

LG CHEM PLANT WAS READY TO REOPEN AFTER EASING OF LOCKDOWN

10 dead in gas leak at Vizag LG factory

Leak not plugged yet, 2,000 people in 5-km radius affected, 200 in hospital

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, MAY 7

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



AT LEAST 10 people were killed and nearly 350 hospitalised after gas leaked from a chemical factory on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh in the wee hours of Thursday, while it was being prepared for reopening after the easing of the lockdown.

At least 2,000 people in five villages located in a 5-km radius around the factory owned by the multinational LG Chem were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



A child being rushed to hospital in Visakhapatnam, hours after the gas leak on Thursday. AP

Last May, company told state: don't have green nod

AASHISH ARYAN & PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE VISAKHAPATNAM unit of LG Polymers India, where a gas leak killed at least 10 people and left several injured, did not have an environmental clearance for its petrochemical plant for a substantial period of its operations between 1997 and 2019, according to documents accessed by *The Indian Express*.

In an affidavit submitted to the State Level Environment

Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), the company admitted that as of May 10, 2019, the unit did not have a "valid environmental clearance substantiating the produced quantity, issued by the competent authority for continuing operations".

It also acknowledged that it had expanded the production at the plant "beyond the limit of environmental clearance or changed the product mix without obtaining prior environmental clearance as mandated under the EIA notification, 2006".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

LOCKDOWN DAY 44
CASES: 52,952
RECOVERED: 15,266
DEATHS: 1,783
TESTS: 13,57,413
DOUBLING RATE: 16.08**



KEY STATES TO WATCH	TOTAL CASES	SURGEIN 24 HRS	3-DAY AVG. GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**
■ Maharashtra	16,758	1,233	4.84%	14.86
■ Gujarat	6,625	380	4.51%	15.97
■ Delhi	5,532	428	4.14%	17.39
■ Tamil Nadu	4,829	771	10.80%	6.67
■ Rajasthan	3,224	129	2.45%	29.36
■ West Bengal	1,456	112	4.97%	14.50

* Computed Daily Growth Rate over last 3 days ** Calculated over 3 days' growth

CONCERN Gujarat: No. 2 in cases, very high case-fatality ratio
CAUTION Punjab: Nanded pilgrims continue to test positive
A GLIMMER Bihar: Dip in growth of cases over last 4 days

Based on data released by Union Ministry of Health and ICMR on May 7
The six states above account for almost 73% of the national case load

First flights land in Kerala with 363 from UAE

Passengers arrive in Kochi and Kozhikode, kept in quarantine

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 7

INDIA ON Thursday launched one of its biggest evacuation exercises, bringing back the first batch of expatriates stranded overseas amid the COVID-19 shutdown. At 10.20 pm, an Air India Express flight from Abu Dhabi landed in Kerala's Kochi international airport with 177 passengers and four children.

Minutes later, in North Kerala's Kozhikode airport, another flight landed from Dubai with 177 passengers and five children.

India had earlier announced that as part of Phase 1 of an evacuation plan titled 'Vande Bharat Mission', 64 flights and three Navy ships would be operated to bring home nearly 15,000 Indians stranded overseas.

On Thursday, passengers who landed in Kochi and Kozhikode came home to an unusual welcome. Instead of crowds of relatives thronging the arrivals gate, they were greeted by officials and health workers who stood in PPE gear in the disinfected terminal.

The passengers were ushered in batches into a triage area, where they were made to undergo mandatory health screening. Those symptomatic will be shifted to Covid hospitals while the asymptomatic will be moved to institutional quarantine centres for 14 days in their home districts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Passengers arrive from Abu Dhabi at the Kochi international airport, Thursday night. Courtesy: Air India Express

Orissa HC on returning migrants: Only those who test negative can return

SAMPAD PATNAIK
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 7

THE ORISSA High Court on Thursday said only those migrants who test negative for COVID-19 should be allowed into the state, forcing the state government to immediately cancel permission given to other states, including Gujarat, to transport stranded labourers

by train.

A bench of Justices S Panda and K R Mohapatra, while hearing a petition on the return of migrants, said, "State government should ensure that all the migrants who are in queue to come to Odisha should be tested negative of COVID-19 before boarding the conveyance".

The order is expected to disrupt the return of thousands of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Karnataka to restart trains for migrants, but many start walking

AMRITA DUTTA & JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, MAY 7

A DAY after its decision to stop train services for stranded migrant workers came under severe criticism, the BJP government in Karnataka on Thursday decided to resume train services.

By then, Chandrabhushan Sahani, 24, a worker at a con-

struction firm in Hebbal, north Bengaluru, had started walking. With Rs 300 in his pocket and his phone at 90 per cent charge, both of which he hoped would last him on the 2,100-km-long journey home. On Thursday afternoon, Sahani began walking on NH-44 highway, towards Hyderabad, hoping to reach his home in Siddharth Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Delhi to peak in June-July, says Covid panel chief

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE CAPITAL is likely to see a "peak" in coronavirus cases in June-July, said the doctor heading the coronavirus response committee formed by the Chief Minister on Thursday, as Delhi recorded 448 fresh cases. This is the third day in a row that Delhi has witnessed 400-plus cases.

Of the 5,980 cases in the capital, 1,431 have been reported since the beginning of this week. Sixty-six people have succumbed to the virus so far.

"The number is expected to stay between 400-500 cases a day for around the next 10 days. This is the natural course of a virus. These are the patients who were infected 10 days ago and are now developing symptoms of the disease. The number of cases is also higher as Delhi has immensely increased testing facilities across the state. The peak season in Delhi is likely to come in June-July where we might

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INSIDE

W.H.O. TRIAL: INDIAN HOSPITALS TO HELP FIND CURE
PAGE 4

In Gujarat, over 1,200 cases in three days

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, RAJKOT, VADODARA, SURAT, MAY 7

WITH 383 new cases, the number of confirmed infections of novel coronavirus in Gujarat has crossed the 7,000-mark Thursday — more than 1,200 cases were added in the last three days. Twenty-nine deaths were also reported from the state, taking the total toll to 425.

Gujarat has the second highest number of cases and deaths in the country, after Maharashtra. And just as Mumbai contributes a bulk of the cases as well as deaths in Maharashtra, an overwhelming number in Gujarat has been reported from Ahmedabad.

On Thursday, 275 of the 383 new cases were in Ahmedabad,

which accounts for 71 per cent of all cases in the state. Mumbai accounts for 63 per cent of all cases in Maharashtra.

The new cases in Ahmedabad included five doctors on Covid duty and the 26 employees of Cadilla Pharmaceuticals Ltd in Dholka that had to be closed down. Ahmedabad city remains under a complete lockdown till May 15, with paramilitary forces deployed in containment zones.

Among those who tested positive were two doctors of Jamnagar who were on deputation at the Ahmedabad civil hospital. "Total 18 resident doctors and six faculty members of MP Shah Government Medical College were tested for COVID-19 in Ahmedabad after they completed their week-long

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Quarantine, tests long over, 3,000 Tabligh members still not released

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

OVER 3,000 members of the Tablighi Jamaat remain confined at different quarantine centres in Delhi despite testing negative for COVID-19 and completing the mandatory quarantine period.

And for reasons not explained, the Delhi Health Department has written twice to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs — on April 17 and May 3 — seeking "directions and protocols" on their release, saying they "have not only tested negative but also completed more than 28 days of stay in hospitals/quarantine facilities".

On Thursday, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain told reporters that the Tablighi Jamaat members could not be released earlier, despite completion of their quarantine period, due to the total lockdown till May 3.

"If police have to act against anyone, it is free to do so. Otherwise, those who are in quarantine and those who were posi-

tive and have now tested negative, should be released," Jain said.

Asked why they were stopped from leaving after the quarantine period, Jain said: "It was due to the lockdown. There was absolute lockdown till May 3 when all kinds of movement were restricted. Now those stranded can be shifted and this is why these people, who are also stranded, should be shifted."

A March gathering of the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin in Delhi has been blamed by health authorities for the spread of Covid cases across the country.

FIRs have been registered in Delhi and different parts of the country in this regard. Some members of the Tablighi Jamaat, who travelled to India from different countries, have been booked for alleged violation of visa conditions — authorities say they came on tourist visas but attended a religious congregation.

Jain said the Delhi government has reached out to other states with lists of Tablighi Jamaat members under

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

How a false ceiling nailed most wanted militant

BASHAARAT MASOOD & ADIL AKHZAR
SRINAGAR, MAY 7



Naikoo was killed in an encounter in south Kashmir

A DAY after Riyaz Ahmad Naikoo, one of the most wanted militants in the Valley, was killed in an encounter, J&K police sources said he was found hiding in an attic of a house in Beighpora, his home village in South Kashmir.

Giving details of the joint operation by security forces that

led to the killing of Naikoo, police sources said the Hizbul Mujahideen commander was hiding in the attic that had been covered with a false ceiling.

A police officer who entered

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THE WORLD



25% U.S. WORKERS WITHOUT JOBS, 3.2 MN MORE FILE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AID

CHINA DOWNGRADES RISK LEVELS ACROSS ALL REGIONS

PAGE 10

MP takes a leap in easing labour laws, allows 72-hour working week, overtime

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, MAY 7

IN THE MIDST of its fight against Covid-19, Madhya Pradesh on Thursday announced a slew of reforms in labour laws to give employers more freedom to operate. These include changing contract labour conditions, allowing third party inspections, allowing workers to work up to 72 hours a week if they are willing and are paid

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED More investment means more revenue

EXEMPTING factories and industrial units from adhering to multiple labour laws will help Madhya Pradesh attract more businesses to invest in the state. The proposed relaxations will help units hire more workers, increase work hours, and simultaneously keep inspectors at bay. Eventually, this will attract more investment, and help generate not just jobs, but also more tax revenues.

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

'Would not have accepted (RS seat)...nobody would offer it to me'

January 2018 press conference wasn't a good idea, SC didn't come out better (in the sexual harassment allegations against ex-CJI), says Justice Deepak Gupta

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

NOT THAT anybody would offer him that, but he would not have accepted the Government's offer of a Rajya Sabha seat; the Supreme Court hasn't "come out better" after the allegations of sexual harassment against former Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi; the January 2018 press confer-

ence by SC judges "was not a good idea," cases involving "big money and "fancy law firms" seem to get priority in listing, Supreme Court judge Justice Deepak Gupta, who retired Wednesday after a three-year stint, spoke to *The Indian Express*.

Before retirement, some Supreme Court judges take a stand on whether they will accept post-retirement jobs

from the government. What are your views?

I will not accept any offers from the government. There are some tribunals that are required by law to be manned by ex-SC judges and somebody has to be appointed to these posts but it is not for me. You have to distinguish short-term assignments for the SC to head committees etc from government appointments. That has been my judicial



Justice Deepak Gupta retired on Wednesday

and personal view. Would nomination to the Rajya Sabha by the President,



as in the case of former CJ Ranjan Gogoi, qualify as a post-retirement job offered by the government?

In my view, it does. I would not have accepted it. Although I think nobody would offer it to me in the first place.

Justice Gogoi said he would act as a bridge between the executive and judiciary in his stint as a parliamentarian. Your comment?

The bridge between the executive and the judiciary exists. It is the Chief Justice. When I was the Chief Justice in high courts, I have dealt with Chief Ministers on various issues.

You have been very vocal on protecting the right to

dissent and have said that there are no holy cows when it comes to dissent. How do you see the expression of dissent amongst judges in January 12, 2018 press conference?

I was not in Delhi and was travelling abroad when it happened. But when I got to know about it, I was very perturbed. Going to the press was not a good idea and the institution is always bigger than any individual. My personal view is that they (Justices Ranjan Gogoi, J Chelameswar, Kurian Joseph and Madan Lokur) should have settled whatever issues within

the system. However, having said that, I think that the CJ must also be receptive to talking to all the judges.

During your tenure, were there any formal consultations among judges on these controversial issues concerning the judiciary?

No. No CJ called for a full-court on these issues. We hardly had any full-court meetings except for fixing calendars and designating senior advocates. There was a request made to former CJ Dipak Misra once but it did not happen.

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BLACK DEATH: THE GREAT PLAGUE THAT KILLED MILLIONS—AND FEUDALISM

The black death, caused by Yersinia Pestis, the same bacterium that caused the Justinian Plague in the sixth century, played out as the biggest tragedy of medieval Europe. However, it was a boon for some—serfs who were bound to provide labour to landlords in exchange for allowing them to live and work in their lands.



VIDEO OF THE DAY

KALLAYI RIVER IN KERALA

The river's water quality has seen a dramatic improvement



THE LOCKDOWN

MUMBAI'S LOCAL TRAIN PILOTS

This is the first time that the train pilots are on such a long break

EXPRESS AUDIO

Why MSMEs are the worst hit by the lockdown

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In today's episode of the 3 Things podcast, we look at why the MSME sector is the worst hit and the measures the government can take to revive it

FROM PAGE ONE

Orissa HC

migrants, some of whom are on their way to the state. Five trains that were to leave from Friday with migrant workers from Surat to Odisha have been cancelled.

Surat District Collector Dhaval Patel said, "We got information from Odisha government officials that they have cancelled the NOC (no-objection certificate). As per High Court orders, all passengers should be tested negative and then they should be sent to Odisha. It is impossible for the local administration to carry out medical test of such a large number of passengers."

Patel said that over 500 people are tested for coronavirus in Surat everyday. With 799 cases as on Thursday, Surat is a hotspot and has the second highest number of cases in Gujarat.

According to Odisha's Information and Public Relations Department, Ganjam district saw a spike in coronavirus cases after 17 people who returned from Surat tested positive. Odisha's coronavirus count reached 219 on Thursday evening.

Nearly three lakh workers, mostly from Odisha's Ganjam district, work in diamond cutting and textile units in Gujarat's Surat. They started coming back to Odisha after the Centre allowed movement of migrant labourers during the ongoing lockdown. The first train from Surat to Odisha was flagged off on May 2, and 16 trains have left for Odisha from Surat carrying 19,200 people.

(With ENS Gujarat)

Tabligh

quarantine - not one had been released until Thursday.

States like Uttar Pradesh started the process of returning stranded people and migrant workers even before the Centre came out with guidelines on their return.

In its May 3 letter to the MHA - it was in continuation of a letter on April 17 - the Delhi Health Department also mentioned "mounting pressure" on the government to release the Tablighi Jamaat members.

"Since a month has already passed after the completion of Markaz evacuation exercise, the persons shifted from these masjids to various hospitals and quarantine facilities are restless to go back to their respective states/countries. As on today, all the 3,013 persons have not only tested negative but also completed more than 28 days of stay in hospitals/quarantine facilities." "Administration is having a tough time convincing these persons for their extended stay, more so during the holy month of Ramadan," Delhi Health Secretary Padmini Singla wrote to the Additional Secretary (UT), MHA.

"Department is receiving requests from various states for their release. We are not in receipt of any order of MHA regarding the same in response of our earlier letter as mentioned above. The earlier orders of MHA issued on the release of quarantined persons returning from foreign locations was followed scrupulously. Now in the light of above-mentioned facts, you are kindly requested to issue requisite directions/protocols for the same immediately as there is a mounting pressure on the government," Singla wrote.

It is not clear why the Delhi Health Department sought a specific protocol on the release of the Tablighi Jamaat members. Singla did not respond to requests for comments.

In his interaction with reporters, Jain did not refer to any absence of protocol in releasing them.

Of the 3,013 at the quarantine centres, 567 are foreign nationals and 2,446 Indians. Of the Indian nationals, 191 belong to Delhi. The government had evacuated around 2,346 persons from the

10 dead as gas leaks from Vizag factory

affected, with several falling unconscious with breathing difficulties. Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Rajiv Kumar Meena said at least two people died accidentally, one falling into a well and another off a two-storey building, as they tried to escape the pungent-smelling styrene gas. "Officials evacuated the villages once it was ascertained that the gas was non-poisonous. All the people admitted in hospitals are stable," he said.

The LG factory, a polymers manufacturing unit located 15 km from Visakhapatnam, was set to reopen on Thursday and around 20 workers were preparing for it when the gas started leaking. PTI reported sources as saying that the moment the gas leaked, the workers followed an established protocol and were not among those affected.

The dead included two children. While over 1,000 people were brought to various hospitals, only 346 remained admitted by evening, of whom 20 required ventilator support. The gas leak has not been fully plugged yet.

Originally established in 1961 as Hindustan Polymers to manufacture polystyrene, the factory was taken over by South Korea-based LG Chem in 1997, which renamed it as LG Polymers Limited. The factory manufactures general-purpose, high-impact and expandable polystyrene, as well as engineering plastics compounds, and employs around 300 people.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan

Mohan Reddy, who rushed to Visakhapatnam and met some of those hospitalised, questioned why the alarms in the factory had not gone off when the gas leaked. An FIR has been registered against the factory and an inquiry started.

Industries Minister M Goutham Reddy said guidelines have been issued to all industries regarding safe reopening of factories. "Our initial information is that workers were checking a gas storage tank when it started leaking."

The officials struggled to contain the gas leak for nearly four hours. Visakhapatnam Collector V Vinay Chand said all the five villages had been evacuated. "The situation was very serious till 6 am as the gas leaked till then. Now, it has eased a bit and we are able to go into the affected villages. A large number of animals, including pet dogs, livestock and birds, have died."

LG said the leak had been noticed by company staff who were inspecting machines to restart the factory, and that they had raised an alarm. It said none of its employees were among the dead, and that it was cooperating with Indian authorities to help the residents and its employees.

The gas leakage is now under control. We are investigating the extent of damage and the exact cause of the leak and deaths," it said in a statement.

The people living in nearby areas first realised what was happening when police vans went around the area at about 3

am, sounding sirens and asking people to come out. Officers said they had to break into many homes as the residents were either fast asleep or may have fainted due to the gas.

A villager talked about waking up to cries for help. Visuals of people gasping for breath as they staggered to safety, of parents carrying unconscious children, and of several fainting, evoked memories of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy and led to panic.

Police and NDRF teams rescued the factory workers. A team from the naval base in Visakhapatnam also helped with the rescue, bringing 50 breathing apparatuses. Apart from breathing trouble, people complained of rashes and burning eyes. Officials said that due to Covid-19 preparations, dozens of ambulances and ventilators were readily available.

With the gas still not fully dispersed, the evacuees may not be able to return home for two more days. A defusing material is being transported from Gujarat.

The gas leak also impacted the movement of trains from Visakhapatnam, including at least nine Shramik Special Trains taking migrants to various places. Staff at SCMN Station in the city experienced burning in the eyes and suffocation. Train movement was stopped across SCMN from 8.35 am to 12 noon.

The Andhra government has announced ex-gratia of Rs 1 crore each for families of the de-

ceased, besides a compensation package for those affected and those who have lost livestock.

The Centre has decided to dispatch a CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) Emergency Team of the NDRF from Pune, which specialises in handling chemical disasters.

12 months ago, company told state: no green clearance

The company had then also undertaken that it would not "repeat any such violation in future".

Furthermore, the company's plans to expand the unit last year was classified as a 'Category A' project for which a "prior environmental clearance" from the Union Ministry of Environment was required. However, the company filed for clearance with the Andhra Pradesh State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority, which in June 2019, transferred the proposal to the Centre.

According to information sourced from the Union Environment Ministry, the company's proposal was delisted from the environmental clearance portal in November 2019 saying that "it seems that the PP (company) is not interested to continue the project".

LG Polymers, which had in 1997 bought the plant from McDowell & Company, applied for an environmental clearance for the plant from Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board in May 2019 when it wanted to expand its capacity from 415 tonnes per day (TPD) to 655 TPD. The unit manufactures poly-

styrene and expandable polystyrene using imported styrene. It also reprocessed primary plastics into engineering plastics.

Questions sent to the LG Chemical's Visakhapatnam unit, its parent company in South Korea, as well as Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board elicited no response.

In a statement issued Thursday in Seoul, LG Chem, the parent company of LG Polymers, said the gas leak was under control and that the company was cooperating with authorities. "...the leaked gas can cause nausea and dizziness, so we are investing every effort to ensure proper treatment is provided swiftly," it said. "We are investigating the extent of damage and the exact cause of the leak and deaths."

outsskirts of the city, found itself between populace over time as the city expanded. After taking over the company from McDowell & Company, LG Polymers decided to continue making polystyrene and expandable polystyrene, albeit from imported styrene. The company had received a consent for establishment and consent for operation of the unit in November 2001 and May 2002, respectively.

