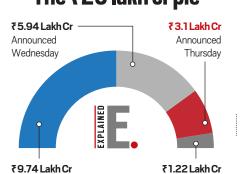
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020, KOLKATA, LATE CITY, 12 PAGES

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The ₹20 lakh cr pie



MIGRANTS



Migrants who are beneficiaries of neither National Food Security Act. or State Card where they are stationed, will get 5kg of grains each and 1kg chana per family per month for two months. States will implement scheme.

IMPACT: About 8 cr migrants who require foodgrain assistance are expected to benefit

₹3,500 cr

to be spent for 2 months

FARMERS



To provide concessional credit to farmers through Kisan Credit Cards, Small and marginal farmers to be extended funds from NABARD, state and district cooperative banks, as well

IMPACT: To benefit around 2.5 cr big farmers, and nearly 3 cr small farmers

₹2.36 lakh cr

STREET VENDORS



Scheme for easy access to credit for street vendors within a month. With initial working capital of up to Rs 10,000, government plans to incentivise digital repayments as well as

IMPACT: Around 50 lakh street vendors likely to gain easy access to credit

₹5,000 cr

to be spent on the scheme

COVID ECONOMIC PACKAGE: DAY 2

To be Announced

Govt safety net for migrant workers and poor has a little for now, more for later

Free foodgrains to credit for street vendors: Of Rs 3.10 lakh crore, Centre's outflow Rs 5000 cr

Announced earlier

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & **ANIL SASI**

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

THERE WAS an expectation that a package aimed at migrant workers, farmers and street vendors would strive to offer immediate relief given that they have borne the brunt of the lockdownrelated distress for over 50 days now. But more than half the nine major proposals announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday have a longer-term horizon.

Besides, the second leg of the relief package continues with the basic design of leveraging large stimulus with minimal fiscal cost of the total liquidity infusion of Rs 3.10 lakh crore, the likely outflow from the Centre's exchequer is only about Rs 5,000 crore.

Thursday's measures focused on the poorer segments of society, including migrant labour, small and marginal farmers and urban poor, seems skewed more

towards the long-term. For instance, the affordable rental housing scheme under for migrant workers and urban poor will likely be implemented

only over a longer time frame. Similarly, the portable ration delivery system is scheduled to be completed only by March next year. The credit facility for street vendors and the extension of the credit-linked subsidy scheme middle class (Rs 6-18 lakh annual income) are also CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



4 AM, THURSDAY A migrant family on their way home to UP, outside the Mayur Vihar Metro Station in Delhi. Gajendra Yadav

BUSINESS AS USUAL By UNNY

PACKAGE UNWRAPPED PAGES 4, 9

No cash in hand for migrants, Rs 3-lakh-cr relief package govt falls back on existing schemes: MNREGS, PDS

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

THE SECOND tranche of the economic package announced by the government on Thursday relies upon two existing mechanisms, the MNREGS and PDS, to offer wage labour and free foodgrains to migrant labourers returning from urban areas to vil-

However, there was no cash relief for the labourers, who have

lost wages over 50 days of the

the government's offer to bear the financial burden of foodgrains for two months to migrants who are not covered either under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, or state government schemes. Announcing the scheme. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said their number is estimated to

lockdown.

be around eight crore. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

for MSMEs but Govts, pvt firms owe them more

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & NEW DELHI, MAY 14

THE FIRST tranche of the Centre's relief package may have been targeted at the country's micro. small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), but much of the working capital-related distress faced by these units can be traced back to one major source - the gov-

ernment machinery. The total outstanding pay-



(Dues) will be more than Rs 5

ments to units in the MSME sector, as on March 31, 2020, was pegged at upwards of Rs 4.95 lakh crore, according to government estimates accessed by The Indian Express.

CÔNTINUED ON PAGE 2

MAY 5 TO MAY 13

Next challenge for **Odisha and Bihar:** Virus coming home with migrants

SANTOSH SINGH & KAUNAIN SHERIFF M PATNA, NEW DELHI, MAY 14

FROM BIHAR to Odisha, Telangana to Karnataka, the return of migrants, expected to pick up pace as the lockdown eases, is bringing the coronavirus home, too, posing a fresh challenge to states fighting to contain the pandemic.

Of the 4,275 samples collected in Bihar from among migrants who returned onboard Shramik special trains between May 4 and May 13, 320 have tested Covid positive — 7.5 per cent. This is way above the positivity rate for the state, which is just about 2.75 per cent. Bihar has so far conducted about 35,000 tests, of which 953 are positive.

The high positivity rate among migrant workers is raising concerns in Bihar which is a primary destination state for migrant labour. And when the testing of migrants returning through six inter-state borders, through which about 10,000 are entering each day, is yet to begin.

The relatively large number of infections among migrants is one reason why Bihar has seen its caseload rise rapidly in the last few days. At less than 8.5 days,

CASES AMONG MIGRANTS

TOTAL: 320 positive cases out of 4,275 samples (May 4-May 13) Number testing positive among Bihar migrants

from: **DELHI:** 76 out of 365 samples **MAHARASHTRA: 68**

out of 506 samples **GUJARAT:** 88 out of 1,066 samples

WEST BENGAL: 11 out of 101 samples **HARYANA:** 10 out of 172 samples

Bihar has among the fastest doubling time of cases well below the national average of 12.65 days.

Next door, Odisha was one of the first states to have reported a surge in the number of migrant labourers turning positive on arrival with Ganjam district being the hotspot reporting as many 249 cases in the 10 days since May 5.

Over the same period. Andhra Pradesh has a total of 105 CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE





KEYSTATES Fowatch	TOTAL Cases	SURGEIN 24HRS	7-DAYAVG. GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**	
■ Maharashtra	25,922	1,495	6.43%	11.20	
■Gujarat	9,268	364	4.91%	14.66	
■Delhi	8,470	472	5.10%	14.12	
■Tamil Nadu	9,227	509	9.69%	7.43	
Rajasthan	4,222	201	3.93%	18.33	
■West Bengal	2,290	117	6.68%	10.77	
* Compounded Daily Crowth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth					

CONCERN **ODISHA**: 180

to 611. Odisha has fastest doubling

CAUTION BIHAR: Numbers 1000, but doubling in less

A GLIMMER PUNJAB: Just Wednesday, daily rise on a decline

Based on daily data released by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,



Partha Chatterjee &

Centre, West Bengal trade barbs over no repatriation flight to state

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, MAY 14

THE CENTRE and the West Bengal government were locked in a war of words on Thursday as the Trinamool Congress accused the BJP-led central government of not scheduling any repatriation flight to West Bengal.

TMC secretary general and state education minister Partha Chatterjee tweeted Thursday evening, "Is the MEA asking us to believe that there are enough people to come from Georgia to Guirat but none want to come to Kolkata? Also, there are enough people to come back to Bihar from Kyrgyzstan but not enough to bring back to Bengal?? Stop this injustice !!!" He then used the hashtag "#MithyebadiBJP", calling BJP "liar".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

India in talks with nations pushing for Taiwan at WHO meet, China sends reminder

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

FOREIGN SECRETARY Harsh Vardhan Shringla has participated in at least seven group phone calls with counterparts in the US, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Vietnam since March 20 – once every week - as the international community debates whether to let Taiwan attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer. Four of these seven countries

- US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand – are signatories to a demarche, urging the World Health Organisation (WHO) to allow Taiwan to be admitted as an observer because its input will be "meaningful and important." Other signatories to this demarche are Canada, France, Germany, the UK.

China is opposing the move as the US leads a group of powerful countries - all members of the UN Security Council except Russia — to support Taiwan's claim.

The WHO will meet on May

18 to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and will hold a vote to determine whether to grant observer status to Taiwan at the WHA, its decision-making body

India, which has traditionally stuck to a One-China policy - in short, it considers Taiwan a part of China - has not yet taken a stand, but has been in conversation with some of Taiwan's advocates as well.

These talks come at a time when tensions have been rekindled on the Line of Actual Control **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

South Block's dilemma

INDIA HAS a growing relationship with Taiwan but a much larger relationship with China. Committed to the One-China policy, New Delhi has high stakes in its ties with Beijing. The pandemic crisis presents an opportunity to leverage its position on Taipei vis-a-vis Beijing, but that's a call South Block has to take.

Swimming guidelines? Federation takes easy lane, forwards US norms

MIHIR VASAVDA NEW DELHI, MAY 14

FOUR DAYS ago, when the government asked the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) to propose ways to resume aquatic activities in a post-pandemic scenario, they were not expecting a reply within a day. And that too, a meticulous framework with references to the White House's guidelines for 'Opening Up

America Again' and advisories issued by the US Center for Disease Control

It turns out the SFI had simply forwarded a set of guidelines USA Swimming had prepared for swimmers in their country. Not copy-pasting bits or borrowing ideas, but passing on the eight-page document titled 'USA Swimming: Facility re-opening, messaging and planning' as is. The Sports Authority of India

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WORLD

CORONAVIRUS MAY NEVER GO AWAY, WARNS W.H.O.

FIRST COVID-19 **CASES DETECTED IN ROHINGYA CAMPS** PAGE 10

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

MSMEs NEED MORE PUSH FROM GOVT BY NEELKANTH MISHRA

In an orange zone, factories stir to life with staggered shifts PAGE 1 ANCHOR

KAVITHA IYER ROHA (RAIGAD), MAY 14

A BUSY marketplace and a short queue of about six men outside the town's solitary wine shop mark the entrance to Roha, an industrial town in Maharashtra's Raigad district, an 'orange zone' where it has been about 10 days now since most towns were able

to open shops and businesses. The queue outside the local public health center (PHC) is much longer than those at any store, and it's not of people who are unwell. Many men have returned from villages nearby to

TEST REPRTS **FROM THE FIELD** TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

Roha, where the chemical factories employ over 1 lakh people.

"We've been called back to work — we are essential services at our factory," said Manish Patil, a 24-year-old from Nandgaon village in Murud, who is standing outside the Ambewadi PHC about 10 km from Roha's Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) layout, along with two other young men who too have just returned. But before they join work — the three are employed as firemen at a unit manufacturing Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) – they will have to clear a 28-day quarantine period. Today, the three are in the queue to get their hands stamped for home quarantine as they have entered the town from elsewhere.

"We were here until March 23, and when the lockdown was announced, we decided to return to our villages. Now we've been called back to work,"



Staff at Sudarshan Chemicals in Roha. Nirmal Harindran

Manish said. Most major facilities in Roha have arranged quarantine spaces for those returning to work right now.

Medical Officer Dr Rohan Nage at the Ambewadi PHC hasn't returned to his home in Panvel since March 23, and has remained on call for 24 hours everyday.

"Nearly 900 people have come in the past few weeks to get screened for quarantine many of these would be people who have returned home from Mumbai or other cities where they work, and there would also be a large number who are returning to Roha to work here," Dr

Roha itself has zero Covid cases until now, but Mangaon nearby has one positive case and so, screening and quarantining measures are strictly enforced. Every quarantine candidate is screened, stamped and asked to return to the PHC after 14 days for another round of clinical examination, after which another 14 days of quarantine is recommended, according to Dr Nage. "Gram Panchayat representatives help our medical staff in keeping an eye on every one who is quarantined.

The very slow restarting of **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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SAMBHAJI: SHIVAJI'S SON WHOSE VALOUR SPURRED THE MARATHAS

The eldest son of the celebrated Maratha emperor, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Sambhaji was the second ruler of the kingdom after his father's death. In his short rule spanning nine years, Sambhaji gained recognition for his

CORONAVIRUS



COPS REMEMBER THE FORGOTTEN

Police near Kolkata are helping daily wagers and the homeless

VIDEO OF THE DAY



WALKING FROM MUMBAITO AYODHYA

Three elderly migrants were walking from **Mumbai to UP**

EXPRESS AUDIO

Why has Aarogya Setu raised legal and privacy concerns?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Chandigarh and one each in

Earlier, the MEA spokesper-

son said Vande Bharat Mission

is the largest and most complex

exercise ever undertaken by the

government for repatriation of

Indian nationals stranded over-

seas, "In the last few days, more

than 12,000 Indian nationals

ond phase of Vande Bharat

Mission from 16-22 May. In this

phase, we will bring back

Indians from 31 countries. 149

flights including feeder flights

will be deployed. Additional 18

countries covered under the

second phase include Indonesia, Thailand, Australia,

Italy, France, Germany, Ireland,

Canada, Japan, Nigeria,

Krgyzstan, Belarus, Georgia,

Tajikistan and Armenia. As you

can see, we are broadening the

ambit every week in a phased

manner keeping with our quar-

antine capacity, health proto-

cols, etc. Till now 188,646

Indian nationals have regis-

tered to return on the portal,"

Factories stir

to life in Raigad

economic activities has had an

immediate and visible impact

in the towns of Raigad - there

are customers at garages, hard-

ware stores, clothing stores,

grocery stores, sweetmeat

stores. There is a samosa wallah

in most markets, through the

restaurants remain shuttered as

per what is currently permissi-

Building construction activ-

ity has begun along National

Highway 66, especially where

Kazakhstan,

he said.

"We are launching the sec-

have safely returned," he said.

[&K, Mumbai and MP.

Since it was launched last month, the Aarogya Setu has raised several concerns. Not only about privacy, but also about the legality of making it mandatory

FROM PAGE ONE

Relief package for MSMEs

Sources indicated that over half this amount can be attributed to pending payments by Central government ministries and departments, state governments and public sector units under the Centre and state

On Wednesday, announcing the Rs 3-lakh-crore credit guarantee for MSMEs. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that the Centre and Central PSUs would clear pending MSME dues in 45 days.

The only available official estimate is on the MSME Samadhaan website, an online delayed payment monitoring system for settlement of disputes on filing of delayed payments by affected MSMEs. which has listed out payment claims of Rs 40,720 crore as on May 14, a fraction of the total

Of this, 11.6 per cent or Rs 4,738 crore are claims of dues from the Central government. Total mutually settled applications were at 3524, with the settled amount at Rs 288.54 crore, as on Thursday. However, this does not reflect actual government dues owing to a reluctance among MSME unit owners to wrangle with the government over pending payments as this may have a negative impact on fresh order

"The exact data (on MSME dues) is not available. It (the data) is coming from state governments and major industries and other agencies... It will be more than Rs 5 lakh crore," Minister for MSMEs and road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari said in an interview to CNBC TV18 Thursday.

Industry estimates are even higher. "Many Central, state governments, PSUs, corporates owe almost Rs 5.5 lakh crore to MSMEs and almost 30 per cent of it are due over 120 days, 45 per cent are between 60 to 120 days and rest below 60 days. We request the Finance Minister to consider settling the dues with interest so that it will apply pressure to pay as soon as possible," said Raghunathan, former National President of All India Manufacturers Organisation.

In September last year, then Expenditure Secretary G C Murmu had said that of the outstanding non-litigated MSME dues of Rs 60,000 crore, payment of Rs 40,000 crore had been cleared.

