

Tablighi FIR: Police probe indicates Saad audio clip was doctored

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

INITIAL INVESTIGATION by the Delhi Police Crime Branch has found that an audio clip mentioned in the police FIR against Markaz Nizamuddin head Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, which suggested he had asked Tablighi Jamaat members not to follow social distancing norms and prohibitory orders, may be "doctored" and stitched together using several audio files.



Booked for culpable homicide

Police have now sent all the individual audio clips as well as the allegedly doctored clip to a forensic science laboratory. Saad and six other people associated with the management committee of the Alami Markaz Banglewali Masjid, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat outfit, had been booked by the Delhi Police on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder (IPC Section 304) for allegedly going ahead with a gathering of around 2,000 people at the mosque in the Capital's Nizamuddin West in late March despite warnings from authorities.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

NEW APPROACH NEEDED FOR ECONOMY REVIVAL

BY ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN & JOSH FELMAN, PAGE 8

Alarm over migrant workers as Odisha sees spike; Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh spar on cases

KAUNAIN SHERIFF, GARGI VERMA & ABHISHEK ANGAD
NEW DELHI, RAIPUR, RANCHI, MAY 8

AS THE Supreme Court Friday stayed an interim order by the Orissa High Court asking the state government to ensure that the migrants seeking to come back "should (have) tested negative" for Covid-19, concerns are rising in the state about cases linked to returning workers.

Ganjam district, that had two cases on May 2, has 47 now, all

RAILWAYS TELLS STAFF TO OBSERVE 'ABUNDANT CAUTION'

16 walking home to MP fall asleep on rail tracks, run over in Maharashtra

20 left from Jalna, hoping to catch a train 150 km away; were 25 km from a station

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE & AVISHEK DASTIDAR
PUNE, NEW DELHI MAY 8

SIXTEEN MIGRANT workers — part of a group of 20 headed towards villages in Madhya Pradesh and who were resting on the tracks — were run over by a goods train in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district early Friday morning. While 15 of them died on the spot, one person later succumbed to his injuries.

The migrant workers, mostly from villages in Shahdol and Umaria districts of Madhya Pradesh and working in different companies in Jalna, had started walking around 7 pm on Thursday.

Inspector Santosh Khetmalis of Aurangabad Rural Police said the group was walking from Jalna to Bhusawal, about 150 km away, from where they hoped to board a 'Shramik Special' train. "After walking for about 45 km, they stopped for some food and rest, between Badnapur and Karmad stations in Nanded Division. While some fell asleep on the tracks, the others slept a few metres away. A goods train ran over them around 5.15 am," he said.

Railway officials said that by the time the driver noticed the people on the tracks, it was too late. "The loco pilot noticed some people along the tracks. He honked and tried to stop the

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Documents and photographs of some of the 16 migrant workers who came under a goods train in Aurangabad Friday. ANI

BUSINESS AS USUAL



PARENTS RUN OVER IN UP, TWO SURVIVE P 3

They thought no trains were running, loco driver spotted them too late to stop

IRAM SIDDIQUE
MUMBAI, MAY 8

"WE HAD registered two-three days ago (for the special trains to go back home), but didn't get called. *Ghar par bhi kaam tha, toh kya karte, nikal gaye* (We were needed at home, so we left)," said 25-year-old Shivbhan Singh.

That is why, after weeks of waiting out the nationwide lockdown, the group of 20 decided to walk the 850-km journey

from their steel factories in Jalna to their homes across the border in Umaria and Shahdol districts of Madhya Pradesh. Shivbhan was one of four in the group who escaped unhurt while 16 of his travel companions were mowed down by an empty freight train in Aurangabad district early Friday morning.

The group from MP had been waiting to return home, much like the thousands of migrants during the lockdown. "Our contractor tried to stop us and said

the factory will start in some time, but my *kachha ghar* back in the village needed fixing. I had to return," he said.

After convincing their contractor to allow them to leave, the group packed some *rotis* and *chutney* for the journey ahead and, around 7 pm on Thursday, set out from Jalna. Shivbhan said they had covered about 40 km on a narrow interior road when, at a place called Badnapur, they spotted railway tracks and

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116 vs 66: Mismatch between toll of Delhi govt, hospital data

Audit panel looking into each case, there is full transparency: Delhi govt

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE NUMBER of coronavirus casualties reported by Lok Nayak Hospital, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, Lady Harding Medical College and the Delhi and Jhajar centres of AIIMS stands at 116, according to data from these hospitals and confirmed by their officials to The Indian Express.

This is higher than the Delhi government's official Covid-19 death toll, which stood at 66 until Thursday night. According to the Delhi government's daily

bulletin, a total of 33 deaths have been recorded from these specific hospitals.

When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson said: "There is an audit committee of doctors that investigates every death incident reported by Covid hospitals and ensures that every death is reported. There's no interference of any kind in the work of this committee... Every single fact is being presented before the public correctly and transparently."

While RML Hospital has recorded 52 deaths of patients

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TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

LOCKDOWN DAY 45
CASES: 56,342
RECOVERED: 16,540 DEATHS: 1,886
TESTS: 14,37,788 DOUBLING RATE: 12.25**



KEY STATES TO WATCH	TOTAL CASES	SURGE IN 24 HRS	7-DAY AVG GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**
Maharashtra	17,974	1,216	6.58%	10.94
Gujarat	7,013	388	5.82%	12.38
Delhi	5,980	448	6.94%	10.37
Tamil Nadu	5,409	580	11.49%	6.27
Rajasthan	3,322	98	3.55%	20.31
West Bengal	1,548	92	8.53%	8.44

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

CONCERN DELHI: Tablighi cases almost over, but numbers rise
CAUTION MP: Rise slower than before, but death count high
A GLIMMER KERALA: 0 cases last 3 days, only 27 active cases

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

Crowding at liquor vends: SC says states can look at online sale, home delivery

ANANTHAKRISHNAN & ARUN JANARDHANAN
NEW DELHI, CHENNAI, MAY 8

THE SUPREME COURT Friday said states could explore the option of online sale or home delivery of liquor to avoid crowding at vends in view of the COVID-19 situation.

Dismissing a PIL against the re-opening of liquor vends, the bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, S K Kaul and B R Gavai



Migrants leave for homes after arriving at Hatia Railway Station in Ranchi from Tamil Nadu on Friday. PTI

said while it was not inclined to entertain the plea "however, it shall be open for the concerned state government to consider non-direct sale including online sale/home delivery of liquor to facilitate social distancing".

In Tamil Nadu, the Madras High Court, in an interim order on a clutch of petitions including one by Makkal Needhi Maiaam of actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan, directed closure of government-run retail liquor outlets

in the state till the lockdown is in place.

The bench of Justices Vineet Kohari and Pushpa Sathyanarayana said the government can use online and home delivery models to sell liquor during the lockdown.

In the Supreme Court, the petition by Noida resident Guruswamy Nataraj urged the bench to declare the May 1 Covid guidelines by the Centre as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

linked to migrant labourers coming from hotspot Surat in Gujarat. In the orange zone earlier, Ganjam now is third in Odisha in number of cases, after Jajpur (55) and Khurda (50). On Friday, a 40-year-old migrant worker who had returned from Surat was found dead at a quarantine centre in Ganjam district. Authorities said he had epilepsy. Other districts in Odisha have also reported cases of labourers returning from Surat testing positive — Bhubaneswar (3), Kendrapara (5), Balasore (2), Mayurbhanj (4) and Jagatsinghpur (4).

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EXPLAINED Help in resources

THE LIQUOR industry, which contributes an estimated Rs 2.5 lakh crore to states, has been pressing for online sale and home delivery of liquor. It says this will not only help states mobilise resources they so badly need, but also ensure social distancing in the time of the pandemic.

Trust for Ayodhya temple gets special I-T exemption

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

DONORS CONTRIBUTING to the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra, set up on February 5 this year, to build a temple in Ayodhya, will be granted tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income-tax Act from financial year 2020-21.

In a notification on Friday, the Central Board of Direct Taxes notified the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra as "a place of historic importance and a place of public worship of renown" under clause (b) of sub-section (2) of Section 80G of the Income-Tax Act and granted deduction to the extent of 50% to those who make donations to the Trust.

The income of the Trust would already be exempt under Sections 11 and 12 of the Income-Tax Act like other notified religious trusts.

The exemption under Section 80G is not available to all religious trusts. A charitable or religious trust has to first apply for registration for income tax

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Migrants cross over at Shedding toll plaza on the Mumbai-Pune road on Friday. Narendra Vaskar

Lack of health workers a concern in cities, govt says must live with virus

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

WHILE MOST of the big cities, including all the metros, are in the red zone, the absence of field-level health workers in urban areas is emerging as a major hurdle. Meanwhile, at the daily briefing on Friday, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said "it is important that we learn to live with the virus and practise behavioural changes".

The doubling time has come down to 10 days, from 12 days on May 5. With 3,390 new cases

INSIDE

SCARY BUT NOT FATAL, STAMP OUT FEAR, SAYS RAHUL
PAGE 3

and 103 deaths being reported in the last 24 hours, the total count is now up to 56,342 (16,539 recovered) and 1,886 deaths.

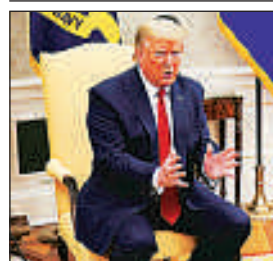
"Of the 37,916 active cases, 3.2% need oxygen, 4.7% are in the ICU and 1.1% need ventilators," Agarwal said.

Even as Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner Praveen Pardeshi was shunted out on Friday, sources in the Health Ministry said the high case load in Mumbai indicates the larger problem in big cities across the country.

While the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) was cleared by the Cabinet in 2013, it was no longer a priority a year later. Hence, there is a shortage of dedicated health workers, like ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers and ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife), on the

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INSIDE



TRUMP URGED TO HALT WORKER VISAS

CBSE BOARD EXAMS JULY 1 TO 15

TOLL 11, WORK ON TO CONTROL GAS LEAK AT VIZAG PLANT
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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

50% want to return to Gurgaon; 74.5% of applicants from UP, Bihar

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, MAY 8

AS MIGRANT workers head for home across the country, as many as 1.09 lakh from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have applied on a Haryana government web portal to come to the state.

Data shows 79.29% have applied to come to Gurgaon, Faridabad, Panipat, Sonapat, Jhajjar, Yamunanagar and Rewari. Little over 50,000 of

them want to come to Gurgaon district. These are districts with maximum industrial activities and business establishments in the state.

Haryana Principal Secretary Anurag Rastogi said, "If migrant workers want to come to Haryana, we will try to make arrangements to bring them back. Industrial activities have already started in the state."

Officials believe the state's low coronavirus numbers are another factor in the workers



Around 200 workers from Bihar returned to Telangana Friday, on an appeal by the state. Express REPORT PAGE 3

seeking to return. Till Friday, Haryana had 647 positive cases, including 14 Italian nationals, and eight deaths. Of the 647 cases, 279 have recovered.

Haryana CID chief Anil Kumar Rao, who is coordinating with other states on the transportation of migrants, told *The Indian Express*, "They are people who want to come back to work, apart from those desperate to come to meet to their relatives here."

A senior IAS officer from Haryana said, "A large number among them might have gone to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh earlier, but others would have gone during the lockdown. Now they

are finding it difficult to come back to Haryana because of the restrictions. It's almost two months and they don't have any job opportunities there. As business activities at shops and industries have started in Haryana, their owners might be calling them back, which may have prompted them to submit their applications online."

The Haryana government launched the web portal six days ago, for those who wanted to leave Haryana for home states as well as those seeking to return. Till May 8, while 1.46 lakh had applied to return to the state, 795 lakh wanted to leave.

Three-fourths of those who want to come back (74.5%) are from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, while 82.55% of those seeking to leave belong to the two states. Haryana has sought 100 trains to send them, reiterating on Friday that it would not charge the workers any money.

As many as 23,452 migrant workers have already been sent back to their native places, mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

GUJARAT EASES LABOUR LAWS FURTHER
PAGE 9

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LEARNING ON THE JOB, EPIDEMIOLOGISTS ARE NOW MUCH SOUGHT AFTER

In Telangana's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a large number of doctors, paramedics, nursing staff, health workers, sanitation workers, and law enforcers, the young volunteers of Epidemiology and Public Health, too, has had a role to play.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



INDIANS EVACUATED FROM MALDIVES

Over 700 Indians in the Maldives have registered to return

TECH



XIAOMI'S MI 10 5G SMARTPHONE

Will it help the firm get premium customers in India?

EXPRESS AUDIO

Hard hit but some hope: COVID-19's impact on agriculture

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Why milk and potato prices have gone up despite production being low, and how farmer producer companies in Maharashtra are ensuring supply of fruits and vegetables

FROM PAGE ONE

Odisha sees spike

Similar concerns have been raised in Palamu district in Jharkhand, where five positive cases have turned up among those who returned from Chhattisgarh. Principal Health Secretary, Nitin Kulkarni, accused Chhattisgarh of sending the labourers before their test results came. Chief Secretary Sukhdev Singh said, "We are lucky we intercepted the labourers before they could mix with a crowd."

The cases are a jolt to the Centre's calculation that Covid-19 would mimic the 2009 H1N1 pandemic in India, where smaller towns with low population densities reported only a few cases.

The first two positive cases in Ganjam had been screened at Surat, which seemed to have been ineffectual as they were asymptomatic then. One of the two, a 17-year-old, said he shared a room with five roommates in Surat and "sometimes" visited a nearby market. He left Surat on April 27 and reached Ganjam three days later, travelling with 56 others, including three of his roommates, on a special bus. Put in government quarantine, he tested positive on May 2. The second case in Ganjam was of a 22-year-old who stayed alone in Surat, "often went outside to have food", and travelled back on the same bus. Ganjam saw two more cases, on May 4 and 5, both 18-year-olds who had returned from Surat.

A day later, on May 6, the number of positive cases among those returning from Surat jumped to 17, seeing a further increase by 26 on May 7.

Over May 5 and 6, Mayurbhanj and Jagatsinghpur saw four positive cases each traced to Surat. On May 7, Bhadrak, which had 11 active cases then, saw three cases linked to Surat, while the next day, Kendrapa, with eight cases, saw seven. Balasore reported two positive cases among migrant workers who came back from Surat on May 7. The fresh cases mean Jagatsinghpur and Mayurbhanj are now in orange zone.

The labourer who died on Friday had been put up at a quarantine centre in Polasara block since Tuesday, after he arrived from Surat on a train. On Friday, Odisha extended its mandatory quarantine for Covid-19 suspect cases, including those coming from outside, to 28 days, including 21 days of institutional quarantine and seven days at home.

In Jharkhand, two of the five cases in Palamu are construction labourers who returned from Chhattisgarh in the last week of April, reportedly without Jharkhand being informed about their positive status. Jharkhand has claimed they spent almost a month in quarantine shelters set up by the Chhattisgarh government and were symptomatic as well as had tested positive on April 30 but yet managed to reach Patan in Jharkhand from Koriya in Chhattisgarh, 260 km away.

According to Chhattisgarh officials, the two had been working in Nashik and Nagpur and were first stopped at a shelter in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh, on April 1, and then, 15 days later, shifted with around 100 others to Koriya. The district officials at the Koriya shelter collected their samples on April 27. The Indian Express went through reports by AIIMS-Raipur, the nodal testing centre, dated April 30, showing both as positive and symptomatic.

A government official in Raipur said, "By the time we found out that they were positive, we were told they had already left the camp to go home. The authorities concerned were informed." The Jharkhand authorities confirmed that they were alerted by Chhattisgarh on April 30, hours after they had entered the state, after which they started a frantic search for the two.

Palamu Civil Suregon John F

Kennedy said: "They were screened at Salatva, 10 km from the Chhattisgarh border, but since they were asymptomatic and we had no information on the two being positive, they were allowed to go. Later when we got to know, we swung into action."

A source claimed, "The Chhattisgarh government told us they had conducted a rapid test, and not found any signs of a disease. They had taken a swab too, but the two were moved before the results came in."

Palamu Deputy Commissioner Santanu Kumar Agrahari said they intercepted the two between Manatu and Patan, travelling in autorickshaws. "We immediately sent around 28 people to a Covid care centre. Five of them tested positive on May 7. We have informed the Chhattisgarh government and told them to follow containment strategies."

Koriya Collector Doman Singh, however, claimed the men had tested positive in Jharkhand and never stayed at a shelter there. "Several people crossed Chhattisgarh while going to Jharkhand, they might have also gone like that," he said.

Ambikapur Divisional Commissioner Emrill Lakda, under whose jurisdiction Koriya falls, said, "If it is found that these two men were indeed positive, we will quarantine all the people, health workers and otherwise, and get them tested. As of now, I don't have much information."

On April 28, Chhattisgarh had reported a positive case among a migrant worker at a camp in Surajpur district who had returned from Jharkhand, leading to massive quarantining in Rajnandgaon, Koriya, Jashpur and Raigarh districts.

A senior official in Raipur said, "Migrant workers in various districts are creating law and order situation as they want to go home. So, most of them are being allowed to go once their quarantine period is over."

He also claimed, "Districts, in order to maintain themselves as green, are facilitating the process of workers going home, as they don't want cases in their districts."

In a special leave petition before the Supreme Court Friday, the Centre outlined the precautionary measures being adopted for migrant travel. Staying the Orissa High Court order, the Court said, "We are of the view that the order of the Government of India dated 29.04.2020 provides ample protection. It appears that before the High Court, the order of the Government of India dated 29.04.2020 and the guidelines were neither brought into notice nor were under challenge."

Tablighi FIR

The event has been linked to a number of Covid-19 cases across the country.

The FIR was registered on the basis of a complaint by SHO (Hazrat Nizamuddin) Mukesh Walia, who alleged that "an audio recording purportedly by Maulana Mohd Saad was found in circulation on WhatsApp on March 21, in which the speaker was heard asking his followers to defy the lockdown and social distancing, and to attend the religious gathering of the Markaz."

Highly placed sources told The Indian Express that police recovered a laptop from the Markaz member who put out their audio clips, and had gone through all. "After scanning them, police found there are over 350 audio clips in three forms — raw clips of Markaz events; audio clips sent to their followers; and ones uploaded on their YouTube channel," a source said.

A team led by Inspector Satish Kumar, that has been trying to find the specific audio which went viral and was mentioned in the FIR, has so far recovered no such clip from the laptop. On the other hand, the investigators found that Saad's comments on

16 fall asleep on rail tracks, run over

train, but failed to stop in time," said Chief Public Relations Officer of South Central Railway, Ch Rakesh said, adding that an inquiry has been ordered under the Commissioner of Railway Safety.

Expressing grief over the incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Extremely anguished by the loss of lives due to the rail accident in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. Have spoken to Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and he is closely monitoring the situation. All possible assis-

tance required is being provided."

The Railways has so far not decided to award any ex-gratia to the kin of the victims. A statement from Railways described as the migrants having "infringed" on the track.

According to Railway rules, anything coming in the way of a train is considered trespassing. "The incident occurred even as the loco pilot of the goods train honked the horn as soon as he noticed the group of people on the rail tracks and also made all possible efforts to stop the train," the statement

by the Railways said.

In the Amritsar case of 2018, when 40 people on the tracks were mowed down by a train, the Railways did not pay any ex-gratia. However, the PM Relief Fund had paid Rs 2 lakh to the kin of each victim.

In a letter on Friday to all its zonal offices, the Railway Ministry said, "There is a need to start a drive to ensure safety in the prevailing situation. The relevant provisions of General Rules, should be reiterated to all concerned so that any accident, unusual occurrence etc can be prevented in future."

Later, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said in a statement that the state government was talking to the Centre for more trains to take migrant labourers to their respective states.

"So far, one lakh labourers have reached their homes. More trains will be started to take the labourers to their destinations. In the meantime, we are making all arrangements to provide them food and shelter. Migrant labourers should not take any kind of risk and should not lose their patience," the CM said.

They slept, confident no trains would run

started walking on those.

The survivors and officials said the group was heading Bhusaval, 350 km from the accident site, from where they were confident of getting some transport into Madhya Pradesh. They were only 25 km from Aurangabad, from where a train was to leave for Madhya Pradesh on Friday evening, but the group did not know about that.