According to the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules 1989, styrene is classified as a "hazardous and toxic chemical". Styrene monomer, which was being used at the manufacturing plant to produce expandable plastics, needs to be stored at a temperature below 17 degrees Centigrade.

While the investigations are underway regarding the accident, a possible reason could be that during the shutdown of the plant due to Covid-19, styrene gas was not being stored at the appropriate temperature, causing pressure to build up in the storage chamber and that led to the valve to break, resulting in the gas leakage.

Earlier, McDowell & Company, which used to operate the unit between 1982 and 1997, had, prior to selling the unit to LG Polymers, decided to decommission the production of styrene and alcohol-based distillery, considering the plant's "proximity to populated areas".

The plant, located on the

this virtual world?

Even without Covid, we should have used technology better but we have not. This is a great opportunity to shift to video-conferencing certain cases, especially those in pre-trial stages. For example, remand hearings of under-trials, service of cases can all be done virtually. I see no reason why the SC hearings should not be live-streamed. Video-conferencing has its benefits even for judges. The unnecessary theatrics of lawyers will also reduce.

Some judges, including Justice Gogoi, have referred to this aspect of lawyers allegedly trying to browbeat judges. Is that what you are referring to as theatrics?

Gujarat

deputation to Ahmedabad civil hospital. Out of them, samples of two asymptomatic resident doctors - one male and one female - returned positive for COVID-19. Three others are equivocal and they will be tested further," said Dr Nandini Desai, medical superintendent of GG General Hospital

UAE flight

However, pregnant women, the elderly, children below 10 and the indisposed have been allowed to travel to their homes, where they will have to stay under strict home quarantine. There were around 60 pregnant women in the first two flights.

Airport authorities said baggage will be handed over to passengers only after strict disinfection procedures - a spray of sodium hypochlorite, followed by exposure to ultraviolet rays by passing the luggage through two tunnels. The ultraviolet disinfection system, developed by DRDO, was recently installed at Kochi airport.

After passengers get their luggage, they will be grouped according to their home districts, before being taken to quarantine centres there in special buses.

Delhi peak

witness a surge in cases. The aim is to keep mortality rate low, which Delhi is maintaining so far," Dr SK Sarin, who heads the Delhi government's Covid response panel and is also the head of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences.

A total of 77,234 people have been tested in the city so far. Based on the committee's assessment of the capital's health infrastructure, three scenarios had been envisaged: Stage 1, when the capital will start reporting 100 cases in a day; Stage 2 with 500 cases a day; and Stage 3, where 1,000 cases or more will be reported in a single day. The capital appears set to enter Stage 2, especially against the backdrop of relaxations in the lockdown.

As per the panel's assessment, once Delhi starts recording 500 cases a day, the requirement of personal protective equipment kits will shoot up to 1,500-2,000 a day. There should be 50 beds with ventilators, 125 ICU facilities and about 325 beds with oxygen support, the committee has noted.

"As of now, we are prepared for Stage 2 as well. If there are 500 cases reported in a day, then 20% of them, that is 100 people, will need hospitalisation. So, if the trend continues for five consecutive days, 500 people will be hospitalised over a period of time. The estimates given by the committee to the government seem to be under control as of now," said Dr Sarin.

Karnataka

"We will reach Hyderabad, and then somehow if they let us cross the state border, we will keep going. I need to keep speaking to my mother and wife at home. I am worried about running out of charge. So I am using it sparingly," he said. With him were a group of 23 fellow workers at the same construction site, all from UP's Siddharth Nagar and Gorakhpur districts.

They were among several groups of migrant labourers in Bengaluru who set off on foot for their home states, after the state government halted train services for migrants on Wednesday.

As the government reversed its decision, the state revenue secretary wrote to the governments of other states, asking them to prepare for the arrival of migrants.

"Once the train schedules are fixed, then workers will be brought from construction sites to the place of departure of trains. They will be taken to railway stations and will be put on trains going to their states," said Karnataka Education Minister S Suresh Kumar.

But Sahani, who worked as a painter at the Hebbal construction company, isn't waiting for the trains to start. "There is nothing for us here. We have not been getting food, nor money," he said.

MP labour laws

overtime, and introducing compensating provisions to reduce industrial disputes.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the reforms would attract new industries, create jobs for youths, and the unemployed workers, by creating a positive atmosphere for investment. He said MP was the first state to usher in this revolution by amending laws that are within its ambit.

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NMDC Limited

(A Government of India Enterprise)
Donimalai Complex, Donimalai Township PO, Sandur Taluk, Ballari Dist, Karnataka State, Pin - 583118

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Dt: 08/05/2020

Sealed tenders are inviting from the competent and experienced bidder for the following works:

S No	Tender No & date	Name of Work	Cost of work	EMD (₹)	Sale/download period From-To	Last date of Submission upto 15:00Hrs
1	CE/W/5(245)/2020 DT 08/05/2020	"Assisting various miscellaneous works by deployment of Semi Skilled laborers to attend work under Finance Department for the period of One Year (Job Contract Basis)" period of completion for work: 12 months (Including Rainy Season from July to October).	11.52 Lakhs	11,520/-	08/05/2020 To 08/06/2020	08/06/2020
2	DNM / ES/ KIOM/ ILLUM-NHR/ 2019-23/OTE DT 09/05/2020	Illumination of New Haul Road at KIOM, NMDC Limited, Donimalai Complex	29.98 Lakhs	30,000/-	09/05/2020 To 08/06/2020	08/06/2020
3	DNM/PPT/ Civil/2020 Dt 08/05/2020	House Keeping/Cleaning and other peripheral works at Pellet Plant, NMDC Limited, Donimalai, Karnataka (Administration, Laboratory, First Aid, Canteen building, gardening etc)	56.64 Lakhs	57,000/-	08/05/2020 To 08/06/2020	08/06/2020
4	KIOM/V-Job Contract/2020 DT 09/05/2020	Various works at KIOM on Job Contract basis for a period of one year	51.10 Lakhs	51,100/-	09/05/2020 To 09/06/2020	09/06/2020
5	KIOM/VS-Job Contract/2020-21 Date 09/05/2020	Various sampling works at KIOM on job contract basis for a period of one year	69.94 Lakhs	69,940/-	09/05/2020 To 09/06/2020	09/06/2020
6	NMDC/Donimalai/ 20/20-21/ET/780 Dated 05/05/2020	Supply of Recon Engine on Unit Exchange scheme for BS6D170-1 BEML Dozer				26/05/2020
7	CE/W/5(238)/2020 DT 08/05/2020	Cleaning of PWD Road in Township for a period of one year (Job contract basis)	37.94 Lakhs	37,944/-	11/05/2020 To 10/06/2020	10/06/2020
8	CE/W/13(570)/2020 DT 08/05/2020	Assistance works in attending Housekeeping works, Office works and other various miscellaneous works at Administrative Building including sanitation materials for a period of one year (Job contract basis)	24.41 Lakhs	24,450/-	12/05/2020 To 11/06/2020	11/06/2020
9	KIOM/ HOUSEKEEPING/ 2020 DT 09/05/2020	Housekeeping work at KIOM Plant for a period of one year	56.33 Lakhs	56,500/-	09/05/2020 To 09/06/2020	09/06/2020

Further clarification, tender related Sl. No. 01, 07, 08 may contact diomcivil@nmdc.co.in, Sl. 02 may contact diomelectrical@nmdc.co.in; Sl. 03 may contact maswamy@nmdc.co.in; Sl. 04 and 05 may contact kiom.nmdc@gmail.com; Sl. No. 9 may contact arindam210990@nmdc.co.in

For Sl. No. 01 to 05 and 07 to 09; The detailed NIT and tender documents can be viewed and/or downloaded from NMDC's website <https://www.nmdc.co.in/nmdctender/default.aspx> or Central Public Procurement Portal <https://www.eprocure.gov.in>.

For Sl. 06 of above work; Prospective bidders may download the tender documents from website <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/eprochome/nmdc/>, <https://www.nmdc.co.in/nmdctender/default.aspx>, <https://www.eprocure.gov.in> and upload their offer on the mstcecommerce website portal as per instructions provided in tender documents. All prospective bidders are requested to visit the above mentioned MSTC website regularly for any corrigendum in this regard.

Further, for any corrigendum, amendment, clarification... etc may please follow the above website.

For and on behalf of NMDC Limited
JGM (Prod.)

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU TIRUMANGALAM MUNICIPALITY

2nd CORRIGENDUM NOTICE
Date: 05.05.2020

In view of extension of the Nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19, the following 2nd corrigendum is issued in continuation of Tender ROC No:223/2020/E1, Dated: 29.01.2020 for Notice Inviting Request For Qualification (RFQ) for the construction of New Bus Stand in Tirumangalam Municipality on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis.

Tender Reference and Name of Work	Particulars	Critical Dates	
		As per the 1st Corrigendum Notice Issued on 31.03.2020	Extended date
ROC No:223/2020/E1, Dt: 29.01.2020 & 31.03.2020	Pre Bid Meeting Date	29.04.2020	01.06.2020
NAME OF WORK: Request For Qualification (RFQ) for the construction of New Bus Stand in Tirumangalam Municipality on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis.	Document Download/ Sale End Date	14.05.2020	11.06.2020
	Bid Submission End Date	15.05.2020 3.00 pm	12.06.2020 3.00 pm
	Bid opening Date	15.05.2020 3.30 pm	12.06.2020 3.30 pm

Commissioner (I/c), Tirumangalam Municipality

GUJARAT MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Government of Gujarat Undertaking)
Regd. Office : Block No. 14/1, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Sector-10, Gandhinagar
☎ 079-23250767, 23250766, 23250768

TENDER NOTICE: D-01/2020-2021

Tenders are invited online from reputed Manufacturers/formulators/direct importers for Purchase of **Tablet & Capsules, Injections and Miscellaneous items** on rate contract basis and details of specification, quantity is available on <https://gmscl.gujarat.gov.in> and www.statenders.com. All tender documents can be downloaded free on the website: <https://gmscl.nprocure.com> & Tender Notice. Interested bidders are requested to submit the tender through e-tender process.

Duration of Downloading of tender document (online) :- 08/05/2020 to 29/05/2020 up to 15.55 Hrs.

Last date for Submission (online): **29/05/2020** up to 18-00 HRS.
Last date for Submission of Physical document : **30/05/2020** up to 18-00 HRS
Opening of Technical Bid Date (online): **01/06/2020** At 15-00 HRS.

INF/74/20-21 MANAGING DIRECTOR

PRESS NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER(Abridged)

No. F.5(16)-Agri/EE(M)/19-20/20-21/5155-57 Dated, Matripally, the 06/05/2020

Separate sealed e-tender (web-portal:- www.tripuratenders.gov.in) are invited by the Executive Engineer(Mech), Mechanical Division, Department of Agriculture & F.W, Dutta Tilla, Matri Pally on behalf of the "Governor of Tripura" from the eligible bidder(s) for **Supply, Installation, Trial Run, Commissioning and Operational Training** of 0.5 (Half) Ton Per Hour capacity Seed Processing Plant (Based on Paddy) on "TURN KEY" basis at "Bamutiya (N.I.E.O.I No. e-04/AGRI/EE(MECH)/2020-21)", "Jumerdhepa (N.I.E.O.I No. e-05/AGRI/EE(MECH)/2020-21)", "Kakraban (N.I.E.O.I No. e-06/AGRI/EE(MECH)/2020-21)" & "Satchand (N.I.E.O.I No. e-07/AGRI/EE(MECH)/2020-21)" upto 3.00 P.M on 01/06/2020:-

Details can be seen in web portal- www.tripuratenders.gov.in and may be contacted with O/o the undersigned if desired.

Sd/-
(S.K. Bhaumik)
I/C Executive Engineer (Mech),
Mechanical Division,
Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare,
Matri Pally, Badharghat
ICA-C/200/20

महिला आर्थिक विकास महामंडळ (महामाष्ट्र शासन अंगीकृत)

Mr. Mahendra Gamare: 9892548854

Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM), A Government of Maharashtra Undertaking, invites Request for Proposals from legally-constituted consulting firms (not individual consultants) to conduct Baseline survey.

For detailed RFP document, interested bidders should visit, E-Procurement system of Govt. of Maharashtra (GoM) i.e. **Tenders Maharashtra <https://mahatenders.gov.in>**

Last Date & Time for submission of RFP: till 11.30 am of 8th June 2020.

Sd-
(MD, MAVIM)

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT

IDENTIFICATION NO: RWS&S DIVIN., PURI -01 OF 2020-21
☎(06752) 251276, Fax :- (06752) 251276
E-mail:-eerwss_puri@nic.in

The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate price bids through e-procurement in double cover system according to the norms of e-procurement system. In on-line mode from eligible contractors.

Sl. No.	Nature of work:	Contractors
1	No. of works:	01 (One)
2	Estimated Cost:	Rs 404.79 lakhs (app.)
3	Time for completion:	12 (Twelve) months
4	Cost of bidding document:	Rs.10000/-
5	Class of Contractors eligible:	A & Special
6	Availability of bids on-line:	From 17 hour of 07.05.2020 to 17.00 hours of 30.05.2020
7	Last date and time for seeking clarification:	17.00 hours of 27.05.2020
8	Date & time of opening of technical bids:	On dt 01.06.2020 at 11.00 Hours in the office of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri (All documents should be submitted in online only. No original documents should be dropped in dropping box before opening of technical bid in Division Office).
9	Date and time of opening of financial bids:	To be decided.

Further details can be seen from the website <https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
RWS&S Division, Puri

25017/11/0001/2021

PARALA MAHARAJA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

(A constituent college of Biju Patnaik University of Technology, Odisha, Rourkela)
SITALAPALLI: BERHAMPUR: DIST.-: GANJAM: PIN - 761003

No. PMEC/Estt./ 732 Date:- 07/05/2020

TENDER NOTICE (TWO BID SYSTEM)

Sealed tenders are invited for procurement of Hostel Furniture (Cot, Table & Chair), Canteen Steel Furniture (Dinning Table & Chair) and Hostel Kitchen Equipment of this college. Interested registered Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) may visit the official website of this college i.e. www.pmec.ac.in for details about Bid document and how to apply. **Interested OEMs may contact (Cell No. 7077714020) for any information.**

Sd/-
PRINCIPAL

EASTERN RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM to the Tender Notice No. OAH/21/Genl : The above mentioned tender notice : (i) 356-2019-20, (ii) 357-2019-20, (iii) 358-2019-20, (iv) 359-2019-20, (v) 360-2019-20 published earlier by Divisional Railway Manager, Howrah. Closing Date should be read as 08.06.2020 instead of 05.05.2020. All terms and conditions will remain unchanged.
(JWH-04/2020-21)

OFFLINE TENDER

9 nos. Offline Tenders are invited by HDA for supplying and providing of Isolation beds with mattress at different points in the Purba Medinipur District vide NIT No. 01/HDA/EC/2020-21 to NIT No. 09/HDA/EC/2020-21. Last date of Bid submission: 13.05.2020 upto 2-30 pm. Information in detail are available in the office.
CEO, HDA, City Centre, Post-Debhog, Haldia, Dist. Purba Medinipur.

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CORPORATE OFFICE, CHENNAI

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5 THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL

7 die, 92 new cases in last 24 hours

Total cases stand at 1,548 and deaths at 79; CMC to be 1,000-bed Covid hospital

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 7

SEVEN MORE coronavirus positive persons died in the last 24 hours in West Bengal, taking the death toll in the state to 79, according to a bulletin issued by the state health department on Thursday. If deaths where co-morbidities are a factor are considered, the count rises from 144 to 151 – one of the highest mortality rate in the country at 9.75% (taking into account co-morbid deaths).

According to the health bulletin, 92 more people tested positive since Wednesday evening, pushing up the total number of cases to 1,548. The active case count is 1,101, it added, up from 1,047. Hospitals have released 296 patients after they recovered, including 31 since Wednesday evening.

The government said till date Kolkata, Howrah and North 24 Parganas districts had reported the most infections. In Kolkata, 783 people tested positive, while in North 24 Parganas and Howrah 324 and 220 people contracted



Swab samples being taken in Kolkata, Thursday. Partha Paul

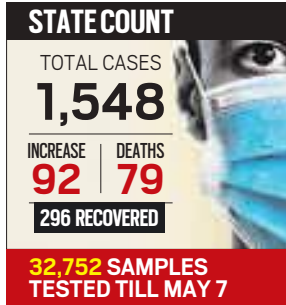
the virus

As per the health bulletin, the authorities tested 2,611 samples since Wednesday evening. In more than a month, 32,752 samples have been examined. At present, 4,757 people are still in institutional quarantine, while 9,618 people are isolated in their homes.

Meanwhile, the state health department started work to turn the Calcutta Medical College

(CMC) into a tertiary-level hospital dedicated to patients suffering from the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement.

Authorities said all doctors and nurses now working in different departments in CMC would be deployed to treat COVID-19 patients. They will have to complete a short professional training module before that. The government



is planning to make CMC a 1,000-bed facility, with a huge isolation ward and Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

On Wednesday, the Chief Minister had said: "Keeping in view the increasing need for ramping up specialised COVID-19 treatment in the state, we have decided to notify Medical College, Kolkata, as a full-fledged tertiary-level COVID Hospital, which will start functioning from May 7, 2020, onwards. The facility at Medical College, Kolkata will start with 500 beds [for both COVID and SARI] which would be scaled up as per need, in phases. This will be the 68th dedicated COVID hospital of West Bengal."

2 NAVY SAILORS TESTED FOR COVID AFTER SYMPTOMS

Kolkata: Two sailors of INS Netaji Subhas, a land-based logistics hub of the Indian Navy here, were tested for COVID-19 after they showed flu-like symptoms, a defence spokesperson said on Thursday.

The close contacts of the two sailors have been quarantined, spokesperson Wing Commander M S Hooda said.

He said the test results of the two sailors, who showed flu-like symptoms, were awaited.

"Following laid down protocols/procedures, the other personnel have been quarantined as a precautionary measure," the spokesperson said in a statement. He, however, did not specify the number of personnel at INS Subhas who have been quarantined. **PTI**



Monks pray for the end of coronavirus, on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at a monastery in Kolkata on Thursday. Partha Paul

KMC COUNCILLORS 5-YEAR TERM ENDED THURSDAY

Governor seeks reply from govt over new KMC board

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 7

WEST BENGAL Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has sought information from the state government for its decision to nominate a board of administrators, led by Mayor Firhad Hakim, to run the Kolkata Municipal Corporation without informing him. A petition was also filed in the Calcutta High Court against Wednesday's government notification.

The Governor on Thursday invoked Article 167 of the Constitution to draw the attention of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over Wednesday's notification.

"The notification dated May 6 about the Kolkata Municipal Corporation is yet to be made available. From every consideration, this should have been sent to Raj Bhavan without delay. This notification is widely in circulation in media. Chief Secretary may be called upon to urgently forward the notification dated May 06 as also the entire decision making process, including the authority that has taken this decision (sic)," read a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan on Thursday.

The state government has appointed a 14-member board of administrators with Urban



Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar (left) cites Article 167 of the Constitution to demand details about the notification which nominated Firhad Hakim as chairman of the KMC board.

Development Minister Firhad Hakim as chairman to run KMC. The board was formed following the postponement of the civic elections in the state amid the Covid-19 pandemic. It will ensure unhindered essential services to common people from May 8.

The KMC election was last held on May 8, 2015 and a five-year term of the office of the councillors expired on Thursday. The government notification said the first meeting of the board of administrators would be held on Friday.

The statement from Raj Bhavan further said, "This accorded highest priority given its constitutional repercussions impacting bodies that are subject to Part IX A of the Constitution. Lack of response from the Chief Secretary led to invocation of Article 167 of the Constitution."

Plea in HC challenges state govt's decision

A writ petition was filed before the Calcutta High Court on Thursday, challenging the same notification issued by the state government to appoint Hakim as the chairperson of the board.

In his plea, one Sharad Kumar Singh said the state government had illegally appointed the members of outgoing mayor-in-council and the mayor of the KMC as members and chairperson of the civic body's board of administrators respectively.

Seeking quashing of the notification, the petitioner claimed that there was no provision for appointment of administrator in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act. The high court, which is currently hearing only very urgent matters over video conferences amid the lockdown, is scheduled to sit next on May 12.