MSMEs, which make up for about 45 per cent of the country's total manufacturing output, 40 per cent of exports, almost 30 per cent of the national GDP and operate across the value chain. They employ an estimated 11 crore persons, are stressed due to depleting internal reserves and low visibility

Next challenge for Odisha, Bihar

positive cases imported from outside the state - this is 12.20 percent of the state's active cases. Of the 105, 67 are from Maharashtra, 26 are from Gujarat, 10 from Odisha and one each from West Bengal and

Karnataka. On Wednesday, the state health department spelled out details of 930 migrant workers, who returned to Kurnool on a special train from Thane, Maharashtra: of the 250 among them who were tested, 38 were positive - all worked in a fish

market in Mumbai. Since May 5 until yesterday, Karnataka has reported 96

cases from outside the state this is 20.25 per cent of the state's active cases. Of these, 48 are from Ahmedabad, 29 from Ajmer, 16 are from Mumbai, two from Odisha and one from Chennai. However, for the state, it is the spread of the cases with travel history from outside the state, that will be a bigger worry for containment. The 96 cases are now spread across 14 dis-

Over the last one week. Telangana has reported 35 positive case of migrants which is 8.88 per cent of all active cases of the state.

samples were taken from returning migrants shows that as many as 76 of the 365 from Delhi were positive; 68 of 506 from Maharashtra; 88 of 1,066 from Gujarat; 11 of 101 from West Bengal and 10 of 172 from Haryana.

As in Karnataka, these cases have now spread across over 30 districts in the state including Begusarai, Nalanda, Munger, Bhagalpur and Patna as the top five districts.

Express, Bihar Principal Health Secretary Sanjay Kumar said: "There is still not a problem with our home population as we collected less than 4,000 samples after door-to-door screening of 10.40 crore. Our challenge is to save our home population from getting infected from migrants coming to Bihar since the last week of

Asked if their early return during the first lockdown would have helped, Kumar said: "Ifs and buts have no meaning now. We have to increase our testing capacity to screen all suspects. We have requested ICMR to increase our testing capacity from current 2.000 plus to 8.600 per day.Getting positive cases from asymptomatic samples is the

More so as the influx continues. This when the influx is ongoing. Since last week of April, till May 13, about 3 lakh migrants (including 2.25 lakh from trains) have returned to Bihar and are sent to quarantine centres at respective block headquarters. The state government has opened 4,672 guarantine centres which can accommodate about 4.52 lakh people.

Swimming

rework the recommendations and make them relevant in India's context.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Virendra Nanavati, SFI's executive director, said they could not come up with a more comprehensive plan. "The guidelines issued by USA Swimming are foolproof and, to start with, we can rely on that. They have proper expertise in this area so we have forwarded that to the SAI committee. Let them modify as per the central and state government guidelines for Covid-19," Nanavati

Training in all sports has been halted from the time the lockdown was first imposed on March 24. And while it is unlikely there will be any competitive event held for the foreseeable future, the sports ministry is considering a phase-wise resumption of training at government-run institutes by the end of this month.

As a first step, SAI formed two committees last Sunday to prepare a Standard Operating Procedure - and asked all federations under its watch to submit recommendations to restart sporting activities. One of the two committees was dedicated to swimming, given

In Bihar, an analysis of the

Speaking to The Indian

guidelines (SAI) has now asked the SFI to

little for now, more for later viewed as measures which would take time to be implemented and unlikely to provide any relief in the immediate crisis being faced by workers.

The announcement of free foodgrain supply (5 kg of grains and 1 kg chana per person) for two months to 8 crore migrant workers without a ration card and outside the ambit of National Food Security Act was expected to provide some relief to migrant workers.

But experts said this entails resolving complicated logistical issues. Since every public distribution shop has a fixed number of registrants based on which the stock of foodgrains is supplied to the shop, allowing accessibility to non-cardholders may result in shortage of supplies at these outlets.

The other proposal of 'One Nation One Ration Card', first announced by Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan in July last year and then targeted for completion in June 2020, is seen as a system of considerable utility to migrants.

limitation of the incomplete value chain backed by infrastructure, including availability of point of sale systems at PDS shops, and states coming on board. Hence, this is unlikely to address the immediate issues being faced by transiting and distressed migrant

workers. Experts said given the ambiguity about differentiating between non-cardholders and cardholders under the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' proposal, a worker could possibly take ration from one shop and then identify himself or herself as a non-cardholder in another

"One of the major issues would be how to identify migrant workers and non-migrant workers if the uniform ration card applicability takes place across the country. The administration will face issues about how much stock of foodgrain supplies to send to which shop, given that every shop has a fixed quota, which then could turn into a major logistical problem," said Pronab Sen,

Statistician of India.

Govt safety net for migrants has

Exclusion of beneficiaries from PDS distribution could possibly be avoided by suspending the ration card system for now and instead relying on Aadhaar for distribution of food grains, Sen said.

The proposal regarding the rollout of affordable rental housing under PMAY by involving the private industry via private public partnership on government land is also unlikely to deliver benefits to quell the short-term distress that is playing out.

"It is not going to happen soon. Also, details about the PPP modalities was not elaborated today and needs to be looked at," said Partha Chatterjee, Professor and Head of the Economics Department, Shiv Nadar University.

contingent on new Kisan Cards being handed out.

could have been better served with cash transfers. "The street vendors will be far more disap-

capital of only about Rs 10,000

per street vendor for a month.

Analysts said street vendors

pointed than the migrant workers since they are just getting 'easy access to credit facility' and that too only 'within a month'... Should they not have been given credible forms of income support given they did not and could not sell their wares since March 26? Why could not the government think of instant direct benefit transfer to stranded migrants and the five million street vendors and free ration for the latter if they have not availed it for want of ration card under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana? Why is the govern-

The provision for concessional Rs 2 lakh crore credit to be provided to 2.5 crore farmers, including fishermen, is also

Credit facility of Rs 5,000 crore for 50 lakh street vendors

ment not talking of DBT of a

fixed amount of say Rs 5,000

which will, in fact, go back to

the business in the form of pur-

chases and then possibly to the

government, at least a part of

it, as tax?" said K R Shyam

Sundar, labour economist and

Professor of Human Resources

governments, we think there Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said, "States will be provided foodgrains to distribute to migrants free of cost. The list of beneficiaries will be taken up later so that the distribution

> Talking about how the MNREGS was supporting migrant workers who had returned to villages, the Finance Minister said the government had managed to generate about 14.6 crore person-days of work and offered work to 2.33 crore wage-seekers till

> May 13. She said wages under the scheme have been raised to a national average of Rs 202 per day against Rs 182 per day in the last financial year, and Rs 10.000 crore spent overall till date in the current financial

> Incidentally, this revision in MNREGS wages was notified on March 23, a day before the first phase of the lock-

ries will complete full automation by March 2021." Consumer Affairs, Food given to us by all the state and Public Distribution

it crosses Pen at the intersection where one road branches off to Alibag, the popular getaway for Mumbaiites. The Khopoli-Pali Road, the Khopoli-Pen Road and the Panvel-Goa NH 66 have starts immediately all been under repairs for nearly two years, and road construction activity is underway on all three stretches, though not as fast as motorists would like.

In the towns of Wadkhal, Pen, Jite and Roha, women from nearby coastal villages are lined up either in a separate enclosure or along the main market road with fresh pomfret, surmai (kingfish), rawas (Indian salmon), simpale (mussels), bangda (mackerel) and bombil (Bombay duck) from the morning's catch.

Of the 44 industrial units in Roha's Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) layout, 36 have resumed work over the last 10 days, said MIDC Deputy Engineer Maloji Nimbalkar, though most are functioning at about 40 per cent of normal capacity. At least one, Varun Breweries, which makes Pepsi. is waiting to get orders to restart business - the lockdown and the shutdown of hotels and restaurants have affected the demand for fizzy drinks and other packaged

"We're sensitive to the fact that factories restarting is central to the overall economic resurgence, and we were careful not to shut down water supply or other amenities for even one day. So when the first unit resumed work, our filtration plant was ready and supplying immediately," Nimbalkar told The Indian Express.

beverages.

The largest unit at Roha is run by Sudarshan Chemicals, India's top manufacturer of paint pigments, and their airy, manicured facility has introduced a series of safety measures that will now remain for the foreseeable future, from social distancing and staggered timings in the canteen to twicea-day screening of every single

person on campus with a con-

tactless thermal instrument. "We use 90 litres of disinfectant daily to clean all areas. washrooms are disinfected twice daily, there is 100 per cent use of facemask and hand sanitiser," said Ranjeet Singh, the administration head at the Roha facility.

B N Kadam, associate vicepresident (Works), said about 100 migrant workers stayed back at the facility where living arrangements have now been made for a percentage of labourers, with free food and laundry facilities.

Taiwan at WHO meeting

following clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in Pangong Tso, a lake in eastern Ladakh, and Naku La, a high mountain pass in Sikkim.

On the weekly phone conversations among the seven countries, the Ministry of External Affairs said the idea is "to share ideas and best practices among these countries in the Indo-Pacific region for responding to the unique and complex challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic".

Among the discussion points is "coordinated response and assistance in the immediate neighbourhood; and working with each other in the multilateral fora." the MEA said.

"They have underlined the need for a new template of globalization and for international institutions to reflect contemporary realities," it said.

An official source said a decision will be taken "depending on how the formal agenda evolves". "We can't say anything more at this point. A decision will be taken closer to the date." the source said.

On May 7, Geneva-based ambassadors from eight countries-US, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand — issued a joint demarche to the WHO, pushing for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHA. Led by Washington and Tokyo, the group includes six of the world's 10 largest economies and four of China's

top trading partners. These countries have made out a case for Taipei's admission: Taiwan has managed to control the pandemic in an exemplary manner despite being in close proximity to mainland

According to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, there have been only 440 cases and 7 deaths in Taiwan. In contrast. China, which first reported the pandemic, has seen 84,000 cases and about 4,600 deaths.

Taiwan attended the World Health Assembly as a non-voting observer from 2009 to 2016. But China scuttled Taiwan's presence after Tsai Ing-wen, who challenged China, was elected President in 2016. She was re-elected early this year and her second term will begin on May 20, two days after WHA's decision on May 18.

On Thursday, Ji Rong, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in New Delhi, underlined the One-China policy.

"We urge the relevant Indian media take a correct stance on issues of core interests concerning China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, adhere to the one-China principle, do not provide platform for 'Taiwan independence' forces, and avoid sending wrong messages to the public,' Ji Rong said.

India has also engaged with the China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organisation this week, participating in a meeting of SCO Foreign Ministers on Wednesday.

Govt falls back on existing schemes

As per the announcement, migrants who don't have ration cards will get 5 kg of wheat or rice per person and 1 kg of pulses per family for May and June each, with the cost working out to around Rs 3.500 crore.

While this is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Rs 20 lakh crore package announced on Wednesday to tide over the Covid-19 crisis, the Union Food Ministry in fact has been offering additional foodgrains to states for those without a ration card from the first phase of the lockdown, starting end-

March. In another announcement, on April 7, the Centre had told states that they could avail additional foodgrains through the Food Corporation of India's open market sales for non-ration card holders.

Additionally, in the third week of April, the Rural Development Ministry had released to states funds required for the first three months of the fiscal towards the MNREGS - the second half of the relief announced for

that the "sport requires athletes

to train in water and may have

different health risks involved

compared to other sport", ac-

meeting was held between the

swimming federation and SAI

officials on Tuesday, when its

"recommendations" were dis-

eration, it was tough for them

to set protocols at this moment,

"until we know what the cen-

tral and state governments de-

cide and what their policies will

what the Americans — a swim-

ming powerhouse — have rec-

USA Swimming has urged

swimmers to "change clothes

and shower at home" and

"eliminate the use rooms that

prevent social distancing, such

as locker rooms".

So, his advice to SAI is to do

In their detailed proposal,

Nanavati said that as a fed-

Following this, an online

cording to SAI.

cussed.

Thursday. In that respect, it is not an additional benefit as the labourers always had the option of taking up work under the scheme - which is demand-driven — in their vil-

Noted economists and opposition leaders have been asking the government for a one-time cash transfer to vulnerable sections like migrant labourers.

Whether Thursday's announcements will instead help stem their flow out of the city remains doubtful, given that the migrant labourers have been leaving for villages despite the MN-REGS and PDS being already

Earlier, on March 26, the Centre had announced 5 kg free foodgrains per individual and 1 kg pulses per family under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana for exist-

ing beneficiaries of the NFSA. The Finance Minister said, "We are engaging with state

governments to make sure

they know where these mi-

grants are. Most of those who

They have also illustrated

how social distancing can be

practised in the pool while

training by using staggered

starts, opposite ends and limit-

ing the number of swimmers

the pool should be disinfected

with chlorine and bromine to

"inactivate the virus in the wa-

ter", citing the Center for

Disease Control's advisory that

"there is no evidence the dis-

ease spreads through treated

parts, however, there is still a

big question to be answered: "If

swimming centres open up

based on guidelines we set, and

something unfortunate hap-

pens, who will take responsibil-

Centre, West

Bengal trade

For their Indian counter-

The document states that

per lane.

have no cards are staying in camps run either by the government or NGOs. Therefore, based on a rough assessment are about eight crore migrants who will benefit through this free foodgrains

She said the state governments would be the "implementing agencies", taking care of both identifying the migrant labourers and distributing food to them.

Sitharaman also announced the rollout of the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' project. But this is still under works, and a nationwide integration is not likely before March next year. While the Centre had hoped to roll out the project by June 1 this year, only 17 states and UTs have

come on board so far. Sitharaman said, "By August 2020, 67 crore beneficiaries in 23 states, or 83% of the PDS population, will get covered by One Nation One Ration Card and we're sure of 100% coverage of national portability by March 2021. All

barbs over no repatriation flight to state

So far, 229 repatriation flights have been announced by the central government - as per the MEA website - from May 7 to June 3. But not a single flight lands in West Bengal. Many residents of West Bengal have tweeted, complaining about

Within hours of Chatterjee's tweet, MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava replied to the West Bengal minister, "MEA does not discriminate between states. GOI's Vande Bharat Mission is for all stranded Indians, including those from West Bengal. Over 3700 of them have registered for repatriation from different parts of

"Will gladly facilitate flights to Kolkata if state government will confirm arrangements to

the world," he tweeted.

receive and quarantine. Will also help in return of WB residents through land borders with neighbors. We hope to receive an early response on the matter." the MEA spokesperson tweeted and tagged West Bengal's Home Secretary and the Civil Aviation ministry. This

Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. In the first phase from May 7 to 15.64 repatriation flights were flown. Out of them, 15 went to Kerala, 11 each to Delhi and Tamil Nadu, seven each to Maharashtra and Telangana, and the remaining flights flew to Gujarat, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Uttar

was retweeted by External

In the second phase from May 16 to 22, 31 flights are to land in Kerala, 22 in Delhi, 17 in Karnataka, 16 in Telangana, 14 in Gujarat, 12 in Rajasthan, nine in Andhra Pradesh, seven in Punjab, six each in Bihar and UP, three in Odisha, two in

THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL

CORONA WATCH

105 trains to bring back more people

Kolkata: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday tweeted, "Towards our commitment to helping all our people stuck in different parts of the country and who want to return back to Bengal, I am pleased to announce that we have arranged 105 additional special trains.'

According to the list, three trains will start from Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore Urban on May 16 and reach New Cooch Behar, Howrah and Malda Town respectively the following day **ENS**



Two girls play at Mallick Ghat flower market in Kolkata on Thursday, Day 51 of nationwide lockdown. Shashi Ghosh

Kolkata's pvt bus owners propose 3 times hike in fare

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 14

PRIVATE BUS owners submitted a proposal to the state government on Thursday, demanding to raise the minimum fare to Rs 20, which is nearly three times the current Rs 7, as they look to resume services after the lockdown was announced to contain the coronavirus pandemic. They also told the Transport Department that they would be unable to limit the passenger count to 20 in a bus and sought police help.

The Transport Department had Wednesday asked the private bus operators to chalk out a revised fare model for the government to consider, following which the services can be resumed from May 18.

