Odisha	170
Puducherry	9
Punjab	1233
Tripura	29
Uttarakhand	60

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 5. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. **13,161 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 31 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES**

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

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why are MSMEs worst hit?

Medium, Small & Micro Enterprises have been the focus of the government's relief package. What makes them most vulnerable to Covid-19 disruptions? A look at the numbers, problems, possible ways forward

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

THE COVID-19 pandemic has left its impact on all sectors of the economy but nowhere is the hurt as much as the Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) of India. All anecdotal evidence available, such as the hundreds of thousands of stranded migrant workers across the country, suggests that MSMEs have been the worst casualty of Covid-19 induced lockdown. It has also been reported that just like the first relief package, called the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, which was announced by the government on March 26, the second package, too, would primarily focus on the MSME sector.

A closer look at the anatomy of the MSME sector explains why MSMEs are so vulnerable to economic stress.

How are MSMEs defined?

Formally, MSMEs are defined in terms of investment in plant and machinery (Chart 1). But this criterion for the definition was long criticised because credible and precise details of investments were not easily available by authorities.

That is why in February 2018, the Union Cabinet decided to change the criterion to "annual turnover", which was more in line with the imposition of GST. According to the proposed definition, which is yet to be formally accepted, a micro enterprise will be one with an annual turnover less than Rs 5 crore; a small enterprise with turnover between Rs 5 crore and Rs 75 crore; and a medium enterprise with turnover less than Rs 250 crore.

How many MSMEs does India have, who owns them, and where are they situated?

According to the latest available (2018-19) Annual Report of Department of MSMEs, there are 6.34 crore MSMEs in the country (Chart 2). Around 51 per cent of these are situated in rural India. Together, they employ a little over 11 crore people (Chart 3) but 55 per cent of the employment happens in the urban MSMEs.

These numbers suggest that, on average, less than two people are employed per MSME. At one level that gives a picture of how small these really are. But a breakup of all MSMEs into micro, small and medium categories is even more revealing.

As Chart 4 shows, 99.5 per cent of all MSMEs fall in the micro category. While micro enterprises are equally distributed over rural and urban India, small and medium ones are predominantly in urban India. In other words, micro enterprises essentially refer to a single man or a woman working on their own from their home.

The medium and small enterprises — that is, the remaining 0.5% of all MSMEs — employ the remaining 5 crore-odd employees.

The distribution of enterprise by caste further completes the picture. About 66 per cent of all MSMEs are owned by people belonging to the Scheduled Castes (12.5%), the Scheduled Tribes (4.1%) and Other Backward Classes (49.7%). The gender ratio among employees is largely consistent across the board at roughly 80% male and 20% female.

In terms of geographical distribution, seven Indian states alone account for 50 per cent of all MSMEs. These are Uttar Pradesh (14%), West Bengal (14%), Tamil Nadu (8%), Maharashtra (8%), Karnataka (6%), Bihar (5%)

WHAT IT MEANS, HOW MANY, AND WHERE THEY STAND

CHART 1: DEFINITION OF MSME

Classification	Manufacturing Enterprise*	Service Enterprise*
Micro	Up to Rs 25 lakh	Up to Rs 10 lakh
Small	Above Rs 25 lakh to Rs 5 cr	Above Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2 crore
Medium	Above Rs 5 cr to Rs 10 cr	Above Rs 2 cr to Rs 5 cr

*Manufacturing Enterprise: investment in plant & machinery; Service Enterprise: investment in equipment

CHART 2: ESTIMATED NUMBER OF MSMEs (IN LAKH)

Activity category	Rural	Urban	Total	Share
Manufacturing	114.14	82.50	196.65	31%
Trade	108.71	121.64	230.35	36%
Other services	102.00	104.85	206.85	33%
Electricity*	0.03	0.01	0.03	—
All	324.88	309.00	633.88	100%

*Non-captive electricity generation and transmission

CHART 3: ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN MSME SECTOR (IN LAKH)

Broad activity category	Rural	Urban	Total	Share
Manufacturing	186.56	173.86	360.41	32%
Trade	160.64	226.54	387.18	35%
Other services	150.53	211.69	362.22	33%
Electricity*	0.06	0.02	0.07	—
All	497.78	612.10	1109.89	100%

*Non-captive electricity generation and transmission

CHART 4: DISTRIBUTION OF ENTERPRISES CATEGORY-WISE (IN LAKH)

Sector	Micro	Small	Medium	Total	Share
Rural	324.09	0.78	0.01	324.88	51%
Urban	396.43	2.53	0.04	399.00	49%
All	630.52	3.31	0.05	633.88	100%

CHART 5: POTENTIALLY ADDRESSABLE CREDIT GAP IN THE MSME SECTOR (IN RUPEES TRILLION)

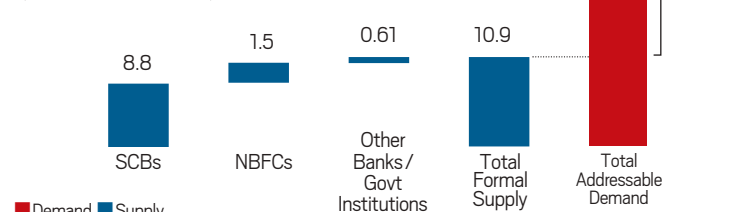
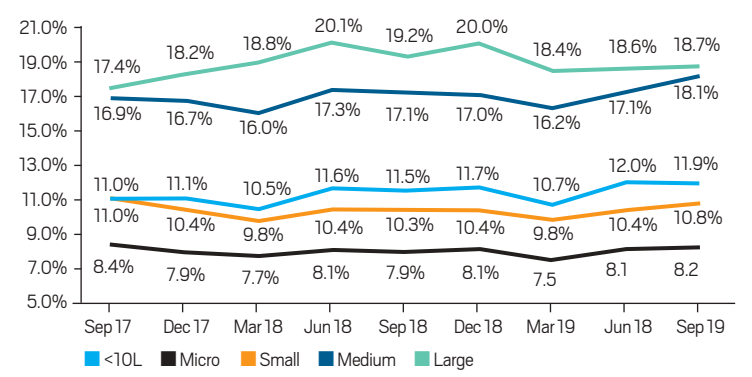


CHART 6: SEGMENT-WISE NPA



and Andhra Pradesh (5%). This breakup provides a sense of where the pain of the MSME crisis would be felt the most.

What kind of problems do MSMEs in India face?

Given the shape and form of MSMEs, it is not hard to envisage the kind of problems

they would face.

To begin with, most of them are not registered anywhere. A big reason for this is that they are just too small. Even GST has its threshold and most micro enterprises do not qualify. This apparent invisibility tends to work for enterprises as well as against them. Being out of the formal network, they do not have to maintain accounts, pay taxes or adhere to regulatory norms etc. This brings down their costs. But, as it is clear in a time of crisis, it also constrains a government's ability to help them. For instance, in some of developed countries, the government has tried to directly provide wage subsidy and extra credit to smaller firms but that could happen because even smaller firms were being mapped.

Related to this is possibly the single-biggest hurdle facing the MSMEs — lack of financing. According to a 2018 report by the International Finance Corporation (part of the World Bank), the formal banking system supplies less than one-third (or about Rs 11 lakh crore) of the credit MSME credit need that it can potentially fund (Chart 5).

In other words, most of the MSME funding comes from informal sources and this fact is crucial because it explains why the Reserve Bank of India's efforts to push more liquidity towards the MSMEs have had a limited impact.

A key reason why banks dither from extending loans to MSMEs is the high ratio of bad loans (Chart 6); data show higher slippage for relatively bigger enterprises.

The other big issue plaguing the sector is the delays in payments to MSMEs — be it from their buyers (which includes the government also) or things like GST refunds etc.

How has Covid-19 made things worse?

Suvodeep Rakshit of Kotak Institutional Equities said that MSMEs were already struggling — in terms of declining revenues and capacity utilisation — in the lead-up to the Covid-19 crisis. The total lockdown has raised a question mark on the existence of many primarily because these are not firms that have too much cash to wait out the crisis. That explains the job losses, he said. According to a recent survey he did for "small and medium" firms in manufacturing, only 7% said they will be able to survive for more than three months with their cash in hand if their business remains closed. A big hurdle to restarting now is the lack of labour availability.

What can be done?

The RBI has been trying to pump money into the MSME sector but given the structural constraints, it has had limited impact. Hetal Gandhi, Director, CRISIL, believes that there are no easy answers. The government can provide tax relief (GST and corporate tax), give swifter refunds, and provide liquidity to rural India (say, through PM-Kisan) to boost demand for MSME products, she said.

What about credit guarantees?

Loans to MSMEs are mostly given against property (as collateral) — because often there isn't a robust cash flow analysis available — but in times of crisis, property values fall and that inhibits the extension of new loans. A credit guarantee by the government helps as it assures the bank that its loan will be repaid by the government in case the MSME falters. To the extent such defaults happen, credit guarantees are shown as a departmental expense in the Budget.

How Covid has flattened prices, shifted demand curve for agri-commodities

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

WHILE THERE is debate on how much the lockdown has helped in "flattening the Covid-19 curve", one thing is clear: It has led to a flattening of prices through a "leftward shift in the demand curve".

The best way to illustrate this is through two agricultural commodities — potato and milk — that were experiencing significant production shortfalls. In ordinary circumstances, it would have resulted in prices shooting up at this time. Instead, they have remained flat or even collapsed, thanks to the demand destruction from lockdown.

Fewer takers for potato

Take potatoes, of which cold stores across India have stocked only an estimated 36 crore bags (of 50 kg each) from the main rabi (winter-spring) crop harvested in February-March. This was as against 48 crore in 2019, 46 crore in 2018 and the record 57 crore bags of the 2017 post-demonetisation crop.

"Production this time has been much lower, which should have translated into far better prices than last year. But the lockdown has upset our calculations," said Karamveer Jurel from Khandauli village in Etmadpur tehsil of Uttar Pradesh's Agra district. This

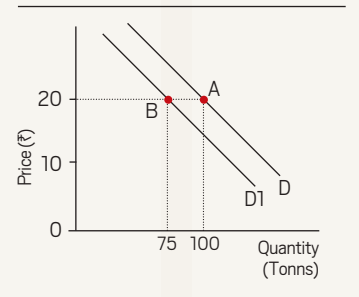
farmer has harvested 28,000 bags from 120 acres, 20 of his own and the balance leased land. Like many growers, he has deposited the bulk of his produce in cold stores for making staggered sales from April to December.

Till early-April, when the lockdown's impact was still to kick in, *mota aloo* or regular large potato was selling from Agra's cold storage units at around Rs 21 per kg. But it is now fetching Rs 18 and Jurel expects rates to drop by another Rs 4-5/kg towards mid-June. "Nikasi (offtake) is down. Hardly 500 trucks (each carrying 400-odd bags) are being loaded daily from Agra zone (which includes Aligarh, Mathura, Hathras, Etah, Firozabad and Etawah districts), compared to the normal 800," Jurel noted.