As the night progressed, around 3.30 am, the exhausted group decided to rest for the night. Singh, along with Briandra Singh and Indalal, were lagging 200 metres behind the group and slept on the ground near the tracks, while the 17 who were ahead decided to lie down on the tracks.

Railway officers said 14 of them seemed to have slept on the sleepers, even resting their heads on the rail, while the remaining three slept close to the tracks. The group, they said, must have been confident in the belief that it was safe to do so because passenger train services had been suspended as part of the lockdown.

"We could not see them

clearly but they switched on their mobile torch lights to signal to us that they were resting there," said Shivbhan.

Meanwhile, piloting the empty goods train from Cheralapally in Hyderabad on his way to Paniwada in Manmad in Maharashtra, loco pilot Ramashish Kumar was running between Badnapur and Karmad railway stations when he spotted some obstruction on the tracks, said Railway officials, adding that it was only when the train got to 160 metres from the "obstruction" that Ramashish realised that there were people on the tracks.

According to Divisional Railway Manager for Nanded, Upendra Singh, as soon as the loco pilot realised that there were men on the tracks, he applied emergency brakes, pressing the hooter to give out a whistle. "The train was moving at a speed of 70 kmph," said Singh, and by the time it came to a halt, it was too late.

Up ahead, Indalal, Shivbhan and Birandar Singh, lying outside the tracks, woke up to the shrill sound of the train's hooter piercing though

the night. "Before I could wake up fully, it was all over," said Indalal.

The train mowed down the 14 men who were sleeping on the tracks. Two others sleeping right next to the tracks were injured grievously and died in hospital. Sajan Singh, who too was sleeping close to the tracks, managed to jump out of the train's way, but his bag came under the wheels of the train. He has injuries to his knees and back.

The train's long hooter alerted people in the nearby Satna village, who rushed to the spot as the loco pilot informed the railway control room.

Those who survived were rushed to the civic hospital in Aurangabad, where a post-mortem procedure was conducted, while an accidental death report was registered at the Karmad police station. Railways have ordered an inquiry into the incident by Commissioner of Railway Safety.

Additional Superintendent of Police Ganesh Gawde said bodies of the 16 victims, along with two of the survivors,

would be sent back to Madhya Pradesh. "Of the other two, Sajan Singh is in hospital and Birandar Singh is staying back with him."

While Shivbhan and the other survivors said they had registered for the special trains, Madhya Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary ICP Keshari told The Indian Express that the workers had not registered for a spot on any of the special trains, neither in Madhya Pradesh nor in Maharashtra. Keshari said the migrants decided to head home after an argument with the labour contractor, who wanted them to stay back and work in the factory that was to restart operations. Keshari said the contractor did not let the workers register with authorities.

A train that reached Bhopal on Friday had 170 workers from Jalna and another 70 from Jalna were set to leave for Jabalpur late Friday. The victims apparently did not know about either of the trains. The train will now carry 16 bodies to Jabalpur in a sealed compartment. From Jabalpur, the bodies will be taken to Shahdol and Umaria districts.

police and religion from other events had been taken out of context and doctored.

In the audio clip mentioned in the FIR, a man can be heard saying "there is no need for social distancing as it is not written about in our religion". "The investigation team noticed that the viral audio is a mix of several clips, which have been edited and doctored. They heard all audio clips again and found that statements from around 20 had been used. Kumar informed his seniors about the development and was asked to send all clips as well as the viral audio to the FSL for further examination," a source said.

Earlier, Special CP (Crime) Praveer Ranjan had said, "We have found an audio clip going viral on social media, and are now sending it to forensic experts. We are gathering evidence to substantiate that they went ahead with the event despite warnings by several agencies." On Friday, he did not take calls or respond to messages.

Liquor vends

unconstitutional, null and void "to the extent they permit the sale of alcoholic liquor for human consumption at liquor vends/shops through direct contact sales during the lockdown period".

Appearing for the petitioner, Advocate J Sai Deepak told the bench that the number of vends were few compared to the demand and there was crowding at the outlets, resulting in social distancing norms being flouted.

He said there were about 70,000 licensed liquor vends in the country and approximately 5 crore consumers.

The bench said there were reports that some discussions about home delivery etc were going on and asked how an Article 32 petition could be maintainable in the matter. Sai Deepak said states were opening the vends as they had been permitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs and as such the plea was directed at the MHA guidelines with respect to direct contact sales.

He pointed out Chhattisgarh was already implementing online sale and home delivery, a better alternative to direct contact sales. He said all the gains made due to lockdown would be squandered if prohibition of direct contact sale was not brought back. He said a balance could be struck between the state's interest of generating revenue and public health by permitting only non-direct contact sales through online and home delivery mode. He said the life of a common man should not be affected because of the re-opening of the vends.

The petition, filed through Advocate-on-Record Anindita Mitra, said: "The reopening of liquor vends/shops, which rely wholly on direct contact sales to the consuming public, is resulting and will result in unmanageable crowds, leading to the high risk of transmission and spread of Covid-19 due to difficulties in managing physical distancing during such sales, apart from serious issues of maintenance of law and order at such liquor vends/shops."

In Chennai, petitioners had approached the High Court, seeking closure of liquor shops over violation of conditions for re-opening of Tasmac shops from May 7. Following the interim order

for closure of liquor shops, government sources indicated that this could be challenged before the Supreme Court.

Health workers

ground. Moreover, the structure of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) is designed for access into rural areas.

"The real problem, not just in Mumbai but in urban areas elsewhere, as we are finding out now, is the lack of surveillance infrastructure. The NUHM never took off. In villages, we are using ASHA workers and ANMs - there are enough field-level workers, they just need to be mobilised. But where are they in cities? Municipal bodies are not attuned to surveillance work," said an official.

"The other surveillance instrument is the IDSP, with a three-tiered structure - national, state and district. The need was never felt to increase its presence in urban areas," he said.

He said the structure of municipal bodies, in which sanitation workers and a sanitation inspector oversee areas, is not the right model for the intense, active case search and contact tracing that is needed for COVID-19.

Talking about Mumbai, a senior Health Ministry official said: "We are on the edge. They needed to quarantine early on. They did not do that. However, we are hopeful that we can still pull back." So far, Mumbai has reported 12,142 cases and 462 deaths. "In some states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, there is a spurt. We are coordinating with state governments to strengthen contain-

migrants, it is important we learn to live with the virus and practice behavioural changes," he said.

While 216 districts have not reported any case till date, 42 districts have not reported a fresh case in the last 28 days, 29 districts in the last 21 days, 36 districts in the last 14 days, and 46 districts in the last 7 days.

Meanwhile, the ICMR has initiated a multi-centre clinical trial called PLACID trial - "Phase-II Open-Label, Randomised Controlled Trial, to assess the safety and efficacy of convalescent plasma to limit COVID-19 associated complications in moderate disease".

The study has received approval from COVID-19 National Ethics Committee (CONEC). The ICMR has shortlisted 21 hospitals for the trial - 5 in Maharashtra; 4 in Gujarat; 2 each in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; and 1 each in Punjab, Karnataka, Telangana and Chandigarh.

Ayodhya temple

exemption under section 11 and 12, following which the exemption under Section 80G is granted to the donors.

Before this, the Central government had in 2017 notified Arulmigu Kapaleeswarar Thirukoil in Mylapore, Chennai, Ariyakudi Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple in Kottivakkam, Chennai and Shri Ram and Ramdas Swami Samadhi Temple (Mandir) and Ramdas Swami Math in Sajjangad, Maharashtra as places of historic importance and places of public worship and allowed for deductions under Section 80G. Donations to other religious places such as Gurdwara Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar are also exempt under section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

Section 80G of the Income-tax Act allows donations made to charitable institutions as a deduction from gross total income before arriving at taxable income. Clause (b) of sub-section (2) of Section 80G of Income-tax Act provides for tax exemption for "any sums paid by the assessee in the previous year as donations for the renovation or repair of any such temple, mosque, gurdwara, church or other place as is notified by the Central government in the official gazette to be of historic, archaeological or artistic importance or to be a place of public worship of renown throughout any state or states".

On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court had allowed the construction of a Ram temple at the site of the demolished Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and ordered handing over another 5-acre plot to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Waqf Board for the mosque. Less than three months later, the government had cleared the formation of a trust for construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The Trust, called the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, set up on February 5, has 15 members.

116 vs 66
who tested positive for Covid, the Delhi government's health bulletin until Thursday night recorded 26 deaths from here.

Asked about the discrepancy, the Medical Superintendent of the hospital, Dr Minakshi Bharadwaj, said: "We are regularly giving our data to the Delhi government. We don't know why incorrect data is reflected. Even the total number of Covid-19 positive cases is incorrect. We have informed them many times but the number is still not corrected."

At the AIIMS Delhi and Jhajjar campuses — the latter also has patients from the Capital — 14 people have died, Dr D K Sharma, Medical Superintendent of AIIMS, said. The Delhi government health bulletin puts the AIIMS figure at two.

Asked whether the data has been shared with the Delhi government, he said: "We are giving them the complete data, but I think they might be taking only Delhi data. They might be saying that Jhajjar data is different, whereas Jhajjar is our campus. It may be located in Haryana but the patients have been transferred from Delhi."

Lok Nayak Hospital, a dedicated Covid facility, has reported 47 deaths of patients with coronavirus. The Delhi government bulletin says five Covid positive patients have died in the hospital so far. Dr J C Passey, Medical Director of the hospital, told The Indian Express: "The total number of deaths reported in my hospital due to Covid positive patients is 47."

Lady Hardinge, which, according to the health department, hasn't reported a single death so far, confirmed that three deaths of coronavirus patients have been reported in the last one month, according to Medical Director Dr NN Mathur.

With 5,980 cases and 66 deaths, as per the Delhi government bulletin until Thursday night, the mortality rate in the national capital stood at 1.1%. On Friday, the Capital reported two more coronavirus deaths.

The Indian Express sent messages to Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, Health Secretary Padmini Singhla and Director General of Health Services Dr Nutan Mundeja asking about the discrepancies. Their response was awaited.

Earlier in the day, when asked about Opposition claims that Delhi was under-reporting Covid figures, Jain told reporters: "There is no question of hiding any data by the Delhi government because if someone tests positive, it should not be hidden. Once the reports come, the hospitals have to inform the government. On Thursday, 448 fresh Covid-19 cases were reported from Delhi, which was an all-time high. If we wanted to hide the numbers, then we would have said 448 cases and not 448. If we wanted to hide, we could have said zero positive cases in a day."

When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson said: "It is unfortunate such politically motivated false allegations are being made when the entire government is fighting corona. Every single fact is being presented before the public correctly and transparently. For instance, in the last few days the number of cases in Delhi have increased. We reported the same correctly. If we had to fudge the figures, we could have fudged those figures also. We have increased the number of tests in Delhi, which has led to an increase in the cases being reported. Therefore our intentions are honest."

On April 20, the Delhi government had formed a three-member committee to conduct an audit of all Covid-19 deaths in the city. "The responsibility of the committee would be to audit daily each and every death in which the Covid-19 test is positive in government and private hospitals before releasing data. All government and private hospitals are directed to report all such deaths to the committee along with the copy of case sheet for death audit," an order from the health department stated.

The committee has so far conducted an audit of 38 deaths in the city, one of the members of the committee said, adding: "The role of the committee is to find out the primary cause of deaths in people who have also been declared Covid positive. The case sheets are provided by the health department and based on that we verify the reason for the deaths. We receive only those cases who are Covid positive. There might be some cases in which the primary cause of death is not Covid-19. They might be Covid positive but the primary cause may be due to a co-morbid condition."

VISAKHAPATNAM GAS LEAK: THE DAY AFTER

Experts work to neutralise gas, toll 11

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, MAY 8

EVEN AS the death toll from the gas leak at the LG Polymers factory near Visakhapatnam rose to 11 on Friday, a team of experts worked to neutralise the styrene gas at the chemical factory as well as in villages where it had spread.

"It might take 48 hours to neutralise the gas everywhere," Andhra Pradesh Industries Minister Guntam Reddy said.

All the chemical tanks in LG Polymers are safe following 60 per cent polymerisation of the styrene vapour so far, District Collector V Vinay Chand said. "We have taken all measures to plug the leak completely and experts are closely monitoring the situation. The situation is now fully under control," he added.

While 10 people died due to the gas leak on Thursday, another person succumbed during the night. As many as 554 people were admitted to King George Hospital, and 128 have recovered completely, said Andhra Pradesh Health Minister A Krishna Srinivas. "There are 305 people still in hospital, including 52 children. All of them are out of danger and no one is on ventilator. About 121 others are receiving treatment at private hospitals, but all are out of danger," he said.

Meanwhile, a special team of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) team and other experts were engaged in neutralising the gas at the factory and five affected villages.

The Industries Minister said that NDRF teams are conducting door-to-door surveys in the af-

ected villages to check for the presence of gas.

"Following this incident, the government has taken up the task of safety audit of 86 industries in the state which will open after the lockdown," Reddy added.

The District Collector said nobody would be allowed into the affected villages until medical experts declare them safe.

A large number of residents of other areas like Gopalapatnam, Marripalem and Pendurthi, who had fled fearing for their safety, returned to their homes after officials declared that the gas had not spread to those areas.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, who was camping in Visakhapatnam and overseeing the relief measures, said the situation was under control and that all tanks in the unit were safe.

Sawhney also issued an order appointing a high-level probe into the causes behind the gas leak and to suggest measures to improve the protocol for industrial safety of similar types of plants.

A large number of people spent the night on the road as rumours of another gas leak spread on social media.

"Several people drove to Beach Road or other areas and spent the night on the road or inside their four-wheelers. They returned home in the morning after assurances that those areas were not affected. There was no second gas leak in the night... it was all rumour. We sent teams to inform the people camping outside that their areas were safe," Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar Meena said.

(WITH PTI INPUTS)



Women mourn as they wait outside a mortuary to receive the body of a relative. Reuters

Don't need nod to start production, LG Polymers had told green panel

AASHISH HARYAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

LG POLYMERS India, a subsidiary of South Korea-based LG Chemicals, had on May 10, 2017, told the Consent for Establishment (CFE) Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) that it did not require an environmental impact assessment to start production of engineering plastics.

The CFE of APPCB, however, refused LG Polymers' stand and asked it to approach the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and get clarification on whether the plant needed an "environmental clearance" for manufacturing engineering plastics.

Engineering plastics are a group of enhanced plastics that have better mechanical and thermal properties than lower grade commodity plastics such as poly-

styrene, polyethylene, and polyvinyl chloride. They are used to make car bumpers, motorcycle helmets among other high-grade products.

Mails to LG Chemical representatives in South Korea and LG Polymers representatives in Visakhapatnam and Gurgaon on whether they had approached MoEF did not elicit any response.

As reported earlier by *The Indian Express*, LG Polymers had in an affidavit on May 10 last year accepted that its Visakhapatnam plant did not have green clearance for its petrochemical plant between 1997 and 2019. The affidavit was submitted to the State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

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FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

VIRUS DANGEROUS FOR ONLY 1-2%, SAYS CONG LEADER

Govt must stamp out fear over Covid, says Rahul

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

COVID-19 is a "scary disease", but it is "dangerous" and "fatal" only to 1 or 2 per cent of the population such as the elderly and people with other health problems, Rahul Gandhi said on Friday, and asked the Prime Minister to take aggressive steps to root out the fear associated with the disease.

Lifting the lockdown would have no impact if there was an atmosphere of fear in the country, the former Congress president said.

The BJP retorted that the Prime Minister had been consulting with chief ministers and subject experts in dealing with the pandemic, and asked Rahul to act with "wisdom and practicality" to "fight the biggest calamity in human history under the able guidance" of Modi.

The lockdown has unleashed an economic tsunami of unimaginable proportions, and the economy cannot move again without a massive economic stimulus from the central government, Rahul said. He asked the govern-

ment to immediately announce a financial package for small and medium businesses, extend income support of Rs 7,500 to at least 13 crore of the poorest households, double the man-days of guaranteed work under MGN-REGA, and offer wage protection and credit guarantee schemes, and interest subsidy facilities to MSMEs and big businesses.

The government, Rahul said, must put money in the hands of migrant workers and the poor without delay, and be transparent on its strategy for exiting the lockdown. "It is important that the government tells the people that these are the criteria that we are going to be using. And if these criteria are met then we are going to open," he said.

The novel coronavirus disease, Rahul said, "is dangerous for certain groups of people. It is absolutely dangerous for older people, people with diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, chronic lung infection. But other than it is not a dangerous disease".

He said: "Covid was not a deadly disease before the lockdown. After lockdown it has become a deadly disease in the

mind of the people. This is a misconception. Covid is a deadly disease but for 1 or 2 per cent of the people. And it is our duty to extend complete protection to 1 or 2 per cent. And not let even one among them get infected. But it is also our duty to tell the country, make them understand that it is not a fatal disease for 99 per cent of the people.

"This the Prime Minister should aggressively do — we all should aggressively do — because there is an atmosphere of fear in India and in other countries. If we want to lift the lockdown, then we will have to root out this atmosphere of fear. Otherwise, people will not come out even if you open up." Reopening the economy, Rahul said, would be a massive transition that would require co-ordination between the state governments, central government, district magistrates and the people of India. The Centre should view states as partners," he said. "We need one strong Indian leader, be it a DM or a farmer, at every level. We need to tackle the problem and finish it at the local level," he said.

(With PTI inputs)

Cycling home to Chhattisgarh, couple killed in accident, children survive

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, MAY 8

A COUPLE on a 750-km bicycle journey from Lucknow to Bemetra district in Chhattisgarh, were killed in a road accident on Thursday. Their two children, the elder 3 years old and the younger 1, who were with them survived.

Late Wednesday, Krishna Sahu (45), who worked as a construction worker, set off on his cycle with wife Pramila Sahu (38), and their children Chandni and Nikhil,



Krishna and Pramila Sahu

from their home in Sikandara village of Lucknow. Sahu had cycled for around 25 km when, around 2.30 am, the family was hit by a vehicle that's yet to be identified. While Pramila died on the spot,

Krishna was taken by police to King George's Medical University, where he succumbed to his injuries. Their children Chandni and Nikhil, who survived with minor injuries, are at the home of their uncle, Krishna's brother Ram Kumar in Lucknow.

"My brother did not tell me before leaving, but he was struggling to feed his children after work stopped at construction sites... had spoken to him a week or so ago, he had told me he had no money... children are now with me" said Ram Kumar, 38.

222 Bihar workers make reverse journey to Telangana

SREENIVAS JANYALA &
SANTOSH SINGH
HYDERABAD, PATNA, MAY 8

AT A TIME when migrant workers are heading back to their home states — on foot, in buses or trains — 222 workers, mostly from Khagaria district of Bihar, opted for the reverse journey as they boarded a special train to

Telangana on Thursday. The train, which left Khagaria in the early hours of Thursday, arrived at the Lingampalli Railway Station in Hyderabad at 1 pm on Friday.

Telangana Civil Supplies Minister G Kamalakar and members of the Telangana Rice Millers Association welcomed the workers with roses, food and water packets.

"The Telangana Chief

Secretary had requested that the workers be sent back for the rice mills in the state. The local coordinators, who keep in touch with migrant workers, contacted them, and 222 workers boarded the train," said Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi.

The rice mill owners in Telangana provided the names and contact details of labour contractors, supervisors and workers to the

state's civil supplies department, which then coordinated with the Bihar government officials.

Arrangements were made for the workers to reach the Khagaria railway station. According to officials, each group of 18-20 workers had a supervisor, whose job was to ensure that the workers reached the railway station. While most of the workers are from Khagaria, a few are from

Madhepura district of Bihar. After the workers arrived in Hyderabad, officials of the civil supplies department registered their names and contact numbers, and then sent them in buses to other districts.

"CMK Chandrashekar Rao has assured the workers that they will be well taken care of. We arranged for their journey and provided food and water," said Kamalakar.