Tapan Bandopadhayay, the secretary of the Joint Council of Bus Syndicates, said: "The minister has expressed his desire to resume bus services from May 18. Today, we met and formulated the fare proposal and submitted it to the Transport Minister. Also, we said police should help us to monitor the situation so that not more than 20 passengers are allowed inside a bus. However, police should not harass them.'

Earlier, Transport Minister Suvendu Adhikari had held a meeting with private bus operators and officials of the Transport Department, during which he had said buses would be allowed to ply if they complied with the rules, including not permitting over 20 passengers in a vehicle.

The department claimed spread the communal virus", ilar accusation against the BIP without naming it. Banerjee had warned that strict action would fake news on social media.

"Strong action has been

Home Department: 129 linked to Telinipara violence arrested community roaming in public taken against miscreants in

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 14

THE POLICE have arrested 129 people in connection with the violence between two communities in Hooghly district's Telinipara area on the night of May 10, the state Home Department said on Thursday.

some people were "trying to days after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee levelled a simbe taken against those spreading

Telinipara, Hooghly. 129 persons have so far been arrested and more will be arrested. Senior officers along with a large number of forces are patrolling the area round the clock," the Home Department tweeted.

Asserting that the administration was committed to ensuring peace across the state, the department said, "Some persons are trying to spread the communal virus to further their political interests. Strong legal action is being taken against all these per-

The violence had broken out in the Victoria Jute Mill locality of Telinipara after the members of a community raised objections about people from another during lockdown even after five of their members tested positive for the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). Several shops were ran-

sacked and many were injured in the clash. On Monday morning, the two groups also hurled bombs at each other and set shops on fire. Two days later, the District

Magistrate issued prohibitory

orders under Section 144 of CrPC

in the area, and suspended internet services, including broadconnections, Chandannagar and Serampore subdivision till 6 pm on May 17 to stop the circulation of fake news and misinformation on so-

6 DEAD IN KOLKATA, 2 IN HOWRAH

Eight die even as state govt works to ease curbs in red zones

May not seal entire areas where virus reported: KMC

TOTAL CASES

INCREASE | DEATHS*

* INCLUDES 7

TESTED TILL MAY 14

COMORBID DEATHS

with curbs eased to varying de-

grees. Red Zone A will have no

relaxations, Red Zone B will have

some relaxations, and Red Zone

Cwill have a few relaxations out-

containment zones in these dis-

tricts. Kolkata, which is the epi-

centre of the pandemic in the

Municipal Corporation said the

civic body might decide not to

seal entire areas where infec-

tions get detected. The corpora-

tion is also drawing up plans to

identify the containment zones.

is detected the entire house of

the patient, the road in front of

the house and adjoining areas

were identified as red zones. This

led to closure of a large number

of roads. Now, discussions are

being held to only identify the

house of the Covid-19 patients

and adjoining houses so that

"Till now when an infection

state, has 340 such areas.

There are more than 550

A senior official of the Kolkata

side its containment zones.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 14

THE STATE government on Thursday announced that the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) had claimed eight more lives, pushing up the toll to 143, even as it worked on relaxing restrictions to a degree in districts designated as red zones because of the high number of cases reported from there. If deaths due to comorbidities are taken into account, the count is 215.

Six of the eight patients who died are from Kolkata, while the other two are from Howrah. Both these districts, which are among the four red zones along with North 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur, also accounted for over half of the 87 new positive cases detected in the 24 hours till Thursday 9 am - 31 in Kolkata, and 25 in Howrah – according to the health bulletin, taking the total number of cases to 2,377.

The other infections were reported from the districts of North 24 Parganas (16), South 24 Parganas (five), Paschim Bardhaman (three), Purba Medinipur (two), Nadia (two), Purba Bardhaman (one), Hooghly (one). One person from another state currently stranded in West Bengal also tested positive.

However, despite the rising number of infections in the red zones, the Mamata Banerjee government has decided to divide them into three categories, they can be identified as red zones. There will be surveillance on the road in front of that house. Soon, a survey will be conducted by health department officials and Kolkata Police on this and a decision will be taken accordingly," the official added. During the day, a large num-

ber of private vehicles were seen on the road in the city's non-containment zones. Government buses, which restarted services the day before, carried passengers as per the social-distancing norms. Small shops and standalone shops remained operational till the evening, but liquor shops in and around Kolkata remained mostly closed. Some fall within containment zones, while others are running out of stock.

Several private offices in the city also functioned with 50 per cent workforce.

Meanwhile, 66 patients were discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, the government said, pushing up the discharge rate from 30.66 per cent to 32.31 per cent. Till now, 767 patients have recovered from the disease. Overall, the active case count rose from 1.381 to 1.394.

According to the health bulletin, 5,205 samples were tested in a day. With this, health officials have examined 62,837 specimens till date, with 3.78 per cent samples testing positive. The department said 8,980 people were in government quarantine, while 34,414 people were

CORONAVIRUS, THROUGHT HE EYES OF A CH

All that quarantine has

done to me f you were looking for nothng, you found it.' Tumblr has its own interesting ways of saying that what you are searching for doesn't make Quarantine has ignited our minds with ideas, and I wonder why they don't make an appearance while we write essays. Online classes, assignments,

scrolling through social media, we have so many things to do, and yet there are times when I feel that all we are doing is staring into the void. Sitting at home also involves

having to hear the news all day long and then hear our parents have a heated discussion about it, spiced with their own views and ideas. Over-thinking has beand cheeky comments are a reminder that things actually exist beyond my house and that they aren't a figment of my imagina-Every cloud has a silver lining. In



Sowmiya Das, Class:8, Sec:A(D.S)

this quarantine pe-

riod, I finally learnt

basic cooking, and

The Pandemic has taught me many things I didn't knów uring this lockdown pe-

riod, the whole world has become aware of the deadly pandemic causing virus, COVID-19. Like being forced to stay

home to prevent this pandemic from spreading. I think that this extensive lockdown period has been the perfect time to discover my hidden talents and accept that life is a game of survival. I have started taking online classes. As a student, like many others, I am worried about my academics and studies. I have realised that such a lifechanging scenario is the

ing other things of my interest, like playing the violin and painting. I love to observe Nature, the environment, and every single thing that I think has significance in human life. I jot down my ideas and present them to others. I am also spending my time am trying to utilise those things which I, at any other time, would have simply thrown away.

At times, I just grab a pen and a piece of paper, jot down my thoughts and compose a story or poem, letting my creativity flow! The best thing about this lockdown period is getting to spend time with my mom and dad who are both busy professionals. At times, when I read news of the pandemic, I do get extremely scared, but the presence of my parents manages to calm my

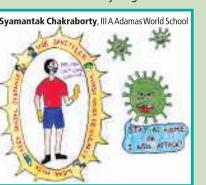
I try to help my mom make food, tidy the house up, wash the utensils and with other household chores. I believe this will help me be independent and self-reliant.Earlier, I never used to have time to observe Nature. Now, in the evenings, I sit in my balcony gazing at the sun going down the horizon, birds flying back to their nests and the stars twinkling in the inky-black sky. Sometimes, the news of suffering of the people fills my heart with pain and I fold my hands to silently pray to the Almighty to

keep all the people of the world safe. While the pandemic seems like a curse, it has taught us a good deal and made us look inwards for the sake of a better

DEBAPRIYA MAJUMDAR, VIII-C D.B. Adamas International School

Making the most of it!!

ith the unprecedented lockdown due to the pandemic came a sense of relief.... "if I'm at home, I'm safe!" Then this slowly began to change as roaming about the streets unchecked by the realisation hit me, "I'm in class 12 and I can't afford to waste my time! I need to study hard as I have to prepare for the Boards and Joints." But it turned out that my teachers were just as concerned and started online classes.....classroom in my mobile.....the flip side is no one minds my spending hours gazing at my mobile! Seriously, I'm studying. There's no option actually!! With all the classes in the mornings, followed by assignments to be submitted and coaching classes to attend in the evenings, I'm sure I'm making the most of it!! I find myself in the midst of a world of eBooks and great food (specially cooked by mom), spending time with my beloved parents and most importantly also finding the time to understand everything I have stud-



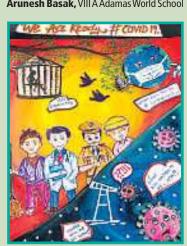
ied during the day as I don't need to waste time traveling to and from educational institutions. Yes, I do miss my friends and going outdoors but then we meet virtually every day. At the end of the day when I look out of my window and see Nature healing itself, and think of the Covid Warriors risking their lives to save others....my complaints seem petty. I pray that we all come out of this crisis unscathed and unscarred. Stay safe, stay healthy.

ANKIT SAHA, **CLASS XII SCIENCE** ADAMAS WORLD SCHOOL, KOLKATA

Mother Earth is rebooting itself!!

s I look out from my window and observe the fresh air, the greenery, the chirping of birds and the stray animals





Shreya Chakraborty, XI Science

zooming vehicles, I am reminded of the famous quote by Lord Byron, "I love not Man the less, but Nature more." Sadly, it took a virus like Covid 19 to finally cage all the disturbing elements of Nature and keep them indoors for good.....until the earth begins to breathe freely again! Even the ozone layer is healing. Nature has shown us the mirror-- the

Earth's most deadly animal, "the Social Animal", has his limitations and can be rendered almost helpless. Yes, it is sad that there has been loss of human life and the struggle to overcome this virus is still on. But for once we have emerged as global citizens without boundaries. Enjoy this peace as long as it lasts. I hope we would have learned a lesson for life post Covid-19. Till then. home, Stay safe!! ANUVAB DUTTA,

CLASS XII SCIENCE, ADAMAS WORLD SCHOOL

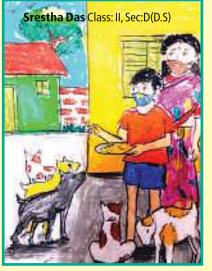


Moubani Kundagrami, IX A Adamas World School

World under siege

he world is witnessing a doomsday scenario because we were not prepared to face a catastrophic situation caused by a tiny microbe with massive virulent power. Doctors, nurses and medical staff are combating it by providing supportive medical facilities, which has resulted in the recovery of many patients from this lethal disease. Doctors and health organisations like WHO have come up with many preventive guidelines like washing of our hands, use of alcoholbased hand sanitisers and, what's most important, social distancing. Most of the affected countries have announced a lockdown, which is showing effective results. We all know that every cloud has a silver lining. This is evident today when Mother Earth seems to be rejuvenating itself due to restricted pollution levels. While fighting this difficult situation, we as humans must realise our responsibilities towards Mother Earth and come up with initiatives that will make the world a better place.

DEBATREE BANERJEE Class-VI B ADAMAS WORLD SCHOOL,



come so normal now. Equally normal is the feeling of being pulled out of the world as soon as the internet goes off. What used to be loud discussions between classes have been replaced by those video calls, but it isn't all bad. The familiar faces

ERNATIONAL SCHOOL

After all this, we surely can. **VARTIKA MANISH** Class 10 D (D.B) Adamas International School

though it wasn't a master chef's work, it was fun. I read books which I wanted to for months and imbibed all I wanted. Family time has increased, and me and all my friends are listening to the 80's music, and enjoying it. When things get back to normal, it would be a different kind of normal with hy-

giene and distancing and stuff but I think we can live with that.



to study on my own! The writings of great personali-

perfect opportunity to learn how to be independent and I am trying ties like Rabindranath Tagore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose keep reminding me that academics is not always the key to success. I believe in this idea and so I

am trying to spend my time do-

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Adamas International School, 58, M.M Feeder Road, Belgharia, Kolkata 700056 adamas@rediffmail.com https://ais.adamas.co.in PHONE: 9830444749/59

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EXPRESS NETWORK



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



TALKING POINTS

IN A meeting of BJP general secretaries with party president J P Nadda Thursday, the topic of discussion was how party cadres could help migrant workers struggling to reach homes. Union Ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah, attended the meeting. Some of them were at the party headquarters and others joined online. The party decided to ask its workers to distribute food and water and footwear among the migrants. It also decided to ask cadres to ensure proper living conditions at quarantine centres. Some leaders said there should be recreation facilities and skill development activities at the centres. Another point discussed was how to celebrate the first anniversary of BJP's return to power.

QUARANTINED

A SUPREME Court judge moved into self-quarantine with family members after the cook at the judge's official residence tested positive Thursday. Sources said the cook was on leave and may have been infected during the break. Earlier, an official of the Supreme Court registry tested positive and 36 security personnel on duty at the court were sent to quarantine.

Alma Mater's Award

NATIONAL HEALTH Authority CEO Dr Indu Bhushan has been selected by the Johns Hopkins Alumni Association for the Global Achievement Award. The award recognises exceptional contributions of alumni who have great professional or humanitarian achievements. Bhushan, a 1993-batch IAS officer of Rajasthan cadre who later quit the service, also holds a Doctorate in Health Economics and a Master of Health Sciences from Johns Hopkins University..

SALUTE THE SOLDIER



On this day 9419142N LNk Dun Narayan Shrestha of 1/11 Gorkha Rifles (BATALIK) made the supreme sacrifice during 'OP VIJAY' in May 1999 in a true act of valour. He was the first of many that the Paltan lost on the Path of Glory that summer. The brave soldier will always be

remembered for his raw courage and indomitable team spirit. To this braveheart we pledge that we shall always be guided by immortal

CO AND ALL RANKS, 1/11 GORKHA RIFLES

A.P. STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
(A State Government Undertaking)
D.No. 55-17-3, Stalin Corporate Building, 2nd Floor,
Behind Autonagar Bus Stand, VIJAYAWADA - 520 007. A.P.
Phones No. 0866-2556244, Fax: 0866-2556344

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

We are Inviting E-Tenders in Two Bid (Technical Bid & Price Bid) System for supply of MLCL Fumigation Covers on ARC basis for different places. Interested Bidders may contact at our Head Office on Phone No. 0866-2556244/9849057693 or view on our Website www.apswhc. com & www.tenderwizard.com/APSWC

Sd/- Managing Director



No. 2(312)/2018/Pur NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER CSIR-CLRI has advertised for 1. Synthetic Slood Penetration Tester for Surgical down/Coverall, 2. Hydrostatic Pressure/Hoad Tester, 3: Wet Bacterial Barrier Penetration Rister for surgical gown/Coverall, 4. Water Vapour Transmission Rate Tester for surgical jown/Coverall, & Water Impact Penetration Tester for surgical gown/Coveralion CPP portal. Mease visit www.etendors.gov.in for further details. Details are also available on

www.chi.org. Tender closing date: 27th May, 2020, 3:00 PM. For & an behalf of COUNCIL OF SCEINTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH



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



19.

24.

28.

34.

37.

TENDER NOTICE

e-tenders are invited for the supply of following items. (1) Cable Fault Locating Van with Maintenance Contract for 5 years

Re-invited e-tenders

(2) 67529.

For more details, log on to website https://mahatenders.gov.in. **GENERAL MANAGER** PRO/AAM(M)/08/2020

JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY Indira Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302004 No.: JDA/EE-ROB/RUB-II/2020-21/D-46

Dated: 13.05.2020 NOTICE INVITING BID NIB NO.: EE ROB / RUB-II / 01 / 2020-21

Online Bids are invited upto date 22.06.2020 at 6.00 PM for "Widening & Strengthening of existing approach roads of ROB at L.C. 70 Sitapura, JDA, Jaipur." Estimated cost Rs. 221.50 Lacs details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the website of State Public Procurement Portal <u>www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in</u>

and www.jda.urban.rajasthan.gov.in (UBN No. JDA2021WSOB00018)

To participate in the bid, bidder has to be :- 1. Registered on JDA website <mark>www.jda.urban.rajasthan.gov.in</mark> for participating in the Bid, the Bidder has to apply for the Bid and pay the Bidding Document Fee & RISL, Processing Fee online only and Bid Security Deposit (BSD), online through bank guarantee. 2. Registered on e-Procurement Portal of Government of Rajasthan <u>www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in</u> for online e-Bid submission Registered in "AA" class contractor category in JDA or any Central Governement Department

State Government Department / Local Body / Railways of Corporations. Executive Engineer (ROB/RUB-II)

FM claim of MNREGS spike true only for May, April saw a fall

HARISH DAMODARAN & **NUSHAIBAIQBAL** NEW DELHI, MAY 14

ANNOUNCING THE second tranche of the coronavirus relief package. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that enrolment of workers under the MNREGS has increased 40-50% "compared to May last year".