CORONA WATCH

Low-cost test kit receives ICMR nod

Kolkata: A low-priced testing kit designed by a group of researchers in the state to detect the coronavirus has been approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research, and will soon be employed to examine samples, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. The "DiAGSsure nCoV-19 Detection Assay" kit can meet the growing demand for testing equipment across India to a certain extent. Priced around Rs 500, the device has demonstrated a near-100 percent accuracy in detecting the virus within 90 minutes, the statement said, quoting an ICMR report. One kit can test up to 160 patients," it said. **PTI**

TMC and Oppn wrangle over migrant welfare, accuse each other of failing them

BJP blames govt for appeasement, TMC claims Centre did not help stranded

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 6

A POLITICAL row has erupted over the welfare of migrant labourers brought back to West Bengal from other states in recent days.

While the BJP has accused the TMC government of practising appeasement politics over the matter, the TMC has hit back at the Central government, accusing it of doing nothing to rescue the stranded people.

State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh alleged the Mamata Banerjee government was working to "bring back people who belong to a particular community", and accused it of not being bothered about other stranded people.

"There are people who went for medical treatment...people who went on pilgrimage and migrant labourers. No one answers the state government's helpline



1,100 migrants had returned from Ajmer on Tuesday. File

number. Recently, we saw people coming from Ajmer. They belong to a particular community. Those who returned from Kerala were also from a particular community. There were few migrant labourers to board the trains which the Centre is running primarily for migrant labourers," Ghosh claimed.

On Tuesday, a Shramik Special Train carrying more than 1,100 people had arrived in the city from Ajmer in Rajasthan. Many of them had gone to visit the Ajmer Sharif

Dargah. Another special train carrying migrant workers from Kerala reached the state's Murshidabad district on Wednesday.

Lashing out at the BJP, the TMC said labourers across India had been left in the lurch after Prime Minister Narendra Modi abruptly announced the nationwide lockdown in March to contain the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

"Firstly, there was no mode of transportation for migrant labourers who were stranded in various states. Secondly, they had to bear the cost of their train tickets when special trains were arranged for them. The Centre has made their lives uncertain and has failed to extend its helping hand to them," said Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien.

In contrast, the state government made sure these people reached home, and was making

efforts to ensure their safety and security. "Instead of maligning our government's image, the Centre must provide financial assistance to each migrant labourer and ensure doorstep delivery of food for such workers," O'Brien added.

Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury also targeted the state government, accusing it of not making enough requests to the Ministry of Railways for trains.

"I came to know from Railway Minister Piyush Goyal that the state government has not made its mind on whether to run a train from Bangalore to West Bengal to bring back migrant labourers. The Railway Ministry is awaiting a response from the state government on how many trains it requires to bring back such workers. But the government has not specified the numbers. If the state government is not serious about bringing them back then it must say so," said Chowdhury.

'IT'S NOT PREVENTIVE DETENTION'

HC raps police for forcing CITU leader into quarantine

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, MAY 7

THE MORNING of April 21 was just like any other day for K Narayanan, Mumbai president of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), who had stepped out in Andheri West, along with two of his colleagues, to distribute food to stranded migrant labourers.

Hours later, Narayanan found himself locked up by Mumbai Police in quarantine, in spite of showing no symptoms for COVID-19. He would spend the next two weeks at the facility, till May 5, while the police withheld from him the report of the COVID-19 test he was made to undergo.

Earlier this week, the Bombay High Court reprimanded the Mumbai Police for putting him in quarantine without any reason, saying that "quarantine cannot be used for preventive detention". It ordered the police to let him go, by which time he had already spent 14 days at the facility.

According to Narayanan, he and his colleagues had been distributing food and essential supplies to migrant workers and the poor. On April 21, around 10 am, in light of a nationwide protest called by CITU against Centre's alleged apathetic attitude to the plight of farmers and workers, Narayanan and his two colleagues arrived near Ajmeri Masjid carrying flags, placards and food items to be distributed to participants and Gao Devi Dongar area in Andheri West. "Prior notice had been sent to the tahsildar and police. We were wearing face masks and

maintaining social distancing protocols," Narayanan told *The Indian Express*.

He added at the distribution site, Deputy Commissioner (Zone 9) Abhishek Trimukhe and senior Inspector Parmeshwar Gamane of D N Nagar police asked Narayanan and his colleagues to come to the police station. There, while his colleagues were allowed to leave, Narayanan was taken to a private lab.

"I was taken to Suburban Diagnostics in Jogeshwari without being told why. A test was conducted, a quarantine stamp was put on my hand and I was told result will be sent on my phone within 48 hours," said Narayanan.

He claimed he was sent back to the police station and police proceeded under Section 41 of CrPc, which empowers it to arrest any person without a warrant or order of the magistrate. He was told he was being booked under sections 188 (disobedience to order promulgated by government servant) and 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of IPC and the Disaster Management Act.

"The police took away my phone and my request to inform CITU members or lawyers was refused. I was then taken to a quarantine facility at West Blue hotel and put in a room on the seventh floor."

When his colleagues approached police, they were directed to BMC officials, but to no avail. Thereafter, CITU members rushed to the facility and spoke to Narayanan briefly through the hotel intercom. Told that his test result would not be declared for at least two weeks, CITU moved

HC. "Narayanan's detention shows abuse of power exercised as a punitive measure to make an example of him," the plea moved by Mahendra Singh, a CITU member, said.

On the first hearing on April 27, Justice C V Bhadgar ordered the police to return Narayanan's phone and provide him with fresh clothes. At the next hearing on April 30, while Public Prosecutor Deepak Thakare and advocate S R Shinde – appearing for the police – claimed BMC had detained Narayanan. The BMC denied any knowledge of the incident.

"He was detained since he was seen coming out of a red zone area in Andheri (West) and was found to be residing in a containment zone," the police said.

At the final hearing on May 5 – heard by a new judge, Justice Revati Mohite-Dere – BMC told the court Narayanan was sent to the facility as per police's direction. However, it said he had tested negative and his 14-day quarantine period had ended the previous day, on May 4.

Narayanan told *The Indian Express* he was staying at the CITU office in Andheri since the lockdown began.

The court observed, "Quarantine cannot be used for preventive detention. A COVID-19 negative person may catch coronavirus in the facility." The judge noted the police had failed to establish any due procedure of law under which Narayanan's phone and other belongings were confiscated.

She said there was no law to keep Narayanan in custody and ordered his immediate release.

Hrs after being booked in 29-year-old case, Punjab ex-DGP stopped from entering Himachal

NAVJEEVANGOPAL & JAGDEEP SINGH DEEP
CHANDIGARH, MAY 7

HOURS AFTER he was booked on Wednesday evening in a case related to disappearance of a man in Mohali, Punjab, after a terror attack in 1991, former Punjab DGP Sumeet Singh Saini was stopped from entering Himachal Pradesh by the hill state's police for not possessing a curfew pass.

Saini, who was booked along with six others in an FIR filed on Wednesday evening, was heading for his "property" in Karsog, in Himachal's Mandi district, when he was stopped at the border at 4 am Thursday, and asked to return, according to Bilaspur SP Devakar Sharma.

While Saini could not be contacted, he was reportedly back home in Chandigarh.

According to the Bilaspur SP, Saini was travelling in a Toyota Innova bearing a Chandigarh registration number and was accompanied by two people who identified themselves as an Inspector and an ASI. Sharma said it was not clear whether the two are serving officers.

Saini, who was removed as the Punjab police chief in October 2015 following incidents of sacrilege and massive backlash against the erstwhile SAD-led government in the state and retired as DGP and chairman of Punjab Police Housing Corporation in June 2018, was booked on Wednesday in connection with the disappearance of Balwant Singh Multani, who was a junior engineer with the Chandigarh Industrial and Tourism Corporation, according to the FIR. Son of then serving IAS officer DS Multani, Balwant continues to be missing and his family suspects he was killed.

The case was registered at Mohali's Matour police station on the complaint of Balwant's brother, Palwinder Singh Multani.

Besides Saini, six other police officers, who served in the ranks of DSP and Sub-Inspector at the time, and an unknown person, have been booked in the case.

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Submit your entries at mdp.iipmb@gmail.com in the form of a write-up on the above theme not exceeding 3000 words with a focus on any product under the agriculture or allied categories. The work should be original and not copied from any sources. However, the statistics needed for the support of your arguments can be derived from any published sources but should be given due credit in the paper. A minimum of 3 students can co-author and submit their papers in the contest. The first page should include only the name/s of the author/s, respective graduate programmes and college with full address, contact email and phone number/s.

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The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A TURNING POINT

Killing of Riyaz Ahmad Naikoo is an important milestone in the battle against militancy in Kashmir, and a moment to build on

AFTER A NEARLY three-year-long manhunt, the Army and Jammu & Kashmir Police have succeeded in eliminating arguably the Valley's most important militant, Hizbul Mujahideen's Kashmir operations chief, Riyaz Ahmad Naikoo. After the 2016 killing of Burhan Wani, and the subsequent killings of most of the others in that group of a new generation of militants, the much older and more experienced militant from Awantipora kept the PoK-based group in business in the Valley — by carrying out attacks on uniformed personnel and civilians alike, and by manipulating the anger and alienation in a section of Kashmiri youth to recruit new candidates into the group. Naikoo became the face of the indigenous militancy, though he kept a lower profile than Wani.

After the August 5 changes in Kashmir, Naikoo was responsible for civilian killings including that of migrant labour, a fruit trader and a truck driver. Earlier, he had kidnapped several J&K policemen after his father was taken away by the police, releasing them only after the police let his father go. For Naikoo, who chose to give up the blackboard for the gun, a violent end was foretold. For the security forces, his killing is an important turning point in the continuing battle against militancy in the Valley. It shows that despite the turbulence, the police network of informants in every village is alive and kicking — it was on a tip-off that Naikoo was traced to his village Beighpora in Awantipora, where he had gone to meet his family.

It would be misplaced, however, to think that militancy in the Valley has ended with his removal, or that the elimination of dreaded militants alone is the solution to Kashmir's problems. Only days ago, a new militant group that calls itself The Resistance Front was able to inflict a heavy toll when an operation in a Handwara village went wrong for the security forces. There were more casualties the next day, this time in the CRPF. Despite their hard-won successes, even the Army and police are only too aware of the vital importance of the political process in finding the way out of this tunnel. What Kashmir needs is an open and participatory process that can provide answers to the political vacuum which militancy feeds on, and the new challenges in the wake of the August 5 decision to change the status of J&K. By all accounts, there is less trust in the intentions of the Centre in Kashmir than there was even in the five tumultuous years leading up to August 2019. The Centre needs to acknowledge and address the task ahead with honesty and sincerity. Naikoo's death is a milestone and the challenge is to build on it — use the space created to secure the peace.

WORKERS' CHOICE

Karnataka's rollback on trains for migrants carries important lesson for plans to resume economic activity

THE KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT has done well to roll back its order of May 5, canceling trains that would have ferried migrants back to their home states. Thousands of migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tripura, Manipur, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal were reportedly left in the lurch by the decision. In a series of tweets, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had cited economic reasons for withdrawing the trains: "Barring the red zones, business, construction work and industrial activities have to be resumed. In this context, unnecessary travel of the migrant workers has to be controlled". The decision had rightly provoked widespread outrage and the state government was called out for denying the migrants, already driven to the wall, the right to choose.

Pandemics are cruel not just because of the toll they take on the health of people but also because of the social and economic disruptions they cause, the anxieties they breed. The urgency of the cash-strapped states — and industry — to get workers back to factory floors and construction sites cannot be overstated. Yet it is also evident that the relaxation of the lockdown hasn't assuaged the fears of workers at most places, including in Karnataka. Migrant workers, who live precariously even in the best of the times, have concerns about getting work on a sustained basis even after economic activities resume and, with no safety nets in place, many prefer to return home. An empathetic attitude towards such anxieties and respect for workers' dignity and safety should inform all plans to resume industrial activities after the lockdown. States — and industry — might well take a leaf out of the Punjab book, where many seats on the trains carrying back migrants are reportedly empty, apparently because efforts to reach out to migrants and persuade them by government and factory owners have been successful. That several industrial units have put in place safeguards for the employees who have reported back to work after the relaxation of the lockdown may also have contributed to this development.

To its credit, Karnataka has put in place a post-lockdown revival roadmap. An economic package, announced on Wednesday, recognises the importance of the MSME sector, agriculturists and horticulturists, and informal sector workers. It provides financial assistance to the self-employed such as weavers, autorickshaw and taxi drivers, and barbers. The Karnataka government has also set up a board to deal with issues related to wages and retrenchment of workers, many of whom are migrants. Yet if, despite all incentives, the migrants still want to go back home, the state, and industry, must respect their choice.

RETURN TO THE FIELD

Bundesliga season could pave the way for resumption of other games. It will be watched like never before

THE BUNDESLIGA SEASON has been cleared to restart in eight days, bereft of spectators but offering hope that football in Germany will chalk out the blueprint for the resumption of other European football leagues. France and the Netherlands have already scrapped the season, copping huge financial losses, while others are engulfed in uncertainty and pay disputes. In this backdrop, the resumption of Bundesliga comes as a wave of optimism. Or, as German chancellor Angela Merkel put it: "People get back a short piece of normal life". The return to the field was as much as a financial necessity as an emotional need. Aborting the season would have made the league, financially the most robust in Europe, poorer by 800 million dollars.

But, there's fear in certain quarters: Will the restart usher in another wave of the pandemic? Three Cologne FC players tested positive last week, and Salomon Kalou irresponsibly filmed himself ignoring social distancing measures and got duly sacked. Football is not taking any chances. The pre-match screening is detailed, now. Players will be tested twice a week, three team buses will be used for social distancing, players will enter the field separately and there will be no handshakes. Off the pitch, food will be delivered to their rooms and they must provide lists of family members when they go home after matches.

From a player-club perspective, every measure is in place to prevent another episode. But still, questions remain. And these concern the fans. Spectators can be kept out of the stadiums, but not out of the game. More so in Germany, which has the highest average attendance figures in Europe. So even if the games will be played behind closed doors, chances are the fans will throng outside stadiums, crowd pubs, parks and other community spaces. The unknown, unregulated crowds could undo the hard work the country's health care system has put in to curb the pandemic. The world will be watching Bundesliga like never before.

The future of justice

Social distancing is here to stay, will profoundly change the way in which justice is delivered



MADAN B LOKUR

THE LOCKDOWN HAS generated several webinars on justice delivery, technology and the future. The discussions focus on the way forward in tackling the problem of social distancing with lawyers and litigants crowding the courts even after the lockdown is lifted.

There are three kinds of courts in our justice delivery system. First, conventional courts located in court complexes where judges, lawyers and litigants are physically present. Second, online courts where the judge is physically present in the courtroom but the lawyer or litigant is not. This is the present arrangement, except that now the courtroom is the residential office of the judge, due to the lockdown. Third, virtual courts where there is no judge, lawyer or litigant and a computer takes a decision based on the inputs of the litigant.

About 15 years ago, Delhi initiated a pilot project with Tihar Jail for dealing with routine remand cases of prisoners. The procedure postulated prisoners being produced in court, not physically but through video conferencing (VC), hence an online court. The pilot project started tentatively with some hiccups but proved to be a success and now several courts have adopted the online process with varying degrees of commitment.

A few intrepid district judges have taken a step forward and recorded the statement of parties in cases of divorce by mutual consent. As of now, several such cases, including those involving NRIs, are dealt with through VC in online courts. Punjab and Haryana judges have gone even further ahead. The online courts record the expert evidence of doctors from PGIMER through VC. This has freed the doctors from time consuming trips to the courts and has resulted in savings of several crores for the exchequer. Similar success stories are available from other district courts, but a determined and concerted effort is necessary to popularise online courts at the district level.

Some high court judges in Delhi and Punjab and Haryana have completely dispensed with paper — everything is on a soft copy, through e-filing and scanned documents. Lawyers and judges have made neces-

sary adjustments to the new regime and the cases are conveniently heard and decided in "paperless courts". A few other high courts initiated similar steps, but have yet to institutionalise "paperless courts".

Online courts have not caught on in the absence of any compelling need to do so. The lockdown has provided that opportunity, which should be seized. The present ongoing "experiment" has, however, indicated that the major problem with online courts is unfamiliarity with the medium of communication. Judges are simply not used to consciously facing a camera generally and in particular while hearing a case. Similarly, lawyers find it difficult to comfortably argue while seated. Body language, facial expressions, the tone and tenor, both of the judge and the lawyer, make for important signals and clues which cannot be captured in VC. However, these and additional skills can be developed and fine-tuned, but not overnight. Online courts introduce a paradigm that the system is today not fully prepared for, but can certainly get ready for in due course.

Some technical problems in conducting online hearings have also surfaced. The bandwidth is not adequate or stable enough. The picture sometimes breaks or gets frozen and the voice often cracks.

Ironically, in the hearing relating to restoration of 4G in Jammu and Kashmir, the link suddenly snapped. Consultations are also a problem. Lawyers occasionally need to consult their client or the instructing advocate; judges also need to consult each other during a hearing. Attention needs to be paid to these real-time issues otherwise lawyers will harbour misgivings about a fair hearing.

The chairman of the Bar Council of India has voiced a concern that 90 per cent of the lawyers are not computer literate or tech savvy. Law and jurisprudence are not static but mirror societal needs and often shape them. Therefore, the Bar Councils and Bar Associations must stretch every nerve to educate the district and taluka lawyers on the advantages of accepting technology. It's a long haul for sure and the task cannot be completed in a day or so — it might take a year, but

a beginning has to be made now.

A virtual court is a unique contribution of the eCourts Project. A pilot virtual court was launched in August 2018 in Delhi for traffic offences and it has been a great success. Virtual courts have been successfully tried out in Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. A virtual court is a simple programme through which a person can find out if a challan has been issued to him or her through a search facility. If a challan has been issued, the details are available online and the person may plead guilty or not guilty. On a guilty plea, the minimum fine is imposed and on a not-guilty plea, the case is electronically transferred to the traffic court for trial. At the end of the day, a judge reviews the cases and disposes of them electronically depending on the option exercised. One judge is all it takes to manage the virtual court for Delhi or an entire state. With the launch of virtual courts, the daily footfalls to the courts have drastically reduced and thousands have pleaded guilty and paid the fine electronically.

The virtual court system has the potential of being upscaled and other petty offences attracting a fine such as delayed payments of local taxes or compoundable offences can also be dealt with by virtual courts. This will ease the burden on conventional courts and therefore must be strongly encouraged.

Post lockdown, justice delivery will certainly undergo a transformation and judges, lawyers and litigants will need to adapt to the new normal. Social distancing is here to stay and will bring about profound changes in the way justice is administered and delivered. Open courts will remain as also open justice, but some definitions will change with a more aggressive use of technology, not only in conventional but also online and virtual courts. Several countries and courts have made adjustments not only for the period of the pandemic or lockdown, but also for the future. We should certainly not be left behind but must also make a roadmap to meet the challenge. As the Boy Scouts say: Be prepared.

The writer retired as a justice of the Supreme Court of India in December 2018

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REDEFINING SECURITY

Covid constraints on defence expenditure could help transform military culture



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

THE FREEZING OF fresh capital acquisitions by the defence forces, delays in procurement and induction of existing orders, and austerity measures in the administrative domain, were expected. It is easy to approach this problem tactically by issuing directives and guidelines and then seeking periodic feedback from the military on the progress made, targets met, shortfalls and remedial measures instituted. This would be a myopic approach and at best result in short-term, tenure-based outcomes. Instead, this should be seen as an opportunity to evolve a transformational culture in the Indian military, based on clear political guidelines driven by existing and futuristic capabilities, expected strategic outcomes and anticipated strategic challenges.

A comparison between the approaches taken by India's principal adversaries is instructive. Pakistan stagnates in an existential-threat-based and India-centric approach to national security. China's expansive global strategy and unbridled capability-based development surge have overcome the dangers of direct competition with the US. It has closed the gap through an "indirect approach to international security", which looks at building on strengths in areas such as cyberspace, non-contact warfare, economic and diplomatic coercion. Strategic guidelines for India's security managers must shift from a threat-based methodology to a multi-disciplinary capability and outcome-based orientation to fit with the nation's power aspirations.