The reason is simple: With hotels, restaurants and street food joints shuts and no weddings or other public functions taking place, consumption of potato-based snacks — from *aloo chaat*, *tikki*, *samosa*, *pav bhaji* and *masala dosa* to French fries — has taken a beating. Lower demand has, hence, caused prices to fall.

The above price decline, though, isn't the usual one that economists term "movement along the demand curve". Such movement involves a reduction/increase in quantity demanded only on account of an increase/decrease in price, and vice versa. What is being seen now, however, is the demand curve itself "shifting". That, in turn, is due to the

WHEN DEMAND CORVE SHIFTS LEFTWARDS



collapse of institutional or business demand for potatoes. When *aloo* is being consumed only in home kitchens, there is less overall demand than before even at the same price.

Thus, in the chart, 100 tonnes was being demanded at Rs 20 pre-lockdown. But with the original demand curve shifting from D to D1, only 75 tonnes (these are purely illustrative numbers) would be bought at the same price. The quantity demanded has been affected by something other than price — in this case, the shutdown of businesses.

The worries, now and later

The ultimate sufferers are farmers. Agra zone's cold stores alone have stocked about



Lower production, yet lower demand, leading to fall in prices. Express Archive

8.7 crore bags of the current rabi crop, lower than last year's 10.5 crore and the all-time-high 13 crore bags of 2017. "The last three years were bad, when we could barely recover our production cost of roughly Rs 12 per kg, which includes Rs 115/bag (Rs 2.3/kg) cold store expenses. When prices touched Rs 25/kg in end-December, we thought 2020 will be the year to recoup past losses. The lockdown's impact will be *deergh kaleen* (long-term), just like *notebandi* (demonetisation). Then, it was cash. Now, it is incomes that will take time to recover," Jurel predicted.

According to Mohammad Alamgir, general secretary of Agra's Potato Growers Association, the situation may worsen with

kharif potato plantings during May-August in Karnataka (mainly Hassan, Chikmagalur, Belgaum and Chikkaballapur) and Maharashtra (Pune, Satara and Nashik). "They should be discouraged from cultivating *aloo*, as it will benefit neither them nor us. Once their crop (of 65-70 days, unlike the 110-120 days varieties grown in UP) arrives in the market, prices will hit rock-bottom," he said.

The Agra zone, along with MP (Indore, Ujjain and Shajapur districts) and Gujarat (Banaskantha and Sabarkantha), meets much of the potato demand in Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and South India. UP's Kanpur zone (especially Kannauj, Farrukhabad and Barabanki), West Bengal and Bihar feed the

entire East and Northeast India markets.

"Something should be done about demand. Why can't the government allow APMC (agricultural produce market committee) *mandis* to open 24 hours? Would that not enable social distancing and make buyers more confident about going to the markets, which are currently overcrowded and open for only a few hours?" said Jurel.

Shift with milk, too

The leftward shift in the demand curve is even more obvious vis-à-vis milk. 2019-20 saw India's milk production, perhaps, fall for the first time in decades. Till mid-March, there was talk of the country actually having to import up to one lakh tonnes of skimmed milk powder (SMP). Before the lockdown, dairies were selling SMP at Rs 300-310 per kg and cow butter at Rs 320 per kg. Those prices have not just flattened, but crashed to Rs 170 and Rs 230/kg levels. Many dairies have further slashed procurement prices. Only two months ago, farmers in UP were getting Rs 43-44 per kg for buffalo milk containing 6.5% fat and 9% solids-not-fat, which has since come down to Rs 32-33 per kg.

That, again, is the fallout of no institutional demand, whether from tea stalls and ice-cream makers or suppliers of *khoa/chemna* to sweetmeat sellers. In other words, it is a "shift" and not mere "movement" along the same demand curve.



The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The panchayati front

Governing establishment in Centre and states needs to tap potential of local self-government to fight COVID-19



MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

COVID & MSME

Small and medium enterprises will struggle to keep afloat in period of turmoil. Government must step up, alleviate distress

ON MONDAY, THE Nikkei India Purchasing Managers Index survey revealed that the manufacturing PMI fell to a record low of 27.4 in April, down from 51.8 in March. Of particular concern during this period of economic distress is the condition of the micro, small and medium enterprises. As a series of reports in this paper has highlighted, for many of these small businesses, the difficulty of staying afloat is rising with each passing day. MSMEs are likely to be the most affected by this economic downturn, both sparked and accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, as they don't have the buffers of the bigger firms or access to cheap capital to help them tide over this period. With demand collapsing, and unlikely to rebound strongly in the near term, it will be increasingly difficult for these businesses to meet their obligations such as repayment of loans or wages to their employees. According to TransUnion CIBIL, MSME loans worth Rs 2.3 lakh crore are at a higher risk of becoming non-performing. Further, the working capital requirements of these firms will rise as payment cycles are likely to be stretched, creating additional cash flow problems. This situation is unlikely to revert to normal in the near term even as restrictions on large parts of the country are lifted.

To ease the firms' financial distress during this period, the Reserve Bank of India has announced several measures such as a moratorium on term loans, and easier working capital financing. Some public sector banks have also opened up emergency credit lines for businesses. However, the government response so far has been muted. Some measures have been announced, but they were mostly regulatory and administrative in nature. Reportedly, the government is working on a package to address the needs of the MSMEs. There are concerns over an across-the-board provision of relief measures and the openness of such a package. There will also be issues of targeting. And providing support to MSMEs operating in the informal economy will pose challenges. Yet the delay in announcing a relief package is surprising. Governments across the world have announced various measures ranging from wage support to direct subsidies to help these businesses tide over these difficult times. But, in India, more than a month after the national lockdown was announced, there is still no blueprint of how the government intends to support these businesses during this period.

There are several possible options for the government to consider. To begin with, all dues owned by governments and public sector undertakings to MSMEs can be immediately cleared. This will help ease their immediate cash flow woes. Second, with banks turning risk averse, credit flow to MSMEs is likely to be depressed as solvency concerns will dominate. In such a situation, the government could step in. It could set up a credit guarantee fund that backstops loans to MSMEs. There is a strong case for urgent government intervention — the costs of intervening early on will be much less than the price of delayed action.

TOXIC BOY TALK

Talking to boys on how to talk to girls should be constant work in progress — Delhi school posts show that failure has tragic costs

THE OUTED INSTAGRAM "locker room", where hundreds of teenage boys from Delhi-NCR's most accomplished schools allegedly shared pictures of girls their age or less, objectifying their bodies through lewd, demeaning talk, and casually discussed sexual violence, offers a disturbing glimpse into their minds. But this is not the first inkling society or elite schools have had of how brutally young people practice misogyny and shame culture as they grow into sexual awareness, nor will it be the last. For the most part, it is something that is looked away from — perhaps, because even in the "real, grown-up" world, men get away with more serious transgressions, as the #MeToo movement recently uncovered. In this case, too, social media has exposed how talk is not just talk. Language — even if it is below-the-radar gossip, chatter, mockery — can be used to belittle and reduce women to sexualised things, setting them up as targets of "real" violence.

For the ecosystem that surrounds the boys, the challenge is to convince them of the consequences of their behaviour. Parents, schools and other institutions can start by opening a conversation about consent and empathy, about drawing a line between desire and entitlement, and about thinking hard about ways to enforce accountability. This is a hard ask — simply because young people model themselves on behaviour much more than they do on language and sermons. It might be especially hard to come to terms with the insensitivity of a generation that has grown up with privilege, and that is far more relaxed in terms of sexual mores than any other preceding generation. But a look at this economy of desire and permissiveness reveals an old problem: Without empathy, curiosity and a respect for the other, what seems like sexual exploration and discovery falls into the old rut of power play. Boys continue to make invisible locker rooms, and girls make lists of predators to share anonymously.

Finally, it is best to remember that the internet in India is an overwhelmingly male preserve, and that offensive sexual behaviour is likely to push more women off it. For parents of many girls, pragmatism might dictate that they give up their smartphones or go off social media. But this is also a time for the same ecosystem to stand by them, to act as circuit-breakers between their self-expression and the jolts of shame, sexism and humiliation that the internet can inflict.

THE SMOKER'S SMIRK

It is fitting that research showing nicotine users are less at risk from Covid has emerged from France

IT IS FITTING that the counter-intuitive research hypothesising that smoking and other forms of nicotine use could lessen the chances of contracting COVID-19 as well as lessen the virus's intensity has emerged from France. Smoking in the 21st century is, given the widespread knowledge of the harm it causes, a dark challenge posed to the only existential reality — death. In much of the world, smoking is vilified and smokers often feel shunned. They have to find corners outdoors — in the sun, rain and snow — in hazy, windowless rooms at airports, even forced out of their own homes to keep up with their addiction. Yet, in France, unlike in the anglophone world, there is still some acceptance of the act and the country still has one of the largest smoking populations in the world.

In its very creation, the French Republic straddled the paradoxes between freedom, equality and death; its revolution was built on both fraternity and the guillotine. Later, the horrors of the last great global crisis — World War II — birthed existentialism. In the upbeat American century, this philosophy seemed bleak — in return for freedom, the fantasies of religion, heaven and utopia had to be cast aside. The only thing that mattered was existence. Now, during the pandemic, it has given the world another paradox, and sidelined smokers something to smirk about.

Smoking is bad for you, but like an antibiotic, it could save your life. French government research institutes CNRS and Inserm, the hospital network Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, Sorbonne University, Collège de France, and Institut Pasteur have found that smokers are significantly less at risk statistically than the general population. In France, there was a rush for cigarettes and other forms of nicotine delivery among non-smokers once the research came out last month. The statistical chance at ensuring existence seems to have diminished fears of the long-term risks of smoking and the decades of moralising asking people to quit. Turns out, the existentialists were right.

AN UNINTENDED BUT welcome consequence of the struggle against COVID-19 is that the "confrontational federalism" that has characterised the Centre's relations with the states, especially those run by non-BJP parties, is now yielding under the pressure of the nation-wide crisis to an element of "cooperative federalism" that was promised in 2014, and then reduced to a "jumla" over the next six years. Repeated teleconferences between the prime minister and the chief ministers has made a centralising establishment accept, however reluctantly, that there is no way the COVID-19 situation can be tackled except through a measure of cooperation between the Centre and the states, with the Centre acknowledging the need to evolve solutions through a consultative process involving the states and offering flexibility to states to adapt guidelines to their respective circumstances, and the states accepting the need for guidelines from the Centre along with adequate availability of funds to meet this wholly unexpected and very expensive contingency.

What is still to be brought upfront and in focus is further devolution to the panchayats and municipalities in keeping with the constitutional obligations under the 73rd and 74th amendments, enshrined for the past quarter century in Parts IX and IX A of the Constitution. The starting point could best be Entry 23 of the Eleventh Schedule that reads, "Health, sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries" among the list of 29 subjects illustratively set out for devolution to the panchayats, subject to conformity legislation being enacted by state legislatures. All state legislation has included this subject and, therefore, empowering the panchayats in this regard with functions, finances and functionalities is now a statutory obligation under state law and governed by the provisions of Article 243G.