Of those flying in, 33% students: Data

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

HAVING STARTED the phased evacuation process, the government has found that one-third of Indians stranded abroad who have registered for repatriation flights are students. A quarter of them are migrant workers, who form the second largest group, followed by those who had short-term visas (tourism or business).

This is the outcome of the analysis done by the Ministry of External Affairs, as it processes requests from 67,833 Indians, who have registered so far to fly back from 12 countries. "These are requests which are specific in nature — that one wants to get on a specific flight," a source said.

As per data available until Friday evening, requests from students (22,470) form 33 per cent of the total, while those from migrant workers (15,815) is 23 per cent. There are 9,250 requests



People at IGI Airport in New Delhi on Friday on arrival from Singapore. Abhinav Saha

from short-term visa-holders faced with visa expiry, 5,531 from people faced with medical emergency or seeking treatment for terminal illness, followed by requests by tourists stranded abroad (4,147), pregnant women and the elderly (3,041), and those required to return due to death of a family member (1,112).

Analysis of state-wise breakup of repatriation requests shows Kerala, at 25,246, is at the top, followed by Tamil Nadu (6,617),

Maharashtra (4,341), and Uttar Pradesh (3,715), Rajasthan (3,320), Telangana (2,796), Karnataka (2,786), Andhra Pradesh (2,445), Gujarat (2,330), and Delhi (2,232).

Sixty-four flights carrying nearly 15,000 people returning from 12 countries are expected to land at 14 airports across the country from May 7 to 15. The third phase of lockdown ends on May 17.

As of now, four flights have landed. After two Air India flights from Abu Dhabi and Dubai arrived on Thursday at Kochi (with 181 passengers) and Kozhikode (182 passengers), respectively, on Friday 234 passengers arrived from Singapore to Delhi and 168 people from Dhaka to Srinagar.

Twenty-seven flights will take off from the Gulf; seven from Bangladesh; 14 from Southeast Asia (five each from Singapore and the Philippines and four from Malaysia), and seven flights take from four US airports: New York, Washington D.C., Chicago and San Francisco.

CBSE to hold remaining Class XII board exams in July first half

New Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will conduct the remaining exams for Class XII in the first two weeks of July, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal announced on Friday.

The government, sources said, has decided that Class XII board exams should finish before JEE (Main) is conducted. The entrance test for admission to NITs will be held over five days between July 18 and 23. CBSE has been asked to wrap up its remaining papers before that. The Board will announce the detailed schedule for each paper in the next few days. On April 1, CBSE had said that it will conduct exams for 29 subjects out of the approximately 90 that were left around the time the nation-

wide lockdown was imposed. For Class X, only exams for students of north-east Delhi, who could not appear for the examination due to the riots, will be held.

For Class XII, CBSE will conduct exams for Business Studies, Geography, Hindi (Core), Hindi (Elective), Home Science, Sociology, Computer Science (Old), Computer Science (New), Information Practice (Old), Information Practice (New), Information Technology and Bio-Technology. Apart from this, all the tests that Class XII students from north-east Delhi could not take because of the riots, will also be held. CBSE is also working to resume evaluation of answer scripts, which was stopped in March due to the lockdown. ENS

RAVI KANOJIA
(07 JUNE 1982 - 09 MAY 2016)

Fondly remembered by his family and colleagues at The Express Group

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAPPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR OF
SHRI LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI NATIONAL SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI
(Central University)
Advertisement No. 01/2020

Applications are invited in the prescribed format for appointment to the post of Vice-Chancellor for Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University, (Formerly Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Deemed to be University), B-4, Outub Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110016 on a fixed pay of Rs. 2,10,000/- per month with Special Allowance of Rs. 11,250/- per month and other allowances as admissible under the UGC/GOI guidelines, within 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement and hard copy of the application must be reached within 07 days from the last date of receipt of application for this post. For other details, terms and conditions, eligibility criteria, please visit website of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri National Sanskrit University: www.silsrsv.ac.in Under secretary (Skt.)

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2020 to, inter alia, consider and approve (i) to revoke the recommendation for payment of final dividend for the Financial Year ended December 31, 2019; (ii) to cancel the earlier Record Date fixed for the purpose of final dividend; (iii) to declare payment of interim dividend for the financial year ended December 31, 2019, to the equity shareholders of the Company; and (iv) to fix new Record Date for the payment of interim dividend, if declare Pursuant to the provisions of Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with applicable rules made thereunder and pursuant to the Regulation 42 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements), Regulations, 2015 the "Record Date" for determining the entitlement of the Shareholders for the payment of aforesaid Interim Dividend, if approved by the Board, shall be Wednesday, May 20, 2020. Accordingly, if payment of Interim Dividend is approved by the Board, the same will be paid to those Shareholders whose names appears on the Register of Members as on Wednesday, May 20, 2020, being the Record Date for the purpose of the Interim Dividend. This Notice is also available on the website of the Company i.e. www.acclimited.com under Investor section and on the website of the stock exchanges where the Company's shares are listed, i.e. www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com.

By Order of the Board of Directors,
For ACC Limited
Sd/-
Rajiv Choubey
Chief Legal Officer & Company Secretary
ACS No.: 13063

Place: Mumbai
Date: May 8, 2020

GANGADHAR MEHER UNIVERSITY, SAMBALPUR
SAMBALPUR-768004, ODISHA

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- (ii) There is an application fee of INR 2500.00 from candidates belonging to General and SEBC Category. The application fee for SC/ST/PwD and Women candidates is INR 1500.00. Those who have applied earlier for the Schools of Botany, Commerce, Economics, Hindi and Zoology against Advertisement No.: 002/REC/GMU/FAC; Sambalpur; dated 18.07.2019, Advertisement No.: 003/REC/GMU/FAC; Sambalpur; dated 23.07.2019, Advertisement No.: 004/REC/GMU/FAC; Sambalpur; dated 12.09.2019 and Advertisement No.: 005/REC/GMU/FAC; Sambalpur; dated 11.03.2020 need not pay any fee.
- (iii) The link for the detailed advertisement and online application submission module is given herewith: <https://recruitment.gmuniversity.ac.in>
- (iv) The last date for submission of online applications complete in all respects is 29th May 2020 at 23:59. The last date of receipt of print copy of the applications with all supporting documents is 03rd June 2020 at 17:00. Online submission of application is mandatory.
- (v) Application fee is non-refundable. Seven printed hard copies of the application form will be accepted, when sent through Speed/Post/Registered Post/Courier only. The candidate must send one set of supporting documents to validate their data.

Advt. No. 006/REC/GMU/FAC; Sambalpur; Dated: 08th May 2020
Sd/- REGISTRAR
GANGADHAR MEHER UNIVERSITY, SAMBALPUR

ODISHA JOINT ENTRANCE EXAMINATION - 2020
(OJEE - 2020)

No: OJEE / 126

Date: 08.05.2020

NOTICE REGARDING EXTENSION OF LAST DATE OF APPLICATION AND INVITING APPLICATION FOR B. TECH. COURSE UNDER OJEE - 2020

In view of the 3rd phase lockdown declared by the Central Govt. to check the spread of COVID -19 (Coronavirus), it is hereby announced that the last date for submission of online application forms for all OJEE-2020 applications is extended up to 31.05.2020 and last date for fee payment up to 05.06.2020.

The detailed schedule regarding revised dates of downloading of Admit Cards and of the Examination will be notified in due course of time, on assessment of the situation after 17.05.2020 only.

Thus, all concerned are advised not to be unduly worried, but to abide, for the time being, by all the preventive measures laid down, from time to time, by various Govt. Agencies to check the spread of Coronavirus, and visit the official websites of OJEE regularly for updated information.

In view of the rescheduling of the academic session for 2020-21, it has been decided to conduct, as an integral part of OJEE - 2020, a special entrance examination for admission into 1st year B.Tech. courses of all Government and Private Engineering Colleges of Odisha against the vacancy seats left out after 1st phase OJEE counselling only for those students, who have not been able to appear in the JEE (Main) - 2020 examination due to some reason or other. The process of online application for this B. Tech. course will start from 12-05-2020 and the last date will be 31-05-2020. Fees can be paid till 05-06-2020. Detailed instructions and terms and conditions for online application will be like other forms as per the Information Brochure available in the website, i.e., www.ojee.nic.in. The syllabus for the examination will be as per the JEE (Main) - 2020.

Sd/-
CHAIRMAN, OJEE, Odisha

PARTY TO MOVE HC

BJP meets Governor over 'unconstitutional' KMC board

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 8

THE BJP has decided to move the Calcutta High Court challenging the Mamata Banerjee government's decision to form a board of administrators with Kolkata Mayor and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim as its chairman to run the civic body. A BJP team, led by its West Bengal MP and state party president Dilip Ghosh and national secretary Rahul Sinha, met Governor Jagdeep Dhanekar at Raj Bhavan Friday, and sought his intervention in this regard.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Sinha said, "The state government has formed a board of administrators to run the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which is unconstitutional. Moreover, it did not take the consent of the Governor who is the constitutional head of the state. Through this move, the state

government ensured that Hakim continued to be the head of the civic body even after his tenure as KMC mayor ended. We have sought the Governor's intervention into this matter. We have decided to move the court to challenge the state government's move."

On Thursday, Dhanekar had sought information from the state government over its notification to nominate a board of administrators, led by Mayor Firhad Hakim, to run the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. A petition was also filed in the Calcutta High Court against the 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 Governor's move came a day after the state government appointed a 14-member board of administrators, with Hakim as the chairman, to run KMC.

Highest 1-day jump with 130; 9 more die

Indian Museum office closed after CISF officer dies, 22 sent to quarantine

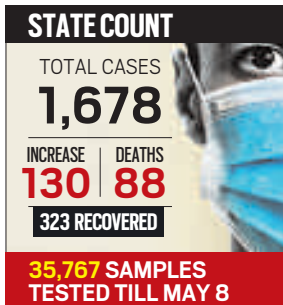
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 8

THE WEST Bengal government on Friday said 130 more people tested positive for coronavirus - the highest spike in the last 24 hours. While on Thursday, the total number of cases was 1,548, the figures on Friday stood at 1,678.

Also, nine more deaths were recorded due to coronavirus in the last 24 hours. According to the state government, the toll stood at 160, with 88 deaths due to coronavirus and the rest due to co-morbidity.

Among the nine people who succumbed was a 59-year-old Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), posted in Kolkata, officials said. He was posted in Indian Museum, Kolkata, and was the second CISF official to die of the virus.

He was admitted to Calcutta Medical College on May 2, after he had complained of breathing trouble. After he died on Thursday night, the museum authorities decided to close their office and sent 22 CISF personnel into quarantine. The Geological Survey of India, which shares office space on the same premises, also decided to shut down from Friday.



The number of patients discharged from the hospital in the last 24 hours was 27, while the total number of patients recovered was 323. However, the number of active cases increased from 1,101 to 1,195.

In the last 24 hours, the total number of samples tested was 3,015. Now, the cumulative number of samples tested in more than one month was 35,767. As many as 4,964 people are still in government quarantine, while 9,576 in home quarantine.

According to the Health Department, the maximum cases of COVID-19 were reported from Kolkata, Howrah and North 24 Parganas. As many as 846 out of 1,678 people who tested positive in the state were from Kolkata. On the other hand, in North 24 Parganas and Howrah, the number of infected patients was 232 and 362 respectively.

Over a month on ventilator, 52-year-old social worker discharged

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 8

THIRTY-EIGHT DAYS after being put on the ventilator, a COVID-19 patient was discharged from a private hospital in south Kolkata on Friday.

The 52-year-old social worker, who had tested positive soon after being admitted to the medical facility in late March, left the hospital in Dhakuria around 4.30 pm. His test reports on April 17 and 18 had come back negative.

AMRI Hospitals CEO Rupak Barua said, "He came with COVID-19 symptoms on March 29, and the next day he tested positive. That day, he was put on ventilator. He also had some comorbid problems. But, he has an immense fighting spirit."

Barua said the doctors and nurses at the hospital did "a splendid job".

In a statement, the hospital said: "He has created a record of sorts in India by being the first patient of COVID-19, to have defeated the virus despite being on ventilator for 38 days."



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee pays tribute to poet Rabindranath Tagore on his 159th birth anniversary, at Rabindra Sadan in Kolkata on Friday. Express

CM PENS SONG TO SPREAD AWARENESS ON COVID-19

On Rabindra Jayanti, police play Mamata's song in public; 'outright insulting', says BJP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 8

"Bhir theke shobai dure thako/Corona ke chhute diyo na [Everyone keep away from crowds, don't allow corona to touch you]."

THESE LINES from a song written by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to spread awareness about the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and sung by her Cabinet colleague and singer Indranil Sen, rang out in public places across the state on Friday morning on the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore's 159th birth anniversary. The song was played at traffic signals, programmes hosted by the government and the ruling TMC, and radio and television channels along with some of the poet's compositions.

On May 6, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Gyanwant Singh had issued a circular to all district po-

lice officials, directing them to play the song, along with Rabindra Sangeet, in areas under their jurisdiction.

"Collection of selected Tagore songs...along with the awareness song written by Hon'ble CM, WB, on coronavirus should be played at important residential areas and housing complexes of cities and towns between 9 am and 11.30 am," read the directive.

The government's move, however, drew sharp criticism from the BJP, while the TMC defended the directive.

"West Bengal Police issued an order to mandatorily play Mamata Banerjee's song at important residential areas and housing complexes of cities and towns on the occasion of Rabindra Jayanti. Instead of commemorating Gurudev, WB government is imposing CM on people! This is outright insulting!" tweeted BJP MP Locket Chatterjee.

Her party colleague Mukul Roy, who was once Mamata

Banerjee's trusted aide, also questioned the connection between the Chief Minister's song and celebrations of Tagore's life. "It is not just an affront to Gurudev but also makes light of the fight against corona!" he said on Twitter.

TMC leader Madan Mitra accused the saffron party of engaging in "dirty politics", and said the Chief Minister had tried to use the occasion to spread awareness about COVID-19.

Though Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated on a grand scale every year, especially in Kolkata and the university town of Santiniketan, the celebrations this time were muted because of the pandemic. No public events were allowed by the government.

In the morning, the Chief Minister paid tribute to the poet at Rabindra Sadan. She sang a Tagore song, "Darye acho tumi amar ganer opare", with Indranil Sen in front of a flower-decked portrait of the Nobel laureate.

Facing Oppn ire, govt floats WhatsApp, toll-free numbers for stranded migrants

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 8

FACING CRITICISM from the Opposition for its handling of the migrant crisis amid the ongoing pandemic, the Mamata Banerjee government has introduced a WhatsApp chatbot and a toll-free number for people from Bengal stranded in other states and those stranded within the province.

The government has also come up with an automated e-pass system for such people.

In a circular issued on Thursday, the government said: "For the convenience of all persons, stranded within and outside the state of West Bengal, an automated e-pass system has been developed and uploaded in the Egiye Bangla portal: www.wb.gov.in for entry to and exit from West Bengal by own arrangements. Intending persons just need to enter the required details at the link provided below and can get the required pass generated."

People can register their details "by sending 'hi' to WhatsApp number 8017845555 or sending SMS to 51969", the government said. A toll-free number, 1070, will provide details and remain functional throughout the day, it added.

Sofar, two trains have brought back more than 2,500 migrant labourers and pilgrims to the state from Rajasthan and Kerala. The Congress has accused the TMC government of not request-

ing the Ministry of Railways for enough special trains to bring back the workers. State party chief Somen Mitra reiterated the claim that the Congress's Lok Sabha leader, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, had made on Thursday, and demanded answers from the state administration. "So far only two trains have come here. Instead of requesting for [more] trains, the state government is issuing e-pass for such people. This tug of war between Centre and the state to bring back migrants labourers must end," Mitra said.

The BJP too hit out at the Mamata Banerjee government. "The state government must initiate talks for this. It should take active steps to arrange for their transportation. The Centre is there to extend its help. But it is the responsibility of the state government to bring back such people," said state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh.

In response, the TMC accused the Opposition of maligning the state government's image to reap political dividends. "The BJP at first tarnished our image by stating false facts regarding COVID-19 cases and deaths. Now it is playing politics over migrant labourers' issue. They have no other work than to engage in a smear campaign. The state government is doing whatever it can," said minister Rajib Banerjee. Meanwhile, social welfare organisation Bangla Sanskriti Mancha urged the Union Home Ministry to take cognizance of plight of labourers stranded in other states.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER



Shri A. C. Kumar, Deputy Inspector General

09Th May 1997

Sashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers with gratitude and cherishes the valiant sacrifice of its brave hearts Shri A. C. Kumar, Deputy Inspector General and Naik/GD L. Ranjan Singh who made supreme sacrifice of their lives in the line of duty for Nation on 09th May, 1997. Shri A. C. Kumar, Deputy Inspector General and Naik/GD L. Ranjan Singh were posted at Divisional Headquarters of Manipur and Nagaland Division in Imphal, when they were attacked by unidentified assailants in the Divisional Headquarter campus and they lost their lives in the attack. We salute the supreme sacrifice of the brave soldiers.

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL



Sub-Inspector (GD) Amal Sarkar

07.09.1970 - 09.05.2017

Sashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers and cherishes the valiant act of its brave heart SI/GD Amal Sarkar who made supreme sacrifice of his life in the line of duty for Nation. On this day in the year 2017 a search and combing operation was launched at Manas forest of Assam to nab NDFB militants. During the operation the search party was indiscriminately fired upon by militants, SI/GD Amal Sarkar promptly retaliated and fought valiantly. He sustained several bullet injuries. Before succumbing to his injuries, he showed extraordinary courage and continued to fight. He fired several rounds and killed a militant Birbal Isary alias I Banso, who was a wanted cadre of militant outfit NDFB. His gallant act will continue to inspire us all. We salute the valor and supreme sacrifice of the brave soldier.

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL

FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA
Regional Office Jaipur: 04 - Nehru Place, Tonk Road, Jaipur (Rajasthan)

E-Tender Notice
An e-tender notice is invited, under two-bid system for appointment of regular Handling/ Handling & Transport Contractor for two years at various centres of Rajasthan Region. Under e-tender notice ROJ/CONTRACT/HTC/02/2020, the bids shall be accepted ONLINE from 09.05.2020, 02:00 PM to 30.05.2020, 02:00 PM. All the Terms & Conditions and other details are available on Central Public Procurement Portal's website <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> and Corporation's website www.fci.gov.in.
General Manager (Region)

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
(A State Government Undertaking)
D.No. 55-17-3, Stalin Corporate Building, 2nd floor, Behind Autoguard Bus Stand, VIJAYAWADA - 520007. A.P.
Phones No.0866 2556244. FAX:(0866) 2556344
SWC/M2/00378/B.Mats /2019 - 2020 Date: 07.05.2020

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
We are Inviting E-Tenders in Two Bid (Technical Bid & Price Bid) System for supply of Bamboo Mats on Annual Rate Contract basis. Interested Bidders may contact at our Head Office on Phone No. 0866-2556244 or view on our Website www.apswhc.com & www.tenderwizard.com/APSWC.
RO. No. 40PPP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2020-21
MANAGING DIRECTOR

A.P. STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
(A State Government Undertaking)
D.No. 55-17-3, Stalin Corporate Building, 2nd Floor, Behind Autoguard Bus Stand, VIJAYAWADA - 520 007. A.P.
Phones No. 0866-2556244, Fax : 0866-2556344
SWC/M2/LWB/Installation/2017-18 Date: 07-05-2020

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
We are Inviting E-Tenders in Two Bid (Technical Bid & Price Bid) System for supply and installation and commissioning of 60 Mts. capacity Pit less Type Electronic Lorry Weighbridge for different places. Interested Bidders may contact at our Head Office on Phone No. 0866-2556244 or view on our Website www.apswhc.com & www.tenderwizard.com/APSWC
Sd/- Managing Director

ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED
VIDYUTH Soudha: VIJAYAWADA

TENDER NOTICE
NIT No: 510002073/APGENCO/2020
APGENCO invites tenders with single-part bid system for "Dr.NTTPS - Procurement of MS ERW pipes of less than 200 mm diameter, Carbon Steel pipes, GI pipes, CI pipes and various pipe specials for CAM- I, II & IV, BM-IV, MM-CHP and Civil Divisions" through A.P. Procurement cum Reverse Auction website. Approximate Value of the Tender : Rs.65,00,000/-, Bid Start Date & Time : From 11.05.2020, 3.00 PM. Bid Submission Closing Date & Time : up to 11.05.2020, 3.00 PM. For further details visit website: www.apgenco.gov.in or <https://tender.apgenco.gov.in/infobid/>
Executive Director/Civil/APGENCO, Vidyut Soudha

PUNJAB HEALTH SYSTEMS CORPORATION
E-Block, 2nd Floor, Phase-8, (Sector 62) Punjab School Education Board Complex Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali), PUNJAB
Phone: 0172-2232243, 2232245 & 2232247
Visit us at: punjabhealth.co.in
E-mail: proc.phsc@gmail.com.