However, an analysis of data on the MNREGS public portal shows that both the number of people to avail of work under the flagship rural employment scheme and the number of days they were employed has fallen in this financial year starting April till now, compared to 2019-20.

This financial year, 1.06 crore households have got 13.59 crore person-days of employment under the MNREGS so far. As against this, 1.55 crore households had got 24.66 crore person-days of work in April 2019 alone. The respective numbers for April 2020 are just 89.66 lakh and 11.08

"The 40-50% increase the minister referred to is only for the past few days. Not much work could be taken up in April because the focus of everybody, including states, was on enforcing the lockdown. The actual ramping up is happening now, when economic activity too is being opened up," a top official told The Indian Express.

Sitharaman also said that 14.62 crore person-days of work had been generated under the MNREGS till May 13. "The data in the public portal is only up to May 12. The minister's figure is

New Delhi: The BJP on Thursday

accused the Congress of making

"sinister efforts" to save fugitive

businessman Nirav Modi, who is

undergoing an extradition trial

in the PNB fraud case at London's

Westminster Magistrates' Court.

Prasad claimed that a Congress

Tender No.

SR2003206810010

SR2001205710001 TICAGRELOR 90 MG

SR2003110510002 50% INSULIN LISPRO AND

SR2003111010003 25% INSULIN LISPRO AND

SR2003121210004 30% INSULIN ASPART +

SR2003121310005 GLARGINE INJ 300 IU / MI

SR2003122010006 LIRAGLUTIDE 6 MG / ML

SR2003122510007 DEGLUDEC 300 I.U.

SR2003204810009 SITAGLIPTIN 100 MG

SR2003207210011 LINAGLIPTIN 5 MG

SR2006508910015 TRASTUZUMAB

SR2010724520020 STERRAD

SR2015304220024

SR2015403620027

SR2015826120034

SR2020275620036

SR2020600320039

SR2020601020040

SR2030992030002

SR2030992230003

SR2003209910012 EMPAGLIGLOZIN 25 MG

SR2006507910014 PERTUZUMAB INJ 420 MG

SR2006509410016 NIVOLUMAB INJ 100 MG

SR2007000410018 GOLIMUMAB INJ 50 MG

SR2007009510019 OMALIZUMAB INJ 150 MG

SR2015206320021 INOUE TRANSVENOUS

SR2015306120026 AORTIC STENT GRAFT

SR2015405220028 SINGLE CHAMBER

SR2015406120029 MRI CONDITIONAL

SR2015408020032 MRI CONDITIONAL

RATE

SR2015407720031 MRI CONDITIONAL CRT

PACING

SR2020260120035 MECHANICAL PROSTHETIC

ADU<u>LT</u>

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SR2054422620053 TITANIUM POLY AXIAL

SR2054456520056 POLY AXIAL SCREW

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CORONARY DRUG

CORONARY DRUG

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THE WIRE SHOULD

TISSUE STABILIZING

STAR FISH HEART

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STABILIZER

CONSISTS

SR2054305020061 X-RAY FILM 10" X 12" PACK

SR2054309020062 X-RAY FILM 15" X 12" PACK

SR2054320220063 DRY IMAGING HIGH DENSITY.

DUAL CHAMBER

SR2005308810013 CEFTAZIDIME 2 GM +

SI.No.

Union Minister Ravi Shankar

CONGRESS TRYING TO SAVE NIRAV MODI: PRASAD

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

E-Tender Notice for supply of Medicine/Surgical/Lab

the President of India, invites **ONLINE** open tenders for the following supply contract as per Tender Notice given in IREPS website. Firms are requested to log on to

http://www.ireps.gov.in->E-Tender->Goods and Services (New) and quote against these tenders. No Manual quotations will be entertained. Closing time for the tenders is 15:00 hours on the date noted against each below.

Description

50% INSULIN LISPRO

70% PROTAMINE

SITAGLIPTIN 50 MG WITH

SITAGLIPTIN 50 MG WITH



A migrant family on the way to Chhattisgarh near Pune railway station. Arul Horizon

not only more recent, she has also mentioned that 2.33 crore wage seekers were offered work just yesterday (i.e. on May 13). The uptick in employment will be visible in the coming days," the official said.

The main driver of the MN-REGS employment will be the migrant workers returning back to their villages from cities and industrial centres. "States have been told to register liberally, as per the provisions of the MN-REGS. Anyone seeking work under the programme should be given employment, irrespective of whether they have a job card or if the same is active or not," the official added.

On paper, MNREGS guaran-

leader, Abhay Thipsay, a former

Bombay HC and Allahabad HC ju-

dge, deposed as a defence witness

to oppose extradition proceedings

against Nirav and told the court

that the CBI's charges would not

stand scrutiny under Indian law.

"Means, he tried to save Nirav

Quantity Due Date

6265

9935

173480 03/06/2020

15190 03/06/2020

4725 03/06/2020

927 03/06/2020

887080 03/06/2020

322153 03/06/2020

780565 03/06/2020

346860 03/06/2020

72240 | 03/06/2020

1200 03/06/2020

25 03/06/2020

17 03/06/2020

115 03/06/2020

60 03/06/2020

318 03/06/2020

44 03/06/2020

26 03/06/2020

70 03/06/2020

4 03/06/2020

20 03/06/2020

35 03/06/2020

03/06/2020

2 03/06/2020

7 03/06/2020

310 03/06/2020

120 03/06/2020

45 03/06/2020

50 03/06/2020

29 03/06/2020

230 03/06/2020

600 03/06/2020

32000 03/06/2020

22100 03/06/2020

72 03/06/2020

221 03/06/2020

72 03/06/2020

PRINCIPAL CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR

03/06/2020

100

1197 03/06/2020

03/06/2020

03/06/2020

03/06/2020

Modi," Prasad alleged. ENS

tees 100 days of employment to adult members of any rural household that "demands" such employment. Critics allege this basic principle, of the programme being demand-driven and selfselecting, has rarely been implemented on the ground.

"The demand for work is going to be high, more so from the returning migrant labourers who need to find immediate employment. May and June are also lean months for agriculture, when the rabi crop has already been harvested and the monsoon not fully arrived," the official pointed out.

According to the MNREGS public data portal, the number of person-days of work under the scheme in 2019-20 rose from 24.66 crore in April to 33.17 crore in May and 30.47 crore in June, before falling to 18.94 crore, 14.98 crore, 14.37 crore and 13.52 crore in the subsequent months coinciding with the kharif cropping season. This time, MNREGS work de-

mand is expected to go up, with this getting reflected in many inactive job cards turning active. Currently, out of the 13.74 crore MNREGS job cards issued, only 7.66 crore are "active".

In 2019-20, 5.48 crore households were employed in MNREGS works. The average days of employment provided per household were 48.39, with only 40.61 lakh households completing 100 days of wage employment.

447 new cases in TN, 2 deaths in Chennai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHENNAI, MAY 14

TAMIL NADU on Thursday reported 447 Covid-19 cases, taking its tally to 9,674. There were two deaths reported, both of them in state capital Chennai.

Chennai also accounted for most of the fresh cases-363. Among the active cases, Chennai with 4.834 cases and neighbouring district of Thiruvallur with 410 cases top the list.

Among the total 66 deaths reported in the state, Chennai had 44 and neighbouring district

The Principal Chief Materials

Chengalpet had four cases.

Among the positive cases were nine people who came back from abroad and 11 who returned from Maharashtra. State Health Minister C

Vijayabaskar said Tamil Nadu continues to top the sample testing charts in India. While India has a total of 19

lakh samples tested. Tamil Nadu alone tested over 3 lakh," he said. ernment admits it has been fac-Quoting observations from a

panel of medical experts, Vijayabaskar said the state had the lowest death rate in the country (0.67 per cent) as a result of early diagnosis through contact tracing.

LOCOMOTIVE WORKS CHITTARANJAN E-TENDER NOTICE

Morager/CLW/Dankuni acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for supply of the following items. For detailed instructions please refer to the railways website : www.ireps.gov.in St. No.: [1]; Tender No.: 34201008; Description of items: Sealing Adhesive, LOCTITE or equivalent for WAG-9/WAP-7, to CLW Specii./Drg. No. - CLW/MS/ 3/Bogie/005 Alt-'2' .; Date of Opening: 20-05-2020; Cost of Bid Documents: Rupees 0.00/-; Cost of EMD: Rupees 79,900.00-

Manager-1 CLW/Dankuni

5 Server-1

7 Server-2

6 UPS for Server-1

Deputy Chief Materials

Open e-Tender Notice No.: F/Mfg/EN Certificate, dated 09.05.2020. Open e tender is invited by Dy CME (Mfg), Eastern Railway, Jamalpur for the following work Name of Work: Certification of EN-15085 CL-1 to Locomotive Workshop, Jamalpur Location of Work: Eastern Railwa Workshop, Jamalpur, Munger (Bihar), Pir 811214. Advertised Value: Rs. 9.97.100/ Earnest Money: Rs. 20,000/-. Tender Closing Date and Time: 12.06.2020 upto 15.00 hrs. Date and Time for uploading ender: 27.05.2020. Bidding Start Date 01.06.2020. Website particulars and Notice Board location where complet details of tender can be seen etc. www.ireps.gov.in hyperlinked with www.er.indianrailways.gov.in and Dy CME (Mfg) office, Eastern Railwa ocomotive Workshop, Jamalpur on any working day. Manual offers are not allowe against this tender. MISC-16/2020-21

Tender Notice is also available at websites : www.er.indianrailways.gov.in / www.ireps.gov.i

Dhankhar seeks details of interim KMC board from Mamata again

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY14



In a letter to Banerjee, Dhankhar criticised her "non-responsive" approach towards the Raj Bhavan, and said he was still awaiting information he had sought a week ago on the matter.

On May 7, Dhankhar had invoked Article 167 of the Constitution to seek information from the Chief Minister about the appointment of the administrative board headed by state minister Firhad Hakim, who was also the city mayor before the tenure of the regular board of the civic body expired. Article 167 lays down the duties of the Chief Minister to furnish information to the governor.

"Your continued non-responsive stance when it comes to the performance of 'duties' under Constitution towards the Gove-



Mamata Baneriee & **Jagdeep Dhankhar**

rnor in terms of Article 167 is unfortunate and contrary to your oath under Article 164 and against the essence and spirit of the Constitution and surely cannot be countenanced," Dhankhar wrote.

The administrators were appointed on May 6 to run the dayto-day affairs of the corporation after the civic body elections were postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The following day, a petitioner moved the Calcutta High Court, challenging the appointments.

However, a single-judge bench allowed the panel to function for four weeks. On May 12, a two-judge division bench ordered the caretaker body to continue running the KMC till July 20.

NON-PDS CARD HOLDERS TO FOODGRAINS

Jharkhand fears problems in migrant aid

ABHISHEK ANGAD RANCHI, MAY 14

THE JHARKHAND government admitted on Thursday that there could be problems with implementation of the Centre's scheme to provide free foodgrains to all migrant labourers, including those who don't hold ration cards, for the months of May and June.

On Wednesday, the state announced distribution of 10 kg of rice, pulses, oil and salt to returning migrants. Apart from reconciling this with the Centre's package, of 5 kg of rice and wheat per person and 1 kg of pulses per family per month, the Jharkhand goving problems in reaching those not holding ration cards. While the Centre will pick up the tab for the free foodgrains, the implementation has been left to states.

Jean Chief Secretary Sukhdev Singh said: "We have announced allocation of Rs 550 packets to migrant labourers, each comprising 10 kg rice, 2 kg pulses, 1 litre oil and 1 kg salt. Once we get clarity on distribution by the Centre, we can adjust it against the books if it is in cash. If allocation is through grains, we will have to decide a course of action.' Non-ration card holders are

estimated to number around nine lakh in Jharkhand. They include people who applied for the cards but could not get them. On March 23, Jharkhand announced 10 kg of rice per family to these applicants, at Re 1 per kg. However, with nearly two months gone, the Food, Public Distribution and Civil Supplies Department admits only 67% of the nine lakh PDS card applicants got the allocation for April. In May so far, only 7.76% of the applicants have been covered.

The secretary of the department, Arun Singh, said he was waiting for details on the Centre's announcement. "As far as the delay in distribution to non-card holders is concerned, we have faced issues like authentication. Plus around two lakh people (of the nine lakh total) have applied for cards since the lockdown. We are working on it too." Haldher Mahato, a member of

the Jharkhand Food Commission, which regulates the implementation of the National Food Security Act in the state, blames the delay on initial confusion over who would handle the rations. Initially. block-level committees were formed for this, but later the task was handed over to village heads, and finally to PDS dealers. Mahato said: "The process to operationalise non-PDS distribution took more than 20 days. If returning migrants are supposed to get rations, the state needs to build an effective system." Development economist Jean Dreze wondered how the government would identify the beneficiaries. "Those who are in government shelters will be easy to identify, but it will be a problem to locate other migrants.

'Staying at home will not help'

Gandhinagar: Indicating significant relaxations in lockdown norms after May 17, Deputy CM Nitin Patel Thursday said people cannot sit at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that it is necessary to start economic activities in the interest of Gujaratis' livelihood, "Experts in the world are saying that the coronavirus pandemic is going to continue in the world for a long time... Therefore, the interest of 6.30 crore

(17.00Hrs.)

citizens of Gujarat and their livelihood are important. Till now, we have been strictly implementing lockdown. Now a stage has come where we have become acquantained with coronavirus... Now, if business, jobs, agriculture, animal husbandry, labour work continue to be stopped, then not only a person or his family will be in bad condition, but the state's economic condition will also become very weak," said Patel. **ENS**

SOUTHCO UTILITY tead Office, Courtpeta, Brahmapur, Ganjare-760004, e Mail : procurement acutho o@ecuthocodoha.com, Web : www.southo E-TENDER NOTICE NO. SOUTHCO UTILITY/CAPEXIT ITEMS/25/2020-21 DATE: 14-85-2020 For and on behalf of SOUTHCO UTILITY, sealed e-tenders are invited for supply offollowing IT items from reputed OEM / System Integrator / Authorized Channel Partner in two part bidding system under CAPEX PROGRAMME EMD Last date of submis-Cost of Tender Item Description Unit Qty. (Rs.in sion of online Bid icluding GST @12% 1 Desidop PC with Windows QS Nos. 340 1.91 Nos: 240 1.47 Rs.10.000/- + Up to 3 600 VA UPS for Desidoo Nos. 340 0.09 05.06.2020 Rs. 1200/- = Nos. 200 Printer (Laser) 0.20

Rs 11,200.00

The interested bidders would be required to enroll themselves on the tender portal www.tenderw.zard.com/SOUTHCO Complete set of bidding documents are available in www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHCO portal from Dt 15.86.2028 10.01AM onwards (as per the e-tender schedule). Interested bidders may visit SOUTHCO's official web site www.southcoodisha.com.or.www.tenderwizard.com/SOUTHCO for detail.specification. N.B.: (1) Any addendum/ conigendum to this e-Tender Notice shall be upleaded in the website only (2) Southco Utility reserves the right to accept / reject any or all bids without assigning any reasons thereof. Dy.General Manager (Proc.&Store)

0.07

Nos 2

Nos. 1 0.03

Nos.