This article provides that state legislatures "may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government". This means state governments cannot and must not treat panchayats as extensions of the state government but as "institutions of (local) self-government" — 243W) in the anti-COVID-19 campaign.

A principal reason for Kerala's amazing performance in 'flattening the curve' is their robust system of effective devolution that has enabled the Kudumbashree programme to function in association with panchayats, as state Finance Minister Thomas Isaac emphasised in a recent article in these columns. Now that the easing of the lockdown appears to be resulting in a flood of migrant workers thankfully returning to their native villages, it becomes even more important to fully involve village panchayats (and municipalities as 'institutions of self-government' — 243W) in the anti-COVID-19 campaign.

as implementation arms of the central government but as autonomous units within the federation, then panchayats too must be conceived not as an extension of state governments but as "units of self-government". It is thus that panchayats need to be brought into the three-tier devolution system envisaged in the Constitution: Centre-State-Panchayats (and municipalities).

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The entire governing establishment in the Centre and the states needs to wake up to the huge potential of local self-government to fight COVID-19. There is an army of 32 lakh elected representatives in the panchayats and about two lakh more in the municipalities raring to rise to the occasion. Well over a third of them, some 10-12 lakh, are drawn from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and, therefore, in touch with the most needy, the most destitute in every village and town.

There are some 14 lakh women who have established themselves by election as village leaders. They constitute the largest body of democratically elected women in the world. About a lakh of them are office-bearers in their respective panchayats and municipalities. Can you imagine a woman emerging from her home in the dead of the night to try to stop the slaughter of two sadhus, as the woman sarpanch of Palghar village did, in any circumstance other than regarding herself as responsible for all that went on in her locality because that was the mandate that she had received from her village community? Imagine the constructive role such women can play as "front-line workers" in the battle against the coronavirus.

The most important requirement is planning to receive the migrant labour influx, including testing, quarantine, isolation, social distancing to the extent possible, and ensuring that all without exception are fed and housed and receive the monetary grants that are essential to keep body and soul together. Last mile delivery can only be comprehensively ensured by empowered panchayats (and municipalities) reporting to their respective gram sabhas and ward sabhas mandated under Articles 243 A and 243 S. Relying exclusively on the local bureaucracy for last mile delivery has been the bane of administration.

Planning for withstanding the ingress of COVID-19 requires the full deployment of the mechanisms for district planning envisaged in Article 243 ZD involving all three tiers of the panchayats and the municipalities brought together in the district planning committee. At the village and neighbourhood levels, it is essential to involve the gram sabhas, gram sansads and ward sabhas. Only thus can the war on COVID-19 be made a people's movement; only thus in a country as huge and populous as ours can we succeed.

The prime minister missed a fantastic opportunity to give the nation this message on National Panchayat Day, April 24, when he broadcast to the nation. Had he done so, India and the world would have sat up and noted that the humanitarian face of the battle is the reflection of the face of the people in the panchayats and municipalities.

The writer is a senior Congress leader and former Union minister



MEETA RAJIVLOCHAN

CREATING VALUE AFTER COVID

As industry struggles back to its feet, there is an opportunity to do things differently

THE COVID-19 pandemic has created a major economic opportunity for the Indian industry, provided it realises that for creating value and capturing markets, trust is a key ingredient. And the only way to build trust is to focus on improving product quality and integrating quality assurance protocols with all industrial processes.

The government has already announced several economic measures to rebuild a battered economy. To consolidate those measures and to ensure that the cash being offered helps to ramp up productivity, a great deal more needs to be done. The economy needs help in different time frames — short-term, medium-term and long-term.

The key to addressing short-term needs is to improve the liquidity position of businesses. In addition to what has already been done, the government should put its house in order by ensuring that payments for goods and services purchased are made on time. For decades now, the government has been rather lax on this matter. It is a different matter that government bodies pay anything up to 25-40 per cent more on every tender for this laxity.

Some years ago, I had introduced an e-procurement and e-payment system for medical goods in government purchases. The sum total of my action was to ensure payment in 45 days, but the results were remarkable. Procurement prices of medical goods came down by 25 per cent in Maharashtra immediately. One of the lasting results was the price

of USFDA stents coming down from Rs 64,000 to Rs 23,500. Stent prices in Maharashtra came down not due to diktat but simply by collating demand and assuring people they would be paid on time. So, the government should ensure that specific officers are held responsible for delayed payments.

In the medium-term, the key measure would be to put in place institutional mechanisms for quality assurance in the industry. Many businesses tend to see quality assurance as an avoidable cost. They pay the price by being lower in the value chain. Quality assurance is no longer a matter of choice. The one sector where few businesses have learnt this lesson is the pharma industry. But the same businesses that apply Good Manufacturing Practices for making medicines for export use different criteria for the domestic market. If Indian physicians prefer to prescribe branded drugs, this is because suppliers of generic medicines have been unable to build trust in the quality of their products.

If the industry is to deliver better quality products, then to support the industry in this task, the government also needs backend reorganisation to offer support. That is the second medium-term measure needed. Currently, government departments are not structured to offer handholding support to businesses: For this, they need to set up three kinds of groups — data analytics groups whose only job is to read reports; problem-solving groups; and, a third group to ensure

that the manufacturers and workers have access to the problem-solving groups. It would be crucial to see that the problem-solvers craft solutions in a language comprehensible to the common people. We must remember that the vast majority of manufacturers today are, at best, matriculates.

For the long-term, the most important measure would be to free up the higher education sector from constant micro-management. To achieve this, governments can offer unconditional autonomy to all colleges — but without linking this with existing grants. Colleges could be asked to sign performance contracts in lieu of the grants. This would leave the colleges free to interact with local businesses, to design courses as per need and to generate knowledge that can be of value.

The second long-term measure would be to encourage Indian businesses to use IT to improve product quality. Currently, 95 per cent of the total IT work done in India is for foreign clients. Indian businesses, by and large, have remained consciously immune to the IT revolution.

Finally, corrupt officials should be given swift and certain punishment. This, perhaps more than anything else, would go a long way towards building trust between the state and business, and would leave businesses free to create value.

The writer is an IAS officer of the 1990 batch. Views expressed are personal



MAY 6, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

TITO'S FUNERAL
AS WORLD LEADERS prepare to visit Belgrade to attend Marshal Tito's funeral, in western political circles grave concern is being expressed on the future of Yugoslavia which the departed leader had built from virtual ruins and given it a prestigious place among communist and non-communist countries. During Tito's illness, the country was being governed by a collective leadership and it goes to the credit of the people and various factions that they created no trouble. This indicates that along with China and Spain, modern Yugoslavia will join the company of a handful of countries in the world to transform its system of government from rule by a charismatic

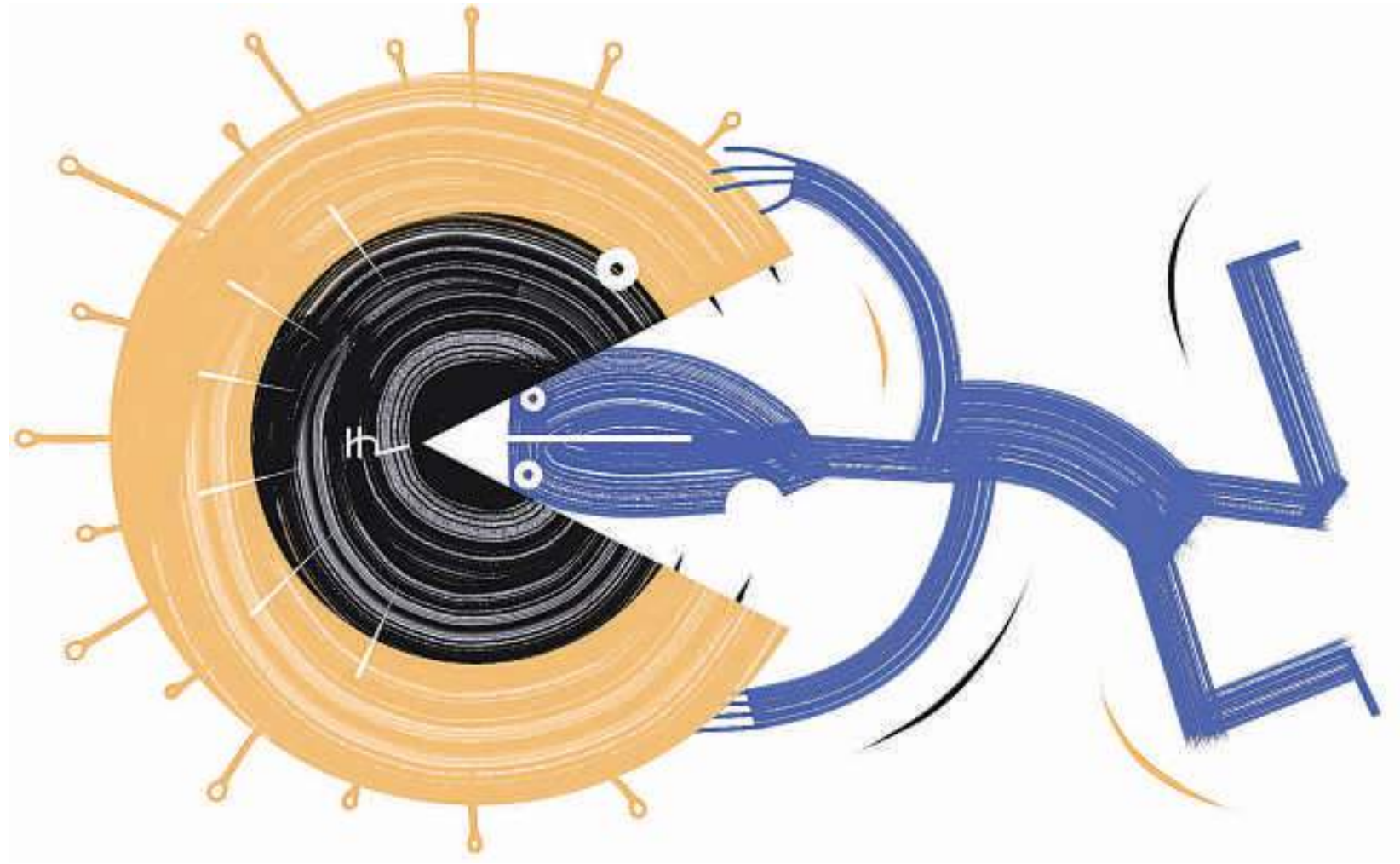
individual to rule by institution.

COURTING ARREST
THOUSANDS OF PICKETS, including women, courted arrest before the offices of the deputy commissioners and sub-divisional and block development officers throughout Assam to press for an early solution to the foreigners' issue. The All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, spearheading the current agitation, have given the call for voluntarily courting arrests for five days as part of their eight-month-old agitation. In Gauhati alone, over 3,000 volunteers were arrested, the police said. Earlier, the volunteers, carrying

black flags, took out processions shouting "either deport the foreigners or arrest us."