Ref No. E-Tender/PHSC/Proc/2020/02
The Punjab Health Systems Corporation, Mohali (Department of Health & Family Welfare, Punjab) invites online bids (www.eproc.punjab.gov.in) for the Rate Contract of one year for the supply of **Hepatitis B Immuno - Globulin (HBIG)** in the State of Punjab.
Pre-bid conference date, time & place: 18.05.2020 at 12:00 Noon in Committee Room of PHSC Mohali.
Closing Date & Time: 04.06.2020 upto 12:30 P.M. For details log onto www.eproc.punjab.gov.in.
NOTE: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.
Sd/-
MANAGING DIRECTOR
PHSC, SAS NAGAR

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
BUILDING (C & M) CIRCLE, MEDICAL WORKS, TRICHY
THIRD TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE, DATED: 07.05.2020
Due to administrative reason (for COVID - 19 - Precautionary Measures) the following dates are extended in this office Tender Notice No.31/2019-20/BCW MW/ TRY/ Dated:10.03.2020 for the works mentioned below:

Name of Work	Approx. value of work (in Lakhs) (inclu. GST 12%)
SI No.1 - PACKAGE -1	
- Slice No.1: Hospital Buildings	Rs.1020.00
- Slice No.2: College Buildings	Rs.650.00
- Package 1 - Total	Rs.1670.00
SI No.2 - Residential Buildings	Rs.8315.00

Date of availability of tender documents: Now Extended - 21.05.2020 upto 5.45 PM
Last date for receipt of tender: Now Extended - 22.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM
Date of Opening of tender: Now Extended - 22.05.2020 upto 3.30 PM
Details may be downloaded from the following websites : www.tenders.gov.in (or) www.tenders.tn.gov.in Other conditions remain unaltered.
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Medical Works, Trichy.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
BUILDING (C & M) CIRCLE, MEDICAL WORKS, TRICHY
SECOND EXTENSION OF TENDER NOTICE, DATED: 07.05.2020
Due to administrative reason (for COVID - 19 - Precautionary Measures) the following dates are extended in this office Tender Notice No.32/2019-20/BCW MW/ TRY/ Dated:24.03.2020 for the works mentioned below:

COIMBATORE DISTRICT - Name of Work : Construction of Infrastructure Facilities to Increase MBBS seats from 150 to 250 in Government Coimbatore Medical College at Coimbatore District
Approx. value of work (in Lakhs) (inclu. GST 12%) : Rs.6710.00

Details of Tender	Now Extended
Date of availability of tender documents	21.05.2020 upto 5.45 PM
Last date for receipt of tender	22.05.2020 upto 3.00 PM
Date of Opening of tender	22.05.2020 upto 3.30 PM

Details may be downloaded from the following websites : www.tenders.gov.in (or) www.tenders.tn.gov.in Other conditions remain unaltered.
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Buildings (C & M) Circle, Medical Works, Trichy.

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED
"A State govt. Undertaking"
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (e-tendering Mode Only)
Online tenders in two part bidding system, are hereby invited on behalf of HPS&E Ltd., by the Superintending Engineer (Designs), Power House Electrical, H.P.S.E.B. Ltd., Sunder Nagar, Distt. Mandi (H.P.) -175019 for Design, engineering, manufacturing, shop assembly & testing before dispatch, packing and forwarding, transportation, insurance, handling, delivery, storage at site, dismantling & lifting of old batteries on bus back system basic erection, testing & commissioning of Plantio type Lead-Acid batteries consisting of 1 No. 220 V, 645 AH battery bank & 1 No. 24 V, 645 AH battery bank for (2x11 25 MW) Ghaini-4 Power House, Jassi, Distt. Shimla (HP) from manufacturer or authorized dealers who regularly manufacture/provide the equipment of the type specified and have adequate technical knowledge and experience in respect of all items covered under Scope of Supply and services as Tender Specification No. HPS&E/PE/GHAINI-4/HEP-BATTERY BANK/2020-1as per the following:

Request for online tender documents:	From 11.05.2020 (10.00 Hrs.) to 01.06.2020 (12.30 Hrs.)
Issue of online tender documents (bid sheets):	From 11.05.2020 (10.00 Hrs.) to 01.06.2020 (12.30 Hrs.)
Date of pre bid meeting:	08.06.2020 (11.00 Hrs.)
Last date of submission of online tender:	Up to 16.06.2020 (11.00 Hrs.)
Date of opening of Techno-commercial bid (Part-I):	16.06.2020 (15.00 Hrs.)
Cost of tender Specification Document (Non-refundable including GST @18%)	(Rs. 2500/- + 18% GST) = Rs. 2950
Earnest Money Deposit:	Rs. 60,000/-

The detailed tender notification can be viewed/ downloaded free of cost from website <https://www.tenderwizard.com/hps&e> and tender document can be had after making prescribed payment. Any clarification/ amendment shall be updated on the above web site. For other details on e-tendering, please contact on Mobile Nos. - 82619 22200, 82619-33300 and 96259 33300
Sd/-
(Partap Thakur) Superintending Engineer (Designs)
Power House Electrical, HPS&E Ltd., Sundernagar, Distt. Mandi (HP)-175019, Tel/Fax : 01907-262596
"Save Energy for the Benefit of Self & Nation" Email: smallhydel@rediffmail.com, sedphel@gmail.com

आगरा नगर निगम
AGRA NAGAR NIGAM

NIT No. 94/D/CS/20 Date: 07/05/2020

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
The EOI is invited for the following workon Design Build Finance Operate Transfer (DBFOT) basis at Paliwal Park, Agra as below-

S. No.	Name of Work
1.	DEVELOPMENT OF AMUSEMENT PARK;
2.	DEVELOPMENT OF LASER SHOW;
3.	DEVELOPMENT OF FOUR TRAFFIC ISLANDS
4.	DEVELOPMENT OF MINI TOY TRAIN
5.	DEVELOPMENT OF FOOD COURT

1. Last date for Purchase of EOI	: 09.06.2020 till 16:00 Hrs.
2. Last date of pre-bid queries through mail at amcagra@gmail.com	: 30.05.2020 at 12:00 Hrs.
3. Date of Pre bid Meeting	: 30.05.2020 at 16:00 Hrs. at Chief Engineer Office, Agra Nagar Nigam
4. Last date for submission of tender	: 09.06.2020 till 17:00 Hrs.
5. Last date for Submission of Hard Copy of Tender Bid	: 11.06.2020 till 17:00 Hrs.
6. Technical Bid opening date	: 12.06.2020 after 12:00 Hrs.
7. Tender Document and other details shall be available on https://etenders.up.nic.in , www.nagarnigamagra.com .	
8. Hard copy submissions shall be submitted before the date and time mentioned at Chief Engineer Office, Agra Nagar Nigam Premises, Near Sur Sadan, Agra - 282002)	
9. Amendment to NIT, if any would be published on website only.	
10. Any clarification related to the EOI can be sought from Mr. R.K. Singh, Executive Engineer, Agra Nagar Nigam. Contact No.- +91-7300740617	

Chief Engineer
Agra Nagar Nigam

EASTERN RAILWAY

CANCELLATION OF e-TENDER

Tender No. : ELEG-OT-767-2019-20, dated 06.03.2020 published earlier by Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer/G, Eastern Railway, Sealdah. Due to administrative reason, the above tender is hereby treated as cancelled.
SDAH-02/2020-21

भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण
AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

TENDER NOTICE

Item rate tenders are invited through e-tendering CPP Portal by AGM (E-C), AAI, Imphal International Airport on behalf of Chairman, AAI from eligible contractors for the work of "Installation (Replacement) of ILS at Imphal International Airport (Civil & Electrical Works)" ID No. 2020 AAI 47485 at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,57,70,508.00 (inclusive of all taxes but excluding GST). Time allowed 06 (Six) Months. Bid Document Download / Sale Start Date 09.05.2020 from 09:30 hrs. and Bid Submission End Date 25.05.2020 upto 1800 hrs. respectively. For further details refer <https://etenderng.in/eprocure/app> or www.aai.aero. Further clarification/ corrigendum in this regard, if any, shall be uploaded in AAI web site/ CPP portal only.

COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Tender Notice No. SR.DEEGH/2020-21 dated 04-05-2020. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:
SN-1. Tender No. EI-GH45-R(1) dated 04-05-2020. Name of work: AI Guwahati-Maligaon-Karmakhya-Gosala - Comprehensive annual maintenance contract for no. 2KVA, 1 no. 3KVA, 1 no. 3.75KVA, 1 no. 3.75KVA, 3 nos. 5KVA, 1 no. 5.5KVA, 7 nos. 10KVA & 4 nos. 15KVA UPS at Guwahati. Maintenance Contract for three years. Tender Value: 16,15,000/- Earnest Money: ₹18,300/- Cost of tender document: ₹2,000/- Date & time of Closing of tender: 15.05.2020 on 27-05-2020 & opening of tender: 27-05-2020 at 15:30 hrs. The complete information with the tender document of above-tender will be available upto 15:30 hrs. on 27-05-2020 in website www.nicops.gov.in
Sr. DEE, Guwahati
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Godseva & Welfa & India

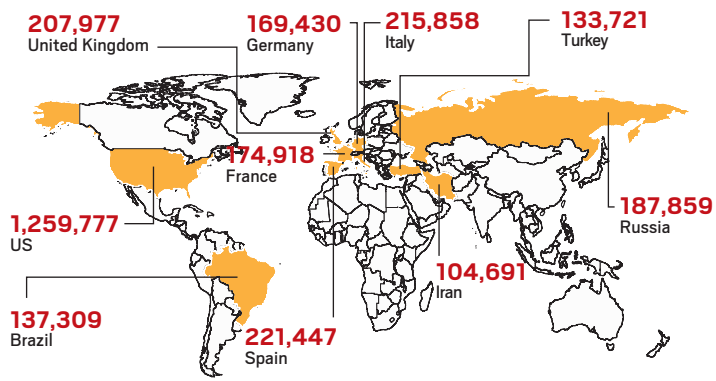


@ieExplained
#ExpressExplained

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

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

THE WORLD



TOTAL CONFIRMED: 3,877,914 DEATH COUNT: 270,537

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 6

Lockdown air: less NO₂, same PM_{2.5} and more urban ozone

IN A pandemic whose impact on public health, the economy and the environment is still unfolding, here is a new finding: While traffic pollution has been falling, the lockdown may be leading to the generation of a dangerous pollutant, urban ozone, which can cause airway inflammation in humans.

The research is specific to the UK. It has been conducted by experts from The University of Manchester, led by Hugh Coe, Professor of Atmospheric Composition, plus air pollution expert Dr James Allan from Manchester's Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. The findings have been submitted in response to a call for evidence from the UK government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the university said in a statement.

NITROGEN OXIDES: Levels of nitrogen oxides were found reduced in most locations in the UK during mid-March and April. The level of decline ranges from 20% to 80%. Levels of nitrogen oxides fall less in rural areas than urban areas; and they are higher in the morning than compared to later in the day.

PM_{2.5}: There was no evidence of a decrease in PM_{2.5}. "While these particles are produced by vehicles, they are also known to originate from domestic wood burning and chemical reactions involving emissions from industry and agriculture, so there has been no significant improvement in air quality in that regard," Professor Coe said.

URBAN OZONE: The Manchester team speculated that photochemical production of ozone may become more important in urban areas during summertime in these low conditions of oxides of nitrogen. As nitrogen oxides reduce, photochemical production may become more efficient and can lead to higher ozone concentrations in summertime as higher temperatures increase emissions of biogenic hydrocarbon from natural sources such as trees. These biogenic hydrocarbons significantly affect urban ozone levels.

While ozone is important for screening harmful solar UV radiation when present higher up in the atmosphere, it can be a dangerous at the Earth's surface, and can react to destroy or alter many biological molecules.

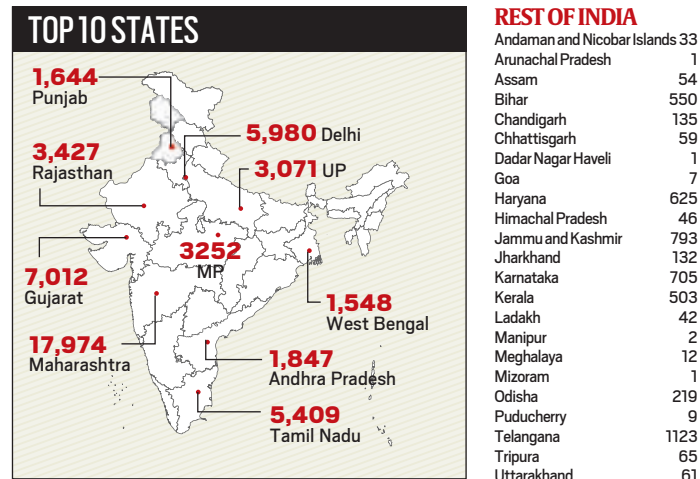
Source: University of Manchester



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

INDIA COUNT: 56,342 (1,886 DEATHS)



Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 8. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. 16,540 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

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

A new concern: early locusts

Locusts normally arrive during July-October, but have already been spotted in Rajasthan. At a time India is battling Covid, they present a new worry with their potential for exponential growth and crop destruction

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
PUNE, MAY 8

ON APRIL 11-12, scientists at the Locust Warning Organisation (LWO) observed groups of grasshoppers at Sri Ganganagar and Jaisalmer districts of Rajasthan. But far from ordinary hoppers, these were desert locusts — the same destructive migratory pests currently devouring acres of maize, sorghum and wheat crops in East Africa.

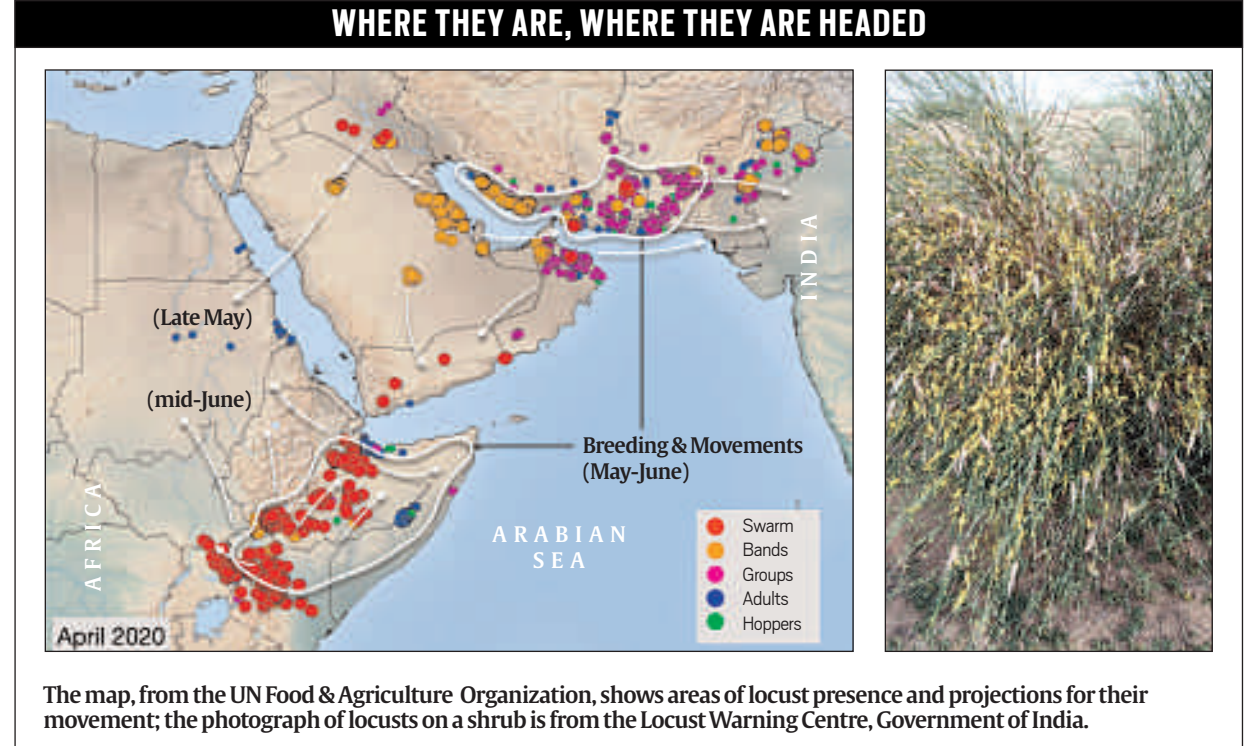
While locusts are seen in India as well, that is normally only during July-October and mostly as solitary insects or in small isolated groups. Their being spotted along the India-Pakistan border before mid-April this time — and coming after the damage they caused to the growing rabi crops along western Rajasthan and parts of northern Gujarat during December-January — has raised the alarm bells, and comes at a time when the country is battling the more high-profile novel coronavirus pandemic.

What exactly are locusts?

The desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) is a short-horned grasshopper that is innocuous while it is in a "solitary phase" and moving about independently. These winged insects differ from normal hoppers, and become dangerous only when their populations build up rapidly and the close physical contact in crowded conditions triggers behavioural changes. They, then, enter the "gregarious phase", by grouping into bands and forming swarms that can travel great distances (up to 150 km daily), while eating up every bit of vegetation on the way. If not controlled at the right time, these insect swarms can threaten the food security of countries. Kenya is already reporting its worst locust outbreak in 70 years, while Ethiopia and Somalia haven't seen one this bad in quarter of a century.

How seriously should the first sightings of the locusts by the LWO be viewed?

There's nothing much to worry right now, as the rabi crop has already been harvested and farmers are yet to commence plantings for the new kharif season. The LWO (part of the Union Agriculture Ministry's directorate of plant protection, quarantine & storage and with its field headquarters at Jodhpur in Rajasthan) has since the second fortnight of April detected "gregarious" hopper groups, including at Fazilka in Punjab adjoining the Pakistan border. But these have been low-density nymphs in "2nd to 4th instar" stages or immature winged adults. No breeding or



The map, from the UN Food & Agriculture Organization, shows areas of locust presence and projections for their movement; the photograph of locusts on a shrub is from the Locust Warning Centre, Government of India.

swarm movement has also been seen so far.

The timing, though, is cause for concern. The normal breeding season for locusts in India is July-October. But this time, they have been sighted by mid-April. Last year, too, they were seen towards end-May as isolated grasshoppers. They could, nevertheless, breed to high enough populations for forming swarming and wreaking havoc during the rabi season in Rajasthan (especially Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Jalore and Sirahi) and Gujarat (Banaskantha). The longer time to breed is more conducive for build-up of gregarious insect swarms, as opposed to solitary, innocuous hoppers.

What kind of damage can they cause?

Locusts are polyphagous, i.e. they can feed on a wide variety of crops. Secondly, they have an ability to multiply rapidly. A single female desert locust lays 60-80 eggs thrice during its roughly 90-day life cycle. K L Gurjar, deputy director of LWO, estimates that a 1-square-km area can accommodate 40-80 million of these insects, making the growth of their swarms exponential quite like the Covid-19 virus. The damage potential of locusts has been limited in India only because of the

country hosting a single breeding season — unlike Pakistan, Iran and East Africa, where they also multiply during January-June.

What is the genesis of the present locust upsurge, particularly in East Africa?