There are five visible silos most critical to

kick-start the transformation. The first is to accelerate the creation of indigenous defence capability. Doing this without brushing away the short and medium-term requirement of selective imports will be the key to a calibrated march to self-sufficiency. The next critical component is leadership. India's military leadership is very hierarchical and sequential in its approach. However, this same leadership has superb operational skills and possesses a quick understanding of technology, tactics, techniques and procedures. Consequently, strategic leaders need to be identified and their transition towards becoming more than mere executors of operational plans and campaigns needs to be enabled. Multi-disciplinary thinking, lateral assimilation and a world-view are among the specific skill-sets that need to be nurtured.

Training and education form the next two silos in the process of transformation. Let us take the developed Western model for example. Several military officers at the colonel level — fresh out of war colleges and the university environment where they spend a year of education (not training) — are posted at the Pentagon and NATO HQ. Here, they work alongside civilians, politicians, lawmakers, not forgetting their own joint leadership. In such an environment, it is not difficult to mark, train and recognise talent in ways that go beyond the mere rank structure. It is high time India goes down that road because even though economic globalisation may be on hold for a while post COVID-19, there is going to be a flat-

tening of the world from a security perspective. There will be common threats that would need to be fought jointly by nations. The three pre-requisites in these silos will be an amalgam of service-centric and joint operations expertise, operational acumen in a global environment, and broad-based education that develops intellectual capital.

Training in the Indian military is top-notch and needs a little tweaking to help officers and men understand the rules of engagement in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. It is diversified education at all levels of leadership that is a weak area.

Some have suggested radical ways of selecting future chiefs, suggesting a "deep selection" and a four-year tenure based on several criteria that have been highlighted in this article. They have also highlighted the accompanying risks of such a move. Keeping that as an aspirational long-term outcome may be a good idea as the processes needed to incorporate such a radical change are either nascent or absent from the current system.

Finally, the silo of jointness and integration without losing identities and compromising competencies is an outcome that needs to be chased down with focus and determination. There will be pain and turfs will be trampled on, but with transformed and intellectually empowered leadership, no bridge will too far to cross for the Indian military.

The writer is a retired Air Vice Marshal and a military historian

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MAY 8, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

URANIUM FOR TARAPUR
PRESIDENT CARTER HAS set in motion procedures which should lead to the shipment of both enriched uranium consignments for Tarapur for which there are pending applications, American officials disclosed. Each application is for approximately 20 tonnes of enriched uranium which will meet the needs of one year's fuel for Tarapur. While naturally hoping that India will eventually agree to full safeguards, officials also point out that there is a waiver provision in the law itself. Under this, even if India continues to refuse to accept the safeguards, the president of the United States can still sanction shipments even after the law goes into effect.

SUGAR IMPORTS
THE UNION GOVERNMENT is understood to have decided to import sugar so as to increase the availability and check the rise in the prices of free sale sugar. However, no official confirmation was available of the reported purchase of about 1,50,000 tonnes of sugar by the State Trading Corporation in the London market. The country has not imported sugar for over 20 years. The government decision follows a steep fall in sugar production in 1979-80 with the total output estimated at four million tonnes.

POLICE DISCONTENT
THERE IS GENERAL discontent among the

police officers in Punjab and Haryana, particularly among those belonging to the IPS cadre. Immediate cause of the unrest is alleged harassment at the hands of the new political bosses and registration of cases against police officers in the two states. First, a former deputy director of the CBI, N K Singh, was arrested and humiliated at the initiative of the Haryana government. RC Sharma, former SSP of Karnalis is facing the same fate. He is currently on bail and has not only been superseded but placed on a junior post. Sharma is considered an upright officer and there is a lot of sympathy for him among the officers and other ranks.



7 THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Ministers and officials have failed to address the trade-offs between health and privacy by being ambiguous about the app's safeguards." — THE GUARDIAN

Enemy is coronavirus, not China

Covid-19 has triggered a new wave of China-bashing. The fact is, China suffered the first attack of the virus, and is now a reliable partner in fighting the epidemic



TANG GUOCAI

CURRENTLY, THE COVID-19 pandemic is spreading all over the world. Facing this unprecedented public health crisis, all countries in the world should work together. However, some Western politicians are taking the lead in a new wave of China-bashing, spinning conspiracy theories varying from "Chinese virus" to "Chinese problem", or "Chinese responsibility", and even "Chinese threat". These assertions are very arrogant and fierce, but if you take a closer look, they all bear the same stereotype of discrimination against China in history. It is a 300-year-old culture trying to tarnish a 5,000-year-old civilisation.

First they called COVID-19 the "Chinese virus", which reminds us of the notorious cliché of "sick man in East Asia" a century ago — it is pure racial discrimination. We must listen to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the scientific community and disregard the yarns spun by some Western politicians.

Secondly, they call it the "Chinese problem" — that China didn't handle the crisis well, or Chinese medical products are problematic. It is fair to say that, facing an unknown enemy, what China has accomplished within a month, namely, informing the WHO of the epidemic, sharing the whole genome sequence of the novel coronavirus, and implementing an effective lockdown of the mega city, Wuhan, no other country can do better. In the fight against the pandemic, about half of the world's medical supplies come from China. China's important role as the "global anti-pandemic factory" is well known and reliable.

Thirdly, they refer to the so-called "Chinese responsibility" and threaten to bring lawsuits and huge claims against China. This is typical political blackmail. It must be pointed out that attempts to use legal means to seek political ends lack the basic common sense of jurisprudence.

Fourthly, these always lead to the so-called "China threat", which claims that China will soon surpass the United States and rule the world, through the pandemic. Instead of fighting a common enemy, some Western politicians are trying to link the pandemic with their elections, or geographical, political or economic gains. The world will move on its own path after the pandemic. Perhaps, some people are even secretly betting on a "China collapse theory". But, again, that is wishful thinking; laughable, and sad.

Equality and mutual respect are the basic norms of international relations. But the colonial hangover is still very much active in many people's minds, and they just cannot look at China's rise on an equal footing. China has now effectively controlled the epidemic, and its economy and social life are back to



C R Sasikumar

normal. Some Western countries could not accept the facts and are full of anxieties that China will be the "winner" after the epidemic. So politicians and media are working hard to shame China. Those baseless clichés attacking China are typically the "old wine" of colonial thoughts in a "new bottle", no different from the notice boards affixed in the old days that said, "Chinese and dogs are not allowed to enter".

As a matter of fact, there is no winner in the epidemic. China is also a victim of the epidemic. China suffered the first attack, made huge sacrifices to contain the epidemic, and won precious time for the global anti-epidemic war. It should be treated fairly rather than blamed. The bottom line here is the enemy is coronavirus, not China, rather China is a reliable partner in fighting the epidemic.

Frankly speaking, we live in a world dominated by Western business. According to the International Monetary Fund, the US dollar accounts for around 40 per cent of the international reserve currency, and the Euro accounts for more than 30 per cent. As far as the media are concerned, Westerners certainly have a "loudspeaker", while the voices of China and India get lost in this cacophony. Especially in today's world, the extreme impact of new media is so intense and ridiculous, that you can simply run a country through tweets. The dangers of fake news and malicious stigmatisation are much more than ever before.

Faced with the epidemic, the buzzwords I hear in India and China are naturally similar — "going home" or "returning to native place". Because deep down, we know that the basic unit of humanity is community and a shared future. In this regard, China and

Equality and mutual respect are the basic norms of international relations. But the colonial hangover is still very much active in many people's minds, and they just cannot look at China's rise on an equal footing. China has now effectively controlled the epidemic, and its economy and social life are back to normal. Some Western countries could not accept the facts and are full of anxieties that China will be the "winner" after the epidemic. So politicians and media are working hard to shame China. Those baseless clichés attacking China are typically the "old wine" of colonial thoughts in a "new bottle".

India could jointly lead the civilisational approach, to cure the global village.

Both China and India are great civilisations with a long history. Peace and tolerance are the core of our philosophy. Chinese philosophy advocates "the unity of man and nature", while the ancient Indian philosophy and Gandhi's idea of peaceful coexistence with nature speak to the same idea. As a Chinese saying goes, "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire". China has never colonised any other country, rather it always works hard for the benefit of its citizens and global wellbeing.

China and India are promoting mutual cooperation in fighting COVID-19. Central and local governments as well as the business communities in both countries are joining hands and moving ahead. Mumbai is playing a crucial role in the bilateral air corridor of medical supplies. The "green channel" of Indian cargo flights from China to India — the first time in history — has been initiated in Mumbai. Besides being the economic and financial centre of India, Mumbai is also a big hub for media and cultural industry, from which China could learn a lot. Now with some Western political figures using COVID-19 to slander China, the Chinese people's anger is understandably on the rise. China and India should further promote media cooperation to ensure that our views get across to different corners of the world. The renaissance of Asian civilisation represented by China and India and the rise of developing countries, is unstoppable. No provocation can change this historical trend.

The writer is consul-general of the People's Republic of China in Mumbai

Acing the tests

Testing is critical in fight against COVID, and in answering question of when it is safe to go back to work



SWATI PIRAMAM AND MAHESH BALSEKAR

MULTIPLE COUNTRIES HAVE started conducting at scale randomised antibody seroprevalence studies to understand the prevalence and trends of COVID-19 infection in specific hotspots, including in Munich, Santa Clara in the US and Italy.

Based on current guidelines and available research, rapid antibody tests alone are not reliable as a diagnostic tool or for contact tracing. Further, these tests have lower specificity and sensitivity as compared to molecular assay tests — like RT-PCR — leading to a higher incidence of false negatives and positives. A positive on the antibody test merely means that the person has been exposed to COVID-19 and developed antibodies. The negative test means that the person has not been exposed to COVID-19 and may be susceptible in the future. Hence, as per the recently announced ICMR guidelines on the use of rapid antibody kits, they can be potentially used for epidemiological and surveillance studies at a community level.

These studies can help understand the spread of the infection in hotspots, probable nature of spread in terms of asymptomatic vs symptomatic carriers, facilitate policy-making and help in evaluating the impact of different protocols and policies. However, these studies must be designed carefully along with experienced medical and epidemiology professionals to be able to draw meaningful conclusions. Based on learnings from the research team at the Stanford School of Medicine, the following critical factors must be ensured while designing and conducting the study: Selection, testing methodology and robust statistical analysis.

Well-thought-through study participant selection methodology should be developed to ensure representativeness of actual population demographic and to minimise selection bias.

Appropriate testing methodology and kits should be selected to ensure high specificity and sensitivity, and implementation challenges must be factored in — for example, pooled RT-PCR testing vs rapid antibody kits, or both. The sample size for such tests should be determined by appropriate statistical analysis driven by demographics and the accuracy of the tests being used. The Santa Clara and Munich-based studies have used a sample size of approximately 3,000 participants.

Robust statistical analysis is needed to determine the appropriate sample size, accounting for multiple factors such as the specificity and sensitivity of the tests used, as well as to draw conclusions from the study to understand prevalence.

While Mumbai and other cities have

significantly ramped up diagnostic RT-PCR based testing, this is still insufficient to understand the potential spread of the infection especially in the asymptomatic population in hotspots such as the slums in Dharavi. Targeted studies to understand the prevalence of the infection could be carried out for selected hotspots, such as Red Zones, which can help the authorities to plan and prepare better. This will also help in the progress of epidemiological research on the disease.

The study could be led by an academic institute of repute, as in the Santa Clara study in which Stanford University led the research supported by either government or private labs approved to undertake COVID testing. The estimated costs are known for various testing methods. For the Stanford study, the cost of the rapid antibody kits was approximately \$7 per kit.

Many countries (including India) and states have reported deficiencies in the output of antibody tests. A variety of antibody tests were validated in a study done by the University of California, San Francisco and the Harvard Medical School. The New York Times reported on the study's results on April 26.

Makers of the antibody tests defend their research and point out how antibody tests have been wrongly used. US-based Sure Biotech has helped develop more than 200 rapid tests for viruses such as HIV, herpes and hepatitis. The company's antibody tests have had a specificity of 100 per cent in one study. On countries reporting a high number of false positives, Sheryl Dunn of Biosure writes "some users don't understand how to use the serology tests. They are less for diagnostic and more for testing for past infections. If you use serology tests between Day 1-14, during a current infection period, they catch only a proportion of the true positive cases. They are a supplement to PCR tests, which test for current infections but so far are not as portable."

The science of testing is evolving. Scientists are cooperating with each other faster than the speed of sound. Our questions to researchers in the Stanford study elicited a quick response (it helped that many of the researchers are of Indian origin). Bill Gates said in a recent interview that we "need to get to the bottom of this" — referring to understanding how much the virus has spread in communities. Researchers are racing to give the answer. It may soon be possible to self-test, just by wiping your nose and providing a swab of saliva via mail to a lab. Academics at IIT Delhi are sequencing bits of the COVID genome and making tests that are affordable. Testing is critical in the fight against COVID and in finding an answer to when it is safe to go back to work.

The writers are part of the Mahacovid, a voluntary informal group including foundations, management consulting firms, companies, public officials and experts in public health and data analytics who are working on the ground in Mumbai, Maharashtra to help in fighting the Covid 19 pandemic. This article is based on conversations with researchers around the world



KALRAJ MISHRA

Regroup and reinvent

There is need for coordinated response by Centre and states to meet crisis

GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROSPECTS have been severely dented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This medical-cum-economic emergency has caused massive dislocations in global production, supply chains, trade and tourism. COVID-19 has impacted economic activity in India directly due to national lockdown and via second-round effects operating through lower global trade and growth.

The government has announced an economic stimulus package worth Rs 1.7 lakh crore, designed to help millions of low-income households bear the lockdown. This package was supplemented by various measures from the RBI, which included reducing the repo rate by 75 basis points, providing a three-month moratorium on payment of instalments of term loans, and deferment of interest on working capital facilities by three months.

The sharp reduction in international crude oil prices could improve India's terms of trade, but the gains are not expected to offset the drag from the shutdown and loss of external demand. To manage the stress, economic policy has to focus on guaranteeing the functioning of essential sectors, providing enough resources for people hit by the crisis and preventing excessive economic disruption. The Chinese character of the crisis represents both challenge and opportunity. Hence, we need to focus on the following aspects.

In the last three decades, China has become the global factory. The disruption in the supply of finished goods and raw materials has led to an increased awareness of the risks of this concentration. Companies are

increasingly exploring the possibilities of diversifying their manufacturing and supply chains to avoid putting all their eggs in the China basket. We should leverage this to our advantage so that China's loss is India's gain.

MSMEs form the backbone of the economy. But they are quite vulnerable and have minimal reserves to meet difficulties. The lockdown has left them with unmet expenses, utility bills, rents, salaries. And payments owed to these units are stuck, creating a double squeeze. On April 15, the government announced certain relaxations on the lockdown restrictions. According to an assessment by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), these relaxations will help restart about 80-85 per cent of export-oriented manufacturing units. If these units can operate by early May, it would help them to pay wages for May. Further, restarting labour-intensive industries like food processing and construction in rural areas would generate income for migrant labourers. Allowing transport, warehousing and cold storage would ensure smoother functioning of the supply chain.

Businesses have started facing massive working capital/cash flow issues and these will continue even post the lockdown because of reduced demand. MSME and startups are the worst hit. Though the government has taken steps via SIDBI and other schemes to help MSMEs, we need to do more. The government can also procure from MSMEs and startups, thus helping them sustain. Restoring pre-COVID levels of purchase could take six months or more. Until then, businesses and workers need to brace themselves for drastic cuts in de-

mand, salaries and jobs. But with speedy action, the government could significantly ease the damage.

Another focus area is pharmaceuticals. Despite the country's strength in the generic drug scene, Indian pharma majors have been importing raw materials from China though some of these are available locally. India could be the largest exporter of medicines. It can also present itself as a credible alternative in the textile and apparel segment. Other promising areas include minerals and metals, homeware, ceramic tiles, engineering goods and furniture.

Further, with businesses transitioning to a digital model, the demand for online tools for communication and collaboration will increase. Online methods of skilling, upskilling and reskilling will grow, leading to a spike in demand for good online education content. Light industries in villages, especially in food processing, will also get a boost. Startups should be encouraged to develop cold-chain logistics with a proper ecosystem.

The top priority today is to get the economy back on track while ensuring there is no resurgence of the disease. The Rajasthan state government should set aside funds to take care of our first responders (across all essential services) and patients. It should provide a universal basic cash payment to every household so that minimal needs can be met even under a lockdown. The government must also ensure the uninterrupted flow of critical supplies and services, and invest in the much-needed health infrastructure.

The government should waive-off utility bills for the urban poor for three months. Similarly, MSMEs should be exempted from electricity duties for three months. Taxes levied by local/state government may also be exempted for three months for specific sectors.

Along with the private sector, the government must create an emergency framework to manufacture low-cost sanitisers and masks, testing kits and protective gear to support healthcare professionals. Additionally, manufacturing low-cost ventilators, digital thermometers and critical vaccines will help mitigate the loss of life.

Organisations should create a COVID-19 response fund through their corporate social responsibility spending. A disaster management framework focused on creating a robust channel to provide information and create awareness is essential. The government should also ensure disaster response training programmes. The Rajasthan state government should also push the National Agriculture Market (eNAM).

Flattening the curve is of utmost importance. India is battling this medical-cum-economic emergency through isolation, social distancing and upscaling diagnostic and testing requirements. But given the magnitude of the crisis, there is a compelling need for coordinated efforts by all stakeholders — central and state governments, doctors, nurses, planners and policy-makers and even those at the helm of affairs at various levels of administration. All of us must play our part in meeting this challenge.

The writer is governor of Rajasthan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BEYOND THE CALLS

THIS REFERS EDITORIAL, 'Other healthcare fronts' (IE, May 7). In the rush to protect the country against COVID-19, those suffering from other ailments must not be ignored. Currently, the government is marshalling all the resources at its command in containing the virus and the treatment of all other diseases has been put on the back burner. Those with serious and critical illnesses cannot be cured telepathically by telemedicine. The government ought to deploy its limited resources optimally.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

FORSEEN PROBLEMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Weak links into strengths' (IE, May 6). Many of the issues relating to supply chains and logistics of essential goods could have been foreseen in a pre-COVID world. The FCI wouldn't have had to struggle with transporting food-grain had godowns been established at the district level. This would have reduced transportation costs and delays. The government must develop a logistics policy in for national emergencies and keep in mind that it shouldn't become reliant on the benevolence of individuals and NGOs to fulfil its sovereign duties.

Noel Therattil, Delhi

WATER IT DOWN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Drink for thought' (IE May 7). The recent stampede has shown that people across the length and breadth of the country are willing to spend astronomical sums of

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● A FLAWED RESPONSE: SHARAD YADAV

● THE RIGHT CRISIS POLICY MIX: SIMRIT KAUR AND KAMALDEEP KAUR SARNA

www.indianexpress.com

money to indulge in few moments of pleasure. With 40 days of lockdown, and all other sources of revenue having dried up, the easiest option for the government is to sell liquor. But the state has a social obligation to preserve the mental-physical well being of citizens as well. The freedom to drink in moderation must be balanced by this concern.

Mohit Swami, Bikaner

SAVE MSMEs

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'COVID & MSME' (IE, May 6). If the government wants to put this sector back on the road to recovery, it must come up with fiscal and other stimuli immediately. Unfortunately, there is nothing on the horizon. It's time for the government to wake up.

SK Prabhakar, Gurugram

Nashik doctor tests positive, advised home isolation, but neighbours bar entry

ABHA GORADIA
MUMBAI, MAY 7

JUST ABOUT A fortnight ago, when Dr Sanjay Gangurde (56), an ENT surgeon at the Nashik Civil Hospital returned from work, his neighbours hailed him as a "corona warrior" and clapped and whistled for him. But on Tuesday, after finding out that he had tested positive, Dr Gangurde said they did not allow him to enter the building.

Dr Gangurde, also the acting civil surgeon at the hospital, tested positive on Tuesday. A message was soon circulated on WhatsApp groups that "a civil hospital doctor living in Nashik's Gangapur Road has been found to be positive".

The doctor lives in 'Rushiraj Hi-rise Society' on Gangapur Road. Since Dr Gangurde was asymptomatic, he was advised home isolation. The Health Ministry's guidelines specify that "very mild/pre-symptomatic patients having requisite facility at his/her residence for self-isolation will have the option for home isolation".

But the residents of 'Rushiraj Hi-rise Society' reportedly held a meeting and decided to bar his entry. Dr Gangurde said he got phone calls from the building's committee members, telling him not to return home. And when he still went on Tuesday, he was not allowed to enter the building.

When contacted, some committee members of the society re-

fused to comment, while others did not respond to calls.