END OF SIEGE
THREE GUNMEN WERE killed, one arrested and a fifth was hospitalised with wounds in the dramatic end to the six-day siege at the Iranian embassy, the police reported. Britain's crack special air services commando unit stormed the building at 7:30 pm (18:30 GMT) after the gunmen threatened to kill a hostage every half hour if their demands were not met, police announced. Nineteen of the hostages were rescued and two were killed before the building was stormed, the metropolitan police commissioner, David McNea, said.

7 THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

What good health means

Covid has posed a question: How do we build a society less susceptible to debt, disease, devastation?



ELA R BHATT

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has been a wake-up call for every country, big and small, rich or poor, developed or developing. It has opened our eyes to the fragility of our healthcare systems, the instability of our economic structures, rising communal hatred, and to the vulnerabilities of our societies. How well we cope with this crisis will depend on how we respond to local — not only global — realities, and how well we recover from the crisis will depend on how willing we are to reorganise our priorities when we rebuild.

In the face of a highly contagious virus, the need to act is acute. Yet in a country like India, where the urban poor live on the streets, in slums, or cheek-by-jowl in one and two-room housing; where their limited supply of water must be fetched from community water taps; and where hundreds use the few neighbourhood toilets, it is nearly impossible to implement what is paradoxically called social distancing, vigorous hand washing and vigilant decontamination.

Similarly, for millions of daily-wage earners, migrant workers, and self-employed workers, staying home is just not an option. A day without work is a day without food. Daily-wage earners have negligible savings to fall back on, so they must borrow to survive. Extended periods of borrowing reduces

the likelihood of recovery, almost exponentially. How is a large, vulnerable population, caught in a spiral of debt, to build a healthy economy? They are victims of two pandemics, one medical and the other economic.

Have we not known that our working poor have hardly any effective and adequate safety net? As a nation, we have yet to achieve large-scale results and put in concerted efforts to build systems and structures to support them. As a result, pre-existing poverty has exacerbated the impact of the pandemic and compounded the problems we are left to deal with.

So what can we do differently and more to go forward? How do we build a better society that is not as susceptible to debt, disease, and devastation after the pandemic?

We begin by investing in the three basic needs of people — food, water, and shelter — and provide three primary basic services — healthcare, education, and banking — that people and societies need for their well-being. By focusing on these six needs and services, we can make sure that our post-pandemic society is both sustainable and equitable.

Any doctor will tell you that the key to good health is nutritious food, clean water, fresh air, and physical and mental exercise. In short, after the pandemic, we need to invest heavily in preventive measures that care for and nurture the not-sick. Let us build local food networks that make fresh, local grain, milk, and vegetables affordable and available to every last citizen. Because food is a healthcare issue. Let us provide clean water to urban and rural communities by building tanks, harvesting rainwater, digging ponds, and cleaning our existing water bodies. Because water is a healthcare issue. Let us take this opportunity to clean our environment by

building toilets, by recycling our industrial waste, composting our organic waste, planting trillion trees, and by using solar and other renewable energies to meet our fuel needs. Because fresh air is a healthcare issue. And let us make all work decent work, that provides a good income, life insurance, disability assistance that can sustain the worker — especially the migrant worker, her family and her community. Because work is a healthcare issue.

Let us facilitate the young and vulnerable self-employed in their entrepreneurship by providing access to local markets, capabilities and training, sustained capital, and nimble credit so they do not sink into debt and despair. Therefore, banking too is a healthcare issue. Let us nurture education inside and outside the walls of a schoolroom, promoting literacy, and hands-on learning, and skill development that enriches the minds and hearts and promotes wellbeing. In this way, education is also a healthcare issue.

Lastly, let us remind ourselves of the lessons the pandemic is teaching us. When one member of the family falls sick, the entire family is affected, and soon the community is affected, the nation is affected, and then other communities in other nations. The wellbeing of one individual has an impact on people on the other side of the globe. This is true of every action of ours. What we eat, what we buy, what we think, and what we do has reverberations and repercussions on all life on earth. It is this *anubandh*, this interconnectedness, that sustains all life on earth. We are all in this together, whether we choose to see it or not.

The writer founded SEWA in 1972 and was its general secretary till 1996. She is presently Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapeeth

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A NEET solution

SC decision will remove arbitrariness in medical college admissions



KETAN PAUL AND AMEYAVIKRAMA THANVI

IN 2010, afflicted with allegations of corruption, the Medical Council of India (MCI) was superseded by a Board of Governors which sought to introduce a monumental reform aimed at bringing transparency. It introduced a system by which admissions to undergraduate and post-graduate courses would be based on a National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), eliminating all such examinations and streamlining entrance to private and government medical institutions, based on a uniform measure of merit. After years of a system riddled with corrupt practices and arbitrariness, with many private institutions engaging in exploitation and profiteering, a bold and necessary step was taken in cleaning the mess in medical education.

More than a hundred private medical colleges approached the Supreme Court challenging NEET in the CMC Vellore case. In July 2013, a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice Altamas Kabir, on his last day in office, struck down the notifications and declared NEET to be unconstitutional. While the decision was criticised widely, it was the dissenting opinion of Justice Anil Dave, clarifying how the judges had "no discussion on the subject due to the paucity of time", which sowed the seeds of a rethink.

This dissent ensured that the victory of the NEET-opponents was shortlived. So, when the MCI petitioned the Court to review its decision, the matter was placed before a five-judge bench which, in an astounding move,

recalled the CMC Vellore decision in part since "there was no discussion among the members of the Bench before pronouncement of the judgment." This bench was headed by Justice Dave — three years later, the dissenter returned to save the day.

By this time, it was already 2016 and students as well as education institutions were in doubt about where the law stood. Thus, began the yearly season of NEET-related litigation. While the 2016 ruling had recalled the CMC Vellore judgment, it did not comment on the constitutionality of the examination itself nor did it clarify if the pre-NEET position was restored. Within days, a petition was placed before the apex court, seeking directions to conduct NEET. The Court granted the prayer and clarified that with the decision in CMC Vellore recalled, the notification which introduced NEET was now in operation. However, the issue of constitutionality of NEET remained unanswered.

As the Court restored NEET, many operational issues came to it for clarification. When the MCI introduced common counselling for admission to MBBS and post-graduate medicine courses on the basis of NEET, minority medical institutions challenged its imposition in the SC. The Court allowed NEET-based common counselling and clarified that the rights of the minority institutions would be protected since the minority quota seats would continue to be filled by minority students so long as they were chosen from the NEET merit list.

Then came the issue of state quota in post-graduate medical courses. A number of petitions were filed challenging the constitutional validity of NEET as it would not permit the granting of institutional preference, which had been approved by the SC time and again. In the Yatinkumar Patel case, the Court explained again that NEET was an entrance test that precluded any state or private institution from conducting their own test for entrance to undergraduate and postgraduate courses in medicine. It did not impact the issue of institutional preference for PG students.

Throughout the yearly administration of NEET, recurring issues were brought before the Court on how the examination was to be conducted. In the past, several states had conducted entrance tests in regional languages and NEET being in English language, raised concerns. It was also argued that the questions in the English language NEET were not the same as those in regional languages. Thus, by a series of orders, the Supreme Court ensured a common NEET was conducted in all languages.

The heavy load of NEET-related litigation also created additional problems and last-minute uncertainties. Pendency of such cases would impact the counselling schedule, which eventually led the Court to hold that adherence be made to the time schedule set in the Ashish Ranjan case. As in countless other cases, the Court had to assume a largely executive role.

Meanwhile, the original constitutional

challenge case came up for hearing. A large number of prominent medical education institutions are minority institutions. These institutions have a bundle of rights emanating from Articles 25, 26, 29 and 30 of the Constitution to administer their institutions as they see fit. These rights are constitutional guarantees in the form of fundamental rights. The minority institutions contended that enforcing a common entrance test such as NEET violated these fundamental religious and minority rights. In a far-reaching, unanimous verdict delivered on April 29, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court finally upheld the constitutionality of NEET, even on the touchstone of these fundamental religious and minority rights. The Court held that such regulatory measures aimed at improving public health by way of introducing transparency, recognising merit, and weeding out malpractice in matters of admission can be imposed. It also held that the right given to minorities to administer their institutions does not include the right to maladminister in derogation of public interest.

Though far from perfect, NEET is a path-breaking reform. Many changes have been made, and with the new legal regime under the National Medical Commission Act, many more will follow. The story of NEET is a lesson in governance. It is also a reminder of the reforming role played by the Supreme Court.

The writers are advocates practising in the Supreme Court of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"President Trump can't handle the truth — at least, not when it makes his administration look bad." — THE NEW YORK TIMES

Not at the cost of food security

Diverting rice to produce ethanol during the pandemic is unethical. Surplus grains should be used to feed those in distress



SIRAJ HUSSAIN AND AJIT RANADE

IN THE middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and a country-wide lockdown came an announcement that was difficult to believe. The press release said the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) chaired by the Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas has decided to use "surplus" rice available with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) for conversion to ethanol. This is ostensibly for making alcohol-based hand-sanitisers and for the blending of ethanol with petrol. This decision is not only audacious but also an affront to the millions of people who are deeply affected by food insecurity.

The images of exhausted migrants with their families trudging back from cities to villages are still vivid. Some have died on the way for the want of food and water. Distribution of food rations and cooked food is still far from adequate. The urgent priority is to transfer grain from godowns to ration shops and NGOs helping in food packet distribution — certainly not diverting rice to ethanol producers.

Policymakers in India have been acutely aware of the dangers of diverting grain for biofuel production. In 2009, the National Policy on Biofuels stressed on the use of non-food resources to avoid a possible conflict between food and fuel. Contrast this with the thoughtless path taken by the US. In 2007-8, about 25 per cent of the corn produced in the US was used for biofuel production. In addition to cereals, oilseed crops like rapeseed, soyabean and sunflower were used for biofuel production. In 2018-19, an astounding 37.6 per cent of the corn produced in the US was used for making ethanol.

Such diversion of food crops to produce biofuel was considered one of the reasons for the rise in food prices globally. Corn and other grain is also used in feedstock for poultry and cattle and is hence part of the food economy. Should India, a country with rampant poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, use food grains for making ethanol? This at a time when India's position in the Global Hunger Index has slipped nine places. India was placed 102 among the 117 countries ranked in the index in 2019. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) 2015-16, found that 38.4 per cent of children under five years are "stunted" (height for age), and 21 per cent are "wasted" (low weight for height). In fact, over a period of 10 years, wasting has increased from 19.8 per cent in NFHS-3 to 21 per cent in NFHS-4.

In 2018, the government modified its 2009 policy. The new National Policy on Biofuels had a target of 20 per cent blending of ethanol in petrol and 5 per cent blending of biodiesel in diesel by 2030. This was to be achieved by increasing production using second generation bio-refineries and developing new feedstock for bio-

fuels. It allowed the production of ethanol from damaged food grains like wheat and broken rice, which are unfit for human consumption.

More worryingly, the new policy allowed the use of excess food grain for ethanol in a bounty crop year, so long as the surplus is endorsed by the Union Ministry of Agriculture. The approval for this is to be given by the National Biofuel Coordination Committee, chaired by the Union Minister Petroleum and Natural Gas. It includes representatives from 14 other central departments.