It lies in the Mekunu and Luban cyclonic storms of May and October 2018 that struck Oman and Yemen, respectively. These turned large desert areas in remote parts of the southern Arabian Peninsula into lakes, which allowed the insects to breed undetected across multiple generations. The swarms attacking crops in East Africa reached peak populations from November onwards, while building up since the start of this year in southern Iran and Pakistan (Balochistan and parts of the Indus Valley and Punjab). Widespread rains in East Africa in late March and April have enabled further breeding.

According to Keith Cressman, senior locust forecaster at the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN, a part of the new generation of swarms forming there in late-June/July may migrate from the Horn of Africa across the Indian Ocean to the desert areas along both sides of the India-Pakistan border. Prior to that, the locusts from spring breeding areas of southwest Pakistan and southern Iran would

arrive in Rajasthan and Gujarat during May-June. They would, then, breed with the onset of the southwest monsoon rains and continue doing so through the kharif cropping season.

What can and should be done?

If the monsoon is good, and in the absence of control operations, the magnitude of attack could be worse than in the 2019-20 rabi season. Gurjar points out that last year's locust incursions were the first and most significant since 1993. Local authorities in Rajasthan and Gujarat had to treat over 4.30 lakh hectares of infested areas with sprayers mounted on tractors and other vehicles. Thankfully, even old generation organophosphate insecticides such as Malathion (96% ultra-low volume aerial application) are effective against locusts. About one litre of the chemical is necessary to treat a hectare of their breeding areas, including trees where they halt for the night. Gurjar says that there is ample stock of pesticides to control any swarms. Control operations also require procurement of equipment, training of field teams, prepositioning of supplies in key breeding areas and updating contingency plans. These operations are technically not restricted under the current lockdown regime. But there is not much time to waste either.

Saliva from home: how US-approved test works

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

ON FRIDAY, Rutgers University announced that the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given emergency approval to testing for SARS-CoV2 on saliva samples sent by people themselves, from home. The test has been developed by Rutgers University's RUCDR Infinite Biologics lab, in collaboration with Spectrum Solutions and Accurate Diagnostic Labs.

What is different

The standard test for SARS-CoV2 infection is done on throat or nasal swabs (RT-PCR). These look for the presence of the virus in the swabs. Various countries also have provisions for testing blood samples for antibodies, including



Nucleic acid extraction workstation for processing saliva samples for SARS-CoV2 testing. David Sokolowski/Rutgers University

India which allows it in certain hotspots.

Rutgers University and its collaborators have developed an approach that uses saliva as the primary test biomaterial for SARS-CoV2. The approach recently got approval of the

FDA; this was for healthcare workers collecting saliva from individuals at testing sites. On Thursday, the FDA amended the emergency use authorisation for the first SARS-CoV2 test that will allow people to collect their own saliva at home and send to a lab for results, Rutgers University announced in a statement.

A company called Vault Health too has been advertising saliva tests for SARS-CoV2. The FDA has not approved it, *The New York Times* reported recently.

How it helps

Collection of nose and throat swabs at a healthcare facility, or testing location, requires physical interaction with a healthcare professional. The new at-home saliva self-collection assay allows for broader screening, Rutgers said.

The RUCDR lab has also launched a genetic testing service. This can test thousands of sam-

ples daily, Rutgers said; with the new saliva tests and expanded collection strategy, that number can increase to tens of thousands of samples daily.

"Collecting a saliva sample at home mitigates the risk of exposure needed to travel to a facility or drive through and is less invasive and more comfortable and reliable than sticking a swab up your nose or down your throat. Protecting both patients and healthcare professionals from any unnecessary exposure is of paramount importance and saliva home collection addresses almost all issues around testing quality, safety and availability," Andrew Brooks, chief operating officer and director of technology development at RUCDR, said in the statement.

The approval also means that healthcare professionals need no longer be put at risk for infection by performing swab collections, he said.

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

What SARS taught East Asia, and what India can learn from Covid



INDU BHUSHAN

AT THE height of the SARS crisis that hit East Asia in 2003, the Health Minister of Vietnam, Madame Tran Thi Trung Chien, told me, "Mr Indu, we can catch crabs only during low tide." Vietnam being largely a coastal country, she had very cogently contextualised Churchill's famous quote, "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

I used to head health sector operations at the Asian Development Bank at that time and was involved in planning and supervising the implementation of its response to the SARS crisis. Considered a major public health crisis at the time, it pales in comparison to the current Covid-19 crisis in terms of both spread and impact. SARS infected

only slightly over 8,000 people in 29 countries, with 774 deaths. Nonetheless, it shook the people and governments in East Asia out of their slumber and many of them indeed did not let this crisis go to waste.

Lessons learnt from the SARS epidemic have helped shaped East Asian countries' response to the Covid-19 outbreak. Vietnam stands out among them — out of 288 cases between January 23 and May 8, only 47 are active, and none have died.

What SARS taught

Lifestyles perceptibly changed in many East Asian countries after SARS. In places like China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea, the use of face coverings in public places became the norm. The practice was continued even after the outbreak was over. People with coughs and colds attend office with face coverings. New norms developed for touching of surfaces in public places. In East Asia, most people now press elevator buttons with a finger knuckle, avoiding direct contact with their fingertips. People are also more careful and use more hygienic sense in using public restrooms. Frequent

handwashing is a norm.

SARS also prompted some introspection about working and travel arrangements. Faced with temporary travel restrictions during the epidemic, the Asian Development Bank experimented with undertaking loan negotiations through video-conferencing. This turned out to be as efficient as face-to-face meetings and has now become the norm. A realisation set in that much of business travel could be severally rationalised.

But more than any of these outcomes, by far the biggest impact of the crisis was that governments realised the importance of investing in health. Before SARS, governments were generally not keen to borrow from development banks for the health sector and preferred bilateral grant resources instead. They would prioritise hard infrastructure projects for loan resources. As they would often rely on a false dichotomy — hard money for hard sectors and soft money for soft sectors. After the crisis, this mindset changed. Many countries realised that they were spending too little on the health sector and that the rel-

atively small grant funding from bilateral donors would not suffice.

China recognised the weakness of its health system and adopted a two-pronged approach of strengthening its government health facilities and expanding health coverage through social health insurance, much like Ayushman Bharat. Government health expenditure tripled in a few years' time and almost entire population received health insurance. Other countries, even smaller countries like Laos and Cambodia, also invested heavily in their public health systems, improved their surveillance and reporting capacities, and significantly increased their health sector budgets. A healthy demand for large loan projects in the health sector ensued. For example, Vietnam borrowed heavily to establish a strong and interlinked laboratory system covering the entire country.

SARS, and subsequently H1N1, also prompted East Asian countries to deepen their regional cooperation on pandemic preparedness and response. Coordinated by the Association of South East Asian Nations and other international develop-

ment agencies, systems and agreements were put in place to identify emerging health emergencies and share information.

SARS also provided a major push to the World Health Organization's effort to revise the International Health Regulations (IHR) to make them more effective. The revisions allowed WHO to seek information from member states and mandated sharing of any epidemic information with neighbours. Starting in 2003, the revised IHR were approved by all member states within 18 months in May 2005 — a speed akin to that of light in the glacial world of international agencies where negotiations on only one phrase can take years.

These reforms have definitely helped East Asian countries in effectively dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. These countries, despite being closely connected with China through trade, tourism, culture and the diaspora and having aging populations, have seen a relatively modest impact of the pandemic. While further research will tell us more, anecdotal evidence suggests that the widespread hygienic and face-covering practices and strong public health systems

have helped in this process. Many of these practices and systems developed as a response to SARS, H1N1 and MERS.

A crisis to learn from

Lives, social practices, working arrangements and the health sector will surely irreversibly change with the Covid-19 crisis in our country as well. Let us wait and watch the shape and extent of these changes. The extent to which handwashing and other hygienic and physical distancing practices become part of our lifestyles; our work arrangements change, with greater reliance on technology-enabled conferencing and supervision and reduced travel; access to healthcare increase through enhanced use of telemedicine; our disease reporting and surveillance systems become stronger; and expenditure on health becomes comparable to our peer nations, is yet to be seen.

I firmly believe that India too will not let this crisis go to waste.

Indu Bhushan is Chief Executive Officer, Ayushman Bharat-PM-JAY



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The economic malaise

With Covid crisis dealing sharp blow to struggling financial sector, revival calls for new approach



ARVIND SUBRAMANIAN AND JOSH FELMAN

CAUTIONARY TALE

Vizag gas leak must be probed quickly, accountability enforced. Other chemical plants restarting operations must be checked

TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE affected in a 5 km radius in a densely populated city, hundreds in hospital and 11 dead — the gas leak in Visakhapatnam revives dark memories of Bhopal in 1984, when the Union Carbide plant there caused one of the biggest industrial disasters ever. By all accounts, recurring instances of human oversight and callousness appear to have precipitated the disaster at the LG Polymers India unit. The original owners of the plant, McDowell & Co, had sold it when the fast-developing city of Visakhapatnam drew uncomfortably close to it. It would have been wise to relocate since the hazardous feedstock of styrene was in use, but LG took it over in 1997 and continued production, admitting last year that it had exceeded the capacity permitted by its environmental clearance. It had then sought permission for expansion from the state authorities, though the central ministry of environment and forests is the competent authority. The ministry later dropped the matter in the belief that the company had lost interest.

This series of unfortunate events may have laid the ground for the accident on May 7 — it is being said that the leak occurred because the styrene had been stored for a long time, due to the lockdown. A failure to check hazardous chemicals and storage vessels is no less mystifying than the failure to secure environmental clearance before restarting operations — the role and responsibility of the company, the state administration and the Union ministry must be probed and accountability must be enforced. The managers of the company should have known that starting a production line which has lain dormant for a long period is not a trivial process. Before throwing the switch, they should have run through the entire safety drill.

A flurry of official activity has followed the gas leak. The National Green Tribunal has ordered LG Polymers India to pay interim damages of Rs 50 crore and issued notices to the company, the Central Pollution Control Board, the state and the Centre. The police have registered a case of culpable homicide and causing grievous hurt against the management, under the Indian Penal Code. The YS Jaganmohan Reddy government has set up a five-member team to probe the incident, and the Union ministry of chemicals and fertilisers has advised chemical plants to reopen with caution. Now, the probe report should be called in as soon as possible, action must be taken against the guilty and authorities issuing environmental clearances must identify any other defaulters and prevent them from restarting.

TRAGEDY ON TRACKS

Aurangabad incident must draw attention to vulnerability of migrant workers in crisis, need to address it urgently

THE PUBLIC HEALTH challenge of confronting the novel coronavirus has triggered a terrible humanitarian crisis in the country. Amongst the defining images of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the virus — arguably the most stringent in the world, and announced at short notice — are those of migrant workers walking back home on the country's highways, carrying their children, and at times elderly family members, on their shoulders and in their arms. There have been reports of many workers collapsing by the wayside, weakened by hunger and fatigue. Sixteen more names were added on Friday to the lengthening toll — of migrants run over by a freight train in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, after they, in exhaustion, fell asleep on the tracks, on the way to their homes. The livelihoods of these workers had dried up after the iron factory in Jalna, which employed them, had pulled down its shutters because of the lockdown. The workers were trekking to Bhusawal, about 150-km away, to catch a Shramik Special train to return to their homes in Madhya Pradesh.

There is little doubt that the migrant workers are essential and indispensable for the wheels of the country's economy to turn. They help run factories, build roads and houses, harvest crops, collect garbage and pull rickshaws. But it's a measure of their invisibility that there is very little official data on their exact numbers — according to the Economic Survey, 2017, nine million people migrate across states every year, but other studies suggest that this could be a conservative estimate. There is a growing body of literature on the multiple deprivations and injustices they must bear. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) of 2017-18, for instance, more than 70 per cent of the workers in the non-agricultural sector with a regular salary — most of them migrants — didn't have a written job contract, about 55 per cent were not eligible for paid leave and, 50 per cent did not have any social security benefits. Any breakdown of economic activity, such as that caused by the pandemic, leaves these workers to fend for themselves.

The public health challenge posed by the novel coronavirus has led to some meaningful conversations on improving the country's healthcare facilities. It should also occasion discussions on putting in place social security nets for the migrant workers. After the pandemic, these workers cannot go back to the ill-lit shadows of the economy that they have been forced to occupy for so long.

A DECENT EXCHANGE

Economic crisis brought on by Covid-19 has led people in Fiji back to the barter system. There is a silver lining

KARL MARX THOUGHT, about a century-and-a-half ago, that society moved from primitive communism, through various forms and structures of inequality, to communism proper. Economic systems moved forward, resolving their contradictions and creating new ones. Turns out he was, at best, only half right.

Mediums of exchange with fictional value — money, in all its forms and abstractions — are premised on a leap of faith. People accept the "promise to pay the bearer" from a distant authority, and lives, communities, economies and civilisations are built on this trust. But when the system isn't enough, and the margins swell enough to flood the entire system, a different, more relatable form of exchange comes into place. In Fiji, and many other Pacific Island nations, COVID-19 has forced a return to the barter system. In epidemiological terms, the region has been relatively less affected by the pandemic: At the end of April, only six Pacific countries and territories between them have reported 260 cases and seven deaths. Yet, over 10 per cent of Fiji's population — 1,00,000 people — are active on a Facebook group called "Barter for a Better Fiji". Similar groups have cropped up in Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

The tourism sector in the region is devastated, and people are out of work. Yet, in the absence of money, many are sustaining themselves through work, and the dignity of social exchanges that engenders. Labour — whether you're a carpenter, teacher or accountant — can be exchanged for meat, food and other commodities. Professional photography lessons are being exchanged for food. The idea behind this network of exchanges is simple: An economic crisis need not descend to a humanitarian one. Thinking of what each member of society can offer, and negotiating the value of that good/service might not lead to a Utopian ideal of equality. But as the world struggles to treat people with decency amid a pandemic, it is at least a more moral equilibrium.

SLOWLY BUT PERCEPTIBLY, we are moving into a different phase of the Covid crisis. The health situation remains serious, of course, precluding normal social interactions. But as the exit from lockdown starts, albeit slow in pace and differentiated across geographies, attention is beginning to focus on the task of reviving economic production. Warren Buffett famously said that only when the tide recedes can we see the jagged rocks. As the Covid deluge recedes, what jagged rocks are we likely to see? And what is the best way to repair the damage?

For some time, we have argued that production and growth have been held back by diseased balance sheets, afflicting key sectors of the economy. As far back as December 2014, we highlighted that the banking sector and infrastructure firms had come under financial stress, a problem we termed the Twin Balance Sheet (TBS) challenge. By December 2019, we documented that the problem had spread to the NBFC and real estate sectors, raising the number of stressed balance sheets to four.

Now, following the Covid-19 shock, red ink will be blotting balance sheets across the economy. For more than a month, firms of all sizes and sectors have been unable to sell their goods; many households have been unable to earn; financial institutions have been unable to collect on their loans; and the government has been unable to collect much tax revenue. The damage to all their financial positions has been severe, and will take a long time to repair.

How bad is the damage likely to be? Reports suggest that around one-third of industrial and service firms have applied for moratoria on their bank loans. If only a quarter of these deferred loans eventually go bad, then the stock of non-performing assets (NPAs) would increase by Rs 5 lakh crore. And this is a conservative estimate. Senior bank officials have been quoted as estimating that the stock of NPAs could increase by as much as Rs 9 lakh crore. In this case, we would be looking at NPAs of Rs 18 lakh crore, equivalent to around 18 per cent of current loans outstanding. For planning purposes, it is worth considering who will pay for such losses, if they do materialise.

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At one level, the answer is simple: The shareholders of the financial institutions, which in most cases means the government. But this is where the ubiquity of the balance sheet problem comes in. When the TBS challenge first materialised, after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008-09, the government had a relatively strong balance sheet: Deficits were low, and the consolidated debt-GDP ratio, having fallen by 17 percentage points over the previous 7 years, stood at just over 60 per cent of GDP. So, fiscal room was available, allowing the government to recapitalise the PSU banks.

This time, the government's financial position will be quite different. Central and state government deficits and debts will increase dramatically this year, as revenues, already slowing, have been decimated by the Covid crisis, while expenditures have increased. Add in a slowly recovering economy, and it becomes clear that the fiscal position will remain weak for some considerable time. As a result, the government will want to pass the burden onto the corporate and household sectors, in the form of higher taxes, more arrears, and possibly higher inflation. But these sectors will resist, for they have financial problems of their own.

It will be tempting in these circumstances to delay recognising the problem, pushing it into the future, for example by allowing banks not to classify bad loans as NPAs, and barring them from taking defaulters to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (IBC) system. But this time, more than ever, this would be the wrong approach. The reason is that, in circumstances where no sector has a strong ability to bear a loss, it becomes imperative to minimise the size of that loss.

How can this be done? Broadly, in two ways. First, by preventing bankruptcies from occurring in the first place. To do this, banks will need to identify the firms that are viable, and lend them the funds they need to tide them over the immediate crisis. But banks are facing their own difficulties, and are reluctant to bear the risk of making such loans. So, the government might need to create a guarantee fund to support lending, as one of us has proposed.

Second, when firms do default, they need

to be resolved as quickly as possible. Speed is necessary because the financial position of stressed firms tends to worsen over time. By definition, stressed firms have poor cash flows and can't obtain much in the way of loans from banks. So, they don't have enough money to fund their operations properly, which means that over time their underlying business deteriorates, destroying the firms' market value. Consider what happened to now-famous House of Debt firms, the 17 large companies (excluding Essar Steel and the Adani group) that Credit Suisse long ago identified as stressed. In March 2010, their market value was Rs 3.1 lakh crore. A decade later, their value had fallen to just Rs 0.8 lakh crore, a loss of Rs 2.3 lakh crore or nearly 75 per cent. Accounting for inflation over this period, the real value of that loss is even greater.

As this example shows, while public attention focuses on the size of the NPAs, a much more important number is the recovery rate — the degree to which the banks can recover on these loans. And the only way to maximise the recovery rate is to sort out the bad loans speedily. If this can be done, and firms put back on their feet quickly, the economy will reap an additional benefit, since the resolved firms will be able to contribute to the recovery.

To recapitulate, the Covid crisis is dealing a sharp blow to an already-struggling financial sector. But no sector is in a strong position to rescue the banks, since balance sheets across the economy are now impaired. That means the costs cannot be spread, they must be minimised, which in turn requires urgent action because delays severely erode the underlying value of assets.

A new approach is consequently needed. The immediate problems created by the crisis must be addressed, decisively and quickly. Then the attention will have to turn to addressing the pre-Covid legacy balance sheet problems, which have been intensified by the crisis. In the next column, we will suggest how both can be done.

Subramanian is former chief economic advisor to the government of India and Felman is former IMF Resident Representative to India
(This is the first of two pieces by the authors)



KHALED AHMED

REACTING TO PROTEST marches called "Aurat March" this year by women who want to control their lives in matters of education and marriage, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced: "We will, hopefully by next year, introduce a core syllabus for all schools that will be mandatory for students apart from the additional subjects each institution chooses to teach. This is how you create a nation. This is how you end rival cultures from developing. The Aurat March that just happened... a different culture was visible in it. This is a cultural issue and this comes from the schooling system".

What he hinted at was that the "liberated" women who wanted more rights were "Western educated" and were responsible for the societal divide that his government would end by adopting a "uniform education system". The obvious inference from his remark is that he would like to "merge" Urdu and English-medium education with the madrassas or the religious schools functioning in the country: He would be less able to prune the extremist religious-ideological material in the Urdu-medium-madrassa sector while expurgating the "liberal" aspect of the English-medium sector.

Pakistan's educational system has consistently opposed the "liberalism" that the growing middle class allows its children to imbibe in the English-medium sector. There was a

TURNING INWARDS, LOCKING MINDS

Educational reform under Imran Khan is a way of embracing isolationism

Pakistan is going through a withering process of isolationism, which is another word for turning inwards and showing hostility towards anything smelling of foreignness. Liberalism is under attack and liberal education is already not in favour even in the private sector stream where the financiers know it pays to create space for ideology and uniformity of the mind.

time when Khan used to accuse his "modernised" opponents of "liberal fascism". But no one ideologically inclined thinks of tackling the extremism nurtured by the Urdu-medium and madrassa sectors.