The doctor said he had no option but to remain at the Nashik Civil Hospital. While the 100-bed hospital is a COVID-19 treatment centre, Dr Gangurde said he has isolated himself in a storage room, while his wife, a tehsildar, is in an adjoining room. She is waiting for her test report. Their meals are being arranged by their friends.

"I used to distribute masks and sanitisers to all doctors. Here at the hospital, I have no mask or sanitiser. There are few facilities here to isolate and take care of oneself. At home, I could have had things at my disposal. Neither the hospital authorities, nor the municipal corporation, nor the police are willing to intervene. My wife is terribly upset," Dr Gangurde told *The Indian Express*. He said he was finally given a sanitiser when he asked for it.

But Dr Suresh Jagdale, District Civil Surgeon, said: "He is not in a quarantine facility but at a COVID care centre. He has been kept in a special room, and I can assure you it is not a storage room. I agree that facilities there are not akin to what you can expect at one's home. He has been holding a vital position in the hospital and we are taking adequate care of him."

Two other doctors of the hospital have tested positive so far.

Meanwhile, Dr Gangurde's sons, both studying in the US, have sought help from the authorities in a social media post.

-WITH INPUTS FROM ZEE SHAN SHAIKH

4 hospitals cleared to join WHO Solidarity trial, more to follow

KAUNAIN SHERIFFM
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

FOUR COVID-19 treatment centres, in Jodhpur, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Bhopal, have received regulatory approvals for taking part in "Solidarity" — the World Health Organisation's (WHO) international clinical trial to help find an effective treatment for novel coronavirus — and more are set to follow.

Confirming this, Dr Sheela Godbole, Head, Division of Epidemiology, ICMR-National AIDS Research Institute, and National Coordinator of the WHO-India Solidarity Trial, said the ICMR plans "to initiate the trial at 20-25 clinical trial sites in many states across India".

"These sites are in various stages of being approved. The sites require approval from their institutional ethics committees, and have to be trained and updated with the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) and Clinical Trials Registry-India (CTRI). Some sites

are already registered, some are close to registration, and many more are in the process of obtaining approval from their ethics committee," she said.

The four which have been cleared so far are from cities that have reported a high case load: AIIMS in Jodhpur, Apollo Hospital in Chennai, B J Medical College and Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad and Chirayu Medical College and Hospital in Bhopal. The case count so far is 842 in Jodhpur, 2,644 in Chennai, 4,991 in Ahmedabad, and 605 in Bhopal.

According to the WHO website, the Solidarity trial "will compare four treatment options against the standard of care, to assess their relative effectiveness against COVID-19".

The treatment options that have been selected are: Remdesivir; Lopinavir/Ritonavir; Lopinavir/Ritonavir with Interferon beta-1a; and Chloroquine or Hydroxychloroquine.

"By enrolling patients in multiple countries, the Solidarity

trial aims to rapidly discover whether any of the drugs slow disease progression or improve survival. Other drugs can be added based on emerging evidence," says the WHO website.

Dr Godbole confirmed that India will be testing all the four treatment options. Remdesivir, which is exclusively manufactured by Gilead in the US, and Interferon beta-1a, "have been donated by WHO for trial in India," she said. "All four treatments will be tested. Patients who are willing to participate and provide their informed consent will be allotted randomly, through a computer programme, to any one of the four treatment options," Dr Godbole said.

Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are very closely related and used to treat malaria and rheumatology conditions respectively. The ICMR has authorised hydroxychloroquine as prophylaxis (preventive treatment), recommending it for healthcare workers and those taking care of COVID-19 patients at home.

In China and France, small

studies provided some indications of the possible benefit of chloroquine phosphate against pneumonia caused by COVID-19, but they need confirmation through randomised trials, the WHO has said.

Remdesivir is a drug with antiviral properties that was manufactured by a US-based biotechnology company in 2014, to treat Ebola cases; it was also tried in patients of MERS and SARS, both caused by coronaviruses.

On May 1, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) authorised the emergency use of Remdesivir as an experimental drug to treat severe cases of COVID-19 who are hospitalised and need oxygen or ventilators.

Lopinavir/Ritonavir is a licensed treatment for HIV. India first used the Lopinavir/Ritonavir combination for treatment of an Italian couple who tested positive in Rajasthan. However, WHO has said that while there are indications from laboratory experiments that this combination may be effective, "studies done so far in COVID-19 patients have been inconclusive."

2 BSF men fall to Covid, 480 cases in paramilitary

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

TWO BSF personnel succumbed to Covid-19 as the total number of infections in the border force reached 193, officials said Thursday.

The new infections have taken the number of cases in the paramilitary to over 480, including 162 in CRPF, 82 in ITBP, 32 in CISF and 17 in SSB. Most of these cases have been reported from Delhi, except for about 30 BSF cases in Tripura and 19 from CISF in other parts of the country.

On Thursday, 90 paramilitary personnel tested positive at the Central Armed Police Force's Referral Hospital in Greater Noida, including 41 from BSF, 37 from ITBP, one from CRPF and the others from CISF and SSB.

Of the two BSF personnel who died, officials said, one had a kidney ailment. Sources said the patient had been undergoing treatment at the BSF's R K Puram hospital and contracted

the disease during a visit to a speciality hospital for dialysis.

Officials said the other victim was 45 years old, had no comorbidities, and died Monday, within two days of developing symptoms. His test results came two days after his death.

BSF spokesperson Shubendu Bharadwaj said most of those who have got infected were deployed with Delhi Police for internal security duty during the pandemic. Of the 41 new infections, 12 are from the company that was deployed on law and order duty in Jama Masjid and Chandni Mahal areas. This company of 94 personnel has 73 positive cases.

The CISF has recorded 13 cases in Delhi, including 11 personnel deployed at Metro stations and the rest at IGI airport. The force also reported the death of a head constable, who was posted at the Mumbai international airport, due to Covid-19. All the SSB, ITBP and CRPF cases are from Delhi.

After MLA posts video of corpses next to COVID patients, probe ordered

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 7

A VIDEO by a BJP MLA purportedly showing bodies of dead patients next to COVID patients at Sion hospital has prompted an inquiry into the incident.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which runs the hospital, on Thursday set up a committee to look into why the bodies were not removed. It asked the hospital to confirm whether the incident took place in its premises, and to take action against those responsible for keeping bodies for hours in wards where patients are undergoing treatment.

The video shows patients lying on their beds, and next to them, on four beds, are bodies

wrapped in black plastic. In some cases a bedsheet covered the plastic wrapping. The video is allegedly from ward number 3, an COVID-19 isolation ward at Sion hospital. A family member of a patient is also seen, even though visitors are barred according to rules.

The Health Ministry guidelines mandate that a body must be disposed at the earliest to prevent infection risk. The guidelines say the body must be sealed in a plastic bag to avoid leakage of fluids and disinfected with sodium hypochlorite solution. Maharashtra's guidelines on April 30 mandated that a body must be removed within 30 minutes from a ward.

111 more corona deaths, but record stays good on fatality, recovery rates

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

REITERATING THE country's good record in both case fatality rates and recovery rates of COVID-19, the government on Thursday said the number of novel coronavirus cases had gone up by 3,561 in the last 24 hours, with 111 more dying. This takes the total number of cases to 52,952 and deaths to 1,783. So far, 15,266 people have recovered.

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said: "India is in a better condition than many other countries as the fatality rate is 3.3% and recovery rate is 28.83%. There are 4.8% patients in ICU, 1.1% on ventilators and 3.3% on oxygen support, among the active cases. The testing capacity has increased and it is 95,000 tests per day, with 327 government laboratories and 118 private laboratories. Cumulatively, 13,57,442 tests have been done so far."

He added that there are currently 180 districts with no new cases in the past week, 180 districts with no new cases in seven-13 days, 164 districts



Women line up to receive Rs 500 in their Jan Dhan accounts Assam's Baksa district on Thursday. *Dasarath Deka*

which have not had any new case in 14-20 days, and 136 districts with no new cases since the last 21-28 days. He also reviewed the situation in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

Besides, 13 states/Union territories, including Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Odisha, have not reported any case in the past 24 hrs. Daman & Diu, Sikkim, Nagaland and Lakshadweep

have not reported a single case till date.

"States need to focus on more effective surveillance, contact tracing and early diagnosis to keep the fatality rate low. Surveillance for Severe Acute Respiratory Infections/Influenza Like Illnesses should be intensified in unaffected districts and districts which have not reported cases for the last 14 days and more, through the IDSP network in collaboration with medical college hospitals. Such measures will help indicate the presence of any possible hidden infection at an early stage," Vardhan said.

VISAKHAPATNAM GAS LEAK

'People walked out and just collapsed ... women and children were crying'

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, MAY 7

"Several people lay on the road, catching their throats or rubbing their eyes. One person fell from the motorcycle he was sitting on. My wife and I gasped, unable to breathe."

Tadhvi Venkaiah, 60, described a Thursday early morning of "horror" as police came knocking on their doors to tell them gas had leaked from a nearby plant and they should leave. "The sound of the banging on the door woke me. I thought something had happened to my cow and a neighbour had come, but someone shouted 'police'. I was really scared. They said there was a gas leak and my wife and I should go with them. I was groggy and I had difficulty walking up my wife, so policemen picked us up and put us in a vehicle. They calmed us down and brought us to hospital."

Of the five villages near Visakhapatnam evacuated due to gas leak from the LG Polymers factory on Thursday, Venkaiah's Venkatapuram was the worst-affected.

Among the dead were two children, 6 and 9 years old. 73-year-old Meka Krishna, who had respiratory problems, C G Raju (48), A Narasimha (55), K Naryana (35) and A Chandramouli, 19. A first-year MBBS student of Andhra Medical College, Chandramouli was at his house in Gopalapatnam village, which fell in the gas leak radius. His father, A Easwara Rao, said Chandramouli struggled to breathe and died on way to hospital.

Kanta Rao from Venkatapuram village, who studies at Andhra University, said the scene was like out of a zombie movie. "People walked out of homes and just collapsed on the road. They gasped for air and frothed at the mouths. Cows and buffaloes moaned. Women and children were crying. Policemen who came to the rescue also collapsed. A few persons who owned autorickshaws or fourwheelers rushed people to



After the gas leak at LG Polymers in RR Venkatapuram village of Visakhapatnam Thursday. *P77*

hospitals before the ambulances started arriving," Rao said, adding that chaos prevailed for hours as families tried to track each other.

Sagar, a local registered medical practitioner, said, "There was a foul smell in the house and I could not understand what was happening. I first thought gas was leaking from the LPG cylinder in our kitchen. Then I opened the doors and there was this strong, pungent smell. By that time both my children had started crying and were struggling to breathe. One became unconscious and the other was barely breathing by the time we reached hospital. They are both fine now."

Doctors said that many of the victims ended up inhaling more gas as they ran in panic.

Dr MV Jay of General Medicine at King George Hospital said people were brought in a state of total shock. "The inhalation of gas had made them semi-conscious, delirious. It had affected their central nervous system. They were unable to walk. The first half-an-hour in the hospital emergency room was chaos as it took us time to understand the scale of what had happened," said Dr Vijay, adding that they called in all their doctors and nursing staff. "Thankfully we were prepared with oxygen and ventilators as KGH had been made a

Covid-19 hospital. The ventilators helped save numerous lives, especially those of children."

Police said some of the scared villagers may have run into the hills around a local temple, and they were scouring the area.

Bobby, an autorickshaw driver who helped take three persons to King George Hospital, said they had no clue initially which direction to head as they didn't know where the gas was coming from. "We met an ambulance and the driver directed us to nearby hospitals," he said.

Several villagers and officials praised police for reacting swiftly, especially Deputy Commissioner of Police B Uday Bhaskar, after receiving the alert around 3 am. Autorickshaw drivers like Bobby also came in for praise for risking their lives to take people out.

"Within two-and-a-half hours, about 5,000 people were evacuated from five villages, thanks to police and fire and emergency services. The seven-seater auto drivers are the real heroes," said Visakhapatnam MPM V V Satyanarayana. Banquet halls in the area opened their doors to accommodate the evacuees. Officials said they had offered to host the villagers till they could back home. People are also being kept in the accommodations created for Covid-19 quarantine.

ODISHA STATE MEDICAL CORPORATION LTD.
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(Assuring Quality, Saving lives)
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Website: www.osmcl.nic.in
E-mail: admn.osmcl@nic.in

No.03/OSMCL/HR/2020 Date:07.05.2020

Advertisement for recruitment (Revised Dateline)

In view of the lockdown due to COVID 19 situation and in pursuance of Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd. (OSMCL) advertisement no. 02/OSMCL/HR/2020, dated 07.03.2020 published for the posts of Sr. Manager-IT, Biomedical Engineer and Logistics Assistant and Office Order No. 4131, dated 06.04.2020, the last date of submission of online application form is further extended to 31.05.2020, 11:59 PM and the last date for receipt of applications and documents by speed post/registered post is further extended to 12.06.2020, 5:30 PM. Applications received by Speed Post / Registered Post after 12.06.2020, 5:30 PM for the aforesaid post will be rejected.

Sd/-
Managing Director
10112/11/0005/2021 Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd.

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking
(Of The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation)

TENDER NOTICE
e-tenders are invited for the supply of following items.
(1) 67472, (2) 67566, (3) 67789.

Note:
For more details, log on to website <https://mahatenders.gov.in>.

PRO/AAM(M)/06/2020. GENERAL MANAGER

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF, RURAL WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION, ODISHA
JAL O PARIMAL BHAWAN UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR - 751001
Tel: 0674-2395734 FAX: 0674-2394946
E-mail: cerwssodisha@gmail.com

File No. OWSM-WQ-270/2020 Letter No. 2279 Date: 24.04.2020
CANCELLATION OF BID IDENTIFICATION NO.2236
EIC/RWSS-51/2019-20 DT.13.03.2020

The Tender Call Notice No. 2236, EIC, RWSS-51 (2019-20 dt. 13.03.2020 for the work "Design Development, implementation & maintenance of ERP system for Water Testing Laboratories as a part of Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance System in the State of Odisha" is hereby cancelled.

Sd/-
Engineer-in Chief, RWSS

Institute Of Hotel Management, Catering Technology And Applied Nutrition
Sector-34, Uparawara, Atal Nagar, Nava Raipur, Distt. Raipur, Chhattisgarh
Phone No. 0771-2972411, email-ihmraipur@gmail.com

e-Procurement Tender Notice
Main Portal : <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

No. 217/Store/IHM/2020 Atal Nagar, Nava Raipur, Dated 06/05/2020
Institute Of Hotel Management, Atal Nagar Nava Raipur Invites Proposals From Reputed Organization For Below Mentioned Tender:

Tender	NIT No.
Notice Inviting Tender for Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Testing Kitchen Equipments and Furniture at Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology and Applied Nutrition Sector-34, Uparawara, Atal Nagar, Nava Raipur, Distt. Raipur, Chhattisgarh	217/Store/IHM/2020

Last Date & Time for bid submission -On 28/05/2020 upto 03:00 p.m.
Date and time of bid opening 28/05/2020 at 04:00 p.m. hrs.

The all details of applications and terms and conditions are available on the website www.tourism.cg.gov.in Any amendments/modification in the tender document, will be uploaded on the website and shall not be published in any newspaper.

Sd/-
Principal
Institute of Hotel Management, Nava Raipur

Telangana State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd.,
5-2-68, 3rd Floor, Mahatma Gandhi Marked Bhavan, Jambhag, Hyderabad - 500 095
Email: seeds.tgmrfed@gmail.com
Ph.No: 040-2460 7108, Fax: 040-2460 7100

CORRIGENDUM

The tender notice was published on 07.05.2020 in the Indian express vide R.No.TSMF/Seeds/853/2020-21, wherein the e-auction was proposed in <https://auction.telangana.gov.in> and www.neml.in.
A partial modification is hereby decided that the e-auction will be conducted in only <https://auction.telangana.gov.in> on technical grounds.
Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR
R.O.No.: 594-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
PRE QUALIFICATION & PRICE TENDER (TWO COVER SYSTEM)
TENDER NOTICE NO.02/2020-21/BCM/MW/Tr Date:06.05.2020
FORM OF CONTRACT: LUMP SUM / ITEM WISE RATE TENDER

For and on behalf of the Government of Tamilnadu, sealed tenders are invited from the PWD Registered contractors in the field, for the following work and the same will be received up to 3.00 PM on the respective date mentioned (column 5) and will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM in the presence of those tenderers or their representatives who choose to be present:

Sl. No	Name of Work	Approx. value of work (in Lakhs)	EMD (in Rs.)	Schedule available Date	Tender Date
1	THE NIGIRIS DISTRICT PACKAGE				
	Slce No.1 - Construction of Hospital Buildings for New Government Medical College and Hospital for 150 MBBS Students at Udhagamandalam in The Nigiris District	Rs.9912.00	49,06,000/-		
	Slce No.2 - Construction of Institution Buildings for New Government Medical College and Hospital for 150 MBBS Students at Udhagamandalam in The Nigiris District	Rs.10584.00	53,02,000/-	11.05.2020 to 16.06.2020 upto 5.45 PM	17.06.2020
	Package -I - Total	Rs.20496.00	1,02,68,000/-		
2	Construction of Residential Buildings for New Government Medical College and Hospital for 150 MBBS Students at Udhagamandalam in The Nigiris District	Rs.14168.00	70,94,000/-		

Note: 1. The evidences on the minimum qualification criteria mentioned in the Pre-Qualification Application should be furnished in Cover-I without any omissions at the time of submission of prequalification tender (507). Any Omissions in this regard will be summarily rejected.
2. The tender notice & other details can be seen & downloaded from the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Medical Works, Tricity.

BUDDHA PURNIMA

Those engaged in service of humanity are true followers of Buddha: PM

New Delhi: Wishing the country on Buddha Purnima, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "India is making every effort to save the life of every Indian, and is following its global obligations equally seriously". He also said that "those who are engaged in the service of humanity at all times, day and night, are the true followers of Buddha", and that "this spirit keeps illuminating our lives, keeps it moving".

In his video address through social media on Thursday, Modi said the "lack of physical presence is not so felt" in the times of social distancing as the minds connect.

"Both our scales and goals of success will change over time. However, the thing we always have to keep in mind is that our work should be done with continuous service. When there is compassion for others, compassion and a sense of service, these feelings make us so strong that you can overcome the biggest challenge," he said. **ENS**



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

The gas that leaked: what styrene is for, and how it behaves

REENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, MAY 7

THE GAS that leaked from a chemical factory on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam on Thursday, leaving at least 10 dead and sending hundreds to hospital, is called styrene. A look at its structure, the kind of industries that use it, and the kind of health hazards experts associate it with:

What is styrene?

Styrene is an organic compound with the formula C₈H₈, its molecular structure as pictured. It is a derivative of benzene (C₆H₆). It is stored in factories as a liquid, but evaporates easily, and has to be kept at temperatures under 20°C.

What is styrene used for?

Styrene is the main raw material for synthesis of polystyrene, or (C₈H₈)_n. Polystyrene, in turn, is a versatile plastic that is used to make parts of various appliances such as refrigerators or microwaves; automotive parts; and parts of electronics such as computers; and also to manufacture disposable cups and in food packaging. Styrene is also used as an intermediate to produce copolymers — which are polymers derived from one or more species of monomers such as styrene.

What happens if someone is exposed to styrene gas?

Exposure to styrene gas affects the central nervous system, said Dr K Vijay Kumar, Head of the Department of Respiratory Medicine, Andhra Medical College. "Breathlessness, respiratory problems, irritation in eyes, indigestion, nausea, transient loss of consciousness, unsteady gait, giddiness are caused by exposure to it. In this incident, people were exposed to the gas for a short duration, so there may not be any long-term effects," Dr Kumar said.

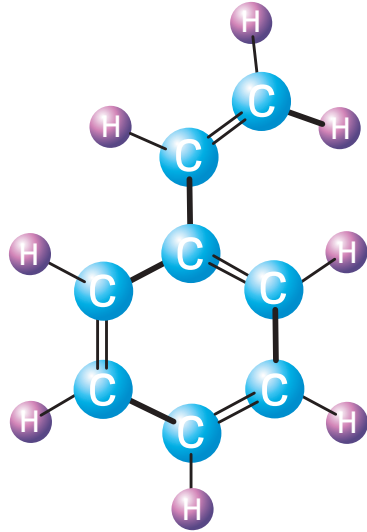
However, in people suffering from respiratory illness such as asthma, and those who have chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, these conditions may get exaggerated, Dr Kumar said. "Those suffering from diabetes or hypertension may have anxiety disorders."