It is not known if the departments of agriculture and food and public distribution have projected that there will be an excess supply of rice in 2020-21. The quantity of rice from which ethanol will be produced has not been announced, nor do we know the price at which such rice will be sold by the FCI. About 85 per cent of rice is kharif crop, heavily dependent on monsoon. Despite the prediction of a normal monsoon, public interest demands that the basis for the projection of surplus of rice is disclosed. What happens if the monsoon projections go wrong? Will we have to import grain?

In the past, damaged grain, unfit for human consumption, has been sold by the FCI for cattle feed. Despite the commonly held belief of a lakh of tonnes of rotting grains, the FCI's storage practices are actually quite good — damaged grains as a percentage of total quantity issued by the FCI has been just about 0.01 per cent to 0.04 per cent in the last five years. On March 1, the FCI had just 984 tonnes of non-issuable rice and 20 tonnes of non-issuable wheat — hardly any ethanol can be made from such a small amount of damaged grains.

Therefore, it seems that the NBCC has decided to use sound quality rice, within FSSAI specifications, for ethanol. It is a bad policy in normal times and particularly unethical during a pandemic. It potentially deprives food to humans as well as livestock. At a time when there are fears of a steep fall in national income, a rise in unemployment, and an increase in food inflation due to supply bottlenecks, it is imperative that food security and food price stability be given the highest priority.

Ethanol can be produced from other ingredients such as B and C heavy molasses, sugar, sugar syrup, and sugarcane juice. Ethanol has also been blessed with a low GST and enjoys relaxed conditions for interstate movement if used for blending with petrol. Since the economy faces a bleak prospect due to the impact of COVID-19, the government should first use the food grains to meet the requirement of about 10 to 20 crore people without ration cards. It must provide rice to NGOs at PDS prices, for providing cooked food to migrant labour stuck in cities and it should provide an additional five kg food grains to the poor for six months instead of three months.

If the Centre still thinks that the country will still have surplus rice, it must facilitate export to friendly countries which are suffering an adverse impact of COVID-19 on their economies.

Hussain is Senior Visiting Fellow, ICRIER. Ranade is Senior Fellow at the Takshashila Institution

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COLD REALITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Grim reminder' (IE, May 5). The recent attacks on the armed forces have been condemned all over the country. But it is not the first time that these attacks have been conducted by the militant groups. The bureaucracy cannot be complacent about the security of the citizens of the newly formed union territories as well as of the armed forces. Moreover, a mere retaliation after every attack on the armed forces is not the solution.

Omkar Thorat, Mumbai

EASING GUILT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The real common man' (IE May 05). The author's narrative, while perceptive, goes little beyond telling a story that just skims the surface to connect a few dots of diverse experiences. The real common man's condition is neither explained nor helped by feel-good tales of seeking dignity by sending "down" cups of tea. It, in fact, gives away the elite's reluctance to step down from its appropriated high perch.

Sandip Kumar, via email

TAKE IT ONLINE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Diplomacy in a virtual world' (IE, May 5). The diplomacy between states is becoming more and more personality-driven.

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

The element of grandeur and optics that is now becoming an integral part of state visits bears resemblance to an era before the birth of the modern nation-states, where elaborate pomp and pageantry use to be bestowed on the visiting monarchs by the host kingdom. The bustle underlying arrangements and understandings that are up for signing during such visits are contemplated and considered by the diplomatic corps, and so taking the real diplomatic exchanges minus the associated festivities can very well be conducted virtually.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

PANDEMIC WATCH



Communications and Information minister S Viswanathan

SINGAPORE

Minister records message in Tamil, Bengali

Singapore: Singapore's Minister for Communications and Information S Viswanathan has released a video message in Tamil and Bengali to address the concerns of foreign migrant workers, who are the worst-hit by the coronavirus outbreak in the country. So far, 19,410 cases of the coronavirus have been reported in the country, most of whom are foreign workers from India and Bangladesh. Singapore reported 632 new COVID-19 cases on Tuesday, out of whom only nine were Singapore citizens or permanent residents (foreigners). **PTI**

NIGERIA

Man sentenced to death in first virtual ruling

Lagos: A Nigerian court sentenced a man to death in the country's first ever virtual ruling during a five-week coronavirus lockdown. Lagos judge Mojisola Dada on Monday ordered death by hanging for Olalekan Hameed, a driver, over the 2018 murder of 76-year-old Jolasun Okunsanya, the mother of his boss. "This is the virtual judgement of the court," she said. On Monday, all the parties to the case, including the accused, lawyers, witnesses and journalists participated in the session remotely from different locations via the Zoom application. **AFP**

AFGHANISTAN

Govt distributes free bread amid price rise

Kabul: Afghanistan's government began distributing free bread to hundreds of thousands of people across the country this week as supplies have been disrupted during the coronavirus shutdown and prices have soared, officials and experts said. More than 250,000 families in the capital Kabul started receiving ten flat 'Naan' breads per day in the first phase of the project. President Ashraf Ghani has said the bread distribution programme was also taking place in other cities as rising prices were hitting what is already one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than half of the population living below the poverty line. **REUTERS**

Britain's toll crosses 30,000

REUTERS
LONDON, MAY 5

THE UNITED Kingdom has overtaken Italy to report the highest official death toll from the new coronavirus in Europe, figures released on Tuesday showed, increasing pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson over his response to the crisis.

Weekly figures from Britain's Office for National Statistics (ONS) added more than 7,000 deaths in England and Wales in the week to April 24, raising the total for the United Kingdom to 32,313.

Only the US, with a population nearly five times greater, has suffered more confirmed fatalities from the virus than Britain, according to the data so far.

Tuesday's figures are based on death certificate mentions of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, including suspected cases.

While different ways of counting make comparisons with other countries difficult, the figure confirmed Britain was among those hit worst by a pandemic that has killed more than 250,000 worldwide.

"The UK has been hit very hard in this wave of COVID-19 and each death will (have) brought sadness to families," said Professor James Naismith of Oxford University, who is director of the Rosalind Franklin Institute of medical research.

Opposition politicians said the figures proved the government was too slow to provide enough protective equipment to hospitals and introduce mass testing.

"I'd be amazed if, when we look back, we don't think: yep we could have done something differently there," the government's chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance, said in response to lawmakers' questions on testing.

Responding to the ONS figures, a Downing Street spokesman pointed to Johnson's recent comments that Britain

had passed the peak of the disease but remained in a "dangerous phase".

He also cited the advice of England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty: "Different countries are recording different things in relation to deaths."

Italy and Spain, the next worst-hit European countries, have smaller populations than Britain, further complicating comparisons. "Putting a graph out with the United States at the top and UK second is not helpful, but once you start to break it down by looking at the population we should be seriously asking questions about what's different," said Carl Heneghan, professor of evidence-based medicine at Oxford University.

"Why are six countries disproportionately affected?" Heneghan added, referring to a list dominated by Europe.

Excess death

But early evidence for excess mortality suggests Britain will be one of the hardest-hit on this measure, too.

ONS statistician Nick Stripe said excess deaths for the United Kingdom were running about 42,000 higher than average at this point in the year.

However, only about 80 per cent of these excess deaths have been linked specifically with COVID-19.

The weekly ONS data also showed the peak in COVID-19 deaths has likely passed, although the week to April 24 was still the second-deadliest since comparable records began in 1993.

The overall decline also masked a worsening picture in care homes.

The ONS said 7,911 deaths from all causes were registered in care homes in the week ending April 24, three times higher than a month previously.

"These figures show that talk of being 'past the peak' of this awful virus simply does not hold true for social care," said Labour opposition lawmaker Liz Kendall.



Customers eat lunch behind plastic shields at a restaurant in Bangkok, Thailand on Tuesday. Thailand has begun easing restrictions that were imposed weeks ago to combat the spread of the coronavirus. **AP**

Asia virus cases hit 250,000 but pace much slower than US, Europe

REUTERS
SYDNEY, MAY 5

CORONAVIRUS CASES in Asia rose to a quarter of a million on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, driven by outbreaks in Singapore and Pakistan, even as China, South Korea and Japan significantly slowed the spread of the disease.

The region where the COVID-19 pandemic started has fared better overall than North America and Europe since the first case was reported in Wuhan, China on January 10.

It has taken Asia almost four months to reach the 250,000-infection milestone, a level that

Spain alone is approaching just a little over two months since reporting its first case.

At 250,650, Asia now accounts for just 7 per cent of global cases, compared with 40 per cent for Europe and 34 per cent for North America, although experts worry that unreported infections are masking the true extent of the pandemic.

The death toll in Asia has also slowed significantly in most countries and is now nearing 10,000 for the region as a whole, representing just 4 per cent of global deaths. Europe accounts for 57 per cent and North America for 29 per cent.

By comparison, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and France

have all recorded more than 25,000 deaths each. The United States leads the grim tally with 70,000 fatalities.

Stringent lockdown measures in China and South Korea that lasted for weeks have been credited by officials with sharp decreases in the rate of new cases and deaths.

South Korea reported just three new cases over the past 24 hours, a turnaround from the peak of the national epidemic in late February when it reported 1,165 cases in a single day.

China has reported single digit or low double digit new cases for the past week, keeping cases at just under 83,000.

In Pakistan, daily detection of

the virus has hit record highs over the past week as the country ramps up its testing efforts. Still, the government said 21,000 infections and nearly 500 deaths are well below projections and it plans to ease lockdown measures further.

Singapore has a total of 19,410 infections and continues to log 500-800 new cases a day, largely due to mass outbreaks in migrant worker dormitories, but has reported just 18 deaths. It began reopening its economy this week.

The nearby Oceania region, made up of Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations, accounted for less than 1 per cent of global cases.

France's first virus case may have been in Dec

THE NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, MAY 5

ONE OF France's first coronavirus cases may have been in December, about a month before the outbreak officially started in Europe, French doctors reported this week after retesting a patient's samples.

The case pushes up the timeline of the emergence of the disease in France by over a month, to before China had alerted the World Health Organization about the virus within its own borders.

The detection of the confirmed case earlier than anyone knew the disease was active in the country follows similar instances across the world - including in the United States, where deaths were identified as caused by the disease weeks earlier than first reported and a model suggested that silent outbreaks had spread for weeks before detection.

The case also implies that person-to-person transmission was taking place in Europe far earlier than previously known, making even more clear that measures to contain the disease both in China and Europe were hopelessly late.

Dr Yves Cohen, the head of intensive care at the Avicenne



A worker disinfects the playground of a school in Cannes, France. **Reuters**

and Jean Verdier hospitals, in the northern suburbs of Paris, said on Sunday that his staff had decided to test samples from patients diagnosed with atypical pneumonia in December and January for the coronavirus.

At the time, the patients were checked for seasonal flu and for other coronaviruses, but not for the new coronavirus, which was little known and not thought to have reached Europe. Dr Cohen told the *BFM TV* news channel that they detected one case of Covid-19 from a December 27 sample, and staff had tested it several times to rule out a false positive.