Given Pakistan's poor level of intellectual sophistication, the project of educational reform under Khan runs the risk of becoming Boko Haram — which translates literally to "Western education is forbidden" — since 2009. As a movement of the Muslims of northern Nigeria, Boko Haram's army of Islamic soldiers has killed more than two million people, and kidnapped and raped thousands of Muslim girls.

The uniformity of mind created in the state-sector schools is a kind of preparation for the final takeover by the pure madrassa stream — the utopia Pakistan aspires to. A majority of the suicide-bomber boys who did the dirty work of the Taliban came from the state-run schools. The madrassas, on the other hand, provided the warriors that waged cross-border jihad and at times, defied the patron-state itself. Today, Pakistan is simply not intellectually equipped to handle the problem it has posited to itself. The most locked mind in Pakistan is located inside the educational bureaucracy serving in the federal and provincial ministries.

Khan might create a system that would still have two streams: Urdu-medium and the

madrassas. Will this create the "single" system he wants? Given the general intellectual backwardness of Muslims from Nigeria to Indonesia, he might end up isolating Pakistan further through a "new mind" embracing the isolationism of Iran.

Why is Pakistan upset by the "three streams"? Pakistan is going through a withering process of isolationism, which is another word for turning inwards and showing hostility towards anything smelling of foreignness. Liberalism is under attack and liberal education is already not in favour even in the private sector stream where the financiers know it pays to create space for ideology and uniformity of the mind.

Pakistani scholar Madiha Afzal in her book *Pakistan under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State*, observes: "While education appears to make people less favourable toward terrorist groups, there is also a worrying increase in favourability toward these groups at the secondary school level. My analysis of Pakistan Studies textbooks helped explain why that is the case: The books set up a framework of the world in which Pakistan is viewed as the victim of conspiracies of both India and the West, and Pakistanis and Muslims are pitched in opposition to other countries and religions."

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan



MAY 9, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM STATUS QUO THE CENTRE DOES not appear to be in a hurry to find a solution to the Assam problem, definitely not before May 15 when the deadline given by the student leaders expires. The mood in Delhi is of "wait and watch". The impression one gets is that Delhi would take the initiative after the assembly elections. Attempts made to persuade the Centre to relook the problem have not met with any success. There was a feeler on behalf of some non-party men, who have contacts with the organisers of the Assam movement, to try to bring the student leaders and the central government to the negotiating table. But the latter did not respond to that.

NATWARLAL SENTENCED NATWARLAL, WHOSE NAME has become synonymous with cheating and forgery, has been sentenced to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment on two counts of cheating by the chief judicial magistrate of Indore. There are about 200 cases against the master imposter for defrauding banks and the railways of more than Rs 2 crore. If he is convicted in all these cases, he will be given 150 years' imprisonment. But Natwarlal says no prison can hold him for long. "No jail in India can keep me for more than a year", he said. Natwarlal has escaped from various jails at least half-a-dozen times. Police custody means little to him. "To walk out of it is a

mere playing", he said as he clicked his fingers, emerald rings flashing.

MEETING BREZHNEV PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi met the Soviet president, Leonid Brezhnev, and warned him about the growing anxiety in non-aligned nations over Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, an Indian spokesman said. The spokesman said the talks, which lasted 45 minutes, concentrated almost exclusively on questions pertaining to Afghanistan. Although India has friendly relations with Moscow, Mrs Gandhi has opposed the Soviet incursion in Afghanistan.

7 THE IDEAS PAGE

Story of the nowhere people

How short-term political vision and public policy have conspired to create a migrant problem there is no more turning away from



SHAILAJA CHANDRA

AMIDST RIGHTFUL JUBILATION over the execution of a colossal nationwide lockdown, the plight of hapless migrants has raised an important, long dormant issue. Their predicament has triggered a volley of questions — about why the magnitude of the migrant exodus was not anticipated, leading to a crisis situation. Anguish over their hunger, and unresponsiveness to their natural urge to return home, bereft of daily earnings, has received extensive media coverage.

But the basic reason why migrants remain the way they do has not been discussed. This article does not answer the valid questions but, instead, attempts to unravel who the migrants are and why they remain marginalised for decades.

The fact that half the population of a megapolis like Mumbai or Delhi lives in slums and shanties is well known. All governments make attempts to improve their lives. Within a couple of days of the COVID lockdown, Delhi slum-dwellers received free rations to last six weeks, women got money and pensioners saw a doubling of their deposits. The needy got hot meals twice a day within 48 hours of the lockdown and, ever since, 2 million people (the population of the city of Patna) are being fed daily.

Then why do we see hundreds of migrants on television screens complaining bitterly about staying hungry? Why did the Supreme Court have to advise one ration card for all during the lockdown? Is there a difference between slum dwellers and migrants? Seasonal or permanent? Settled or stranded? To understand this, one has to see the constitutional provisions and policies governing the political economy. The latter endure migrants for economic reasons without amalgamating them under the state's food safety nets.

According to the Constitution, urban development is the responsibility of municipal governments and the management of migration is one facet of that. While the Centre can give directions, the states have the powers to legislate on urban matters. Of course, like much else, policies are determined by where the political advantage lies. This largely explains the huge disparities that continue to exist in levels of socio-economic development.

In administering welfare schemes, migrants are not equated with state residents, be it the regulation of minimum wages, housing, and political participation. A World Bank study has referred to "migrant unfriendly policies" that prevail throughout the country. Every state maintains reservation in government jobs and higher education, targets foodgrain distribution and provides social welfare essentially for the state's own residents. Nurturing migrants is considered suicidal as it upsets the local residents who assert first claim on benefits, the Marathi Maoos syndrome being a case in point. Political parties find it difficult and unproductive to promote migrants with no roots as voter constituencies.

While migrants can access hospitals and receive treatment, this has never extended to habitation. On first arrival new migrants just try and get enough room to sleep.



C R Sasikumar

Eventually, after years, they might negotiate an address to show continuity of stay, which alone can enable them to get an election card and a ration card. For decades, they have travelled to the cities — a thousand migrants disembark just at Old Delhi railway station every day. Initially, they depend on *mama-chacha* networks while scouting for work. After years, they fetch the family. Seasonal workers are different, as they often come as a family. Many were left stranded after the lockdown.

Successive chief ministers have treated migrants as "not our problem". Most migrants would be having ration cards in their home states but these are not transferable. Only when elections are on the horizon are they facilitated in getting a local Pehchan Patra (election card) and a ration card. But until those documents are acquired (or procured), they remain outside the welfare net.

The magnitude of inter-state migration in India was reported to be close to 9 million annually between 2011 and 2016, while Census 2011 pegged inter- and intra-state movement at close to 140 million then. Some estimates pitch migrants to be at least 10 per cent of the labour force, contributing substantially to the GDP.

Since the Constitution enjoins citizens with the right to reside and settle anywhere in the country, no permissions are required to move or stay anywhere — mostly on public land with the tacit approval of several political and public authorities. Although the state is enabled to make laws imposing reasonable

According to the Constitution, urban development is the responsibility of municipal governments and the management of migration is one facet of that. While the Centre can give directions, the states have the powers to legislate on urban matters. Of course, like much else, policies are determined by where the political advantage lies. This largely explains the huge disparities that continue to exist in levels of socio-economic development.

restrictions in public interest, they have shied away from regulating migrant settlement. Indispensable as they are, migrants are considered unsupportable in normal times.

During the COVID pandemic, the media has highlighted a situation no welfare state can afford to turn away from much longer. Turning a Nelson's eye to the arrival of migrants and letting them rough it out on their own can contribute to unmanageable health hazards putting entire populations at risk. Permitting the vicious cycle of slums and squalor has shown how infection can permeate into dense populations. If COVID has not taught this lesson, nothing will. The states must now start to register every migrant. Only regular head counts will enable a correct measure of the entitlements.

But registration is only the first step. Finding state resources for them, unless billed to projects hiring migrants, will be mind-blowing. Registration will be a huge challenge. Unless the processes are simple, transparent and low cost, they can become exclusionary and exploitative.

The Aadhaar card could be used to kick-start migrant registration. The states with greater pull factors will need to take a call on habitation and welfare — if not spurred by humanitarianism, then at least by the obligation to safeguard the health of their residents.

The writer is a former secretary to the government of India and former chief secretary, Delhi

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In the longer run, there are no quick solutions to our society's health inequalities. They are deeply rooted... The pandemic has exposed how devastating they can be, and when it ends, the need to address them will be as deep as ever."

— THE GUARDIAN

Let down by law

Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, must be rationalised to remove requirements that disincentivise formalisation

K P KRISHNAN, ANIRUDH BURMAN AND SUYASH RAI

THE FALLOUT of the lockdown in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 highlights the urgent need to rationalise the legislative framework for labour in India. Migrant labour has been among the worst affected due to the lockdown. Their efforts to leave the cities before the lockdown, and the extraordinary efforts some put in to get back home, suggest that they have very low resilience to stay in cities without employment. They fall through the cracks of India's social security net, and the government response has shown a significant gap between high-minded intentions reflected in existing laws and their implementation.

A key piece of legislation governing inter-state migrants in India is the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. The Act was enacted to prevent the exploitation of inter-state migrant workmen by contractors, and to ensure fair and decent conditions of employment. The law requires all establishments hiring inter-state migrants to be registered, and contractors who recruit such workmen be licensed. Contractors are obligated to provide details of all workmen to the relevant authority. Migrant workmen are entitled to wages similar to other workmen, displacement allowance, journey allowance, and payment of wages during the period of journey. Contractors are also required to ensure regular payment, non-discrimination, provisioning of suitable accommodation, free medical facilities and protective clothing for the workmen.

In the immediate aftermath of the lockdown, state governments were taken unawares by inter-state migrants who were desperate to return home. Many had lost jobs, would not be able to afford rent and were afraid of falling seriously ill away from their families. The full and proper implementation of this law would have meant that state governments had complete details of inter-state migrant workmen coming through contractors within their states. While this would still leave out migrants who move across states on their own, a large segment would be automatically registered due to the requirements of the Act. States would consequently have been better prepared to take steps to protect such workmen during this lockdown. However, almost no state seems to have implemented this law in letter and spirit.

The primary reason for this seems to be the onerous compliance requirements set out in the law. It not only requires equal pay for inter-state workmen, but also requires other social protection that would make their employment significantly more expensive than intra-state workmen. This includes the payments of different allowances, and requirements that contractors provide accommodation and healthcare for such workmen. Compliance with these requirements is not only onerous, it makes the cost of hiring inter-state workmen higher than hiring similar labour from within the state.

Since the Act is barely implemented, it exists as another law that potentially provides rent-seeking opportunities to enter-

prising government inspectors while failing in its main objective. Another consequence of weak implementation is the absence of government preparedness and the consequent failure in preventing genuine hardships for vulnerable groups.

Not only does this raise questions about the utility of such well-meaning but impractical laws, it also highlights the lack of state capacity to enforce such provisions. To implement this law alone, government inspectors would not only have to maintain records of inter-state workmen, but also verify whether all the other requirements regarding wages, allowances, accommodation and health care are complied with.

The issues with the law and its non-enforcement are symptomatic of the socialist era, when the mere enactment of a law with aspirational requirements backed by legal coercion was considered adequate for creating good outcomes. This law, and many other labour-welfare legislation never considered issues like compliance costs, government capacity for enforcement, and importantly, counter-productive consequences. For example, the onerous requirements set out in this law incentivise contractors and employers to under-report inter-state workmen rather than to register them.

The consequences of the lockdown are already proving to be disastrous for migrant labour. One of the lessons from this episode is to not let aspirational requirements become a hindrance to the effective protection of the very groups these requirements are designed for. This will require a principled distinction between formalisation and ostensible social-welfare. While the former seeks to make people or activities visible or "legible", the latter goes a step further. Social-welfare protections are predicated upon formalisation, but non-compliance with onerous social welfare requirements can instead inhibit formalisation. This is not merely because of high compliance costs, but also because the state can barely keep up with the task of ensuring compliance with such requirements, made worse given the disincentives to comply.

This has created a two-tier system — formal and informal. Those in the formal tier — fewer than 10 percent of the workforce — enjoy considerable protections, while those in the informal tier get almost no protections. Since welfare schemes are also predicated on the visibility of those getting the benefits, informal workers, especially in urban areas, fall through cracks in the system. The lack of any welfare net for informal workers in urban areas reflects the consequences of formalisation on paper — while farmers get cash transfers, and labourers in rural areas have MGNREGA, there are hardly any schemes for informal workers in urban areas.

Laws such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 must therefore be rationalised to remove requirements that disincentivise formalisation. We must be pragmatic and ensure that employers and contractors have incentives to come forward and register labourers without being worried about punitive action or impractical social safety requirements.

Krishnan is a retired civil servant. Rai and Burman are with the political economy program in Carnegie India. Views are personal



AKSHAT JAIN

A seat at the table

Pandemic could act as catalyst for reworking world order, giving India leading role

THE WORLD might soon realise the immense need to include India in the UNSC club, and COVID-19 will likely act as the catalyst for a UNSC permanent seat.

Let's consider the context. While China kept briefing the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other countries that the situation was under control, and that no human-to-human transmission was traced, the situation in Wuhan — where the virus reportedly originated — was getting out of hand. Officially, China only declared the death of 2,535 due to COVID-19, as on March 30 though local residents, and other indicators, suggested otherwise. Approximately 40,000-50,000 urns had been delivered to the eight mortuaries in Wuhan during that period. Locals were being paid 3,000 yuan (\$685) as "funeral allowance" as well.

It took the Chinese government almost seven weeks after the first case of COVID-19 to impose a lockdown in Wuhan. Despite informing the WHO about the unknown virus on December 31, China allowed millions of people to travel to and from Wuhan outside the country around January 17, the time of Chinese lunar new year celebrations. According to a study by the University of Southampton in England, had China acted three weeks earlier, 95 per cent of the worldwide cases, and the consequent spread of the

virus, could have been stopped.

It seems that China also started hoarding masks and sanitisers just before the virus became a pandemic. China had reportedly already made half of the world's total masks before January. They not only stopped exporting the masks from January onwards, but they also started buying the remaining stock worldwide.

The global number of cases is now over one-and-a-half million with more than 1,00,000 people dead. The Asian Development Bank has predicted that the economic damage to world GDP would be close to \$4.3 trillion. In the US, millions have already filed unemployment claims. In Africa, 31 out of the continents' 54 countries have already imposed a full border closure and an estimated 50 per cent of the jobs in the continent are at risk. In Spain, close to a million people have also filed unemployment claims in just a month.

The UN has predicted that for the upcoming financial year, except for China and India, every major country in the world is likely to face recession. From the past year to this year, the world saw 178 new billionaires, 80 of which were from China. The top 100 billionaires in the world saw six new Chinese entering the list. Most of them had bought shares in companies producing goods and

services which are now in prime demand due to the lockdown worldwide, for example, Zoom, the digital meeting app, or companies making certain medicines, masks or ventilators. And while the world is grappling with this pandemic, Hubei province — where Wuhan city is located — has already lifted its trade restrictions. They have declared Wuhan open once again with a big festival involving laser lights and fireworks no less. In fact, since the start of the pandemic, from January 31 to March 31 this year, the top 100 billionaires of the world lost over \$400 billion of their wealth. Strangely enough, only nine of those 100 were richer at the end of March than they were in January. And they all happen to be Chinese.

India, one of the founding members of the UN, has been claiming a permanent seat at the UNSC for a long time. Out of the five permanent members of the UNSC, four have been in support of India getting a permanent seat. China has been the only nation blocking India's entry by using its veto power.

The traditional superpowers are outraged at China's supposed involvement in the origin and the spread of COVID-19. And tensions flared up further after China apparently demanded that France give 5G contracts to Huawei to procure COVID-19 testing kits.

India would be the perfect counter to curb

Chinese influence and power in the region. A UNSC reform is long overdue, but countries like Germany, Brazil and South Africa are not viable options at present. And China would never agree to the seat going to Japan.

India's response to the pandemic has been arguably one of the best. India has also imposed a largely successful lockdown and enjoyed relative success in slowing the spread so far. The Indian government's efforts to lead the G20 as well as SAARC countries in tackling the pandemic reflect its willingness to be the leader at this crucial time. India's leadership has not only been praised by smaller neighbouring nations, but also by Australia.

China has already proposed India as a temporary member of the UNSC seat for two years, starting in 2021. But, there is a high chance that by the time the world recovers from COVID-19, the picture is entirely different. China will surely be in a tough situation as questions will continue to mount regarding its role in the pandemic. Often in the past, China has used its veto power to block many WTO resolutions to benefit itself. If India is also given the same access, it could be a game-changer in terms of the shift in balance of power in world politics.

The writer is a research scholar at IIM-Indore

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STRANDED WORKERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Workers' choice' (IE, May 8). Migrant labourers cannot be expected to stay put with so much uncertainty over their employment. The government should immediately put them to work on the huge number of infrastructure projects lying unfinished across the country. Without the hindrance to human and cargo movement, down to minimum levels thanks to the pandemic, these projects can be fast-tracked. We should not lose this opportunity to keep our migrant labourers gainfully employed.

S B Bhalerao, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Workers choice' (IE May 8). It is a relief to learn that the decision to cancel the train for migrant workers has been rolled back. In this great crisis, the governments should feel obliged to facilitate the journey back home for stranded workers. But the original decision to cancel the trains without consulting the workers (who had registered to go back) and the logic behind that decision surely point out how poorly the decision-makers hold the opinions and interests of the poor.

Pritam Singh, Delhi

CHINA SUFFERED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Enemy is

IDEAS ONLINE

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● **DOING AWAY WITH RED TAPE:** SUNIL ALAGH

www.indianexpress.com

coronavirus, not China' (IE, May 8). The reports of coronavirus casualties emerging out of Wuhan at the tail end of 2019 were agonising. No conspiracy theory can belittle the suffering faced by the Chinese people due to this pandemic. China's firsthand experience in dealing with the outbreak came handy for the rest of the world. On its part, China should seriously reconsider its decision to operationalise the wet markets dealing in exotic animals and support research on zoonotic diseases with wider participation from academicians of international repute.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

PANDEMIC WATCH



Notice at a club. Reuters

SOUTH KOREA
Nightclub cases lead to probe, concerns

Seoul: South Korean officials are concerned after finding more than a dozen infections linked to club-goers in Seoul. The cases raised fears about another surge in transmissions after the country eased social distancing measures. South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 12 new cases of COVID-19 in the 24 hours before midnight Thursday, the first time in five days the daily jump was more than 10. Vice Health Minister Kim Gang-lip said it detected at least 13 more cases, all linked to a 29-year-old patient who visited three nightclubs in Seoul's Itaewon district Saturday.

SINGAPORE
Spread in dorms 'not due to poor conditions'

Singapore: The outbreak among the migrant foreign workers in Singapore in dormitories for them cannot be attributed to bad living conditions alone even if there are abysmal examples, a senior politician has said. Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-jin on Thursday pointed out the contagious nature of the coronavirus and the fact that dormitories involve groups of people living in close quarters are more likely to have contributed to the spread. "It is something that we will work on, but meanwhile, let's grapple with the (present) issues..." he was quoted as saying.

NORTH KOREA
Kim praises China success

Bangkok: North Korea says leader Kim Jong Un sent a personal message to Chinese President Xi Jinping praising what he described as China's success in getting the epidemic under control. The report followed an assessment by South Korea's spy agency that the pandemic is hurting the North's economy. China is North Korea's most significant ally and economic lifeline. The Korean Central News Agency says Kim in the message to Xi "congratulated him, highly appreciating that he is seizing a chance of victory in the war against the unprecedented epidemic".

Trump urged to halt all guest worker visas

Top Republicans cite economy, job loss; say some visa categories should be halted for a year

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, MAY 8

FOUR TOP Republican senators have urged President Donald Trump to suspend all new guest worker visas for 60 days and certain categories of new guest worker visas, including the H-1B, for at least a year or until unemployment figures return to normal levels in the US amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

President Donald Trump said on Thursday his administration is talking to Republican senators about work visa issues, amid the outbreak that has wreaked havoc on the US economy.

The letter to president Trump, dated May 7, has been signed by Senators Ted Cruz, Tom Cotton, Chuck Grassley and Josh Hawley.