It is the mucous membrane that is mainly affected by exposure to styrene gas. In Visakhapatnam, the styrene gas leak caused acute breathlessness among many people, a few of whom asphyxiated to death.

What are the long-term effects?

Experts say that if people are exposed to the gas for a long period, there is a chance of their developing leukaemia and headaches. Studies on the effects on health due to occupational exposure to styrene have, however, been inconclusive.

As per the United States Environmental Protection Agency, tests involving acute exposure of rats and mice have shown styrene to have low to moderate toxicity by inhalation and oral exposure. Animal studies have reported effects on the central nervous system, liver, kidney, and eye and nasal irritation from inhalation exposure to styrene. Liver, blood, kidney, and stomach effects have been observed in animals following chronic oral exposure.



Molecular structure of styrene (C₈H₈), with bonding in the form C₆H₅CH=CH₂. Used for synthesis of plastics, it is stored as a liquid in factories but evaporates rapidly.

What was the factory from which styrene leaked?

Styrene gas leaked from a storage tank of LG Chem Polymers. The factory was established in 1961, originally as Hindustan Polymers, to manufacture polystyrene. It was merged with McDowell & Co of the UB Group in 1978, then taken over in 1997 by South Korea-based LG Chem, which renamed it LG Polymers. The factory manufactures general-purpose polystyrene and high-impact polystyrene, expandable polystyrene, and engineering plastics compounds. It is located at RRV Puram in Gopalapatnam, 15 km from Visakhapatnam city.

A company official said 1,800 tonnes of styrene was stored in a tank of capacity 2,400 tonnes. The gas leaked from this tank when officials were preparing to reopen the factory that was shut for 44 days due to the lockdown. About half the gas leaked before it was contained.

Were safety protocols in place?

As explained, styrene has to be stored in gas tanks under 20°C to keep it stable. The temperature has to be continuously monitored, and any exposure to light or heat may result in polymerisation. A team of 15 engineers and officials remained on duty at the factory throughout the lockdown period to monitor it. If temperature rises, inhibitors have to be added to keep the styrene stable. At LG Chem, an inhibitor tank is attached to the styrene storage tank but it failed to stabilise it in time. As a safety measure, the styrene tanks are never filled to capacity.

Why could the inhibitor not prevent what happened?

As the styrene was stagnant for 44 days, officials said, it was possible that some gas accumulated at the ceiling of the storage tank and its temperature rose beyond the specified 20°C, and the styrene started vaporising and escaped. This is called auto-polymerisation. However, the exact cause is still being ascertained. The company has not explained how the storage tank ruptured and the gas escaped.

India lockdown, other lockdowns

A Stringency Index created by Oxford University shows how strict a country's measures were, and at what stage of the spread it enforced these. India imposed its strictest measures much earlier than others

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

IT HAS been well understood that among various countries responding to the Covid-19 outbreak, India enforced one of the strongest lockdowns at an early phase of case growth. Now, an index created by the University of Oxford quantifies that. The Stringency Index has found that India indeed had one of the strongest lockdown measures in the world — at a 100 score since March 22. It was relaxed slightly on April 20 after the government eased norms for certain workplaces in regions outside the red zones.

What is this index?

It is among the metrics being used by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker. The Tracker involves a team of 100 Oxford community members who have continuously updated a database of 17 indicators of government response. These indicators examine containment policies such as school and workplace closings, public events, public transport, stay-at-home policies. The Stringency Index is a number from 0 to 100 that reflects these indicators. A higher index score indicates a higher level of stringency.

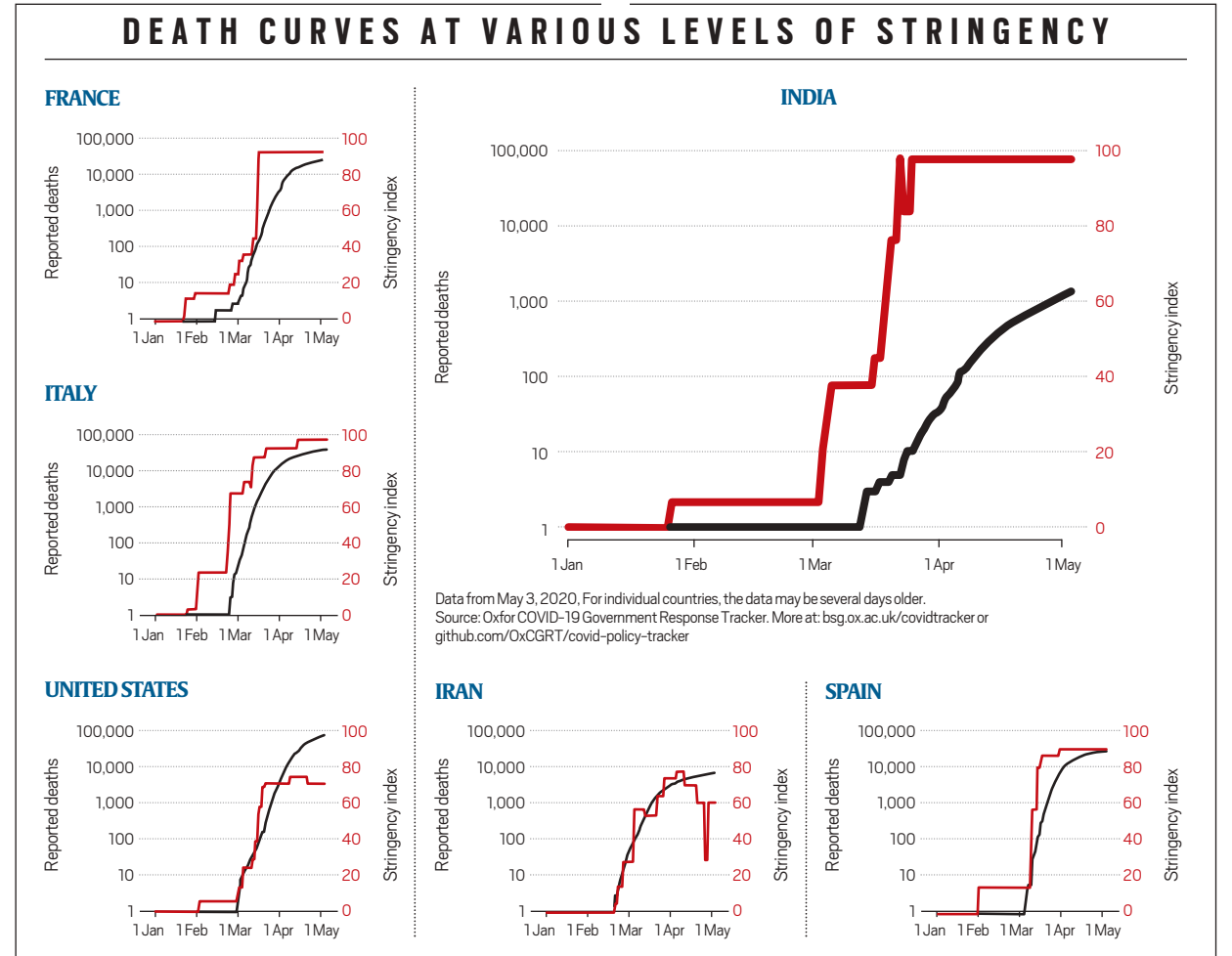
What does the index tell us?

It provides a picture of the stage at which any country enforced its strongest measures. Oxford provides an overlay of countries' death curve and their stringency score. Some countries saw their deaths just begin to flatten as they reached their highest stringency, such as Italy, Spain, or France. As China pulled stronger measures, its death curve plateaued.

In countries such as the UK, the US, and India, the Oxford graphs find that the death curve has not flattened after strictest measures were enforced. From the highest death count at their strongest measures, the countries compared were France, Italy, Iran, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Mexico, Canada, Belgium, Ireland, US, Turkey, Israel, China, India, and Switzerland.

How does India compare with others?

When compared to other countries with



similar or higher case load, India called its strict lockdown at a much earlier point on its case and death curves. These 18 other countries had more than 500 cases when they called their strictest lockdown, while India had 320. Again, India had only four deaths on March 22, when its score reached 100, while most countries had more deaths at that point (except Switzerland: no deaths). Spain called for its strictest measures later in its case and death count than all others. Sweden has had the most liberal measures

in this set, and Iran the second most liberal.

Other countries with a 100 score are Honduras, Argentina, Jordan, Libya, Sri Lanka, Serbia, and Rwanda. India now has the highest number of cases in this set.

What else does this resource cover?

In a research note, these researchers examined if countries meet four of the six World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations for relaxing physical distancing measures. These are: control transmission

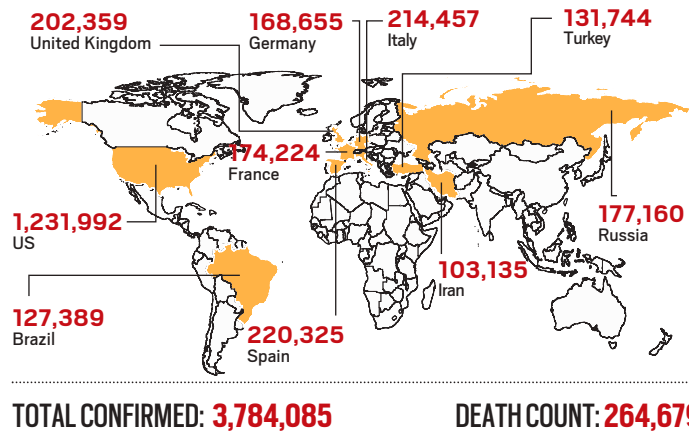
to a level the healthcare system can manage; the healthcare system can detect and isolate all cases (not just serious ones); manage transfer to and from high-risk transmission zones; and community engagement.

India scored 0.7 (below Australia, Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea) because it scored 0 for controlling its cases. The highest scorers on this index, at 0.9, were Iceland, Hong Kong, Croatia, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Oxford found no countries meet the four measured recommendations, but 20 are close.

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

THE WORLD

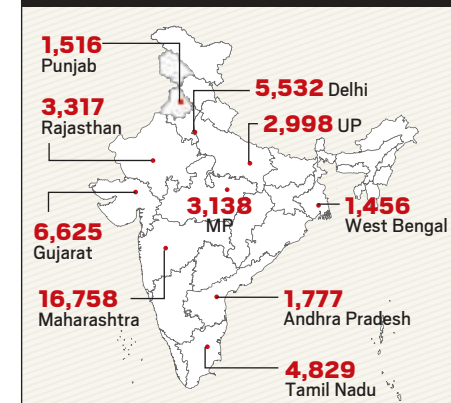


TOTAL CONFIRMED: 3,784,085 DEATH COUNT: 264,679

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 7

INDIA COUNT: 52,952 (1,783 DEATHS)

TOP 10 STATES



REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	33
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	45
Bihar	542
Chhattisgarh	120
Dadar Nagar Haveli	59
Goa	7
Haryana	594
Himachal Pradesh	45
Jammu and Kashmir	775
Jharkhand	127
Karnataka	693
Kerala	503
Ladakh	41
Manipur	2
Meghalaya	12
Mizoram	1
Odisha	185
Puducherry	9
Telengana	1107
Tripura	43
Uttarakhand	61

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 7. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed here.

15,267 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 30 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

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

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

Why it is necessary to watch the emergence of ISIS in the region



ANJU GUPTA

FOLLOWING A coordinated suicide attack on a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25, in which several Sikhs were killed, Daesh (ISIS) claimed its second ever attack on Indian interests in Afghanistan. Identifying the lone attacker as Abu Khalid al Hindi (Muhammad Muhsin from Kerala, who had gone to the Gulf in 2018), ISIS termed it "revenge for Muslims of Kashmir".

Subsequently, Afghan security forces arrested the Amir of Islamic State Khurasan Province (ISKP, the ISIS branch in Af-Pak) — a Pakistani national, Aslam Farooqui Akhonzada — and others, including Kashmiri militant Aijaz Ahangar, wanted for two decades. ISKP posted a picture and a video of an Afghan officer in their custody, and pictures of his "beheading" on May 4. The Afghan Taliban called Aslam a "stooze" of Afghan forces, but his organic links in the region have been known even before ISIS was born. The chain of events does neces-

sitate closer scrutiny of the ISKP threat in the region.

ISIS and Taliban

Less than a month after the fall of the Caliphate (March 23, 2019), ISIS mounted spectacular attacks on targets in Sri Lanka. In March 2020, in Kabul, ISIS claimed mortar attacks on a high-profile political gathering, President Ashraf Ghani's inauguration, and on US troops in Bagram base twice. Was the March 25 attack an "anniversary attack"? Did ISIS intend to target "enemies" using a local radicalised group as it had sought to do with the July 2016 bakery attack in Dhaka or the April 2019 attacks in Sri Lanka? In a country where ISIS presumably has a handful of targets, it is curious as to why it endorsed the targeting of a minuscule minority.

Moreover, in recent years, especially after the US-Taliban agreement, the Taliban have repeatedly claimed to have finished ISKP in Afghanistan. In a recent issue of the weekly *al-Nabha*, criticising the agreement, ISIS has exhorted supporters to target "enemies" as their resources are tied up with Covid-19. Over the last few weeks, a few lone wolf attacks have been reported across Europe. Thus, the targeting of a gurdwara is surprising. Moreover, the claim of using a single foreign fighter, the modus operandi, and weak propaganda doesn't indicate a signature attack by ISIS. However, owning

up to the ISKP attacks could suggest a possible shift in post-Caliphate strategy.

The Wilayat Khurasan — comprising parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia — is a concept born in January 2015, when ISIS designated a former Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) commander from Orakzai, Hafiz Saeed, as "Wali" and a disgruntled Afghan Taliban commander, Abdul Rauf, as "deputy Wali". Following the killing of TTP Amir, Hakimullah, in a drone strike in November 2013, Hafiz Saeed and TTP spokesperson Sheikh Maqbool had drifted away from TTP towards the ISI. The intra-Mehsud fight within TTP led to the emergence of Mullah Fazlullah as the Amir, which led to an exodus of some commanders who were being courted by the ISI to turn them towards targeting Afghanistan.

In October 2014, Hafiz Saeed and Sheikh Maqbool suddenly pledged allegiance to ISIS. Around that time, the ISIS ideology was gaining traction in Pakistan; not so much in Afghanistan. The group did attract Pakistani and Afghan foot soldiers. The group went online for propaganda and recruitment of foreign fighters who found it difficult to go to Syria-Iraq, especially from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Central Asia. However, this recruitment was very small, except from Pakistan. Accounts from the West described the group as ISKP. Online recruiters from Kashmir surfaced as Abu Usman Al

Kashmiri, a *kuniya* (a kind of name) used by Aijaz Ahangar, and as Huzaiifa-al-Bakistani, a *kuniya* used by his son-in-law, reportedly killed in Nangarhar.

In no time, hundreds of local fighters of ISKP displaced the mightier Taliban from Nangarhar while, across the border the Pakistan Army had a formidable presence to control cross-border movement for its own security. It has taken close to five years for ISKP to be dislodged from a small area. Some ISKP nodes did surface in Kunar province, where Pakistan has for years alleged the presence of TTP and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar bases. The geographical spread of ISKP, its selective and big attacks (promptly denied by Taliban) and its "near peaceful co-existence" with Taliban cannot be misread.

Four ISKP Amirs have been killed and a fifth is now under arrest. The group has never gained much traction in Afghanistan or Pakistan. Except claiming a few big attacks in Kabul and Quetta, ISKP has not shown any keenness to expand its areas of influence. Post-Caliphate, no mass movement of regional foreign fighters back to the fold of ISKP has been reported. Some central Asian fighters of dubious connections have surfaced, especially in the north and Nangarhar, recruiting Tajiks and Uzbeks for local and overseas operations. However, the local impact of such groups is marginal.

Aslam Farooqui is one of the first

Pashtun commanders of tribal areas of Pakistan who, along with Moulvi Nazeer and Hafiz Gul Bahadur, aligned with Taliban to fight against US-led ISAF, with active support of the Pakistan Army way back in October 2001. He was also one of the founders of the TTP network that turned the heat on the Pakistan Army for targeting their fiefdom. However, Aslam Farooqui was reported to have made a "deal" with the Pakistan Army around December 2012. Like all such deals in Pakistan, this too was denied as soon as it became public.

In the region, the signs

It is widely believed that over 100 Indians had migrated to the Caliphate, while it was gaining traction among foreign fighters across the world. Subsequently, it became known that a group of Indians from Kerala, including women and children, had migrated to Afghanistan around 2016-17. Some children were born there. A total of 60-plus Indians were believed to be living in territory controlled by ISKP in Nangarhar. Between October and December 2019, over 1,400 people with ISKP, including fighters and their families, surrendered before Afghan forces in Nangarhar. These included fighters from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Some Indian women and children were in this group. A few Indian fighters are believed to have been killed, with no solid

proof as yet, while a few are still missing. With the surfacing of Mushin, it appears that a few more Indians may have joined ISKP.

In recent times, online entities called the Islamic State Hind Province (ISHP) or Islamic State-Kashmir (IS-K) have surfaced, with focus on propaganda and recruitment of Indians, or of fighters from the region, for attacks on Indian interests. The activities of ISHP and IS-K are closely linked to ISKP. The arrest of a Kashmiri couple by Delhi Police Special Cell in early March, being linked to ISHP/IS-K, may have been an attempt to test the waters with Indians — those driven by personal grievances, radicalised in the name of ISIS — to hit targets in Delhi or elsewhere. Although the source of ISKP/ISHP/IS-K is known, this does not reduce the threats posed by them. Since ISIS is currently claiming all "verifiable" attacks, these entities have a ready-to-use platform for propaganda for recruitment. Moreover, through the Covid-19 phase, ISIS is becoming quite active in cyberspace. While ISIS would happily own up to many attacks by the likes of the ISKP network, it may not miss the opportunity to rope in and guide such networks to attack targets in the region. Thus, apart from stemming radicalisation, it is critical to closely watch threats emerging in the region, especially for India and the West.

Anju Gupta is an IPS officer. Views are personal

PANDEMIC WATCH



In Dhaka. Reuters

BANGLADESH
Govt lifts curbs on mosque prayers

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Thursday allowed Muslims to attend prayer congregations in mosques as the government continues to ease the lockdown restrictions amid the coronavirus outbreak which has infected 12,425 people in the country so far. However, mosque leaders are not allowed to organise Iftar gatherings on the mosque premises in line with the social distancing rules, the Bdnews24.com reported. The mosques and devotees have been asked to comply with a set of safety protocols to hold prayer congregations, the Religious Affairs Ministry said.

UNITED KINGDOM
Indian-origin UK MP sacked as care worker

London: An Indian-origin Opposition Labour Party MP, who had returned part-time to her role of a care worker, says she was sacked for speaking out against the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). "Because I've spoken out about this [PPE shortages] I've been sacked from my employment. But this isn't just about me, it's not just about one individual case, or even one employer. Care workers across the country are being easily exploited by their employers, especially if they're on zero-hours contracts," said 24-year-old Labour Party MP.

CANADA

Wages of key workers to be boosted

Ottawa: Canada and the 10 provinces have agreed to increase pay for essential workers such as those working in seniors' residences, where many cases have occurred, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Thursday. "Workers are risking their health to provide us with essential care and services, and we need to make sure that they are paid properly for the work they do," he said. Ottawa will contribute C\$3 billion, representing 75% percent of total cost of the increased wages, the government said. Trudeau earlier said the amount was C\$4 billion.

White House rejects key guidelines as they could 'slow down' reopening

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, MAY 7

THE TRUMP administration has rejected detailed guidelines from health experts to help schools, restaurants, churches and other establishments safely reopen, saying they are too prescriptive, according to several administration officials.

The White House has asked for revisions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, whose public health experts wrote the guidance, but some officials at the CDC have privately expressed concern that the recommendations will never be posted publicly.

In a senior staff meeting at the White House last week, Mark Meadows, the chief of staff, expressed concern that the guidelines were "overly prescriptive," according to a person familiar with the discussion. Meadows' concern, the official said, was that the guidelines were too uniform and regressive for places with minimal numbers of cases.

A copy of the guidance obtained by The New York Times includes sections dealing with child care programs, schools and day camps, communities of



Police remove people from the subway to disinfect it, in New York City on Thursday. Reuters

faith, employers with vulnerable workers, restaurants and bars, and mass transit administrators.