The patient, a 42-year-old man born in Algeria who has lived in France for many years, had not been abroad since August, according to Dr Cohen and others in their study, pre-proofed for publication in the *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents*.

"He could be patient zero, but maybe there were others in other regions," Dr Cohen said.

It is not yet entirely clear how the man caught the infection. But experts have long suspected that the coronavirus may have spread internationally before the first officially reported cases.

Spanish govt to ask Parliament to extend state of emergency

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID, MAY 5

SPAIN'S SOCIALIST-LED government will ask parliament on Wednesday to extend the state of emergency another two weeks through May 24.

But the Popular Party, the main opposition, is reluctant.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez says extending the state of emergency "is the only instrument that allows the government to limit mobility, in order to prevent contagion, save lives and protect citizens".

Health Minister Salvador Illa says the state of emergency, which has allowed the government to impose a lockdown, has been "essential" in reducing the daily infection rate from 35 per cent to 0.4 per cent.

Finance Minister María Jesús Montero warned that economic measures to cushion the pandemic's blow are dependent on state of emergency legislation.

If the Popular Party votes against the extension, it could scuttle the government's pandemic plans. It may decide to abstain, in which case the government's request should win approval.

Be transparent about virus origins, Trump tells China

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, MAY 5

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Tuesday asked China to be "transparent" about the origin of the coronavirus that emerged from Wuhan so that such a situation never emerges again, as he faced pressure from lawmakers to act against the Asian powerhouse.

Trump has alleged that the Chinese government was either incompetent in preventing the deadly virus from spreading globally or did it for a reason.

"We want them to be transparent. We want to find out what happened so it never happens again," Trump told reporters outside the White House before leaving on a trip to Arizona, adding that the United States would release its report detailing the origins of the novel coronavirus over time, but giving no other details or timeline.

Trump, who initially praised China over its response to the outbreak but has since blamed Beijing harshly over the virus, also said that he has not spoken to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Meanwhile, pressure is building on the Trump administration to take action against China. "While evidence mounts that



First responders wait in line to be tested for coronavirus antibodies at a testing site in Jersey City. **AP/PTI**

COVID 19 was accidentally leaked from China's Wuhan lab, we must understand the CCP (Communist Party of China) is aggressively developing biowarfare capabilities," Congressman Michael Waltz said.

Senator Ted Cruz asked for re-evaluation of US ties with China.

"Once we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, we must reevaluate our relationship with China. The Chinese government hid the coronavirus outbreak from the world, which has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and millions of jobs. China must be held accountable," Cruz said.

Germany disease centre warns of second wave of virus

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, MAY 5

THE HEAD of Germany's national disease control center said there will be a second wave of coronavirus infections, but his country is well-prepared to deal with it.

Lothar Wieler, the head of the Robert Koch Institute, was responding Tuesday to a question about whether a planned contact-tracing app is still relevant given that new infections have slowed significantly.

Wieler pointed to the nature of a pandemic and said "we know with great certainty that there will be a second wave - the majority of scientists is sure of that... And many also assume that there will be a third wave."

He said a lot has been done in recent months and doctors know more about how to deal with COVID-19 cases. But he added: "It's clear, depending on how strong this second wave is, certain measures will of course have to be taken again if we want to slow the wave - I don't know how it could be handled differently."

Virus in Stockholm's sewage system

Stockholm: A Swedish newspaper said Tuesday that a technology institute in Sweden has found large concentrations of the coronavirus in Stockholm's sewage system.

The analysis by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology was made in the purification plant in Bromma, west of the capital. The institute told *Dagens Nyheter*, one of Sweden's largest newspapers, that the test that can predict a second virus wave.

Since the beginning of April samples have been taken from two treatment plants in Stockholm with the purpose of monitoring how the amount of virus residues develop over time, the newspaper reported. **AP**

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

US denies any role in foiled raid in Venezuela

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, MAY 5

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump on Tuesday denied any involvement by the US government in what Venezuelan officials have called a failed armed incursion in the South American country that led to the capture of two American "mercenaries".

Trump made the comment to reporters at the White House after Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday said authorities there had detained two US citizens working with a



Venezuelan soldiers with a suspected mercenary after the alleged incursion. *Venezuelan government TV/Reuters*

US military veteran who has claimed responsibility for the foiled operation.

"We'll find out. We just heard about it," Trump said when asked about the incident. "But it has

nothing to do with our government."

In a state television address, Maduro said authorities arrested 13 "terrorists" on Monday involved in what he described as a plot coordinated with Washington to enter the country via the Caribbean coast and oust him. Eight people were killed during the incursion attempt on Sunday, Venezuelan authorities said.

The two detained Americans, former special operations forces members, were believed to be in the custody of Venezuelan military intelligence, according to a

person familiar with the matter.

The State Department did not provide any immediate comment on the arrests.

Washington has waged a campaign of tough economic sanctions and diplomatic measures against Venezuela in an effort to oust Maduro, accusing him of having rigged elections in 2018.

But while Trump has repeatedly said all options are on the table, his administration has shown no apparent interest in military action as it pursues what it calls a "maximum pressure" strategy against Maduro.

China launches new large carrier rocket

K J M VARMA
BEIJING, MAY 5

CHINA'S MOST powerful carrier rocket Long March-5B made its maiden flight on Tuesday, successfully sending the trial version of the country's new-generation manned spaceship and a cargo return capsule for test into space, state media reported.

The rocket blasted off from the Wenchang Space Launch Centre on the coast of southern China's island province of Hainan at 6 pm (Beijing Time), state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported, citing China Manned Space



Long March-5B blasts off. *Xinhua via AP*

Agency (CMSA).

About 488 seconds later, the experimental manned space-

craft with no crew, together with the test version of the cargo return capsule, separated with the rocket and entered the planned orbit. The successful flight inaugurates the "third step" of China's manned space programme, which is to construct a space station, the CMSA said.

Specially developed for China's manned space program, Long March-5B will be mainly used to launch the modules of the space station, it said.

The construction of China's space station moves a step closer with the successful maiden flight of its new large carrier rocket, a senior official said.



GOLD

₹41,705



RUPEE

₹75.63



OIL

\$26.15



SILVER

₹38,100

Note: Spot gold markets shut due to lockdown in major states. *Indian basket as on March 19, 2020

SENSEX: 31,453.51 ▼ 261.84 NIFTY: 9,205.60 ▼ 87.90 NIKKEI: 19,619.35 ▼ 574.34 HANG SENG: 23,868.66 ▲ 254.86 FTSE: 5,845.63 ▲ 91.85 DAX: 10,654.40 ▲ 187.60

*International market data till 1900 IST

COVID-19 EFFECT INSURANCE

Insurers get 900 treatment claims worth ₹18 crore

Average claim of ₹2 lakh per person

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 5

AFTER OVER 40 days of lockdown, the number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in the country might have exceeded 42,000 by Monday, but it has not impacted general insurers much till now. General insurance companies have received 900 claims for over Rs 18 crore towards COVID-19 treatment till Monday, according to the General Insurance Council, the official representative body of the domestic general insurers.

While the number of COVID claims so far are low when compared to the rising number of infections, the average claim amount of around Rs 2 lakh per person has raised doubts about the high treatment cost considering the fact that ICU and ventilators are used only in some select cases.

Maharashtra has remained at the top of the claims chart with around 450 claims for about Rs 8 crore. The city of Mumbai itself has generated around 350 claims for around Rs 4 crore.

After Maharashtra, Delhi has seen the maximum number of COVID-19 insurance claims — 150 claims for about Rs 3.5 crore have been filed by Delhiites. "Effectively, around two per cent of people who are undergoing treatments in different hospitals across the country have filed for insurance claims. On an average, each of the claims is estimated to be around Rs 2 lakh. It is not immediately known how many COVID-19 claims have been settled so far," said GI Council sources.

One reason for the low number of insurance claims is that COVID treatment is free in many states as the state governments are taking care of the patients in state-run hospitals. Also, it is not known how many COVID-19 cases have received treatment for free under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan

Maharashtra is at the top of the claims chart with about 450 claims for about ₹8 cr

Mantrij Ananya Yojana (AB-PM JAY). "Testing and treatment of COVID-19 is already available for free in public facilities. Now, more than 50 crore citizens, eligible under the health assurance scheme will be able to avail free testing through private labs and treatment for COVID-19 in empanelled hospitals," the National Health Authority said earlier.

Earlier, IRDAI directed insurers to take decision on all COVID-19 insurance claims within two hours. "Decision on authorisation for cashless treatment shall be communicated to the network provider (hospital) within two hours from the time of receipt of authorisation request and last necessary requirement from the hospital either to the insurer or to the TPA whichever is earlier," IRDAI had said.

Decision on final discharge should be communicated to the network provider within two hours from the time of receipt of final bill and last necessary requirement from the hospital either to the insurer or to the Third Party Administrator (TPA), whichever is earlier, IRDAI said.

A section of the insurance industry has proposed a pandemic insurance pool on the lines of terror insurance pool to tackle the possible massive claims from coronavirus-type of virus attacks that claimed the lives of people, hit India Inc's day-to-day business and livelihoods. As per the latest government data, the highest number of confirmed cases are from Maharashtra (14,541), followed by Gujarat (5,804), Delhi (4,898), Tamil Nadu (3,550), Rajasthan (3,061), Madhya Pradesh (2,942) and Uttar Pradesh (2,766).

TO HELP MONETISE STATE-OWNED SURPLUS LAND ASSETS

Govt panel suggests setting up apex land management body

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

A GOVERNMENT panel on boosting infrastructure investment has recommended setting up a National Land Management Corporation, which would help in monetising state-owned surplus land assets in a systematic and specialised way.

Such a corporation should be set up under Companies Act to function as the facilitator for land monetisation and an asset manager for lands owned by government of India and central public sector enterprises. It has recommended that a chief executive officer (CEO) and a technical team be hired at market-linked compensation to carry out land monetisation. The Corporation can raise capital from the equity market, based on the value of its leased assets, just like it has been done recently by some private-owned real estate investment trusts (REITs), which were listed on the stock exchanges last year.

The task force noted there is a need for a separate organisation, which can work with various government departments including Railways and Defence Ministry to

EXPLAINED

Will help in raising funds from market

THE GOVERNMENT has been trying to monetise surplus land assets with departments and state-owned companies for the last couple of years. Despite large tracts of commercially viable land being available, there has been limited progress on this front. The National Land Management Corporation, with a professional team from the market, is being proposed to speed up progress in this area. A pipeline of income-yielding properties can be created by such a corporation, which can, in turn, raise funds from the market.

utilise their surplus land assets. After setting up the proposed Corporation, which will identify and manage surplus land assets, concessioning of the land should be done through this special purpose vehicle that would provide land on lease basis or other revenue sharing modes (including sale of land) for commercial purpose. The panel recommended the Corporation consider development or co-development of land belonging to defence or railways as well. It can also take up co-development of private land parcels adjoining government lands to

maximise revenue.