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MAHARASHTRA

Uddhav, eight

others elected to Legislative

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister

Uddhav Thackeray and eight

others were on Thursday elected

unopposed as members of the

Electoral Officer said as only nine

nominations were received for

the nine seats, all candidates

were elected unopposed.

Thursday was the last day to

withdraw the nominations.

Later in the night, a notification

was issued about their election,

Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray

and Neelam Gorhe; NCP's

Shashikant Shinde and Amol

Mitkari; Congress' Rajesh

Rathod and BJP's Gopichand

Padalkar, Pravin Datke,

Ranjitsinh Mohite Patil and

oath as members of the Legislative Council on Monday.

"The oath-taking ceremony will

be held on Monday at 1 pm in

the central hall of the state leg-

islature," said a minister.

The candidates, who were

said an official.

Ramesh Karad.

Officials from the Chief

state Legislative Council.

Council

MUMBAI, MAY 14

Lawyer appearing in Palghar lynching dies in accident

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, MAY 14

A LAWYER appearing in the lynching of three men in Palghar, was killed in a road accident on Wednesday morning. Police have ruled out any foul play.

The deceased, Digvijay Trivedi (32), was head of the legal cell of political party Bahujan Vikas Aghadi.

According to the police, Digvijay and his colleague Preeti Trivedi were travelling to a court in Dahanu in Palghar district when their car overturned around 9.30 am near Charoti Naka on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway.

...The deceased was speeding and lost control of the vehicle. There are skid marks on the road indicating that he tried to bring the car under control," said Siddhva Jaybhaye, assistant police inspector. Kasa police station.

Jaybhaye said there was no foul play in Trivedi's death and it was an accident. A case of accidental death has been registered. **TENSION ON INDIA-CHINA BORDER**

Delhi strikes conciliatory note, invokes spirit of recent summits

SHUBHAJIT ROY& **KRISHN KAUSHIK** NEW DELHI, MAY 14

STRIKING A conciliatory note after incidents on the India-China border, India on Thursday invoked the spirits of the Wuhan and Mahabuliparam summits in which both sides had reaffirmed that they will make efforts to "ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas"

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "Occasionally, however, on account of difference in perception of the alignment of the Line of Actual Control, situations have arisen on the ground that could have been avoided if we had a common perception of the LAC." This is alluding to the demarcation of the boundary and exchange of maps, which Delhi has been insisting upon.

Army Chief General M M Naravane said in a statement that



Army Chief General M M Naravane

"temporary and short duration faceoffs between border guarding troops do occur along the LAC due to the differing perceptions of the alignment of boundaries which are not resolved". Claiming that troops from both sides were aggressive, which resulted in scuffles at two different points in different commands, he said "there were two incidents at Eastern Ladakh and North Sikkim where aggressive behaviour by both sides resulted in minor injuries to

sation. However, under no situa-

tion do we compromise the secu-

rity of the country. But it is also an

opportunity to implement some

long-pending reforms and cut un-

necessary expenditure in defence...

What specific measures are

you taking for the domestic

industry to help its revival?

Our efforts to promote in-

digenous manufacturing in de-

fence and aerospace, both for the

domestic market as well as ex-

ports are ongoing and will con-

tinue post-COVID-19 also... We

are continuously working with

the industry to address the is-

How has the restructuring of

This reform had been pend-

ing for nearly 20 years. The cre-

ation of CDS has brought into ef-

fect a mechanism which will

induce greater jointness in our

defence forces. During the

Covid-19 pandemic, the defence

forces have played a significant

FULL INTERVIEW ON

www.indianexpress.com

role coordinated by the CDS...

sues raised by them.

the higher defence

organisation helped?

defence manufacturing

troops post which both sides disengaged after dialogue and interaction at local level".

Indian and Chinese soldiers in the Naku La area in north Sikkim and Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh were involved in scuffles and stone-pelting in the first week of May. The Army had stated the soldiers disengaged after intervention of senior officers at the local level. The tension has been around for over two months as the People's Liberation Army tried to stop Indian troops from patrolling.

The Army chief downplayed the tension between Indian and Chinese troops at two points along the LAC.

"It is reiterated that both these incidents are neither co-related nor do they have any connection with other global or local activities. All such incidents are managed by established mechanisms where-in local formations from both sides resolve issues mutually as per established protocols and strategic guidelines given by the PM (Prime Minister) after the Wuhan and Mallaparam summits," the Army chief said.

The MEA spokesperson Thursday said India and China attach "utmost importance" to maintenance of peace in border

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, in their informal Summits in Wuhan (2018) and in Chennai (2019), had reaffirmed both sides will continue to make efforts to ensure peace in the border areas. Recalling that the two leaders

had also directed their militaries to implement confidence building measures agreed upon and strengthen institutional arrangements and information sharing mechanisms to prevent incidents in border regions. Srivastava said. "As a result, India-China border has largely been peaceful."

He also said the two sides have established mechanisms to resolve such situations as and when they arise.

Rail signal: Bookings on regular trains cancelled till June 30

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR NEW DELHI, MAY 14

IN AN indication that normal train services are unlikely to resume soon, the Indian Railways on Thursday said it has decided to cancel and refund all bookings on regular passenger trains till

June 30. However, special trains, like the Shramik Specials for migrants and the Rajdhani-type trains started earlier this week connecting New Delhi to 15 major cities, will continue to operate.

The Railways had announced "indefinite" suspension of paselected unopposed, included senger train services in mid-April, at the end of the first phase of the lockdown. However, as reservation can be made 120 days in advance, train tickets were booked till August 12, sources said.

Earlier, the Railways had decided to cancel all bookings till Sources said that Uddhav and May 17, when the third phase of eight others are likely to take the lockdown is scheduled to end.

The Railways' decision comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was taking suggestions from the states before deciding the contours of the next phase of the lockdown.

Sources said the indication from the government so far is to start more trains, in phases, in popular routes as special services like the Rajdhani-type trains. More trains with other non-AC coaches will be run in the coming days but the details are being worked out, said sources.

Two days before Modi announced the first phase of the lockdown on March 24, the Railways suspended its opera-

tions till March 31. Sources said the national transporter's decisions so far have indicated the government's

lockdown strategy. Meanwhile, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said the Shramik Special services would be scaled up. "We can even run 300 Shramik Specials per day, subject

to requests from states," he said. Since May 1, when the Shramik Specials were started, the Railways has operated 800 of these trains.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday that 386 such trains were sent to Uttar Pradesh, 206 to Bihar, 67 to Madhya Pradesh, 44 to Jharkhand, 18 to Rajasthan, and 7 each to Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted that her government had arranged 105 additional special trains" to bring back those who want to return to the state.

Responding to this, Goyal tweeted: "I feel sad that while there is a need for 105 trains/day to bring back migrants to WB, the state is accepting only 105 trains over 30 days.

from defence perspective' budget cuts on defence moderni-

DR AJAY KUMAR speaks to SUSHANT SINGH about challenges posed by Covid-19, the likely budget cuts and defence modernisation.

What is the biggest challenge posed to the Defence Ministry by Covid-19?

Covid-19 has been a cause of several concerns. But at the same time, it has also opened new opportunities. To be operationally ready despite the constraints imposed by Covid-19 has been one of the biggest challenges faced by the armed forces. And we can say proudly that the armed forces have been able to do so with determination and careful planning.

Armed forces have also been asked to support the civil authorities in the fight against this pandemic... Whether it is for setting up of quarantine centres across the country in real time, or earmarking medical facilities for the Covid patients, Armed Forces Medical Services has been equal to the task.

eral opportunities from the defence perspective. One of the important one relates to the great encouragement it has provided to domestic innovation. Whether for developing equipment/devices for dealing with the pandemic or developing tests for detecting patients or developing vaccine against the

disease, the pandemic has seen

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

OPPOSITION LEADERS on

Thursday slammed the govern-

ment over its economic package,

arguing that the announcements

were insensitive towards mi-

grants and full of statistical jug-

of the Finance Minister today was

a classic display of arrogance, ig-

norance and insensitivity," senior

Congress leader Manish Tewari

"bamboozle" people by throwing

big numbers at them while actually giving nothing to them, he

there are 8 crore migrant work-

ers. She said the government has

transported 10 lakh people home.

What about the 7.9 crore people.

Have you left them at the mercy

you have told them that if you get

home, if god is with you. then we

will give you 5 kg rice, if you don't

like rice, we will give you 5 kg atta

and 1 kg gram for the next two

months. If this is not insensitivity,

I do not understand the meaning

of the word insensitivity.. Out of

the Rs 20 lakh crore that you have

ostensibly put together. all you

have for the migrants whom you

call the builders of the nation is Rs

3,500 crore in terms of atta and

gram. This is your empathy for the

poor," Tewari said.

"And what you have offered.

of god?" he asked.

The government is trying to

"The Finance Minister said

said.

added.

"The entire press conference

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

Package insensitive to

jugglery: Opposition

migrants, full of statistical

Covid-19 has also offered sev-



THE EXPRESS **INTERVIEW**

Dr Ajay Kumar DEFENCE SECRETARY

much greater acceptance of indigenous technologies and solutions as never before... Several of the industries and start-ups who have come forward are the same as those in the defence and aerospace area. I am very hopeful that this push for indigenous innovation will rub off on other areas which have direct implication for defence and aerospace as well.

It is feared that there will be significant budget cuts in defence expenditure because of the economic situation. How will you tackle this, particularly when it comes to defence modernisation?

It is early to speculate on

Senior leader Anand Sharma

said the government has offered

"too little money" to support the

crores of workers who have lost

wages and migrant labourers

who have suffered the most.

"Shockingly there is no emer-

gency transfer to the states," he

party leader, said, "It's an empty

package wrapped by speeches

since the last three days... The gov-

ernment has been trapped by this

number of Rs 20 lakh crore.

Rather than struggling to reach

this target by creative accounting,

it is better to work with a reason-

able but genuine figure."

Ahmed Patel, another senior

'Covid has offered opportunities Kerala sees 26 fresh coronavirus cases

SHAJU PHILIP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

KERALA ON Thursday saw a steep rise in the number of coronavirus patients, with the state reporting 26 fresh cases. Of the new cases reported Thursday, at least 14 were patients who reached Kerala either from abroad or from hotspots in other parts of the country.

Health Department officials said the reporting of new cases after flattening the curve was expected with the arrival of Keralites stranded in Covid-19 hotspots abroad and in other parts of country. "We cannot rule out more cases in the coming days... Things would worsen if these returnees fail to stick to quarantine norms," sources

The state has so far reported 560 Covid-19 cases, mostly people with travel history.

As the Kerala government prepares to open up liquor outlets, start school admissions, resume intra-district public transport and several other fronts of economic activities after the

3 CONG MPS, 2 MLAS ADVISED HOME **QUARANTINE**

Thiruvananthapuram: The Palakkad district medical board has advised 130 people, including Congress MPs V K Sreekandan, T N Prathapan and Ramya Haridas, and MLAs Shafi Parambil and Anil Akkara, to go on home quarantine.

The move comes after a traveller from Chennai at the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border check-post at Valayar tested positive. The MPs and the MLAs had been demonstrating at the check-post, protesting over the delay in the entry of those who did not have a mandatory pass to cross over into Kerala.

third phase of lockdown, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "Coronavirus should be factored in our life in the coming days. Public would have to bring in changes in life style. Mask should be made part of public

Army patrol team caught in Sikkim avalanche, 2 soldiers dead

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MAY 14

An Indian Army officer and a sapper died in north Sikkim after a patrol/snow-clearing party they were part of was caught in an avalanche.

"A patrolling-cum-snow clearance party came under avalanche in North Sikkim on 14 May," the Army said in a statement late Thursday night, "Inspite of the best efforts of the rescue team and local formation an officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert T A, and Sapper/ OPEM Sapala Shanmukha Rao, who were trapped under ice, lost their lives."

The Army stated that others who were part of the team, comprising 17 or 18 members, are safe.

More than 70 soldiers have lost their lives to avalanches since 2016, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had told Parliament in December 2019.

13 electrocuted as tractor-trolley hits electricity pole in Andhra The others sustained burn injuries.

ENS&PTI

HYDERABAD, AMARAVATI, MAY14

AT LEAST 13 farm workers were electrocuted when a tractor-trolley in which they were travelling hit an electricity pole and a live wire fell on them near Machavaram village in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh, police said.

Officials said around 30 chilli field workers were returning to their homes on the tractor-trolley when the driver lost control and hit an electricity. The impact caused a live high-tension wire to fall on the tractor, electrocuting at least nine women and four men.

Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal said the tractor ferrying the farm workers to a nearby vil-

lage of Raparla hit the pole at a bend in the road. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed dismay

and ordered the district collector to ensure treatment for the injured and asked his cabinet colleagues from the district to visit the families of the deceased and injured, a press release said. He also ordered Rs 5 lakh as ex-gratia to the kin of the deceased.

Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan also expressed his dismay and offered his condolences.