President Trump has been desperate to reopen the country quickly amid the worst economic meltdown since the Great Depression. The detailed CDC guidance was seen by members of the White House coronavirus task force and other aides as a document that could slow down

that effort, according to several people with knowledge of the deliberations inside the West Wing. The dissension on the guidelines was first reported by *The Associated Press*.

The guidance, which the CDC first submitted to the White House in draft form two weeks ago, was meant to help states, local governments and businesses adopt measures that would help

keep the virus from spreading once they reopened. But several federal agencies, including the Department of Labor and the Office of Civil Rights within the Department of Health and Human Services, protested, saying it would be harmful to businesses and the economy and too prescriptive for houses of worship in particular, a federal official said.

3.2 mn more file for jobless aid, US total over 33 mn

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, MAY 7

Another 3.2 million people filed for first-time unemployment benefits last week, in the latest evidence of the economic devastation from the pandemic.

The US government report released Thursday brings the total tally over seven weeks to more than 33 million. The weekly numbers have declined since reaching a peak of 6.9 million claims in late March. But the data remains shocking: Officials in some states say more than a quarter of the work force is jobless.

Economists expect the monthly jobs report from the Labor Department, due Friday, to show that the unemployment rate in April was 15 per cent or higher, a Depression-era level. The figure will almost certainly understate the damage.

The current economic picture is, in a word, bleak. But even in the longer term, many economists warn, the outlook is far from promising, and the quick rebound that Trump predicts may not materialise.

"We don't know what normal is going to look like," said Martha Gimbel, an economist and a labor market expert.

EXPLAINED
The long road back to 2019

WITH THE economic decline occurring so quickly and comprehensively, experts have said that a return to the economic state of 2019 would likely take a long time. This prediction, which contradicts Trump's assurances of a quick rebound, lies partly in the fact that it is impossible to ascertain how quickly jobs will return as curbs are lifted.

The country has already suffered its worst decline in gross domestic product in a decade and the worst retail sales report on record. And it is part of a broader global downturn.

More than half of states have begun to reopen their economies or plan to do so soon. But most fail to meet criteria recommended by the Trump administration to resume business and social activities.

Many cases among medics spark alarm in Afghanistan

HAMID SHALIZI & RUPAM JAIN
KABUL/MUMBAI, MAY 7

MORE THAN a third of confirmed coronavirus cases in the Afghan capital have been among doctors and other healthcare staff, two senior health officials said on Thursday, in a sign that the war-torn country is struggling to deal with the pandemic.

The officials cited a lack of protective equipment for medics as well as a lack of awareness among some medical staff of the precautions needed to avoid infection.

The high rate of infection among healthcare workers has sparked alarm among medics and some doctors have closed their clinics.

However, it is not clear whether the apparently disproportionate rate of infection might be at least in part because medical staff are more likely to be tested for the illness. Few people with the classic COVID-19 symptoms of high fever and respiratory problems are being tested in Afghanistan, because of a shortage of testing kits.

The total of 925 confirmed cases in Kabul has included some 346 medical staff, a government health official and an Afghan doctor who is on the board of a government-led pandemic task force said.

As of Thursday, 3,563 people have tested positive and 106 people have died in Afghanistan, according to official figures. The two officials, who asked not to be named as they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly, said at least 13 doctors had died in different parts of the country last month and in the first week of May. **REUTERS**

Amid pandemic, lockdown, an adoption and evacuation

MARIA ABI-HABIB
NEW YORK, MAY 7

THE LITTLE girl, her black curls tumbling over her eyes and her slight frame uncomfortably splayed out on the airplane seat, hid crayons in her armpits the entire flight. She was puzzled how they, like the new people called Mom and Dad sitting next to her, now belonged to her.

Her new parents, Seth and Meg Mosier, looked to each other. Were they doing things right? It was not their first emergency evacuation — they had escaped war and violence before — but it was their first on a one-way flight from India sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And certainly their first with a little girl they had just adopted as a deadly pandemic swirled around the world.

In 2008, Seth, an American diplomat, was ordered to evacuate from the embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, when the Russian military invaded. Meg drove a car filled with diplomats across the border and into the safety of Armenia. In 2011, the Arab Spring protests forced them to leave Egypt.

Seth, 41, with a dirty blond crew cut and a perpetually earnest look on his face, and Meg, 42, with freckles, a short brunette bob and a determination to always stay positive, decided to settle down after they left Cairo.

After weeks of filling out monotonous paperwork, they were directed to an orphanage in Madurai, a city in southern India. The orphanage gave them a name: a little girl named Selvi.

Last December, when they had their first video chat with her, they struggled to hold her attention. Less than three months later, the first coronavirus case in Delhi was announced on March 2, a day



Seth and Meg Mosier pose with their daughter Selvi

before the adoption was approved. They booked tickets to Madurai for March 12, four days before their meeting with Selvi.

Just 20 hours after the Mosiers arrived, India sealed its borders. Now all they needed to do was meet their daughter and get out in time. The bonding process was never going to be easy, but now they had to speed it up. "It was so scary. There was so much weight behind this, so many moments dedicated to thinking about this moment," Meg said.

The next day, the Mosiers could finally take Selvi home. They flew several hours to Delhi on March 18. The next day, India announced all flights in and out of the country would be cancelled in three days. They had two days to finalise an international adoption.

The final paperwork usually takes a week. But bureaucrats from both countries rushed to finish it in two days. Just hours before the airport closed, the Mosiers checked in. But they had forgotten one crucial piece of paper: an exit stamp allowing Selvi to leave the country.

They were stuck in India with few hotels still open. The Mosiers checked themselves into a fancy hotel now empty of guests. They spent the next nine days playing hide and go seek with bored bellhops and the hotel manager.

"So many people told us we were the bright spot in their day," Meg said.

Finally, they got an email saying the Latter-day Saints had chartered a flight to evacuate missionaries. They offered unoccupied seats to the embassy, which offered them to the Mosiers.

The Mosiers are now back in Bethesda, where the governor has ordered an extended lockdown. They haven't introduced Selvi to friends or family yet, which they said was a blessing that allowed them to bond with their new daughter.

Meals have been difficult. Selvi does not like American food and so Seth has been researching Indian curry recipes online. "I've spent a lot of time perfecting a potato masala," Seth said.

And the crayons? Selvi now leaves them lying around the house. "She knows," Meg said, "what's ours is hers." **NYT**



CLIMBING THE DOME

People at the Boudhanath Stupa during the birth anniversary of Buddha amid the lockdown in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Thursday. The IMF has approved a disbursement of about \$214 million to help Nepal cover pandemic costs. Reuters

Pakistan to lift measures from May 9 despite rising curve

REUTERS & PTI
ISLAMABAD, MAY 7

PAKISTAN'S CORONAVIRUS lockdown will be lifted on Saturday, Prime Minister Imran Khan said Thursday, despite the fact that the number of cases in the country is still accelerating.

The decision is being taken because the country's large number of poor people and labourers cannot not afford to live under lockdown any more, he said on Thursday.

"We're deciding that we are ending this lockdown now," Khan said in a televised address. "We know that we're doing it at a time when our curve is going



Villagers harvest crops amid lockdown in Peshawar. AP

up... but it is not edging up as we were expecting."

Pakistan, which has undergone a five-week lockdown, has reported 24,073 coronavirus cases with 564 deaths, and recorded its highest single-day in-

crease of 1,523 cases on Thursday. Debt-ridden Pakistan is also going ahead with its strategic \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, despite the country's further economic downturn. "There is no political hindrance in its way. The project is Pakistan's future as well as a tangible reality and no compromise will be made on it," CPEC Authority Chairman Lt-Gen (ret'd) Asim Saleem Bajwa said Wednesday.

Pakistan takes decisions in its interest and there should be no doubt that the CPEC project "is in the best interest of the country" and "no external pressure will be accepted", the *Express Tribune* quoted Bajwa as saying.

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Israeli High Court lets Netanyahu form govt, despite indictments

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM, MAY 7

IN A ruling late Wednesday, Israel's Supreme Court refused to bar Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from forming a government, clearing the last major obstacle to his claiming a record fifth term as Israel's leader.

The high court unanimously rejected petitions that sought to disqualify Netanyahu because he faces prosecution on felony corruption charges, ruling that it had no legal grounds to do so.

The court also declined to



Benjamin Netanyahu

block an unusual power-sharing arrangement that Netanyahu struck with Benny Gantz, the former army chief who had fought him to a draw in three straight elections.

Israel's Parliament on

Thursday approved amendments to two basic laws by a hefty majority, paving the way for Netanyahu.

The Knesset or Parliament voted by 71 votes to 37 to back the power-sharing deal.

The bills were necessary for Blue and White to be able to recommend Prime Minister Netanyahu to form a government by Thursday night's deadline to prevent a fourth election, the paper said.

Netanyahu, 70, immediately announced he would take the oath of office on May 13. Gantz, 60, is to take office as deputy or alternate prime minister.

Former Iraqi intel chief approved as new premier

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, MAY 7

IRAQ'S FORMER spy chief was sworn in as prime minister by lawmakers early Thursday after weeks of tense political negotiations as the country faces a severe economic crisis spurred by plummeting oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic.

The majority of 255 legislators approved the government plan and the majority of Cabinet ministers proposed by Mustafa al-Kadhimi, officially inaugurating him as Iraq's sixth premier since 2003 and ending five months of a leadership void.

Legislators accepted 15 ministers and rejected five, among them the ministries of trade, justice, culture, agriculture and migration. The ministries of oil and foreign affairs also remain vacant pending further political negotiations. According to Iraq's constitution, a government can pass if over half of a proposed Cabinet is approved.

Al-Kadhimi, who gave up the intelligence post when he became the prime minister-designate, assumes the premiership as Iraq faces unprecedented crises amid falling oil revenues that will likely prompt unpopular austerity measures, a rising daily tally of coronavirus cases, and expected US-Iraq talks.

Venezuela: Detained American claims he plotted Maduro's capture

BRIAN ELLSWORTH & ANGUS BERWICK
CARACAS, MAY 7

A FORMER US soldier captured in Venezuela said on Wednesday he had been contracted by a Florida security firm to seize control of Caracas' airport and bring in a plane to fly President Nicolas Maduro to the United States.

Venezuelan authorities on Monday arrested the man, Luke Denman, along with fellow US citizen Airon Berry and 11 others, in what Maduro has called a failed plot coordinated with



Nicolas Maduro

Washington to oust him.

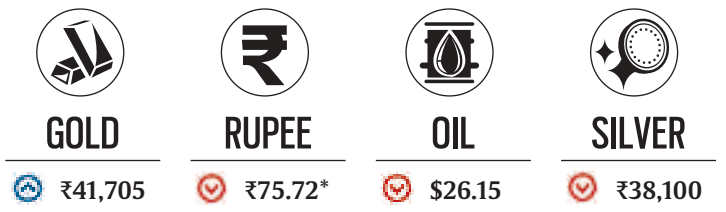
During questioning broadcast on state television, Denman said the firm, Silvercorp USA, had signed a contract with Venezuelan opposition leader

Juan Guaido to seek Maduro's removal. A Guaido advisor told CNN on Wednesday he had signed an exploratory agreement, but it had never been finalised and the opposition did not support the attempted incursion.

US President Donald Trump has denied involvement. A senior Trump administration official said Maduro's accusations of a US role "are not credible".

"I was helping Venezuelans take back control of their country," Denman, a former special operations forces member, said in the video. He did not give details on how his group planned to get Maduro on a plane. **REUTERS**

ECONOMY



SENSEX: 31,443.38 ▼ 242.37 NIFTY: 9,199.05 ▼ 71.85 NIKKEI: 19,674.77 ▲ 55.42 HANG SENG: 23,980.63 ▼ 156.85 FTSE: 5,917.10 ▲ 63.34 DAX: 10,726.85 ▲ 120.65

*Forex market closed on Thursday on account of Buddha Purnima; International market data till 1900 IST

COVID-19 EFFECT New Amendments

Relaxation in labour laws, exemptions to cos in various states draw trade union ire

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

AMID THE coronavirus-induced lockdown, an increasing number of states that include Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat have pushed through changes to their labour laws by way of amendments — ordinances or executive orders — some of which would require approval from the central government to come into effect. Reacting to the move by states, trade unions have condemned the blanket exemption to employers from labour laws and termed the move as regressive.

The Uttar Pradesh government had, on Wednesday, cleared an ordinance exempting businesses from the purview of most labour law provisions for the next three years. However, labour laws related to bonded labour, deployment of women and children and timely payment of salaries will not be relaxed under the ordinance.

"The industrial and economic activities in Uttar Pradesh have been severely affected and slowed down due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Businesses and economic activities have slowed down due to which labour welfare has also been affected. This is because businesses and economic activities came to a halt more or less due to the national lockdown. To bring economic activity back on track, new investment opportunities would need to be created along with fastening the business processes and productivity," a statement issued by the state government said.

CPI(M)-linked Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) condemned the blanket exemption to employers from labour laws, terming it as a "barbaric move to impose conditions of slavery on the working people who are actually creating wealth for the country, simultaneously suffering from brutal exploitation and loot by the capitalists and big-business".

The latest is the more aggressive

move to liberate corporate employers from obligations under almost all labour laws in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, CITU said. Most other state governments will follow the same path while competing with others in "the name of development and attracting investment in the state on the dubious plea of revival of their economy", it said.

Along with an extension of daily working hours to 12, Madhya Pradesh has exempted employers from some obligations under various labour laws, like Madhya Pradesh Industrial Relations Act and Industrial Disputes Act, as well as Contract Labour Act for 1,000 days, allowing employers to hire and fire workers "at their convenience". The state has also allowed exempted firms flexibility of extension of working hours. Further, it has exempted new factories under the Factories Act, 1948 from inspection from the Labour Department and permitted the flexibility to conduct third party inspections at will.

The state has also issued an ordinance to the Madhya Pradesh Labour Welfare Fund Act, 1982, exempting all newly established factories from filing annual returns and paying Rs 80 per labourer per year to the Madhya Pradesh Labour Welfare Board for next 1,000 days. Changes to the Madhya Pradesh Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1961 will exempt industries employing up to 100 workers from the law's provisions.

Experts have termed the amending of labour laws by state to be in contravention to the globally accepted norms. States including Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab have extended working hours in manufacturing units to 12 hours from 8.

Reacting to the development, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury on Thursday tweeted, "Wealth is nothing but the monetisation of value. Destroying labour means destroying economic growth. BJP's diabolical agenda must be resisted and defeated to save "India, that is Bharat".

FINANCE MINISTER SAYS ECONOMY IS POISED TO RECOVER 'PSB loans of ₹5.66L cr waiting for disbursement soon after lockdown'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

AMID DELAYS in the announcement of an economic package being readied by the Centre, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday said the "economy is poised to recover" as public sector banks (PSBs) have stepped up loan sanctions in March and April, and these funds will be disbursed soon after the lockdown is lifted. She said PSBs have proactively provided three-month loan moratorium facility to over 3.2 crore accounts after the scheme was announced by the RBI.

A total of Rs 5.66 lakh crore of loans were sanctioned during March-April 2020 to MSMEs, retail, corporate and agriculture sectors, while another over Rs 1 lakh crore of funds have been sanctioned to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs). "During March-April 2020, PSBs sanctioned loans worth Rs 5.66 lakh crore for more than 41.81 lakh accounts. These borrowers are from MSME, Retail, Agriculture & Corporate sectors, waiting for dis-

MORATORIUM TO OVER 3.2 CRA/Cs

■ In a series of tweets on Thursday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said PSBs have proactively provided three-month loan moratorium facility to over 3.2 crore accounts after the scheme was announced by the RBI

■ PSBs are attending to the funding needs of MSMEs, she added

bursal soon after #lockdown lifts. Economy poised to recover," the FM said in a series of tweets.

PSBs are attending to the funding needs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), she added. The economic shutdown has hit MSMEs particularly hard as they do not have large reserves that bluechip companies have. "For MSMEs and others, pre-approved emergency credit lines

& working capital enhancements being prioritised by PSBs. More than 27 lakh customers contacted from March 20 and 2.37 lakh cases sanctioned loans worth Rs. 26,500 cr. A work in progress," Sitharaman said on her official Twitter handle.

A recent report by Crisil points out how SMEs are hit when the economy moves into a low-growth phase. It says that when the economy moves from normal to low growth rate, current asset days (how quickly a company is able to convert its current assets into cash) for large companies rises from 139 days to 143 days, for micro and small companies it jumps from 189 days to 220 days. This affects their funding ability, pushing them to seek higher working capital loans from banks.

Credit information firm TransUnion CIBIL said loans worth Rs 2,32,000 crore of MSMEs are at a higher risk of becoming non-performing assets. MSMEs operating across the value chain — including cycle parts, auto parts, textiles products, toys, hand tools — are facing stress due to depleting internal reserves and low visibility of demand for next six

months at least, according to industry sources.

Apart from MSMEs, NBFCs are other companies facing the stress, as their cost of funding has gone up sharply especially for lower rated companies. Sitharaman said that state-owned banks have sanctioned funds to NBFCs. "Sustained credit flow to #NBFCs & HFCs in #COVID-19. PSBs sanctioned loans worth Rs 77,383 crore between Mar 1-May 4. Inclusive of TLTRO funds, extended total financing of Rs 1.08 lakh crore, ensuring business stability & continuity going forward," she said.

The RBI last month announced targeted long term repo operations (TLTRO) scheme through which banks can borrowing funds from RBI for lending. The scheme mandates that within the total size of Rs 50,000 crore, 10 per cent should be allocated to MFIs, 15 per cent to NBFCs with asset size of Rs 500 crore and below, and 25 per cent to NBFCs with asset size between Rs 500 crore and Rs 5,000 crore rated in investment grade. NBFCs have also sought a moratorium on loan repayments, and banks are considering this on a case-to-case basis.

'Micro enterprises best placed to help economy'

Micro enterprises are best placed to help the economy come out of the COVID-19 crisis, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and TransUnion CIBIL said in a report



What are micro enterprises?:

Micro enterprises have been classified as those with borrowings of less than ₹1 crore

NPAs in various segments, as of December 2019:

■ 11.3%: Very small segment (under Rs 10 lakh exposure)

■ 17.3%: Overall commercial lending segment

■ 18.7%: Medium corporate segment

■ 19.1%: Large corporate segment

Liquidity and leverage positions: of active MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) as of January 2020:

■ 63% in structurally strong risk segment having a CIBIL MSME Rank (CMR) between 1 and 5

■ 37% in weaker risk segment having CMR between 6 and 10

₹92,000 crore: Total credit support received by micro segment in 2019 from banks and other lenders

Source: Sidbi & TransUnion Cibil/PFI

'Possible to raise \$60 bn by listing govt bonds overseas'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

BOEING WON An economic relief package to fight the COVID-19 crisis will come any time soon, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) Krishnamurthy V Subramanian said on Thursday and indicated that borrowing of around \$60 billion to fund the rising fiscal deficit

can theoretically be through listing government bonds on the global bond indices.

In an interview to *India Today*, he said: "About \$4 trillion of money tracks these (global) bond indices. India is expected to get a weight of around 1.5-3 per cent. Even if you take 1.5 per cent, that translates into \$60 billion."

"I recognise that this money can't come immediately but may

come later half of the year or next year. But that gives us the opportunity to structure the borrowing plan in terms of maturity etc to be able to finance the deficit and also do it in a way that the cost of borrowing doesn't become very large," he added.

In March, the RBI announced the opening up of key government securities to full foreign investment in a bid to find a place in

global bond indices. The Centre had budgeted gross market borrowing of Rs 7.8 lakh crore for FY21 and had recently announced plan to borrow 62.6 per cent of it in the first half itself. However, its plans have gone haywire due to the virus crisis. The economy could grow at 1.5-2 per cent in FY21, with a contraction in the first half. This will be followed by a V-shaped recovery, he said FE

CII offers suggestions to bring workers back to industry

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

EXPANSION OF coverage of the applicability of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) to more workers, addressing the shortage of workers for commencement of businesses, usage of unclaimed funds for wage payments and increase in working hours by four hours across sectors are some of the key recommendations to be made by the industry to the government.

In a meeting with Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar, which will be

held with employers on Friday, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is also going to propose mapping of migrant workers residing in shelter homes or locally near industrial belts for employment in the nearest factories.