The letter specifically calls for suspension of all non-immigrant guest worker visas for the next 60 days, followed by a continued suspension of certain categories of new non-immigrant guest worker visas for a year or until the national unemployment figures return to normal levels.

Exceptions to this suspension should be rare, limited to time-sensitive industries such as agriculture and issued only on a case-by-case basis, when the employers can demonstrate that they have been unable to find



President Donald Trump at a meeting in Washington. AP

Americans to take the jobs, the senators wrote.

After 60 days, the senators urged Trump to continue to suspend new non-immigrant guest workers for a year or until the national unemployment figures return to normal levels.

"That suspension should, at a minimum, include H-2B visas (non-agricultural seasonal workers), H-1B visas (specialty occupation workers) and the Optional Practical Training (OPT) programme (extension of foreign student visas after graduation). We also urge you to suspend the EB-5 immigrant visa programme, effective immediately," the lawmakers wrote.

The senators argued that there is no reason why unem-

employed Americans and recent college graduates should have to compete in such a limited job market against an influx of additional H-1B workers.

"Temporarily suspending the issuance of new H-1B visas would also protect the hundreds of thousands of H-1B workers and their families already working in the United States — workers who could otherwise be subject to deportation if they are laid off for more than 60 days," they said.

"Of course, appropriate exceptions could also be crafted to the H-1B program suspension to allow for doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals who wish to come to the United States to assist in combating the coronavirus pandemic," the sen-

DAILY TESTING

Washington: US President Donald Trump has decided that he will be tested daily for coronavirus after one of his valets tested positive for the deadly disease.

A military aide of Trump, whom the White House officials described as a personal valet, tested positive for coronavirus. The valet, a member of the military, would have had very close contact with Trump, and assisted him with his food, clothes and other personal needs, CBS News reported.

Trump said he, the vice president and other staff of the White House would be tested every day. "I just had a test. In fact, I had one yesterday and one today, and it is negative. Mike just had a test and it is negative," he said. PTI

ators wrote. Their letter came days after the Trump administration urged a federal district court not to block an Obama-era rule allowing certain categories of spouses of H-1B visa-holders to work in the country, saying American workers have not been irreparably harmed by such work authorisation.

Unemployment hit 14.7 pc in April, 20.5 mn jobs lost: Report

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, MAY 8

THE LABOR Department said Friday the economy shed more than 20.5 million jobs in April, sending the unemployment rate to 14.7 percent — devastation unseen since the Great Depression.

The report underscores the speed and depth of the labor market's collapse as the coronavirus pandemic took a devastating toll. In February, the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, a half-century low. And even since the survey was taken, millions of people have filed claims for jobless benefits.

The April job losses alone far exceed the 8.7 million in the last recession, when unemployment peaked at 10 percent in October 2009. If anything, the report underestimates the damage. The government's definition of unemployment typically requires people to be actively looking for work. And the unemployment rate doesn't reflect the millions still working who have had their hours slashed or their pay cut.

Father-daughter doctor duo of Indian origin die of Covid-19

YOSHITA SINGH
NEW YORK, MAY 8

AN INDIAN-AMERICAN father and daughter, both doctors in New Jersey, have died due to the COVID-19, with Governor Phil Murphy describing their demise as "particularly tough" and hailed them for dedicating their lives for others.

Satyender Dev Khanna, 78, was a surgeon who served both on staff and as the head of the surgical departments for multiple hospitals across New Jersey for decades. Priya Khanna, 43, was a double board certified in both internal medicine and nephrology. She was Chief of Residents at Union Hospital, now part of RWJ Barnabas Health.

"Dr Satyender Dev Khanna and Dr Priya Khanna were father and daughter. They both dedicated their lives to helping others. This is a family dedicated to health and medicine. Our words cannot amply express our condolences," New Jersey Governor Murphy tweeted on Thursday.

Satyender passed away at the Clara Maass Medical Center

where he had worked for more than 35 years.

Murphy described him as a "pioneering doctor" who was one of the first surgeons to perform laparoscopic surgery in the state. He is being remembered by colleagues as a "gentle and caring physician."

Priya did all of her medical training in New Jersey and then did her fellowship in nephrology in South Jersey with the Cooper Health System.

Like her father, she too worked at Clara Maass, where she died.

"Priya will be remembered as a caring and selfless person who put others first. And even while in the hospital, fighting her own battle, she continued to check up on her mom and dad and her family," Murphy said.

"This is a family, by the way, dedicated to health and medicine," he said.

The governor spoke with Satyender's wife Komlish Khanna, who is a pediatrician. The couple has two more daughters — Sugandha Khanna, an emergency medicine physician and Anisha Khanna, a pediatrician. PTI

US driving wedge between Communist Party, Chinese people over Covid-19: China

K J M VARMA
BEIJING, MAY 8

CHINA ON Friday asked American politicians not to "waste" their time by trying to drive a "wedge" between the ruling Communist Party and the Chinese people over the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying during a media briefing here said it was under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chinese people made important progress in fighting the pandemic. "Accusing Chinese political system. We cannot accept this. They are doing it out of malicious intentions. They want to drive a wedge between the CPC and people," Hua said.

"The US politicians shouldn't waste time in driving a wedge between the CPC and the people. Our political systems can co-exist and this serves the common interest of both the people," she said, responding to criticism on a host of issues related to China by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. PTI

EXPLAINED
Focus on wet markets, their regulation continues

WHILE THE political tussles over the "origin" of the coronavirus has increasingly taken centre stage in recent stage, experts have continued to look at the issue of wet markets. It is widely believed that these open-air markets, which are found across Asia, need to be better regulated, with higher levels of hygiene. Experts have said only a few will have to be closed. Waste management and proper handling of live animals are seen as some key steps in tackling the issue.



At a school in Wuhan. AP

A WHOLESAL market in Wuhan played a role in the outbreak, as the source or possibly as an "amplifying setting", the WHO said Friday

A WHO expert said, "But what role we don't know, whether it was the source or amplifying setting or just a coincidence..."

IT WAS not clear whether animals or infected people brought the virus to the market, he said, calling for more research.



MARKING VICTORY DAY, WITH CAUTION

Ukrainian soldiers take part in celebrations to mark Victory Day and the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II at the Soviet War Memorial at Tiergarten Park in Berlin, Germany, on Friday. Reuters

Kenyans held for weeks in quarantine were told to pay for their release

ABDILATIF DAHIR
NAIROBI, MAY 8

WHEN VALENTINE Ochogo arrived home in Kenya after being laid off from her job at a hot-air balloon business in Dubai, she was put in quarantine in a university dormitory with other travelers — one step in the government's aggressive, often-lauded campaign to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

But instead of the mandated 14-day quarantine period, she was confined for 32 days, often cold, hungry and so frightened that she said she blocked the door at night

with an empty bed. Although she tested negative for the coronavirus three times, she said that government officials would not release her until she paid \$434 in fees.

After she managed to negotiate the amount down to \$65, Ochogo, 26, was freed.

"Am out," a relieved Ochogo texted on April 24, saying later, "I got really lucky."

Some citizens and health experts have praised Kenya for its response to the outbreak: it suspended international flights early, conducted tens of thousands of tests and imposed a partial lockdown on some areas.

But the Kenyan government is

now facing mounting criticism for its response — particularly its use of quarantine centers. Citizens stopped by the police for violating curfew or not wearing masks have been sent not to police stations, but to quarantine, sometimes held in compounds with people known to be infected.

"Quarantine can't be a response to people breaking the law," said George Kegoro, the executive director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission, a nongovernmental organisation, "because what it does, it exposes them to the possibility of infection, the very thing you are trying to fight." NYT

Death toll in Italy tops 30,000, highest in EU

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ROME, MAY 8

THE NUMBER of people in Italy who've died with COVID-19 infections has topped 30,000.

The Health Ministry registered 243 deaths on Friday, bringing the total of those who died in the country to 30,201. As per a BBC report, the toll is the highest in the European Union.

Authorities say many more likely died with the infection at home or in nursing homes without being diagnosed.

With 1,327 more cases regis-

EU offers aid of \$163 mn to Pakistan

Islamabad: A record 1,764 new coronavirus cases reported in Pakistan in one day, taking the total number of patients to 25,837, the health ministry said on Friday.

Meanwhile, the European Union has offered an aid package of more than \$163 million to cash-strapped Pakistan to tackle the pandemic and to boost the country's economic and security developments, the EU mission here said in a statement.

The Ministry of National Health Service said that 35 more patients have died in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 594. As many as 7,530 people have so far recovered, it said.

Punjab reported 10,033 patients, Sindh 9,093, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 3,956, Balochistan 1,725, Islamabad 558, Gilgit-Baltistan 394 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 78 patients, it said. PTI

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

An incursion into Venezuela, straight out of Hollywood

JULIE TURKEWITZ & FRANCES ROBLES
BOGOTÁ, MAY 8

A DISENCHANTED band of Venezuelan politicians and military deserters gathered in secret last year to plot the overthrow of Venezuela's authoritarian leader, Nicolás Maduro. They determined they would need four tools to succeed: men, money, a plan and guts.

Jordan G Goudreau, a United States citizen and former Green Beret, would be the guts. At least, that's one version of the story.

Over the weekend, a group of self-declared freedom fighters set sail from Colombia to Venezuela

on an apparent mission hatched by Mr. Goudreau to overthrow the Venezuelan government.

The operation failed miserably, and the men were apprehended by the authorities. Eight of the rebels were killed. Two Americans, former members of the US Army special forces, have been arrested.

But the figure who has emerged as the central character in what one official described as something out of a Hollywood script, is Goudreau, 43, who was not on the mission.

The Maduro administration has blamed the attack on the United States government, which has denied a connection to Goudreau or his Florida-based



Special forces stand guard after the failed incursion. Reuters

security company Silver Corp. The company claims it had entered into a \$220 million agreement with the Venezuelan op-

position to help oust Maduro. The plan was called "Operation Gedeon." In the end, there were just two boats with

60 men who were to storm the capital and capture Maduro. Goudreau later said his men vomited the entire way and nearly ran out of gasoline as they headed toward Venezuela.

Thirteen of the men were taken into custody, including the two US citizens, both former Green Berets said to have been recruited by Goudreau. State television ran photographs of the alleged prisoners, face down on the pavement. "They were playing Rambo," said Maduro.

In an interrogation video released by the Venezuelan government, Luke Denman, one of the captured Green Berets, said he "was helping Venezuelans take back control of their country," and

expected to be paid \$50,000 to \$100,000 for his efforts.

Reached by telephone this week, Denman's mother, Linda Kay Denman, said she had no idea what her son had been up to, and thought he had been attending an underwater welding school.

Alemán said he understood that the attack looked like a suicide mission, but urged people to understand the level of desperation shared by many Venezuelans. He said he often visited the training camps and sometimes spoke with Goudreau about his reason for working with group.

"It pained him," he said, "to see how Venezuelans were suffering." NYT

US justice dept dropping Flynn's Russia-Trump case

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, MAY 8

IN AN abrupt about-face, the Justice Department said it is dropping the criminal case against President Donald Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, abandoning a prosecution that became a rallying cry for the president and his supporters in attacking the FBI's Trump-Russia investigation.

The action Thursday was a stunning reversal for one of the signature cases brought by special counsel Robert Mueller. It comes even though prosecutors for the past three years have

maintained that Flynn lied to the FBI in a January 2017 interview about his conversations with the Russian ambassador.

Flynn admitted as much, pleading guilty before later asking to withdraw the plea, and he became a key cooperator for Mueller as the special counsel investigated ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 political campaign.

Thursday's action was swiftly embraced by Trump, who has relentlessly tweeted about the "outrageous" case and last week pronounced Flynn "exonerated," and it is likely to energise supporters of the president who have taken up the retired Army lieutenant general as a cause.

COVID-19 EFFECT LABOUR LAWS

Employer bodies seek longer working hours, easing of some provisions for 2-3 yrs

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

SUSPENSION OF labour laws for the next 2-3 years except for provisions of minimum wages, bonus and statutory dues, national data bank of migrant labourers and increase in the maximum limit of 33 per cent of workforce to at least 50 per cent after the re-opening of industries were some of the suggestions raised by employers' associations and industry chambers in their meeting with Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar Friday.

According to a release by the Labour Ministry, the industry bodies sought relaxations, such as raising the working hours to 12 per day to help them revive operations. They also flagged concerns regarding migrant workers.

"A programme may be formulated for return of these migrant labourers to work by providing counselling to alleviate their fears on COVID-19, providing financial help for their transportation, providing free groceries for about six months, etc," the release said.

The suggestion to suspend labour laws follows the Uttar Pradesh government's move to bring an ordinance this week to suspend all labour laws, barring some provisions for the next three years, to give relief to the industry hit by the ongoing lockdown.

Some states, including

Rajasthan, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, have already approved extension of their working hours.

The employers also sought relaxation of provisions of the Industrial Disputes Act to treat the lockdown period as lay-off, along with covering of wage expenses under CSR funds in view of the difficulties being faced by the industry and liquidity crisis, the release said.

Gangwar told the employer associations that the Ministry is consulting other concerned line ministries for resolving issues being faced by the industry, particularly the MSME sector.

Labour Secretary Heeralal Samariya said the focus should now be on reviving the industry and opening of the economy, to fully revive economic activities and employment opportunities.

The industry associations also suggested that power to the industry may be supplied at subsidised rates, along with resumption of all activities in non-containment zones.

The CII, among its recommendations, asked for extending the provisions of lay-off, suggesting allowing the industry to pay wages as per the lay-off (50 per cent basic plus DA) provisions for no work carried out for April and May.

The All India Manufacturers' Organisation in its suggestions recommended setting up of a migrant labour welfare board along with relaxation in labour laws.

BUDGET ESTIMATE FOR GROSS MARKET BORROWING WAS ₹7.8L CR

Fiscal strain: FY21 govt borrowing pegged at ₹12L cr, up 53% from BE

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE CENTRAL government's total market borrowings requirements have jumped by a whopping 53 per cent to Rs 12 lakh crore in the current fiscal, as falling revenues and rising expenses led to a sharp deterioration in the government's fiscal position. This indicates the Centre's fiscal deficit for the 2020-21 could spurt to 5.5 per cent of GDP, a sharp jump of 2 percentage points from the target of 3.5 per cent, according to market analysts. The Finance Ministry, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on Friday revised its borrowing calendar for the rest of the financial year.

"The estimated gross market borrowing in the financial year 2020-21 will be Rs 12 lakh crore in place of Rs 7.80 lakh crore as per BE 2020-21 (Budget Estimates). The above revision in borrowings has been necessitated on account of the COVID-19 pandemic," the

"The above revision in borrowings has been necessitated on account of the COVID-19 pandemic"

FINANCE MINISTRY

Ministry said in a statement.

Rising borrowings are expected to put pressure on the bond market, crowding out resources for the private sector. The fiscal deficit is set to shoot up sharply, indicating that the government has limited space to push through a massive fiscal stimulus to protect the economy from adverse effects of COVID-19.

"Given that the fiscal deficit was to be Rs 8 lakh crore for FY21, this increase of Rs 4.2 lakh crore will under unchanged conditions mean a fiscal deficit ratio of around 5.5 per cent from 3.5 per cent targeted earlier," CARE Ratings said in a statement.

"...there are clear signs of government finances being affected

by the shutdown as revenue has ebbed and expenditure pressure will be there through the year even after the lockdown is withdrawn. A takeaway is that this also means that presently there is no intention of RBI lending directly to the government," it said.

Starting Monday, the Centre will be borrowing Rs 30,000 crore per week each week till September 25, as per the revised calendar, which is sharply higher than Rs 19,000-21,000 crore planned earlier when the borrowing calendar for April-September was released on March 31, 2020.

Due to the shutdown of the economy, the government is expected to face sharp shortfall in its net targeted tax revenues of Rs 16.36 lakh crore budgeted for the current fiscal. A slump in the stock markets from the record high levels will make it difficult to raise funds through stake sale in state-owned companies.

The Centre has targeted Rs 2.1 lakh crore through divestment this year. On the other side, expen-

diture will spike as the government recently announced Rs 1.7 lakh crore of relief, including income transfer and support measures for the poor.

Higher borrowings are likely to push up bond yields, unless open market operations (OMOs) or other instruments are deployed by the RBI. The yield on benchmark 6.45 per cent bond maturing in 2029 was 5.97 per cent, lowest since January 27, 2009, as against 6.03 per cent on Thursday.

Aditi Nayar, principal economist, ICRA, said, "The upward revision in the Govt's borrowings for the remainder of FY2021, although sharp, was inevitable given the estimated extent of revenue loss following the lockdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic."

"However, less pressure on expenditure compression to offset the expected revenue shortfall would allow economic activity to display some semblance of recovery in the latter part of this fiscal year," Nayar said.

'Excise duty hike unlikely to help bridge fiscal gap'

The record excise duty hike on petrol and diesel will not help the government bridge the fiscal gap as planned, Bank of America Securities India said in a note



2% OF GDP: EXPECTED FISCAL SLIPPAGE FOR CURRENT FISCAL, DESPITE OIL TAX HIKE OF 0.7 PER CENT OF GDP

₹1.6 lakh crore: Expected additional revenue this fiscal from excise duty hike on petrol by Rs 10 a litre and on diesel by Rs 13 a litre

0.3% OF GDP: Expected stimulus for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), state-run banks and reactors to be announced by Centre

4.8% OF GDP: EXPECTED FISCAL DEFICIT FOR FY21, OVERSHOOTING BUDGET TARGET BY 130 BASIS POINTS

EFFECTIVE NEW EXCISE DUTY:
 ■ Petrol: Rs 32.98/litre
 ■ Diesel: Rs 31.83/litre

50-100 bps: Expected rise in states' fiscal deficit, above the 3.1 per cent of GDP forecast earlier

Source: Bank of America Securities/PTI

Guj govt: Sops, break from few labour laws to attract industries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, MAY 8

THE GUJARAT government on Friday said it will go all out to welcome to the state firms wanting to shift out of China by giving them land within seven days and all clearances to set up industries in 15 days.

The Vijay Rupani government also announced that new industries being set up will not be bound by labour laws for 1200 days (3.2 years) from the start of manufacturing to attract foreign direct investment and local investment post the COVID-19 pandemic.

"At present, a large number of industries and MNCs from Japan, USA, Korea and other European nations are willing to shift their production from China to other countries.

"We have decided to coordinate with various Central ministries, including the External Affairs Ministry, and approach missions of different countries to attract such industries to Gujarat," Rupani said in a video message.

"A total of 33,000 hectares of land is available for industrial use in Khoraj, Sanand, Dahej SEZ Saykha, Dholera SEZ and other private SEZs in Gujarat," he said.

Rajan: Go in for monetisation, higher fiscal deficit in measured way

New Delhi: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has suggested the government should go in for monetisation and higher fiscal deficit in a "measured" way. Monetisation, which is loosely referred to printing of currency by the Reserve Bank, need not be a constraint on government spending, Rajan said in a blog, adding, "government should be concerned about protecting the health of the economy and should spend what is needed." PTI

Vista Equity Partners to invest ₹1,367 cr in Jio Platforms

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 8

US-BASED VISTA Equity Partners on Friday announced it will invest Rs 11,367 crore in Jio Platforms, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries (RIL), pegging the Indian firm at an equity value of Rs 4.91 lakh crore and an enterprise value of Rs 5.16 lakh crore.

Vista's investment will translate into a 2.32 per cent equity stake in Jio Platforms on a fully diluted basis, making Vista the largest investor in Jio Platforms behind RIL and Facebook. Jio has now raised Rs 60,596.37 crore from leading technology investors in less than three weeks. Silver Lake recently proposed to invest Rs 5,655.75 crore in Jio Platforms,

THIRD INVESTOR IN THREE WEEKS FOR RJIO

■ Vista Equity Partners is now the largest investor in Jio Platforms behind Reliance Industries and Facebook. Jio has now raised ₹60,596.37 crore from leading technology investors in less than three weeks

■ Vista is a leading global investment firm focused on empowering and growing enterprise software, data and technology enabled companies that are reinventing industries and catalysing change

while Facebook agreed to buy a 9.99 per cent equity stake in Jio for Rs 43,574 crore with an eye on India's 6 crore small businesses and a huge digital customer base of 1.3 billion users.