Apart from a CEO and technical team, it has been proposed that the Corporation have representation from senior officials of the Finance Ministry, Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs as well as independent directors from finance and real estate industry. Besides maintaining an inventory of public land, the Corporation will develop model concession agreements for land development and sale, legal management of litigation/encumbrances relating to land, development planning, de-

sign and bid process management. Operational requirements like change of land usage and revenue management functions will also be entrusted with the Corporation.

Along with monetisation of land assets, the task force on National Infrastructure Pipeline, in its report submitted to the government last week, also suggested measures including strengthening of the municipal bond market, deepening of corporate bond markets, and setting up Development Financial Institutions for infrastructure sector. The task force pegged the total expected capital expenditure for infra sector at Rs 111 lakh crore in the next five years.

Having income earning inventory of assets would enable the Corporation to raise equity capital or debt from the markets. These funds can be deployed for development of surplus land assets, creating a pipeline of developable assets. The Corporation may adopt different models for land monetisation, including securitising a pool of assets through structures like REITs and InvTs. Successful bidders in projects could either make large upfront payment for the assets combined with annual payments, or small or zero upfront payment with annual payments.

'State-owned bank NPAs may rise by up to 4ppt in FY21'

Non-performing loans of state-owned banks are expected to rise by 2-4 percentage points, resulting in a \$15 billion recapitalisation burden on the Centre in FY21, Bank of America said

RECAPITALISATION NEEDS: The government can issue recapitalisation bonds, or the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) huge reserves of over \$127 billion can also be dipped into to help the state-run banks' recapitalisation needs

2-4 PPT: The increase in non-performing assets by 2-4 percentage points of the assets will need a government

recapitalisation requirement by \$7-15 billion

Fiscal deficit target is likely to overrun by 2 percentage points

The government will infuse capital into PSU banks and fund it by issuing recapitalisation bonds to them. PSU banks will invest the capital received in recapitalisation bonds

Helping PSBs: Public sector banks (PSBs) can heal their broken balance sheets and meet adequate capital requirements through the bonds and once growth recovers, the government can gradually convert these recap bonds into normal G-secs and sell them

Source: Bank of America/PTI



FOR WEEK ENDED MAY 3

Unemployment rate soars to 27.11% amid COVID-19 pandemic: CMIE

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

AMID SUSPENDED economic activity to counter the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's unemployment rate surged to 27.11 per cent for the week ended May 3 from the level of 6.74 per cent in the week ended March 15, the data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed. Unemployment rate had moderated to 21.05 per cent in the previous week (which ended April 26) from 26.19 per cent in the week before.

The Mumbai-based think tank said the rate of unemployment was the highest in the urban areas, which include the majority of the red zones due to the COVID-19

cases, at 29.22 per cent, as against 26.16 per cent for the rural areas. In the previous week ended April 26, the urban unemployment rate had stood at 21.45 per cent and the rural unemployment rate at 20.88 per cent.

As per CMIE's data, the monthly unemployment rate in April stood at 23.52 per cent, up from March's 8.74 per cent.

CMIE's weekly series of data pointed to a steady increase in unemployment since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, with the week to March 29 showing the sharpest spike to 23.81 per cent.

With the imposition of nationwide lockdown on March 24, economic activity has taken a hit, with most analysts and economists now predicting a possible contraction of the country's GDP for this

financial year. Employment in MSMEs and unorganised sectors is expected to be hit sharply.

State-wise data shows that as of April-end, Puducherry had the highest rate of unemployment at 75.8 per cent, followed by neighbouring Tamil Nadu 49.8 per cent, Jharkhand 47.1 per cent and Bihar 46.6 per cent. Maharashtra's unemployment rate was recorded at 20.9 per cent, while the same for Haryana stood at 43.2 per cent, Uttar Pradesh at 21.5 per cent and Karnataka at 29.8 per cent, CMIE data showed.

Hilly states had the lowest incidence of unemployment as of April-end, with the unemployment rate in Himachal Pradesh at 2.2 per cent, Sikkim at 2.3 per cent and Uttarakhand at 6.5 per cent, the data showed.

Give cash to bottom 60% of population: Banerjee

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

STRESSING THAT spending is the easiest way to revive the economy, Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee on Tuesday said the government should put money in the hands of the bottom 60 per cent of the population post-lockdown to spur demand and trigger growth besides announcing a big stimulus package. He advocated waiving off loan repayments for small businesses in the June quarter.

In a conversation with former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, Banerjee said the three-month moratorium on debt repayments announced by the RBI for the MSME sector was a wise decision and argued more should be done. "We could even say that debt payments for this quarter will be cancelled and will be taken care of by the government," he said.

But beyond that, he said, "It is



Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi (left) in conversation with Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee on Tuesday. @RahulGandhi

not clear targeting the MSME sector is the right channel." It is more about reviving demand, he said.

Banerjee advocated cash transfers to trigger spending, but said targeting is going to be extremely costly and argued the government should give cash to the bottom 60 per cent of the population. He, however, felt the transfer should be timed in such a way that "you get the money when you can go out and buy (and) not now."

"If they had money or even if you promise them money, it doesn't have to be that the money is right now. If you are in the red zone, you can say look whenever lockdown is lifted you will have money in your account, Rs 10,000 in your account and you can spend it. I think spending is the easiest way to revive the economy. Because then the MSME people get money, they spend it and then it has the usual Keynesian chain re-

action," he said. He added: "You get a promise that you'll get the money so that you stop panicking and stop completely starving yourself, so that you have a little bit of savings left. If people were reassured that in 2 months or whenever the lockdown is lifted, they will have some money in their hands, they will be much less worried about (it), they will be more willing to spend already. Some of them have some savings." "I feel you must not necessarily rush into it, because there may be places where there is no production right now, no supply right now. Putting money will just burn the money, there will be inflation. You want to wait for that."

When Gandhi pointed out businesses which are in distress will find it difficult to maintain jobs, Banerjee said "that's the reason, a lot of us have been saying that we need a stimulus package. That's what the US is doing, Japan is doing, Europe is doing. We really

haven't decided on a large enough stimulus package. We are still talking about 1 per cent of GDP. United States has gone for 10 per cent of GDP. There is a sense in which I think we have to."

Banerjee suggested distribution of temporary ration cards to anyone who requires it and argued government godowns have enough stocks of wheat and rice for distribution. Pointing out there may be many people who may not have access to schemes like Jan Dhan accounts, he said: "We should give a bunch of money available to the state governments to try out their own schemes, to be creative in reaching people who are excluded using NGOs".

"I think we have to be willing to take some amount of mistargeting, malfeasance. Some money will be stolen. But if we sit on our hands, and say that we don't want to do anything that could go possibly wrong, then we'll make sure it goes wrong," he said.

US services sector shrinks first time since Great Recession

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, MAY 5

THE US services sector contracted for first time in nearly 10-1/2-years in April as orders plunged, which could strengthen economists' views that the economy would struggle to rebound from the novel coronavirus-driven recession.

The ISM said its non-manufacturing activity index fell to 41.8 last month, the first contraction since December 2009 — the height of the Great Recession. REUTERS

Indices turn lower as early gains fizzle out, oil rises 10%

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 5

DOMESTIC SHARES gave up gains in the last hour of trade on Tuesday due to broad-based selling in banking, financial services and FMCG stocks. This came after a German top court said the European Central Bank's bond-buying programme or quantitative easing programme did not respect the "principle of proportionality". The market perceived this development as negative for risky assets like equities.

The 50-share index Nifty declined by 87.9 points or 0.9 per cent to close at 9,205.6, while the benchmark SENSEX fell 261.8 points or 0.8 per cent to close at 31,453.5.

The Nifty 50, which had topped the 9,400 mark during the day's trading session, erased its gains to-

wards the last hour of the trading session.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued to remain net sellers on Tuesday, pulling out \$139.98 million from Indian equities.

Meanwhile, markets globally were soaring with Asian bourses extending the gains of Dow Jones' previous day rally. Stock markets in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong were up between 0.3 per cent and 1 per cent.

Bourses in China and South Korea were closed on Tuesday. European markets also had a strong opening with bourses in the UK, France and Germany trading 1.2-1.5 per cent higher.

At 12:51 p.m. ET the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 339.42 points, or 1.43 per cent, at 24,089.18. Brent crude rose \$2.77, or 10.2 per cent, to \$29.97 a barrel by 11:30 a.m. EDT. FE WITH REUTERS

MCA permits cos to hold AGMs online

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

COMPANIES WILL now be able to hold annual general meetings through video conferencing or other audio-visual means (OAVM), the Corporate Affairs Ministry announced on Tuesday.

The move is aimed at allowing companies to conduct business while maintaining social distancing norms and abiding by restrictions on movement put in place to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

HC sets aside temporary bail of former IL&FS vice chairman

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 5

THE BOMBAY High Court on Tuesday cancelled temporary bail granted by a Sessions Court to Hari Sankaran, former Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) vice chairman in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A single-judge Bench of Justice C V Bhadang heard a plea via videoconference filed by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), challenging the order passed by the court on April 28 granting Sankaran temporary bail

Ex-IL&FS vice chairman Hari Sankaran was arrested by SFIO in connection with alleged irregularities at the group

of 75 days. Sankaran was arrested by the SFIO last April in connection with alleged irregularities that resulted in a default crisis at the group. Citing ill-health and old age, Sankaran moved for interim bail before the special court.

Advocate Hiten Venegaonkar for the SFIO submitted that the HC

last month set aside criminal proceedings against former IL&FS officials, but had stayed its order for a period of eight weeks for SFIO to appeal before the Supreme Court.

Senior Counsel Aabad Ponda, for Sankaran, said considering age and high risk for COVID-19 to his client, temporary bail should be granted. Justice Bhadang set aside the Sessions Court order and directed the trial court to hear and pass its final order on Sankaran's regular bail plea within six weeks.

Justice Dangre also rejected bail to Ramchand Karunakaran, former MD at IL&FS Transportation Networks.

US trade gap rises to \$44.4 bn

WASHINGTON, MAY 5

WASHINGTON: The US Commerce Department reported Tuesday that the gap between what the United States sells and what it buys abroad widened 11.6 per cent in March to \$44.4 billion from \$39.8 billion in February. AP

net marketable debt, assuming an end-of-June cash balance of \$800 billion, an official statement said on Monday. PTI

BRIEFLY

Centre extends e-way bill validity

New Delhi: The government extended validity of e-way bills till May 31 for all those e-way bills which were generated on or before March 24 and had its expiry till April 15. The government also extended the due date for GST annual return for 2018-19 to September 30 from June 30.

COVID hits SBI corporate centre

Mumbai: Two SBI employees working at its building in Nariman Point were infected with coronavirus. The building has been vacated. ENS

EPFO releases total ₹764 cr

New Delhi: EPFO said it has disbursed Rs 764 crore to 65 lakh pensioners for April.

Cut-off time for mutual funds

New Delhi: SEBI has extended reduced cut-off time for subscription and redemption of MFs till further notice. PTI

Trump nominates Indian-Americans

Washington: US President Donald Trump has nominated Indian-American diplomat Manisha Singh as envoy to the OECD. He nominated Ashok Michael Pinto as a representative to the IBRD. REUTERS



I'm more looking to the Australian Open than what happens later this year. I see 2020 as practically lost. My feeling, and I say it with sadness and I won't lie to you, is that we are losing a year of our lives. And at 33 or 34 years old that is much more valuable than at 20.