"All the stakeholders, including both central and state governments and trade unions, need to work together to get the workers back to industry. State governments and district administrations need to work closely to facilitate the movement of migrants and ensure accommodation, meals and other basic amenities," the list of recommendations prepared by CII stated.

With no relief in sight, auto industry petitions govt

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE AUTO industry, which is already reeling under the burden of low demand and high inventory, both of which have got accentuated with the lockdown, is staring at another big problem: How to meet the regulatory changes which have come into effect from April. Not getting any relief from the Supreme Court, the industry on Thursday sought the intervention of Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari.

In a video conference with the minister over the impact of

COVID-19 on the automobile sector, members of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Institute sought that switchover to certain safety norms, which have kicked in from April, should be deferred by a year.

Industry members also urged that the sector be given more time for registration of BS-IV vehicles sold till March 31 as lockdown has delayed matters. Pawan Goenka, MD and CEO, Mahindra & Mahindra, said that around 20 per cent of the BS-IV vehicles sold within the March 31 deadline are still stuck with the concerned regional transport authorities (RTOs) for various reasons. FE

Sebi refutes Templeton CEO charge, asks MF to return investors' money

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 7

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Thursday asked Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (FT), which closed down six of its debt schemes, to focus on returning money to investors "as soon as possible".

Sebi's advisory to FT follows the company's CEO Jennifer Johnson's statement shifting the blame for the recent winding down of six schemes — with a corpus of Rs 28,000 crore — on to the markets regulator's October 2019 decision to not let funds invest more than 10 per cent in unlisted instruments. "Despite the regulations being clear, some mutual fund schemes seem to have chosen to have high concentrations of high risk, unlisted, opaque, bespoke, structured debt securities with

low credit ratings and seem to have chosen not to rebalance their portfolios even during the almost 12 months available to them so far," Sebi said in a statement.

"In light of credit events since September 2018 that led to challenges in the corporate bond market, a need was felt to review the regulatory framework for mutual funds and take necessary steps to safeguard the interest of investors and maintain the orderliness and robustness of their investments," Sebi said. *The Indian Express* had earlier reported that FT's credit risk schemes had invested in several lowly rated instruments and lesser known companies.

In a circular dated October 1, 2019, Sebi provided a timeline to comply with the investment limits for unlisted NCDs as 15 per cent and 10 per cent of the debt portfolio of the scheme as on March 31, 2020 and June 30, 2020, respec-

tively. These dates were subsequently extended to September 30, 2020 and December 31, 2020, respectively, in view of COVID-related disruptions, Sebi clarified.

In an investor conference call, Johnson had said the high-yield market is still very immature in India. "So we've had a large fund — it's actually six funds that were invested with a lot of this kind of private debt. And in October of 2019, unfortunately, Sebi came out with new guidelines saying that any investments in unlisted instruments, you can't have more than 10 per cent in a fund, and you can't trade them. So that orphaned about one-third of our fund there," the FT CEO said.

However, NS Venkatesh, Chief Executive, Association of Mutual Funds in India, said that measures taken by the Sebi over the years, including one on October 19, have deepened the debt markets.

A member of Facebook's key oversight board, NLSIU V-C sees a new internet regulation model

KARISHMA MEHROTRA & APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

FACEBOOK'S NEW oversight board — similar to an independent, internal court — has chosen National Law School of India University (NLSIU) Vice-Chancellor Sudhir Krishnaswamy as one of its first 20 members.

Prof Krishnaswamy, founder of the advocacy organisation Centre for Law and Policy Research, told *The Indian Express* that the new model could set an example for internet regulation in India and around the world.

"For the problem of content moderation on the internet, either we take the market option (where the audience decides which com-



NLSIU Vice-Chancellor Sudhir Krishnaswamy. Express

pany to use), or we have a state option (where the state regulates). Neither of these work," he said.

The board is a third alternative, said the former Azim Premji University director and a Columbia University visiting pro-

fessor. "In (press and broadcast) media regulation, there have been self-regulation options, but none has emerged as strongly," he said.

Krishnaswamy has been chosen among the former Prime Minister of Denmark, a Nobel Laureate, non-profit organisation leaders, and journalists from all over the world. "Facebook as a company is to be bound by the board," Krishnaswamy said, when asked about the most promising policies of the structure. "But we don't have a direct relationship with Facebook. We do our job and they do theirs."

He said the board will focus on "edge" cases that are most "consequential". He said important cases of pornography and abusive online behavior would likely reach the board. The policies for

the board have been outlined since 2018. If a user's post gets taken down on Facebook or Instagram, this oversight board will act as an appeals process. The board will primarily judge content moderation cases in consistency with the company's policies, as well as formulate policy suggestions.

At least for the beginning, it will not deal with posts that users want taken down.

"The Oversight Board will have power to overturn decisions we've made on content as long as they comply with local laws," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote in a May 7 post.

While the print and broadcast media have attempted self-regulation models, Krishnaswamy said this is an entirely different structure adapted to the Internet age.

GSK offloads stake in Hindustan Unilever for over ₹25,000 cr

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 7

GLAXOSMITHKLINE PLC (GSK) on Thursday sold its 5.7 per cent stake in FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) for Rs 25,480 crore. The GSK sale, at an average price of Rs 1,905 per share, is the largest secondary market trade on Indian stock exchanges.

"GSK has, through its subsidiaries GlaxoSmithKline Pte Ltd and Horlicks Ltd, today agreed to the sale of 133,772,044 ordinary shares in HUL at a volume-weighted average price of approximately Rs 1,905 per share, raising gross proceeds of approximately Rs 25,480 crore," GSK said.

After the transaction, GSK will not hold any HUL shares. The names of the buyers were not immediately known. Glaxo acquired the stake in HUL after the former sold its consumer nutrition business, including brands like Horlicks and Boost, to HUL.

In December 2018, Hindustan Unilever approved a scheme of amalgamation between the com-

pany and GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Ltd (GSK CH India). The transaction was an all equity merger with 4.39 shares of HUL being allotted for every share in GSK CH India. This transaction valued the total business at Rs 31,700 crore.

"When GSK originally announced the divestment of Horlicks in December 2018, the company expected gross proceeds from the overall transaction to be approximately 3.1 billion pounds and net proceeds to be approximately 2.4 billion pound after hedging costs, taxes and other expenses had been settled," GSK said in an exchange filing in London.

"With the appreciation of HUL's share price since then, GSK now expects gross proceeds from the divestment to be 3.4 billion pounds and net proceeds from the divestment to be 2.9 billion pound," it said. This includes the proceeds received on closing of the transaction on April 1, 2020 and the expected proceeds from the sale of our Bangladesh business, which is expected to close later this year, GSK added.

SBI slashes MCLR by 15 bps across all tenors

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 7

STATE BANK of India (SBI), the country's largest lender, on Thursday slashed its marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 15 bps across all tenors.

The one-year MCLR has come down to 7.25 per cent from 7.40 per cent, with effect from May 10. This is the 12th consecutive reduction in the bank's MCLR. Consequently, EMIs on eligible home loan accounts (linked to MCLR) will get cheaper by around Rs 255 for a 30-year loan of Rs 25 lakh.

Further, in view of adequate liquidity in the system as well as with the state-run lender, SBI has cut its interest rates on retail term deposits by 20 basis points (bps) for 'up to 3 years' tenor with effect from May 12.

Meanwhile, to safeguard the interests of senior citizens in the current falling rate regime, the bank has introduced a new product 'SBI WeCare Deposit' for senior citizens in the retail term deposit segment.

In another development, according to a PFI report quoting a

EXPLAINED Deposit rates cut to keep adequate liquidity

THE STATE-OWNED bank has also cut interest rates on its retail term deposits by 20 bps for 'up to 3 years tenor'. The cut in deposit rates is aimed at maintaining adequate liquidity in the larger system as well as the bank.

senior official, SBI on Thursday increased its home loan rates that are linked to repo rate by up to 30 bps. The state-owned lender has also hiked interest rates on personal loans against property by 30 bps, according to the report.

The new rates came into effect from May 1, as per information available on its website, the PFI report stated. WITHPTI

BRIEFLY

Ratan Tata invests in pharma startup

Mumbai: Ratan Tata has invested an undisclosed amount in a 17-year-old kid's pharma start-up Generic Aadhaar, in his personal capacity. The startup supplies quality generic drugs from reputed manufacturers at up to 80 per cent lesser cost and other medicines 20-30 per cent cheaper.

Swiggy co-founder Jaimini quits

New Delhi: Swiggy Thursday said its co-founder and CTO Rahul Jaimini will move away from active role in the company to pursue another entrepreneurial venture. Jaimini will be joining Pesto Tech, a career accelerator start-up, as their co-founder, Swiggy said. PTI

'Reopening of red zones vital for economy'

Mumbai: McKinsey Thursday said that finding methods of keeping red zone districts, which account for 41 per cent of national economic activity, operational and safe would be critical in keeping the economic activity sustainable. ENS



The British central bank said the country's economy will be 30 per cent smaller at the end of the first half of the year than it was at the start of it AP file

Cricket in bio-secure bubble

ECB mulls 6 Tests at 2 venues, players away from families for 9 weeks; BCCI to wait for pandemic to recede

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, MAY 7

THE UNITED Kingdom is mulling a mid-June restart of the Premier League after the suspension caused by the coronavirus pandemic and cricket is also exploring a return to action without fans in attendance.

The England and Wales Cricket Board is considering options to host home series against West Indies and Pakistan in July-August. According to a report in *The Guardian*, England players would be asked to assemble at the Ageas Bowl on June 23 and they might have to stay away from their families for nine weeks until the end of the third Test against Pakistan, scheduled from August 20. The first Test against West Indies might commence on July 8.

As per the report, the ECB could host the six Tests at two venues – Ageas Bowl and Old Trafford – and during the entire period, players would be subjected to daily temperature checks, regular Covid swabs and other bio-security measures. Also, an expanded squad comprising 30 players could be chosen with an eye to rotation.

Apart from six Tests, six ODIs and as many T20 Internationals are also on the roster. The limited-overs itinerary includes three ODIs against Ireland at the end of July followed by three T20Is against Pakistan after the Test series and then three ODIs and three T20Is against Australia in September.

In India however, the BCCI is willing to wait. Given that the domestic season starts in August-September, the board still has a few months to make a decision. It doesn't want to put its cricketers into any health risk, regardless of bio-secure arrangements.

"We aren't considering anything (like that), as of now. We will wait for the government guidelines. We won't put our players in a health hazard. We would be very cautious," BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal told *The Indian Express*.

There's an overwhelming agreement in the BCCI that even with all the precautions and 'bio-security', playing cricket, while the Covid-19 curve is still steep, is fraught with risk. Going back to England, *The Times* reported that a group of players were briefed

Daily temperature checks, onsite hotels

In sport's resumption bid to avert a financial meltdown, bio-secure stadiums will be the imminent future. Like the ECB, which is deliberating on getting the season underway, with Tests against Windies and Pakistan.

SECURE STADIUMS: As the word implies, it's playing in conditions that are entirely infection-free, where all those involved, from players and support staff to officials, are tested for Covid-19 in advance and then kept in a "bio-secure" environment, sealed off from the outside world. Only people who were virus-free or have immunity are allowed into the bubble. Most football leagues in Europe and the ECB have been busy identifying stadiums that can be converted into a bio-secure bubble, self-sustainable venues with onsite hotel and training facilities in those areas that have a relatively reduced incidence rate.

ECB'S OUTLINE: The ECB believes that two of their venues, Old Trafford and Ageas Bowl could fulfil the criteria of bio-secure venues. The two grounds have their on-site hotels, the Bowl has a well-being centre too, spacious enough to accommodate both teams, their entourage of support staff, match officials and broadcast crew.



If the ECB plan goes through, players like England captain Joe Root will be sealed off from the outside world, including family and fans for weeks.

The Bowl's health centre could be used to provide players, backroom staff, administrators and media with skin prick tests on their way into the ground.

MEASURES IN PLACE: Apart from the standard practices of social distancing, England's Test cricketers have been told to expect daily temperature checks, regular swabs, weekly COVID-19 tests and possibly nine weeks away from their families. After initial testing, they would spend the first week training in small groups before an inter-squad match that serves as a warm-up for the first Test against West Indies. The matches will be played on the practice wickets of the Bowl or on neighbouring club grounds. Also, the ground and hotel staff will operate in small groups with another set on the standby. If one of the staff gets infected, the entire team will be put under quarantine while the new group takes over.

CHALLENGES: A possible hurdle for ECB is testing, as the country is struggling to get tests for even frontline NHS staff. So to conduct tests on an estimated 200-300 people every week could be quite daunting. **ENS**

by the ECB about its plans on Tuesday. They were told to minimise physical contact including handshakes on and off the field, also in the team bus, when cricket returns. It needs to be seen if, like the Premier League, the ECB makes any move to have private companies on board to provide test kits.

Sports bodies in England have swung into action after the UK government gave their 'project restart' a positive consideration. Also, as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab mentioned, return of sport would lift the morale of a beleaguered nation that has suffered the highest number of coronavirus deaths (over 30,000) in Europe. "I think it would lift spirits of the nation and people would like to see us get back to work and children can go to school safely but also pastimes like sport," Raab said during a government press conference.

Loss of revenue is a major reason why sports authorities are keen to have a restart at the earliest. The Premier League stares at a £1 billion black hole if the season is voided. Similarly, ECB chief executive Tom Harrison has told MPs that this is the "most significant financial challenge we have ever faced", with potential losses of £380 million for a 'zero' cricket season.

Australia's single-venue plan

Cricket Australia (CA), meanwhile, has already started planning about cricket in isolation for their home Test series against India in December-January. CA chief executive Kevin Roberts has spoken about the possibility of hosting the series, which is worth \$300 million, at a single venue – Adelaide Oval – and behind closed doors. "Whether or not there are people at the venue or not;

we will explore all viable options. Fortunately, we have a little bit of time to work through the different scenarios with the India series. But we are not ruling out any possibility for that at this point in time," Roberts had said during an interaction with the media via video conference last month.

A 138-room premium boutique hotel at Adelaide Oval, which is scheduled for a September opening, reportedly could offer the Indian team a potential quarantine centre. Whether the BCCI would agree to play Test cricket in such a deadpan atmosphere remains a question.

"To start with, it depends on our government's policies. To travel abroad and coming back, you need the government's permission. Then, office-bearers will sit with the team management and players to discuss the issue," a BCCI functionary said.

If T20 World Cup is off, IPL may find a window

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, MAY 7

A BCCI teleconference on Wednesday discussed the possible scheduling of IPL and also gave a thought to India's domestic and international seasons.

It is learnt that the office-bearers also discussed the possible postponement of the T20 World Cup in Australia, scheduled for October-November.

While the office-bearers agreed that there was very little chance of any cricket taking place in India until later this year, the talk of the ICC event getting pushed back at least gave the BCCI a window to slot the IPL. However, with India's Covid-19 curve getting steeper and a heavy cloud of uncertainty hovering over the game's commencement, the Indian board merely saw this as a glimmer of hope for this season's IPL.

Meanwhile, in Australia despite the pandemic's numbers shrinking, serious question marks remained over the country hosting the T20 World Cup as per schedule.

Australia has closed its borders for six months and even Cricket Australia (CA), jointly with the ICC, has been exploring alternate options.

It is learnt that the majority of the ICC members are in agreement that a global event like the T20 World Cup can't be staged behind closed doors.

"A one or two-match (T20 series) before empty stands may happen. But a big event like World Cup, I don't think it will happen," a BCCI functionary told *The Indian Express*.

"If there's a possibility to organise the IPL (in autumn), we will go for it, but at the moment we are not in a position to take a call," he added.

One of his colleagues sounded more cautious about the future.

"See, at the moment we aren't sure about anything. One thing we are very sure, we can't take any chances (about the safety of players, officials and spectators). We will see what they (CA and ICC) decide about the T20 World Cup and will act accordingly," he said, making it amply clear that the BCCI will start thinking about its future course of action only after the government green light.

If eventually the T20 World Cup is post-

EXPLAINED
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BCCI vs Star: 5 years or 5 seasons?

In case the 2020 Indian Premier League gets cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, should Star get an additional year added to their broadcasting contract with BCCI? Some legal experts have said that Star's 2017-2022 deal should get extended to 2023 in case of the eventualty, arguing that the contract is valid for 'five seasons'. However, BCCI so far hints that Star's right to broadcast IPL ends in 2022 as the deal is for 'five years'. This conflicting interpretation of the terms of agreement might result in Star invoking the "breach of contract" clause.

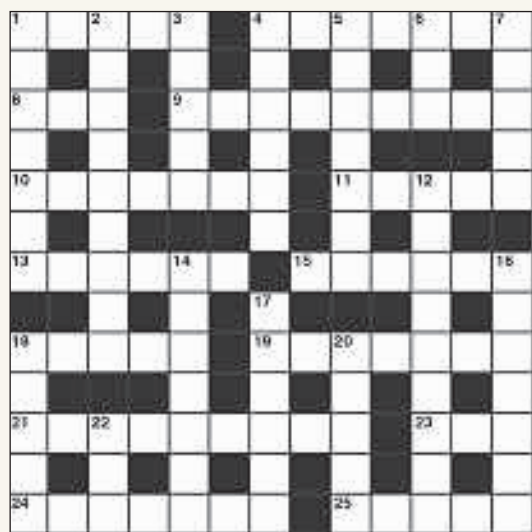
Meanwhile, a delayed, or even shortened, IPL might avert this potential face-off. Star, at present, is heavily invested in cricket as it has pledged close to Rs 30,000 crore in media rights. Besides being the rights holders for Indian cricket at home and IPL, they have ICC's global broadcasting rights.

poned and the BCCI gets an opportunity to organise the IPL in October-November, participation of overseas players might not be a problem.

"Cricket boards that are issuing NOCs to their players for the IPL get 10 per cent based on the total contract value of the players from the respective boards. Given the current (economic) situation, everybody would like to maintain a good rapport with the BCCI," said a source.

India swapping the T20 World Cup with Australia and hosting it this year, is ruled out, it is learnt.

CROSSWORD 4112



- ACROSS**
- Father has a hand in getting fruit (5)
 - Find the solution is to organise into groups (4,3)
 - Disturbance cut short in Brazilian port (3)
 - Combination of wind and frost cause a pile-up in winter (9)
 - A requirement is inside this flavouring (7)
 - Musical jymnal? (5)
 - Water nymphs in a sad muddle (6)
 - Athletic pursuits turn into instruments of sharp practice (6)
 - The key note of medicine (5)
 - A number in favour of good taste? (7)
 - Keep in mind what the host will do (9)
 - Cooling agent used in atomic energy (3)
 - Powered galley vessel? (7)
 - Students may decline to learn it (5)
- Down**
- Belong to painter, perhaps (7)
 - Making it may be foresight or for sight (9)
 - We sat out in the desert (5)
 - Throw out uneven and inferior material (6)
 - New cadet or old soldier (7)
 - Sash that's somewhat too big (3)
 - In colour it is one of the greats (5)
 - Expert on the rocks? (9)
 - Crude modus operandi executed with propriety (7)
 - Desire in one's child to become a doctor? (7)
 - Business concern (6)
 - Hair used to stuff mattresses (5)
 - Cancel an article from a year book (5)
 - Sartorial obligation, perhaps (3)

Solutions Crossword 4111: Across: 1 Distressed, 8 Astr, 9 Granite, 10 Burying, 11 Attic, 12 Serrite, 14 Flagon, 17 Again, 19 Vanilla, 21 Opinion, 22 Piece, 23 Ill-feeling. Down: 2 Interim, 3 Tars, 4 Engage, 5 Sea wall, 6 Drift, 7 Percentage, 8 Ambassador, 13 Tennis, 15 Galleon, 16 Avenue, 18 Alibi, 20 Nepal.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



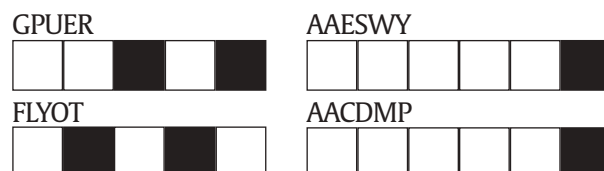
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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 quip.

You will not find _____ anywhere unless you bring some of it with you. - Joseph Joubert (6)



SOLUTION: PURGE, LOFTY, SEAWAY, MADCAP
 Answer: You will not find **PUFFERY** anywhere unless you bring some of it with you. - Joseph Joubert

Difficulty Level 4s

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 4202



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