AUGMENTATION OF 02301/02302 HOWRAH-NEW DELHI-

21 coaches w.e.f. from 15.05.2020 from Howrah and from

EASTERN RAILWAY

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF ALL REGULAR MAIL/EXPRESS TRAINS UPTO 30.06.2020

To. The Chief Claims Officer/Chief Commercial Managers,

21.03.2020 to 03.05.2020.

deducted. Details of the tickets are as under: 1. PNR No. (If available) . 2. *Train Name & Number :.... 3. *Date of journey :.... 4. *Names of passengers (as mentioned on the ticket along with valid id proof of any one passenger) :.... 5. *From :.... To :.... 6. *Class of travel

facts known to best of my knowledge. I Sh/Smt/Ms.... hereby certify that I have not claimed refund till now on the details furnished. If they are found false I am liable for any action as deemed fit by Indian

Chief Commercial Manager/PM

IOWRAH AC SPECIAL TRAIN (DAILY) BY ONE AC 2-TIER COACH 02301/02302 Howrah-New Delhi-Howrah AC Special train will be augmented by One AC 2-tier coach. Revised load will be

Chief Passenger Transportation Manager

(1) In continuation of earlier notification it has now been decided to extend the cancellation of all regular Mail/Express trains upto 30.06.2020. (2) The Shramik Special Trains and Special train services shall, however, continue to operate. (3) The cancellation and refund rules will also stand modified for all tickets purchased for journey on or after 21.03.2020 till resumption of normal service or till further orders, as follows: A. For trains cancelled by the Railways – (i) For tickets purchased at PRS counters refund may be claimed upto 6 months from the date of journey(by submitting original ticket). Passengers can also cancel such counter tickets through 139 or through IRCTC website and get refund across counters (by submitting original ticket) within 6 months from the date of journey. (ii) For etickets auto refund will be given in the account. B. For trains NOT cancelled by railways but Passenger not willing to travel (i) For tickets purchased at PRS counters passenger(s) can file TDR (Ticket Deposit Receipt) within 6 months from the date of journey at the station and submit the detailed TDR within the next 60 days to Chief Claims Officer/CCM Refund office for getting refund amount, subject to verification. (ii) For e-tickets online cancellation and refund facility available. (4) Passengers who have already cancelled their tickets for the said journey period starting from 21 March, 2020 and wish to claim full cancellation amount, if deducted, can apply for refund of balance amount to Chief Claims Officer/CCM Refund of the concerned zonal railway Headquarters in the prescribed format giver below - through post - within 6 months from the scheduled date of journey.(5) For e-tickets the refund of the balance amount of cancellation charge so deducted shall be credited to the account of the passenger(s) from which the ticket was booked

Proforma for applying refund of cancellation/clerkage charge levied on cancellation of counter booked PRS tickets for journey period from 21.03.2020 to 03.05.2020

(Name of Zonal Railwavs). Sub: Refund of cancellation/clerkage charge levied for counter booked PRS tickets already cancelled for journey period from

Sir/Madam, I have already cancelled my journey tickets on which cancellation/clerkage charge was levied. Kindly refund the amount

.. 7. *Mobile number :.... 8. Date of cancellation of tickets (if known) .. 9. Amount deducted as cancellation/clerkage for which refund sought :.... 10. *Bank account details (copy of pass book may be

enclosed): (a) Name of the account holder:.... (b) Account number . (c) Name of the Bank/Branch : (d) IFSC Code :... Note: Complete details for Fields marked * are mandatory to process the claim through CRIS. Declaration: The above stated details are

> Signature of the claimant. Place and Date

SALIENT FEATURES OF AC SPECIAL TRAINS FOR GENERAL PASSENGERS, STARTING ON OR AFTER 22.5.2020 FOR WHICH RESERVATION OF BERTHS **WILL COMMENCE FROM 15.5.2020**

(1) The special trains will have the fare of Rajdhani Express, without catering charges. Pre-ordered meals will not be available. Also no linen or blanket will be provided. Passengers are requested to carry their own food and linen. (2) The booking can be done ONLY THROUGH IRCTC WEBSITES AND MOBILE APPS. (3) The Advance Reservation period for these trains is a maximum of 7 days from date of journey (excluding the date of journey). (4) The train will stor only at stations indicated in the special time table. (5) There will be no Current, Tatkal, PremiumTatkal facilities. Booking against SS and LD quotas (Senior Citizen and Ladies quotas) will be allowed. A few berths will be available for Divyangjans also. Booking against Freedom Fighter Pass. Fully reimbursable warrants/vouchers can be done rom the earmarked counter at train terminating/originating stations and from enroute stations where charts are generated. No counter tickets will be generated for general passengers through PRS counters (6) There will be no RAC passengers. However a limited number of waitlist for each class will be generated. (7) Normal/extant cancellation/refund rules (as per Refund rules of 2015) will be applicable. (8) In case a passenger holding confirmed ticket is found to be Covid positive during screening at stations by railway personnel he/she will not be allowed to travel. In such cases passenger(s) may obtain full refund by filing online TDR (Ticket Deposit Receipt) within 10 days and submitting the original TDR – with TTE certificate obtained at the originating station – within 10 days of the Date of journey (9) Passengers are requested to wear masks, use hand sanitizers and maintain social distancing and co-operate with the railway officials present. (10) Passengers are requested to arrive at least 90 minutes before departure of the train to enable screening by railway personne at stations.

Chief Commercial Manager/PM EASTERN RAILWAY

and Paramedical Staff at Orthopsedic Hospital, Howrah Orthopaedic Hospital, Eastern Railway, Howrah Division has been designated as a Hospital to treat COVID-19 patients. In

Walk-In-Interview for Engagement of Contract Medical Practitioner

order to provide treatment to such patients, it has been decided to fill the following posts purely on contract basis in the said hospital for a period of 03 (three) months. Medical practitioners. Paramedical staff who satisfy the requisite qualification, age willing for such engagement may report with all original certificates, self-attested photocopy of certificates, 4 passport size photographs for Walk-In-Interview at the venue and time mentioned below. Medical officers/practitioners, paramedical staff both retired and fresh are eligible for such engagement. However, retired Railway Medical Officer/Paramedical staff up to the age of 65 years will be given first preference. The age of fresh medical practitioner should not exceed 53 years. Venue: DRM Meeting Room, DRM Building, Eastern Railway, Howrah-711101. Date of Interview: 18.05.2020. Reporting Time: 11.00 hrs. Category: CONTRACT MEDICAL PRACTITIONER (CMP), Vacancy ; 13. Qualification ; M.B.S.S./MD, Valid MCI registration. Age : Up to 65 years. Remuneration : ₹75,000 lump sum for GDMO, ₹ 95,000 lump sum for Specialist & ₹1,15,000 lump sum for super specialist. Category : NURSING SUPERINTENDENT (STAFF NURSE), Vacancy : 44. Qualification: GNM/B.Sc Nursing & registered as Nurse & Midwife. Age: 20 to 40 years. (Age relaxable as per applicable rule). Remuneration: Same as regular Staff Nurse of Railway for fresh candidate. Remuneration of retired Medical Officers Paramedical staff on such re-engagement will be determined by reducing pension from the last pay drawn (Basic pay + DA) They will be deputed any where under Orthopaedic Hospital Howrah as per requirement. Payment will be strictly on "NO WORK NO PAY BASIST

Chief Medical SuperIntendent, Orthopaedic Hospital, Howrah

BASTERN RAHIWAY

Careers

National Institute of Technology, Uttarakhand n Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development) nporary Campus: Govt. ITI, Srinagar, Dist: Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand-2461 osite: www.nituk.ac.in, Email: nitukrecruitmentcell@gmail.com

RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION

Name of post(s)	Number of post(s)				
	UR	SC	OBC	EWS	Total
Professor	03	01	01		05
Associate Professor		01	02	01	04
Registrar	01				01
Total post	04	02	03	01	10
	Professor Associate Professor Registrar	Professor 03 Associate Professor Registrar 01	Name of post(s)	Name of post(s) UR SC OBC Professor 03 01 01 Associate Professor 01 02 Registrar 01	Name of post(s) UR SC OBC EWS Professor 03 01 01 Associate Professor 01 02 01 Registrar 01

The applicants may refer the Institute website www.nituk.ac.in for the details of educational qualification, experience, age, last date for submission of online application and other terms & conditions for filling up of application(s) for the above post(s). Any addendum/corrigendum shall be posted only on the Institute website. Applicants/incumbents are requested to visit the Institute website regularly. The Director, National Institute of Technology, Uttarakhand reserves the right to fill or not fill any vacancy in the absence of deserving candidate and to cancel application or all applications without assigning any reasons.

Date: 12/05/2020



INDO-SWISS TRAINING CENTRE CSIR-Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India) Sector 30-C, Chandigarh-160 030

ADMISSION NOTICE (Session: 2020-21)

Online Applications are invited for the following Diploma Courses duly approved by AICTE, New Delhi being conducted by Indo-Swiss Training Centre (ISTC) at CSIR-CSIO, Chandigarh.

3-Year Diploma in Mechanical Engineering (Tool & Die) 3-Year Diploma in Electronics Engineering

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rrance Test for admission to the courses will be held on 19th July, 2020 (Tentative) at Chandigarh. Number of Seats: The total number of seats is 140. (Reservations as per Govt. of India rules) Age: Those born on or after 1st August, 2001 (1st August, 1998 for SC/ST candidates) are eligible to apply.

Qualification: Passed Matriculation or equivalent examination from recognized school/board. Those who have

appeared in the Matriculation Examination are also eligible to apply.

Entrance Fee: Rs 1200/- for General/OBC and Rs 600/- for SC/ST Candidates. The fee is to be deposited online/offline through https://www.onlinesbi.com/sbicollect/icollecthome.htm and then apply online as per instructions given in Information Brochure-2020.

Online Application Form along with detailed relevant information is available on the websites www.istc.ac.in o www.csio.res.in w.e.f. 15-05-2020. Before applying online, the candidates are advised to read instructions carefully given in Information Brochure-2020 available on websites. Last date for submitting online application is 15-06-2020 up to 11:59 PM. For further information related to admission, please contact on following links:





THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

Most gods throw dice. Fate plays chess — and you DON'T FIND OUT TILL LATE THAT HE'S BEEN PLAYING WITH TWO

QUEENS—Terry Pratchett

The Indian EXPRESS

∞ FOUNDED By ∞ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FALLING SHORT

Distress of poor, migrants is greater than relief announced by government so far promises to address. It needs to do more

N THURSDAY, FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the second tranche of relief measures to alleviate the stress stemming from the coronavirus. While the first set of measures was geared towards ensuring liquidity flow to various parts of the economy, the second aims to ensure food security for migrants workers, and ease credit flows to the more vulnerable sections of society - street vendors and small farmers, among others. But though more announcements are in the offing, for a country which has gone through the most stringent of lockdowns, with the thinnest of safety nets, the measures so far lack the required breadth and depth.

To ensure food security for migrants, the government has announced two sets of measures. First, provision of foodgrains for the next two months — this includes the nonration card-holders who are not covered by the national food security act or state schemes. And second, portability of benefits. This implies that ration card-holders will now be able to withdraw rations from anywhere in the country, not just their home states. While both these relief measures are welcome, they have come too late in the day. By the government's own admission, this measure will cover 8 crore migrants. This is a staggering number. Implementing these measures early on could have averted the painful migrant crisis that has unfolded over the past several weeks. Ensuring food security, some form of short-term income support to tide over this crisis, could have alleviated their hardship. Further, if the only plan for migrant workers is to provide them jobs under MGNREGA, then surely the first step should be to significantly ramp up allocations to the scheme. The efficacy of measures geared towards ensuring easier access to cheaper credit is also questionable. For instance, a special credit facility has been set up for over 50 lakh street vendors with an estimated outlay of Rs 5,000 crore. But in a country with well-known problems of identification of beneficiaries for government schemes, that may not be enough. The credit linked subsidy scheme for affordable housing has been extended by another year — but with questions over job/income security, its ability to spur demand for affordable housing is questionable. There are also contradictory signal over labour laws. Sitharaman spoke of extending minimum wages, and providing protection to workers, yet at the same time, the Uttar Pradesh government, ruled by the BJP, is in favour of doing away with all forms of labour protection.

The hurt borne by the most vulnerable in this crisis is likely to be far greater than the relief measures the government has announced so far can address. Though the government has said that measures are still in the offing, the scale of that distress requires it to do more.

IN EC's COURT

Setting aside of election in Gujarat by court poses a question it must respond to seriously and institutionally

MID THE PANDEMIC, a court verdict has delivered a setback of a different kind to the Gujarat government, and to the Election Commission of India. In a rare step on Tuesday, the Gujarat High Court set aside the election in 2017 of Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, minister with multiple portfolios in the Vijay Rupani government, from Dholka constituency, and upheld the contention of the petitioner, his Congress rival in that election, that it was conducted in violation of the poll code. The court ruling was strikingly stern and strong: It spoke of 429 "illegally" rejected and excluded postal ballots when the margin of victory was a slender 327, of an "unholy nexus", "manipulation of record", and "corrupt practice", which gave an unfair advantage to the winning candidate and materially affected the result. The High Court verdict is set to be challenged in the Supreme Court, but it lends weight to allegations of misuse of government machinery to influence an election. And it places in the dock the Returning Officer, Dholka's deputy collector, Dhaval Jani. In the verdict's aftermath, the EC has constituted a threemember Committee of Officers and has spoken of disciplinary proceedings against the RO being underway. But that, surely, cannot be the end of the embarrassment.

The Election Commission is deservedly feted as the independent and impartial monitor of a poll process of staggering complexity in a large and diverse country. Over the years, it has earned its place at the top of the heap of India's most trusted institutions. Yet, it is also true that its stature and standing calls for constant vigilance by the poll monitor against every and any breach of due poll process. That an election has been held invalid by the court is an indictment that needs to be addressed seriously, and institutionally. This is especially important in times when politics is becoming more confrontational, and when the EC is coming under increasing fire for feeble interventions that are heard less and less.

The EC's rebuke and reprimand even for violations of the legally un-enforceable Model Code of Conduct matter because of its formidable reputation for fairness. Any signs of institutional weakening or sloth - in the recent Uddhav Thackeray election case, it reportedly took a call from the chief minister to the prime minister and then the governor's intervention to prod the EC to hold an election that was necessary to avert a political crisis — must be guarded against. The EC must act, and be seen to act, to ensure that the aberration in Gujarat remains just that.

A METEOR CALLED DING

If he manages to dethrone Carlsen, China's emergence in the game it had once banned would be complete

AST OCTOBER, CHINA'S World No 3 Ding Liren defeated world champion Magnus Carlsen in a dramatic play-off to capture the prestigious Sinquefield Cup in St Louis, strengthening the growing impression that the 26-year-old can challenge the Norwegian's global crown in 2020. The pandemic has put the prospect on hold, but by claiming the FIDE Online Nations Cup, China has asserted its credentials as a global superpower in chess, a game it had ironically banned in the incipient years of communist rule. The victory was a reflection of China's real depth and quality, a triumph of the long-term strategy, Big Dragon, designed to make the country one of the leading chess powers by 2010.

Barring the men's world crown, they have conquered vast areas of the 64-square board for the last decade. Hou Yifan, just the second woman after Judit Polgar to crack the list of the world's top 100 players and the youngest ever world champion, has been sitting atop the women's grid for the better part of the last five years. In the top 15, she has four compatriots for company. Like in badminton and table tennis, women's chess has become a field of Chinese expertise. And unlike several western countries, China has thrived on home-grown and not assembled talent, by investing in people and spreading opportunity across the country. Yifan grew up in a remote county town in Jiangsu Province; Ding in a small town in China's eastern province of Zhejiang.

The men's circuit, though, was more difficult to crack. For several years, players with promise emerged from China but entering the top 10 proved difficult. Then came Ding, whose rise to World No 3 was as meteoric as it was spectacular. Barely a passing mention till 2017, he improved rapidly in the last three years, beguiling his adversaries and friends with a smile and an incredibly attacking game. If Ding manages to dethrone Carlsen, China's emergence in the game it had once banned would be complete.

The credit lifeline



Fund for MSMEs will ease credit. But government may have to scale up support in coming months

NEELKANTH MISHRA

THE BATTLE AGAINST the virus is likely to last several more months, implying prolonged curtailment of economic activity to ensure social distancing. The resultant economic pain has been, and is likely to be, broad-based, though it is most acutely felt by the indigent and small-scale enterprises. Not only is it necessary to support the worstaffected, but it is also necessary to preserve India's economic growth potential, so that, once the restrictions are lifted, the economy quickly reverts to a rapid growth trajectory. The first package ('How to minimise the damage', IE, March 28) announced by the Union government focused on the poor, and the second rightly focuses on providing credit to smaller enterprises.

While assessing policy measures during the lockdown, where stimulating new activity has limited value, we believe there are two over-arching principles one must keep in mind. One, the flow of funds slows with economic activity; and two, firms do not go bankrupt because of insolvency, but because of lack of access to funds (also called liquidity). Policymakers the world over are pulling out all stops to make sure that the flow of credit continues. Of the Rs 20-lakh-crore economic support announced by the Prime Minister on May 12, we have details for about Rs 16 lakh crore. Monetary and financial interventions taken by the government and the RBI to provide credit to those who need it make up more than 90 per cent of it.

Most of the measures announced by the RBI earlier have not had the desired effect, with the quantum of cheap funds being made available being more or less the same as the increase in the amount being deposited in the RBI every night by banks. Heightened risk aversion in banks has meant that just reducing the cost of funds had no impact on the volume and cost of the credit they provided. At this stage of the cycle, this is not surprising.