Vista is a leading global investment firm focused on empowering and growing enterprise software, data and technology

enabled companies that are reinventing industries and catalysing change. Vista has over \$57 billion in cumulative capital commitments and its global network of companies collectively represent the fifth largest enterprise software company in the world.

Mukesh Ambani, chairman and MD, RIL, said, "Like our other

partners, Vista also shares with us the same vision of continuing to grow and transform the Indian digital ecosystem for the benefit of all Indians. They believe in the transformative power of technology to be the key to an even better future for everyone. We are excited to leverage the professional expertise and multi-level support that Vista has been offering to its investments globally for the benefit of Jio."

"We are thrilled to join Jio Platforms to deliver exponential growth in connectivity across India, providing modern consumer, small business and enterprise software to fuel the future of one of the world's fastest growing digital economies," said Robert F Smith, founder, chairman and CEO of Vista.

Franklin Templeton apologises to Sebi

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 8

FRANKLIN TEMPLETON has "unconditionally apologised" to Sebi for its global CEO's statement that the market regulator's regulatory changes led to abrupt closure of its six credit risk schemes with a corpus of Rs 28,000 crore.

The fund house also claimed that the media quoted Jenny Johnson, its president & CEO, out of context. "We deeply regret any unintended slight this may have caused to the esteemed offices of Sebi whom we have always held in highest regard and unconditionally apologise for the same," it said in a notice.

On Thursday, stung by Johnson's accusations, the

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) asked Templeton to focus on returning money to investors "as soon as possible".

The regulator pulled up Templeton after its global CEO shifted the blame for the recent winding down of its six schemes to Sebi'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," the markets regulator said in a statement.

"It is clarified that some media outlets in India have quoted Ms Johnson out of context, which diluted the essence of her responses. The headlines and articles erroneously suggested that Ms Johnson stated that Sebi's guideline on unlisted securities was the main reason for the decision to wind up the schemes. This is neither factually correct, nor substantiated by the comments made during the conference call," Franklin Templeton said.

In an investor conference call earlier this week, Johnson had said the high-yield market is still very immature in India.

Sources said Franklin Templeton's India unit is under Sebi's scrutiny over whether it had violated rules or acted in the best interest of its investors.

Moody's cuts FY21 growth forecast to 0%

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

MOODY'S INVESTORS Service on Friday trimmed its FY21 growth projection sharply to 0 per cent for India in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak and warned of a possible rating downgrade for the country if fiscal metrics "weaken materially".

The global rating agency had in November 2019 revised down its outlook for India from stable to negative, although its sovereign rating of Baa2 is still a notch

above those of S&P and Fitch — both the rating agencies have assigned the lowest investment grade to India, with a stable outlook.

In its latest credit opinion, Moody's said: "This would probably happen in the context of a prolonged or deep slowdown in growth, with only limited prospects that the government would be able to restore stronger output through economic and institutional reforms."

Moody's warning follows a similar statement by Fitch and is expected to add to policy-makers'

unease, as they firm up a relief package to prop up the economy.

Already, several analysts have warned of a negative growth for the entire fiscal, amid a nationwide lockdown. Manufacturing and services activities have witnessed unprecedented contraction in April, as per the PMI survey. Unemployment rate surged to as much as 27.1 per cent in the week through May 3, according to the Centre for Monitoring of Indian Economy. Moody's, however, expects GDP growth to recover to 6.6 per cent in FY22. FE

Pharma sector missed FY20 export target of \$22 bn, says industry body

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

INDIA'S PHARMACEUTICAL exports missed its \$22-billion goal in the 2019-2020 fiscal, due to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Exports in this sector grew 7.57 per cent, as against the targeted 15 per cent, to touch \$20.58 billion, with shipments dropping nearly 3 per cent in the fourth quarter of the last fiscal, according to a note by the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil) on Friday.

"Usually, Indian pharma exports during Feb & Mar are quite brisk and are to an extent of 22-23 per cent in the first ten months (Apr-Jan). Having seen the good pace of export trend in first three quarters and price stabilisation in the United States, it was estimated that FY2020 exports would reach 22 bn USD mark," stated the Pharmexcil media note.

"India being dependent on China to an extent of 60-70 per cent of its needs of bulk drugs has suffered disruption in the supply chain with the outbreak of COVID 19. Our imports of bulk drugs went down significantly in February," it stated.

AiB clears \$500-mn loan to support India's fight against COVID-19

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE ASIAN Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved funding of \$500 million to support India's efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government and the AIIB on Friday signed a COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project that would help strengthen India's public health preparedness. This is the first ever health sector support from the Beijing-headquartered bank to India.

The project will be implemented by the National Health Mission (NHM), the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

"This new support will cover all States and Union Territories across India and address the needs of infected people, at-risk populations, medical and emergency personnel and service providers, medical and testing facilities, and national and animal health agencies," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The project will enable the government slow and limit as much as possible the spread of COVID-19 in India by providing immediate support to

The government and the AIIB on Friday signed a COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project that would help strengthen India's public health preparedness

enhance disease detection capacities, oxygen delivery systems and medicines among others, it said.

Department of Economic Affairs Additional Secretary Sameer Kumar Khare said "AIIB's timely assistance will help the government in its efforts to respond to the threat posed by COVID-19 and strengthen the national health systems for preparedness in India."

DJ Pandian, AIIB Vice-President (Investment Operations), said that building a resilient health system that can effectively treat COVID-19 patients and prevent its spread is the immediate priority, and this funding will address this need and strengthen India's capacity to effectively manage future disease outbreaks.

BRIEFLY

CBDT provides relief to foreign nationals, NRIs

New Delhi: Providing a relief to NRIs and foreign nationals stuck in India due to lockdown, the CBDT on Friday said their stay in the country during the period will not be counted for the purpose of determining their residency status for taxation purpose. The nationwide lockdown since March 25 and cancellation of international flights to contain the spread of COVID-19 has forced non-resident Indians (NRI) and foreign nationals to prolong their stay in India. PTI

GIFT City starts Re-dollar derivatives

Ahmedabad: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday virtually launched rupee-dollar derivatives on the international exchanges of BSE and NSE in GIFT City, Gandhinagar. BSE, in a statement, said that the launch will attract more participants to the IFSC and make INX India a leading centre for raising capital for issuers across the globe. ENS

Foreign players in ISL, I-League to be reduced

The Technical Committee of All India Football Federation on Friday recommended the implementation of the continental body's rule on fielding foreign players in a domestic match from next year, reducing the number to four from five, including an Asian player.

'I am worried, I don't have job, IPL contract'

COVID-19 IMPACT ON DOMESTIC CRICKET: Several players yet to receive their dues from BCCI, stare at financial hardship in days to come

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, MAY 8

EVERY YEAR after the Ranji Trophy season, Chhattisgarh skipper Harpreet Singh Bhatia would spend the summer in England playing club cricket. On return, he would turn out in a few local prize money tournaments before the next domestic season. This year however, he is sitting at his rented home in Raipur getting restless due to the COVID-19 lockdown. A one-time India under-19 World Cupper, Bhatia, 28, says it isn't boredom that bothers him; his bigger worry is his rapidly exhausting savings and an uncertain future.

With the BCCI yet to clear last season's match fees, due to most domestic cricketers, and substantial arrears - pertaining to players' share from Indian cricket's annual earnings - pending for the last three years, Bhatia, like a majority of the 950 first-class cricketers affiliated to the world's richest board, is facing a financial crunch. While a player is entitled to close to Rs 40,000 for each day of first-class cricket they played last season, the share from the BCCI, running into lakhs, varies each year. A regular player for his state unit can expect approximately Rs 10 lakh from the BCCI pie for a year, which means Bhatia expects a cheque of Rs 30 lakh.

"It doesn't matter to those playing international cricket. But those who are dependent on only domestic cricket are certainly worried in these times. I am worried. I don't have any IPL contract or a job. The domestic money which we earn never comes on time. We haven't received our domestic match fees for last season till now. I'm yet to get three years' gross money for playing domestic cricket," Harpreet told *The Indian Express*.

The BCCI blames the lockdown for the delayed payments with treasurer Arun Dhumal saying the process of disbursement has begun with many players starting to get their dues.

"The process has started. We have released payments to players, officials and state associations. Because of the lockdown, things are slow. Our staff verifies documents of 150 players and officials daily, after which we send out instructions to release the payments. There could be a few cases where some might have not got match fees, including old dues

It doesn't matter to those playing international cricket. But those who are dependent on only domestic cricket are certainly worried in these times.

HARPREET SINGH BHATIA
CAPTAIN, CHHATTISGARH

like gross revenue share, but they will be getting it soon. If the lockdown hadn't happened, things could have been done faster. Those who haven't received payments will be getting it in the coming days," Dhumal said.

That would be good news for several cricketers, spread across the country, who *The Indian Express* spoke to. Aditya Tare (Mumbai), Tanmay Srivastava (Uttarakhand), Faiz Fazal (Vidarbha), Ishwar Pandey (Madhya Pradesh), Ishank Jaggi (Jharkhand), Upendra Yadav (Uttar Pradesh), Parvez Rasool (J&K), Arpit Vasavada (Saurashtra), Shreevats Goswami (Bengal) and Abhimanyu Singh (Baroda) confirmed that they are yet to receive match fees for the Ranji Trophy nor have they got the complete 'gross revenue' payment. Some players from teams like Gujarat, Karnataka and Delhi too confirmed they are in the same boat. Like Bhatia, they said that receiving their dues will be a big help at this juncture.

Bhatia also gave an insight into the income-expenditure imbalance he is juggling with these days. "Problems have started now. I used to travel to England to play minor county cricket in Yorkshire and used to earn a bit from there which used to help me, but that is not happening now. After playing for India under-19 and the Duleep Trophy, I still don't have a job, so you can understand how tough it is to be a cricketer. Recently, I have shifted to Raipur in my rented apartment and if no cricket happens, things will become tougher. The biggest problem for a domestic player is that they don't know when they will receive their match fees and dues. There is no consistency, no time period," he lamented.



Under-23 off-spinner Salman Khan, son of a groundsman, at his home, a tent, at Cross Maidan in Mumbai. Prashant Nadkar

MPL player Salman can't move out of his tent

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, MAY 8

A TENT at Cross Maidan is U-23 Mumbai off-spinner Salman Khan's home. He is the son of a groundsman, who looked forward to summers when he could earn money preparing grounds for camps and club matches but now the Khan family is staring at heading into the monsoon without any savings.

Salman, 21, was looking forward to the Mumbai Premier League (MPL) in which he was to play for Akash Tigers, which in a normal summer would've brought him Rs 1 lakh - an amount he could've used to move into a rented house with a roof on his head. If the coronavirus pandemic has scuttled the lives of hundreds of first-class cricketers waiting for payments for last season, the situation is distinctly wretched for the rungs below.

Salman, who turned up for Railways trials, is uncertain of any progress on that track too, and waits these days for free ration from generous souls. A few Mumbai Cricket Association officials did lend a helping hand. "Had MPL happened, I would have shifted my family from this tent to a rented place somewhere in Mumbai. But is *bimaari ne sab tabaah kar diya*. I don't have a job and my limited savings are fast disappearing," the young spinner says.

Cricket, where even the fourth and fifth rung could carve out a comfortable livelihood in normal times, is seeing the base of the pyramid crumbling gradually. Most ominously, around 350 club and state cricketers and 51 coaches in Mumbai, Saurashtra and Tamil Nadu - three of the worst affected regions - will miss out on earning money this summer as the three associations are likely to suspend their annual state T20 leagues in the coming days on account of the increasing number of Covid-19 cases.

"It's looking very tough at the moment to hold our league. Our big worry is what happens if there's no domestic cricket," says SCA secretary Himanshu Shah. Local T20 leagues help players earn between Rs 75,000 to 5 lakh while marquee players make between Rs 6-7 lakh.

Saurashtra paid Rs 25,000 per game to its Ranji players during the SPL while under-23 players made Rs 15,000 and others Rs 10,000 for every game. However, young pacer Chetan Sakariya, part of the Ranji Trophy winning team, is waiting for the BCCI to release match fees and prize money before his savings get exhausted. The disappointment of a suspended season is also hurting cricketers who usually play minor county cricket in England for three months. Sandeep Konchikar, a club player from Dharavi, was looking forward to the MPL. "I would have earned 8-9 lakh by playing MPL and club cricket but no cricket means a big loss of income," he said.

BRIEFLY

Anand, Harikrishna lead India to win

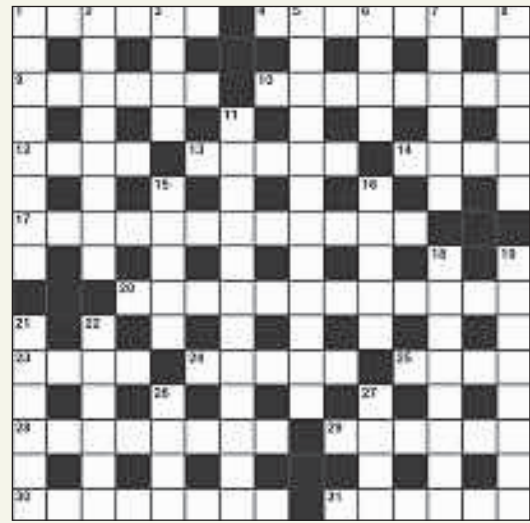
Chennai: Former world champion Viswanathan Anand and P Harikrishna led India to their first win in the Online Nations Cup, beating Rest of the World 2.5-1.5 in the seventh round, on Friday. Anand beat Teimour Radjabov in 37 moves. Anand had posted his maiden win in the tournament on Thursday by thrashing Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi in just 17 moves. Harikrishna posted his first win after four draws and a loss (to Vladislav Artemiev yesterday) by putting it across Jorgi Cori. India No.2 Vidit Gujrathi's struggles continued as he went down to the talented, young Alireza Firouzja for Rest of the World to pick up a point. It was his fourth loss in the tournament so far. D Harika and Mariya Muzychuk settled for a draw as India posted a much-needed win. India had drawn with Russia and lost to USA on Thursday.

Ad-hoc body set to run Delhi cricket

New Delhi: Without a president and its secretary in jail, the controversy and corruption-ridden Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) is set to be directly governed by the BCCI through an ad-hoc committee. The BCCI has already stopped DDCA's annual grant and there has been a discussion to put an ad-hoc body in place during a tele-conference between Apex Council members a couple of days back. "There are endless complaints of corruption at all levels as far as DDCA is concerned. Most of the Apex Council members feel that till a proper set up can be put in place, an Ad-hoc body should be put in place," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The DDCA is already without a president since senior journalist Rajat Sharma resigned while general secretary Vinod Tihara is in a Meerut jail for alleged violation of the Customs Act.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CROSSWORD 4113



- ACROSS**
- Give up and get plastered (6)
 - Very good article for cake decoration (8)
 - Mint that's still wrapped? (6)
 - If you want to use the weighing machine, hurry! (4,2,2)
 - What might be said from the platform (4)
 - Appears to understand what is written (5)
 - Staunch supporter (4)
 - A monster novel (12)
 - Don't interfere - with the water supply? (3,4,5)
 - Some currency back in circulation (4)
 - In France it appears friendship is wrong (5)
 - Not a sign of a fatal wound (4)
 - I've only a piece of material around me and trembled with cold (8)
 - Opera for motorists (6)
 - Languages master? (8)
 - Gems and pets (6)
- Down**
- Complete cancellation of a golf match? (5,3)
 - It's to do with ships in actual trouble (8)
 - Looks at a key agreement (4)
 - Occasion when victory must be obtained quickly? (2,4,2,4)
 - See an oriental agent (4)
 - Had a meal at the pub first - it's instinctive (6)
 - Complaint about Ma's hat (6)
 - Pool enthusiasts? (4,8)
 - Desk I ordered has gone up a lot (5)
 - Gold sovereign? (5)
 - Train a chap to be a driver (8)
 - Directions for making machine parts (8)
 - Craft in which wives seldom excel (6)
 - Fresh air, and that's essential for a man (6)
 - Country in which hope runs high (4)
 - Fled before the start of the storm (4)

Solutions Crossword 4112: Across: 1 Papaw, 4 Sort out, 8 Rio, 9 Snowdrift, 10 Aniseed, 11 Organ, 13 Naiads, 15 Strops, 18 Tonic, 19 Flavour, 21 Entertain, 23 Ice, 24 Steamer, 25 Latin. Down: 1 Pertain, 2 Provision, 3 Waste, 4 Shoddy, 5 Redcoat, 6 Obi, 7 Titan, 12 Geologist, 14 Decorum, 16 Surgeon, 17 Affair, 18 Tress, 20 Annual, 22 Tie.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

- The ___ is very important. Because, your behaviour radiates how you ___ - Lou Ferrigno (8,...,4)
- GSEEE** **EILLTT**
- DUAIT** **AELDFU**

SOLUTION: GSEEE: GEESE; EILLTT: ELLITL; DUAIT: DUAIT; AELDFU: AELDFU. Answer: The attitude is very important. Because, your behaviour radiates how you feel.

Difficulty Level 5s
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

SUDOKU 4204

	4			9				
6	7	5	2					
2	5	9	3	7				
	5	7	2	6	9			
	9	6	4	8	3			
9	8	7	5	4				
4	6	2	7					
1			2					

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4203

4	7	2	8	5	9	6	3	1
9	1	5	4	3	6	2	8	7
3	6	8	1	7	2	5	9	4
7	3	4	2	1	8	9	6	5
6	2	9	7	4	5	8	1	3
8	5	1	6	9	3	4	7	2
5	8	7	9	2	1	3	4	6
1	9	3	5	6	4	7	2	8
2	4	6	3	8	7	1	5	9

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**
There is a sense in which your horoscope is looking a mite repetitive, which means that you may feel as if you are still facing the same old issues. The way to boost your morale today is to splash out extra cash, perhaps allowing yourself a little extravagance.
- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**
A simple reading of your chart indicates that a businesslike day favours shopping trips and bargains. On the deeper level, if you have any doubts about a particular relationship, bring them into the open and you may see that there's nothing to worry about.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**
There is still a great deal going on that's related to the lower recesses of your chart, which suggests that while on the one hand home and family relationships are still vitally important, it is your own individual needs which must take first place.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**
There's a real chance of an emotional squall, but it passes quickly and is easy to avoid with just a little goodwill. The converse is that it's a day when you may sail a smooth course, accomplishing much and risking little, just as long as you watch out for others' interests.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**
The chance of arguments at home is very small but, for some of you, no less real for that. This is why a diplomatic approach might be necessary, even when you are apparently sure of your ground. You see, however certain you are, there will always be information that hasn't come your way.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)**
What on earth have you got to be so secretive about? Perhaps nothing! The simple fact is that while the Moon is in a deep and emotional region, you feel the urge to keep certain things to yourself, and other people should respect your right to do so.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**
It is rather convenient that your chart favours short trips and excursions, sometimes with a serious purpose but almost invariably with an enjoyable outcome. The central theme seems to be the need to stay close to your home base, and doing your best by family members.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**
Your businesslike stars are gradually dispersing, reducing your financial concerns. As they move apart, so other considerations come into play, like travel or overseas connections, moral issues and, for some of you, the promise of a new interest or course of study.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**
There is a great deal to be said for putting the brakes on. I don't think you will be compelled to slow down or stop a particular course of action, but a brief pause for thought might reveal some interesting side-effects of recent emotional endeavours.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**
Sometimes you just have to wait while other people catch up. Frankly, it now looks as if someone else owes you an apology, but whether you get it is another matter. You will only be prepared to collaborate with partners as an equal when they have made the necessary changes to their lifestyles.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**
You may be right not to trust someone else. It's not that they are unreliable or about to let you down, just that the lines of communication are not smooth. You may enjoy joint activities and shared feelings, but don't feel obliged to explain yourself.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**
The Moon right up there in a powerful region of your chart is attracting you to higher things and distant places. This is nicely appropriate if it's a day for either overseas travel or a spot of quiet contemplation. You can take your pick - and do your thing.

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