RAFAEL NADAL

Masked man wins toilet roll trophy

Hanfmann takes grand prize in Germany as tennis takes tentative steps back through exhibition events

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, MAY 5

YANNICK HANFMANN is all smiles as he reaches out to accept his trophy. It's a roll of toilet paper with a tennis ball on top that has the number '1' marked in black – handed over by an official wearing a mask and gloves. In sport, trophies can tell a great deal about the era and circumstance in which the victory was achieved. This one is no different.

While sport, and in many places, life itself, has been forced into a standstill by the pandemic, there are certain pockets in the world where conditions have improved, and some activity is allowed. The German state of Rhineland-Pfalz is one such place. Relaxation in the lockdown meant that the BASE Tennis Academy in the town of Höhr-Grenzhausen could host the four-day Tennis Point Exhibition Series – an eight-man event where Hanfmann emerged the winner after beating former world no. 64 Dustin Brown (the biggest name in the draw) in the final.

But with these being extraordinary times, a lot of safety measures had to be put in place. To minimise contact, there were no line judges (just the chair umpire and players making their own calls), no ball kids to hand over balls or towels, not even a spectator in the stands.

"You can only remove your mask when you get onto court. The coin toss is different because we cannot be near the umpire or other player, so the umpire is at the net and we players stand at the T service line. Once the match ends, there is no handshake. You pack your bag, wear your mask and leave the court," world no. 354 Benjamin Hassan told *The Indian Express*. "The atmosphere is so different. It's not difficult to play without ball kids, because we are used to it from our junior days. Only the silence has been difficult to get used to."

Once players leave the court, organisers enter and disinfect the umpire's chair and players' benches. Off court too, there's a great deal of procedure to be followed – all of it crucial for the tournament, the largest exhibition event to take place since



Yannick Hanfmann (left) won the eight-man Tennis Point Exhibition Series event, beating former world no. 64 Dustin Brown in the final. AP

Rapid planning

It was during the planning phase itself that players – almost all of whom live within 100 km of the venue – were informed about the possibility of playing in the event. All that remained was the easing of the lockdown and the local government's permission – which came a week before the Friday start. Once that came through, organisers had to work quickly to prepare the venue.

"Before the tournament started, we were locked out for 37-38 days. So, the first thing we had to do was disinfect the whole building. We had to redesign the floor plan and measure the paces in the centre and divide it so everybody had the safe distance required. We had to measure and mark. We take everyone's temperature at the entrance," Herrera says.

The locker rooms, too, had to undergo changes and screens were erected to divide area and create a 'box'.

"We all have our own player's box so we don't come in contact," says Hassan, who

finished sixth overall. "We can only take off our mask when we're in the box. We can't see each other from there, but can still talk. But if we want to see each other, we have to leave the box and wear the mask."

Additionally, the players had to remain in quarantine for 14 days prior to the event. Meanwhile, the government sent its officials to the venue on the first day to see if everything was in order. For Herrera though, the government's involvement is welcome because it sends the message that the tournament has passed all health checks. But it also keeps everyone on their toes.

"This is still a very serious matter and we have a responsibility because we are the first ones to show that this (sort of tournament) can be done, and be done in a safe way. We cannot relax," he says.

On April 18, on a tennis court at a private residence in Bradenton, Florida, the first ever 'tournament' during the lockdown phase took place, with world no. 121 (former 33) Paolo Lorenzi headlining the four-man event. More events are expected to take place in the coming weeks though.

Again in Florida, a men's four-player event is to take place – between world no. 8 Matteo Berrettini and American trio Tennis Sandgren, Reilly Opelka and Tommy Paul, followed by a four-player women's event contested by world no. 19 Alison Riske, Amanda Anisimova, Danielle Collins and Ajla Tomljanovic.

Serena Williams' coach Patrick Mouratoglou is scheduled to organise an exhibition match between world no. 10 David Goffin and no. 103 Alexei Popyrin at his academy in Nice, France and Rafael Nadal too has proposed to organise an event for star players at his academy in Mallorca, Spain.

Meanwhile in Höhr-Grenzhausen, two more exhibition events are expected to take place, but it all depends on the course the pandemic takes.

"We are following the news, government documents. We are checking for updates at least three times a day. These are very uncertain times," Herrera says.

For the players though, just like Hanfmann's peculiar trophy, every event that takes place symbolises a win.

SPORTS RETURN, SLOW AND STEADY



Cardboard cutouts and dummies replaced fans during a game at Taoyuan International Baseball Stadium in Taiwan on Saturday. NYT

Korea plays ball

WITH MAJOR League Baseball in the U.S. still mulling plans on what to do about its own season, American sports network ESPN signed a contract to broadcast six Korean Baseball Organisation (KBO) games per week, starting with Tuesday's season opener between Daegu's Samsung Lions and Changwon-based NC Dinos, which the Dinos won 4-0. Korea's professional soccer leagues will kick off Friday.

UFC's fight week

ON MAY 9, the UFC will make a return with the closed-doors UFC 249 event in Jacksonville, Florida. The first major promotional sporting event making a comeback, the UFC may likely show the world the blueprint of how to hold events during the pandemic.

"In today's world, it's as safe as possible," Donald Muzzi, the chief ringside physician for the Florida State Boxing Commission, told ESPN. "We're living in a new normal... We can do closed events, limiting the amount of people. Those that are working will be practicing social distancing."

ESPN also reported that once fighters drive or fly into Jacksonville, they will undergo both the diagnostic swab as well as the antibody tests. Per an email accessed by ESPN, the UFC will check fighters everyday and take regular temperature checks.

Rory returns

FLORIDA HAS de-facto become the home of professional sport during the coronavirus pandemic. After allowing the UFC to operate in the state and hold three different events in the space of nine days, it will be providing a return for the sport of golf as well.

Rory McIlroy, the World No 1, will play with Dustin Johnson against Rickie Fowler and Matthew Woelfel in a \$4m skins game – a game that has full backing of the PGA Tour and will be played in the absence of any spectators.

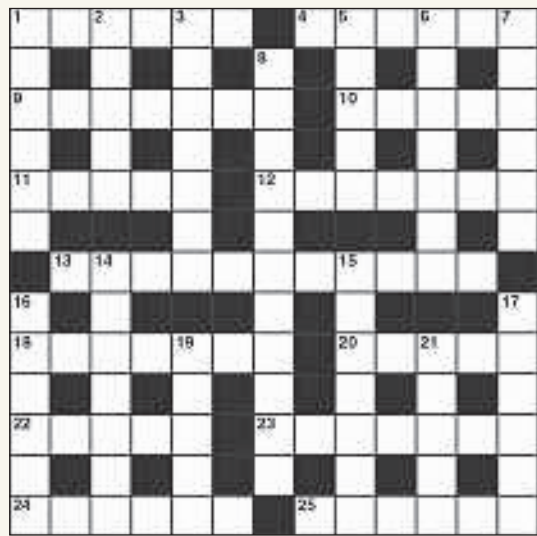
Don't hold your horses

NEXT MONDAY, horse-racing makes a return in France since being suspended on March 17. The French police have provided permission for races to be held at the ParisLongchamp. "We have had some strong support from the ministers in charge of racing – the ministers for finance and agriculture so it was more a question of local areas allowing us to proceed," said France Galop chief executive Olivier Delloye, according to BBC.

Horse-racing has continued without spectators, and with social-distancing protocols, at some tracks in the United States, Australia and Hong Kong. But now with the French allowing events to go across, Britain may follow suit as well.

SHASHANK NAIR

CROSSWORD 4110



ACROSS

- To score as a writer (6)
- Get in the way of a food container perhaps (6)
- Is it entered by shipping agent on order? (7)
- Rinse out an adhesive (5)
- Girl puts lad in turmoil (5)
- Ironing out differences before bedtime (7)
- Repairs rot in nave so felicitously (11)
- Fingers, often crossed (7)
- A nut case? (5)
- Pervasive quality of a European city (5)
- Evening work on board, perhaps (7)
- Fancy us to be stupid (6)
- No king would make him the ruler (6)

Down

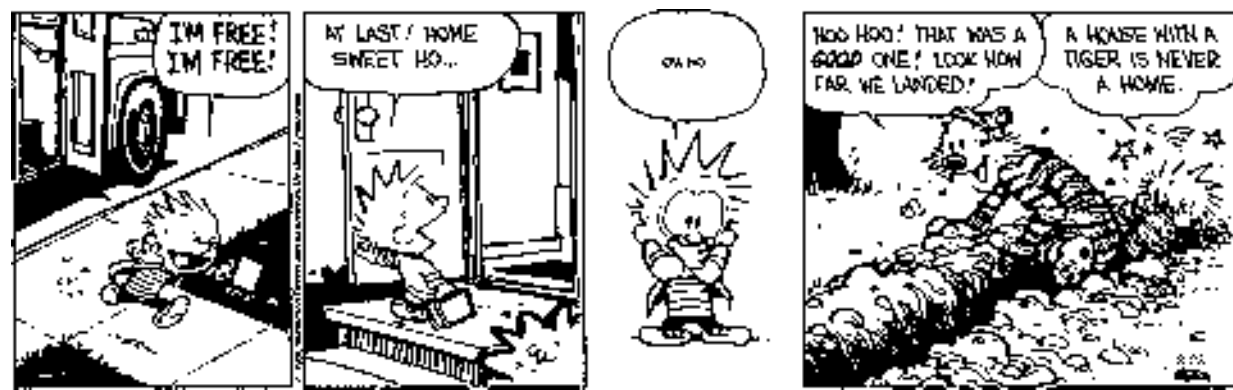
- The bench is alight (6)
- Arrest made in a dispute (3,2)
- Boasting about a number well done? (7)
- Awfully eager to share views (5)
- Overtake one on a wave of anger (7)
- Welsh fail to follow suit (6)
- Skill in manoeuvring a broad vessel (11)
- Farthest in line? (7)
- Not far out in marine navigation (7)
- Japanese ruler OK amid chaos (6)
- A quick getaway - by air? (6)
- They see through people (1-4)
- Join one in a new tune (5)

Solutions Crossword 4109: Across: 1 Forceps, 5 Laser, 8 Roulette wheel, 9 Shine, 10 Reserve, 11 Sights, 12 Usance, 15 Inherit, 17 Bowls, 19 Hard-boiled egg, 20 Sisal, 21 Settles. Down: 1 Fares, 2 Rousing chorus, 3 Everest, 4 Suture, 5 Lawns, 6 Steering wheel, 7 Relieve, 11 Sights, 13 Subject, 14 Stairs, 16 Rebel, 18 Sagas.

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.

An error is the more... the mere... it contains. - Henri-Frédéric Amiel (9...5)

BAERR



ERSNUU



TOUTS



IINDGH



SUDOKU 4201

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 4200



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