The series of measures announced to provide credit support to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) attempts to address this gap. We believe the largest of these schemes is likely to be the most effective, particularly as it comes without too

The natural limitation to policy interventions thus far is that they only affect enterprises in the formal sector and in agriculture: As we are talking about taxpayer funds and formal savings, it may be unfair to allocate them to informal enterprises. Such measures (or say if the government provides GST credits for liquidity support) may be incentives for firms to formalise, but the pain in informal non-agricultural enterprises may stay unaddressed, and remain an

overhang on growth.

 $many\,conditions.\,For\,standard\,MSMEs\,(that$ is, those that have been servicing their loans so far), new loans up to 20 per cent of the current outstanding credit will be fully backstopped by the government. That is, if there is a default, the government will pay the bank. We expect this to drive immediate credit creation, as guarantees are available only for loans extended in the next six months, lenders have zero risk, and the borrowers are most likely stressed and would want these funds. It is possible if not likely that firms will use these loans to just pay interest and cover losses, but if so, that in a way is the purpose of this scheme — the government absorbing losses upfront rather than the (likely larger) lost taxes and potential bank bailouts if there is a bankruptcy. For the government, the costs of this guarantee would be spread over several years, with at most 10 per cent incurred in this fiscal year.

The two schemes together, targeting to provide Rs 75,000 crore of liquidity to nonbanking finance companies (NBFCs), may be a bit less successful, however, in our view. The special purpose vehicle that is to provide liquidity to NBFCs provides funds for three months at a time, may be enough to prevent accidents (like an NBFC defaulting due to lack of liquidity). But it may not suffice to get them to grow. The partial credit guarantee given to banks' loans to NBFCs may be more effective for a subset of NBFCs, but as it is only available to public sector banks, it would depend on their willingness

and ability to extend new loans. The Rs 50,000 crore fund to provide equity for MSMEs, with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore being provided by the government, which would then be leveraged, is an interesting initiative. Losses incurred in the current lockdown are depleting risk capital, something that the country was short of even before this crisis. Replenishing if not growing that is paramount to restoring India's growth potential. While global as well as local private equity and venture capital funds would continue to explore and invest in smaller firms, such a fund can scale up the funds availability significantly. Its efficacy though can be judged only after details emerge on the nature of the fund (like its duration, the investors it raises funds from), as well as how it would operate. A sharp increase in credit to farmers, through Kisan Credit Cards (extended to livestock farmers and fishermen) as well as special loans, should also help funds flow in the economy by increasing the quantum of new bank credit.

The natural limitation of the policy interventions thus far is that they only affect enterprises in the formal sector and in agriculture. As we are talking about taxpayer funds and formal savings, it may be unfair to allocate them to informal enterprises. Such measures (or say if the government provides GST credits for liquidity support) may be incentives for firms to formalise, but the pain in informal non-agricultural enterprises may stay unaddressed, and remain an verhang on growth.

While less than 10 per cent of the announcements thus far has been the fiscal cost, the remaining 4 lakh crores of the economic package may have a greater fiscal element, though at this stage it appears unlikely. One senses a fiscal caution in government measures that in our view is overdone, and could hurt more than it helps. By pre-announcing the additional bond issuance for the year, and giving an implicit assurance that additional deficits would be financed separately, bond market volatility has been minimised. Even though that potentially means the RBI purchasing government bonds, the rupee has been remarkably stable - there was fear that fiscal spending financed by the central bank would be frowned upon and drive currency weakness.

The road ahead remains unclear, but it is likely that the economic damage is already much larger than the measures undertaken so far. It is best to see this as the beginning of government action. The scale of government intervention may have to intensify in the coming months. We believe a continued focus on reforms and on sustaining India's growth potential will be critical in preventing macroeconomic instability.

The writer is co-head of Asia Pacific Strategy and India Strategist for Credit Suisse



I AM MORE LEFT THAN YOU THINK

Many who claim to be leftist feel only they should have freedom of speech, nobody else

SADHGURU

I AM FAR more "left" than people can imagine, but I am not crazy left, where you make sure people are left out of all development and all possibilities. My idea of left is a more fair and just administration. I say "more" because there is no such thing as an absolutely fair and just society. All we can create is a society where things are largely happening in a fair manner, and if people are not equal, at least they have equal opportunity.

What left means is your life is not about yourself; your life is about the community. The Isha Yoga Center is a commune — in a way, it is a communist arrangement. Nobody is asking how much you have, your religion, caste, where you come from, who your father is. We will treat you like we treat everyone else. If you rise and show some special qualities, we will honour that as well. Communism means everyone is sharing and living together. For instance, you are willing to give away your phone to someone who does not have one, or at least share it with your neighbour because, after all, you are a party member. In the Yoga Center we do such things effortlessly. This is absolute left.

But the people who claim they are "left" are not living like that. Many are just living in their own home, talking left philosophy.

You have the right to protest for sure, but you do not have the right to disrupt even one citizen's life. You have no right to block the road, cut off the water or electricity or whatever else. You must ask for permission, find an area,

Their lifestyle, opinions and attitude do not show that they are left or liberal. One aspect of this is that they feel only t hey should have freedom of speech and nobody else. Liberal means whatever is in my heart I will speak, and you should listen and tell me what is wrong with it. You cannot point out one thing and just say, "No, I do not like it." That will not work.

If you believe that your opinion is much more sacred than the people's will in a democratic society, then you have a fundamental problem. When a majority of the people elect a government, even if you do not personally like it, it is still your government. It is not someone else's government. For me, this is India's government and I will support it. Not because I am someone's fan or because of any political ideology, but simply because I am a citizen of India. The country is offering a certain order, facilities and fundamentals for us to live and work. For that, I will abide by whatever the government

You can vote against a Bill in Parliament, you can express what you think is wrong with it. If we have some concerns about a certain law, we can say, "this is our concern, please fix it". But it is still the government's choice whether they want to fix it or go ahead with it. So then you say: "I will take to the streets — my right to protest." You have the right to protest for sure, but you do not have the right to disrupt even one citizen's life. You have no right to block the road, cut off the water or electricity or whatever else. You must ask for permission, find an area, sit there and protest. The democratic process has enough proper platforms where you can protest.

If you do not agree with the law, there is court where you can go. If it is in any way illegal, it will get knocked down. But if it is legal and you still do not like it, you must strive hard to win the next election — that is the only way you can do it in a democratic country. Many people are not able to digest this simple fact. They do not have the necessary commitment to work for five years and somehow win the election next time. They just want to sit at home, wine and dine all their life but protest about everything that the government does. You cannot lose the election and pass the laws. If the losers want to pass laws and carry the trophy, it is

The writer is founder, Isha Foundation. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India

INDIAN EXPRESS

May 15, 1980, Forty Years Ago

AAGSP THREATS

sit there and protest.

WITH THE ULTIMATUM on the foreigners' issue due to expire, the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) made what it called a last-minute appeal to the government to come forward with an "acceptable and constitutional" solution before expiry of deadline failing which, it said, "appropriate action would have to be taken". The Parishad, in a statement issued in Gauhati, said it was waiting for some meaningful response from the government "at this last minute". If the government does not act as demanded, it warned, then the people will have to take some appropriate measures towards fulfilment of the goal.

Manipur Military Aid THE MANIPUR GOVERNMENT is likely to seek military aid to stem the near-insurgency situation prevailing in the Manipur Valley, it was learnt through reliable official sources. The state government plans to have almost half of the Valley declared a disturbed area under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act. Official sources said the government had prepared a case for recommending the invocation of the Armed Forces Act of 1953. The recommendation will be forwarded to Shillong within a day

or two, the chief minister, Dorendra Singh,

BANNING STRIKES AN ORDINANCE GIVING wide powers to the

Maharashtra government to ban strikes in essential services has been promulgated by the president. The ordinance provides for arrest without warrant of anyone suspected of having committed an offence under it and seizure of vehicles used by him/her. Anyone participating in an illegal strike is liable to a jail term of upto six months and a fine of upto Rs 200 besides disciplinary action by the employer. It lays down severe punishment for those instigating strikes or giving financial support to strikers. This category may include labour leaders who are liable to imprisonment upto a year and fine of upto Rs 1,000. THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The best way of striking a balance between commerce and safety is to commit seriously to a mass test and trace regime, as countries from Germany to South Korea are doing. Sadly, Westminster's efforts in that direction have fallen far

— THE GUARDIAN

Things not to do in a pandemic

You cannot replace the invisible hand of the market with the visible hand of the bureaucrat and the police, telling people what to do and doling out money and food



BY KAUSHIK BASU

THE RISK OF COVID-19 is widely misread. This is causing a fear psychosis and can do great harm to the economy, creating shortages in food and essential services. All over Europe and in many East Asian nations, people have come to grips with the fact that we may have to live and function alongside COVID-19 for some time to come. In contrast, several developing nations, especially in Africa and South Asia, remain shuttered and closed

My argument is not about how riskaverse we should be but the need to be consistent in our response. The stress of the pandemic is often robbing us of consistency. In India, roughly 10,000 people die from malaria each year, and close to 200,000 are killed in road accidents. But every time we go out for a stroll, we do not worry about contracting malaria or being hit by a car.

There is literature in psychology on "salience". Depending on how saliently a piece of information is presented to people, rational responses can be drowned out. If, for instance, accounts of COVID deaths are presented in vivid detail while the risk faced by a driver not wearing a seat belt is given in pure numbers and relegated to the back pages of our newspapers, people will perceive the two risks differently. This is happening in a big way today, especially because we live in the age of social media, and instant

Much of the pandemic data from the rich countries are presented without correction for population size. This is causing people in populous regions like Asia and Africa to misread the risk. Thus, many Indians may panic on learning that more than 2,500 people have died of COVID in the country while the virus has claimed less than 1,500 people in Ireland. But correct these figures for population size, and the risk of an individual dying by COVID in Ireland is about 260 times greater than in India. These kinds of differences in risk exist not just between Ireland and India, but all of Europe and North America compared to all of Africa and Asia.

Some will counter my analysis by arguing that I am discounting the future. Is it not possible that Africa and Asia are on the brink of a huge surge? And in that case, should we not lockdown our economies totally? The answer to the first question is yes, and the second no. Let me explain. About the future, at the best of times, we know little. COVID-19 is new, and so we know even less. The pandemic could slowly go down, remain flat, or surge into a mega pandemic. We cannot rule out any of these situations, but that should not mean that we always think of the worstcase scenario and live by that. By that reasoning, nations should have locked down their economies even before Wuhan happened. After all, the risk of new viruses has been known for a while. On April 27, 2018, at an event organised by the Massachusetts Medical Society, Bill Gates and several others warned us of the possibility of a new virus and pandemic. By the reasoning some people are using now, economies should have been



C R Sasikumar

shut down then. Clearly, Gates was not suggesting that. He was urging for more research and better health preparedness. Moreover, by focusing on the worst-case scenario, we are ignoring why the risk of COVID fatality is, in general, several hundred times lower in all of Africa and Asia compared to Europe and North America. The lower risk may well be rooted in past illnesses and, therefore, resilience, in these regions.

This is not to deny that there are some irresponsible leaders in the world, such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, who have gone to the other extreme by ignoring all scientific evidence and treating COVID-19 like the common cold. Luckily, we have outstanding leaders, like Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Emmanuel Macron, who are reminding people of the risks of the pandemic but also pointing out to them that we have to take the hard decision of unwinding from the lockdown and enabling the economy to

Even though there has been a worrying outflow of capital from India over the last two months, there is hope in the country because several corporate leaders, senior bureaucrats, and some political leaders, across ideological lines, have begun speaking up in recent days, showing awareness that a protracted lockdown can do more harm than good. We also have remarkable examples of good practice – most strikingly in Kerala, which is talked about all over the world, but also in some other areas such as Delhi.

But there are many countries which are running big risks of ending up with major economic setbacks. Argentina is a case in $point. \, The \, country \, is \, not \, completely \, to \, blame \,$ for the situation it is in now. Argentina is about to be declared in debt default by its private international lenders, who have shown an unfortunate lack of empathy in the midst of the pandemic. But some of Argentina's problems are because of the country's overzealousness in shutting down the economy and mobility in the mistaken view that this

When it comes to the economy, the question is not whether or not there should be a lockdown but what kind of a lockdown. There is growing evidence that we can create a few social-interaction rules, such as no

large gatherings, buses and trains running but with limits on the number of people allowed in each compartment, planes with alternate seats vacant. This will mean a rise in fares but that is a price we will have to pay. The government can shield the poor with directed subsidies. We will need new staff to manage this, which will also create jobs. When someone contracts coronavirus we should ensure that the household concerned follows quarantine rules, instead of shutting down a whole area or a housing complex. In western nations and in East Asia, there is now a lot of writing about opening schools (some have already done it), because otherwise we can damage the nation's human capital and long-run growth. I would not take this step in India at this time but take a decision sometime in June when we have even more evidence. And, we need to work relentlessly on testing and contact-tracing. This will enable us to do a curated lockdown in a much more effective way, cutting down the risk of capital flight and economic crash.

Economists have written about the need for governments to allocate more money to help workers, migrants, and small informal businesses. This is absolutely essential. However, this is also time to recognise that the economy is an unbelievably complex organism. One critical factor that allows it to survive and flourish is the invisible hand of the market, which has evolved over thousands of years. The market's invisible hand enables collaboration among millions of individuals each taking his or her own decision concerning what to produce, and what to buy. If the market is brought to a halt through excessive control, there is no way you can replace the invisible hand with the visible hand of the bureaucrat and the police, telling people what to do and doling out money and food. It was Deng Xiaoping's recognition of this in the late 1970s that enabled China's economy to flourish. These are challenging times but it is important for emerging nations in Africa and Asia to be aware that a controlled economy and society is a recipe

The writer is C Marks Professor at Cornell University and former Chief Economist and Senior Vice President, World Bank

Recover and shield

An approach that capitalises on the realities of the virtues of India



Shitij Kapur

FOR THE LAST four weeks, I have had the privilege of leading over a hundred of Australia's brightest medical scientists, economists and political scientists to develop a report called the "Roadmap to Recovery". It outlines two options for Australia – elimination of the virus, or controlled adaptation to it. I have wondered whether these options make sense for India, but neither of these approaches will work for India: The country needs to pioneer its own pragmatic way.

Australia is a small country of 26 million people spread across a vast continent with a well-developed health system. This makes elimination possible. In fact, five regions in Australia have successfully eliminated the virus already and now have extensive testing to certify that. In a country of India's scale and size, and limited healthcare resources, the elimination of COVID is not possible anymore. India will have to live with it.

The rest of Australia is now going for "controlled adaptation" where the virus is suppressed to very low levels. Australia right now has 10-20 new cases a day, and it is hoped that it will be held at this level while gradually releasing restrictions. To achieve this, one needs a precise handle on the total number of cases and extensive testing. I fear none of these conditions apply to India.

India currently reports approximately 3,000 cases a day and has relatively limited testing. The London School of Hygiene estimates that the real number in India is closer to 2,00,000 total cases, and rising fast. Even if India wishes to hold the numbers to this level, the scale of testing required for finely tuned relaxation of social distancing is in the range of 10,000 to 20,000 per million. India currently stands at 700 per million. India would have to increase its testing by a factor of 20. No country can do that in the next few weeks.

The lives versus livelihood trade-off for India is not the same as that for Western nations. A study done by Barnett-Howell and Mobarak of the Yale University School of management shows how the cost-benefit trade-off of social distancing makes good sense in Western nations while in nations like India, using local costs and local values, the returns are meagre. Social distancing in countries like the US and Germany delivers economic returns more than 10 times greater than the returns for countries like India. So, why is India following the same prescription?

We need our own approach that capi-

talises on the realities of the virus and the virtues of India. First, it is becoming clear that the fatality rate of the virus is much lower than it appears. Antibody studies in Italy, Germany, California and New York show that for every one case recorded in the system, there may be five-10 others who have immunity. In all likelihood, they got their immunity from very mild or silent infections. If confirmed, this has two implications. First, the virus is too widespread to allow for controlled suppression in India, and that the virus is not as fatal as has been initially assumed.

Add to that, COVID-19 is much less dangerous, almost 20 times less dangerous, for those under the age of 50. Three-quarters of Indians are under 50, and they account for more than 80 per cent of its productivity. They are the ones who earn to support the young and the old. India's under-50 could thus "recover" back from social distancing into productive employment.

"Recover" does not mean back to normal. It means a large-scale return to work but with a few practical conditions: No physical contact, everyone wears homemade masks, places of employment provide water and soap and require disinfection three times a day, maintain "arm span" distance where practical; amplify in the media the three major symptoms of COVID and provide advice on self-isolation if any two of those three present; and, testing and tracing where possible. No large parties, no large gatherings. A simple message, posted all over the country.

While allowing this, one would selectively "shield" the elderly, the vulnerable and those who feel particularly at risk. They should continue to practise social distancing as they do now, and should use face masks and "arm span" when interacting with the young.

Modelling studies by the London School of Hygiene show that such an approach of 'recover and shield" for countries like India could achieve the benefits of an early economic recovery, and dramatically decrease the number of cases requiring hospitalisation and deaths. Indeed, the number of deaths in India could be held to less than those lost every year from smoking and air pollution.

India could use its sophisticated system of collecting data by districts and zoning them by COVID cases to implement this model in stages, comparing districts as it goes along, refining the method and sharing it with the rest of the world.

The strategies of the West will not work for India, nor for the other low and middleincome countries. Following them will lead to an economic and humanitarian disaster. With its own version of "recover and shield", India can pioneer a better way. And it does not have to wait. It can start tomor-

The writer is dean of the faculty of medicine, dentistry and health sciences at The University of Melbourne

Schooling in times of corona

will also create jobs.

When it comes to the

of a lockdown. There is

rules, such as no large

the number of people

allowed in each

economy, the question is not

whether or not there should

be a lockdown but what kind

growing evidence that we can

create a few social-interaction

gatherings, buses, and trains

running but with limits on

compartment, planes with

alternate seats vacant. This

will mean a rise in fares but

that is a price we will have to

shield the poor with directed

subsidies. We will need new

staff to manage this, which

pay. The government can

Roles of parents, teachers have merged, education must be founded on compassion

Shailendra Sharma

"I HOPE MY children have eaten today." "I called all 35 children from my class yesterday. I could not get through to three of them. Hope they are fine." "Rahul barely sits for 10 minutes in one place. I wonder how he is coping with confinement. I hope he is not stepping out." These were the remarks of the Delhi government teachers whom we called for their views on how to support the learning of children during the lockdown.

Next, we called a few parents. One of them asked, "When will she get her textbooks?" "Every year she gets her books for the next class in April, but this year we don't know whether she is in a new class. When will she start going to school?" Another parent was a bit worried: "My son wanted to join engineering college after school. With so many days of schooling lost, will he get enough time to prepare?'

In another time, whether the child has eaten or not would have been the concern of parents, and if the child is learning well, a concern of teachers. But not anymore. This distinction has blurred during the lockdown. Everyone is worried about the well-being of children. Therefore, any teaching-learning approach has to be imbued with care, concern, and compassion. It is in this context that the Delhi government launched its initiative, "Parenting in the time of corona". It seeks to combine the role of parents and teachers and

encourage them to step into each other's

Ageneric ``happiness class for family" wasintroduced for all children and their families. For about a fortnight, government teachers conducted daily online classes on two distinct components of the happiness curriculum — the practice of mindfulness and selfreflection through stories and activities. Daily viewership of these classes on social media platforms averaged about 40,000.

To ensure the continuous learning of children in Delhi's government-run schools, a twofold strategy has been adopted. One, for younger children up to class eight, using a non-internet based approach and second, for older children, in classes nine to 12 using the

For younger children, the government aligned its approach with two ongoing programmes in schools — happiness classes and Mission Buniyaad. Information on daily activities, generic and specific, is sent through SMS and IVR (interactive voice response) to parents. Mission Buniyaad involves parents helping children in reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. Happiness activities support the emotional well-being of children and encourage them to self-reflect and think critically. We use SMS because nearly 40 per cent of children in elementary classes do not have access to smartphones and IVR can enable even non-literate parents in facilitating the recommended activities. Nearly 5.7 lakh parents get these messages every day.

Nearly 68 per cent of the students in higher classes have access to a smartphone – a more staggered and online approach has been adopted for them. As soon as a child joins class 12, preparation for the board exams or competitive exams begins. Considering this, live online classes were introduced with the help of a technology partner, Career Launcher. Within two weeks, nearly 81 per cent of the likely class 12 batch, with smartphones, were offered registration. Online classes are conducted in 11 subjects by a lead teacher for each subject. Three coteachers, who assist the lead teacher, keep a tab on the questions of students in the chatbox and prompt the lead teacher to respond. The handholding of the teachers by the technology partner has enabled about 60 teachers to transition from the classroom to screen teaching. The confidence of these teachers has thrown open the possibility for the Delhi government to consider creating its own online teaching platform.

After careful analysis of the examination results of the last academic year, it was found that in class 10, nearly 26 per cent students failed in math — the highest among all subjects. To address this, online math teaching for class 9 was introduced in partnership with the internationally-renowned Khan Academy. Students join the class by clicking a link, sent to them through SMS, to reach the video shortlisted as per the lesson plan. After each lesson, students take an online test to assess if they have understood the concept. For students of classes 10 and 12, waiting for the completion of the remaining board exams and results, an online spoken English and personality development course has been introduced in partnership with the British Council and Macmillan Education.

A weekly live review by the Education Minister of Delhi with students, parents, and teachers helped in deepening the engagement and evolution of the approach. The Delhi government now plans to telecast its classes as per the lesson plan of its schools on free-to-air TV channels. Suggestions from students, parents, teachers, and principals have been invited to develop a protocol for school education after the lockdown.

The lockdown could not have been anticipated. However, in retrospect, this crisis has given us an opportunity to usher in a new era of learning, one that is based on the fundamental principles of schooling – care, concern, and compassion.

The writer is principal advisor to Director Education at Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dangerous augury THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Justice

deferred' (IE, May 14). The Supreme Court's referral of the restoration of 4G services in Jammu & Kashmir issue to a special committee isn't surprising. Since the abrogation of Article 370, the SC has been dragging its feet on the many contentious issues emanating thereafter. If judiciary too starts using national security as a pretext to forsake its duty of protecting people's rights, then it doesn't augur well for the future. Kamna Chhabra, Gurugram

MIGRANTS FIRST

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The first tranche' (IE, May 13). Rhetoric and buzzwords need to be replaced with action on ground. The need of the hour is to attend to the lakhs of migrant labourers who are on roads, suffering emotional and physical pain. They should be immediately transported to their homes and given some money. Else, the vast workforce, movers of our economy, will lose faith in the state

RD Singh, Ambala

IMMUNITY GAMBLE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The cure that lasts' (IE, May 14). Herd immunity is not something India should not wait for. In the process of developing herd immunity, many lives could be lost as India's inadequate healthcare facilities won't be able to bear the burden of increased COVID cases. The best solution, therefore, is a gradual opening of lockdown, with strict measures of social distancing in place till a vaccine is available.

Dimpy Bhatia, Delhi

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

• TIME FOR A RELOOK ATLOCKDOWN: **RUCHIGUPTA**

WHEN COVID HITS **SLUMS: RAMAN, NIRMA BORA AND KANIKA SINGH**

www.indianexpress.com

STATES' CALL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Heed the difference' (IE, May 13). Staggered easing of lockdown measures is best left to the states. Centre may spell out policies to fight the pandemic and revive the economy, but states should be given the leeway to respond to the ground situation as per the former's guidelines.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurugram

JUST NOT ENOUGH

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Rs 1000 crore for welfare of poor, migrant labour from PM CARES" (IE, May 13). We don't know how much money there is in the PMCARES fund. But the declared amount of Rs 1,000 crore for the poor migrants is peanuts. An estimate suggests there are more than 12 crore migrant labourers in India, So, it comes to less than Rs 100 per labourer. It may work for a headline, but in reality the amount is nothing.

Anil Kumar Jain, Jaipur

8 THE OUTBREAK NATION

district.

of migrants stranded in another

checkpost around 10.30 pm.

According to survivors, the

migrants had set out from

Kharera in Haryana on Sunday

and taken rest at an ashram in

Saharanpur a day before the ac-

cident. They had covered a few

kilometres on Wednesday when

cident, UP Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath announced compen-

sation of Rs 2 lakh each to the

families of the deceased and Rs

50,000 each to those of the in-

jured. He also ordered the

Saharanpur authorities to probe

the matter and arrange for the

bodies to be taken to their re-

spective homes.

Taking cognizance of the in-

the incident took place.

President to forego 30% pay, announces austerity steps

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday announced that he would forego 30 per cent of his salary for a year. He has already donated his March salary to the PM CARES fund and also decided to defer purchase of the Presidential Limousine which was to be used for ceremonial occasions.

A statement issued by Rashtrapati Bhawan said "this will be a small but significant contribution to realise the government's vision of making India self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) and energise the nation to take up the challenge to fight the pandemic...'

According to the statement, no new capital work will be taken up in the current financial year and minimum maintenance work will be carried out.

Vice-President M Venkajah Naidu had announced last month that he will forego 30 per cent of his salary till normalcy is restored. The Rajya Sabha secretariat has identified ways to save about Rs 60 crore for this financial year through various measures. The Vice-President's secretariat is targeting a total saving of Rs 80 crore.

CBSE gives second chance to students who failed class IX, XI

New Delhi: Students of class IX and XI who failed to clear their final examinations will be given a chance to reappear, Central Board of Secondary Education announced as a one-time relief measure amid the Covid-19 crisis.

"Children are confined at home. Their schools are closed. They are experiencing mental stress and anxiety. Parents are worried about salaries, health of family etc. In this difficult time, children who have not been able to clear school examinations will be even more upset," read a statement by Controller of Examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj.

The board said that the schoolbased test can be taken by students irrespective of the number of subjects they have failed in, the number of times they have attempted the exam, and whether or not the exams have been completed or results released yet. The board said schools may conduct offline, onthey deem fit, but added that students must be given sufficient time to prepare for these. ENS

UP: 6 killed as bus hits Bihar migrants walking home

AMIL BHATNAGAR NOIDA, MAY 14

A FATHER-SON duo were among six people who were killed when a group of migrant workers, who were walking from Haryana to their villages in Bihar, were allegedly hit by a speeding UPSRTC bus on the Muzaffarnagar-Saharanpur state highway in Muzaffarnagar district.

Four others were injured in the accident late on Wednesday. Two of them were taken to Meerut for treatment.

"We were told by local residents that these people were migrants who were walking. Six people were declared brought dead after being rushed to the hospital. The accused driver, Rajveer, was drinking and driving and has been arrested for death due to negligence," said Anil Kaparvan, SHO of Kotwali police station in Muzaffarnagar. The accused hails from

Firozabad district The deceased have been

identified as Harek Singh (51),

9 UP workers killed in MP

Bhopal: Nine migrant workers from UP were killed and 54 injured when a truck carrying labourers collided with a bus near Guna bypass in Madhya Pradesh early Thursday. The truck carrying 65 people – most of them workers - from Mumbai was on its way to Unnao in Uttar Pradesh while the bus was returning from Bhind to Ahmedabad after dropping passengers. The bus driver was among those injured and a case has been filed against him as the bus was on the wrong side, police said. ENS

his son Vikas (22), Guddu (18), Vasudev (22), Harish Sahni (48)

and Virendra (28). Virendra was from Patna and

As cases rise, marginal growth in patients Guddu was from Bhojpur while the rest were from Gopalgan requiring critical care The bus, registered at UP-SRTC Mathura depot, had earlier travelled from Agra to Saharanpur after dropping off a group

Patients

Patients

Patients

hospitals

on oxygen

in ICU

ABANTIKA GHOSH

district, police said. The empty bus was due to make a journey NEW DELHI, MAY 14 back home when it allegedly ran over the group near Ghalauli

WHILE THERE were 134 deaths due to coronavirus (all-India total 2.549) and total confirmed cases reported touched 78,003, as of Thursday morning,185 patients across the country are on ventilators, 1,425 patients are in ICUs, and 1,282 require oxygen support.

In the last 24 hours, 3,722 new cases have been reported.

These figures of patients needing additional care also show that as coronavirus cases in the country have trebled over the last fortnight, the percentage of patients needing critical care has risen only marginally.

On April 29, when total active cases in the country were 21.632. these figures were 2.17 per cent admitted in Intensive Care Unit (ICU), 0.36 per cent patients on ventilators, and 1.29 per cent requiring oxygen support.

The figures until Wednesday, when the total number of active cases was 47,480, show that 3 per cent patients need ICU, 0.39 per cent are on ventilator, and 2.7 per cent on oxygen support.

The fact that these numbers have remained stable is important because one of the concerns of governments across the world in dealing with Covid-19 has been the apprehension about hospitals running out of space.

So far, 26,234 people have been cured across the country.

Data available with the Health Ministry until Wednesday show that in 900 dedicated coronavirus hospitals in the country there are 1.79.882 beds (1.60.610 isolation beds and 19,272 ICU beds) and in 2,040 dedicated Covid-19 health centres there are 1,29,689 beds

80 (0.36%) on ventilator 185 (0.39%) 280 (1.29%) **CAREGIVING INFRASTRUCTURE** 2,79,950 Isolation beds ICU beds (with oxygen supply) (with ventilators) 4,93,101 beds (without **2,040** Covid health centres critical care facilities) **8,708** guarantine centres 900 dedicated Covid **5.577** Covid care centres (Source: Ministry of Health data)

COVID CURVE: A TWO-WEEK TALE

470 (2.17%)

■ April 29 ■ May 13

(1,19,340 isolation beds and 10,349 ICU beds). The former are also equipped with ventilators while the latter have oxygen

In addition, there are 8,708 quarantine centres and 5,577 Covid Care Centres with 4,93,101 beds. These are isolation facilities which are not hospital-based.

The Health Ministry on Thursday issued guidelines for conducting pooled testing in zero case districts, or districts that have reported cases in the past but are currently designated in the Green Zone. "A decision has been taken to use one-time RT-PCR-based pooled sampling for surveillance purposes for migrant workers in institutional quarantine facilities. international passengers in institutional quarantine facilities/hotels earmarked for quarantine and

for surveillance purposes in green zones (districts with no case/no case reported in last 21 days)," the document says It lays down that a maximum

Active cases

21,632

of 25 samples can be pooled. If any such "pool" of 25 tests positive, all individual samples would then have to be tested to identify the person who is positive.

The National Centre for Disease Control has now started testing using COBAS 6800, a fully automated, high-end machine for performing real-time PCR with a high throughput of around 1,200 samples in 24 hours.

The total number of tests done so far across the country is

According to the ministry, the last three days' doubling time is 13.9 days; doubling time in the

ICMR clears 1st batch of key **ELISA** antibody testing kits made in India

KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, MAY 14

IN ANOTHER step towards deploying antibody testing kits manufactured in the country for a nationwide household Covid-19 survey, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved the first batch manufactured by Zydus-Cadila.

The test kits, called "COVID KAVACH ELISA", was developed at the National Institute of Virology, Pune, by isolating the virus from patients in India earlier this week.

According to an ICMR official, the ELISA kits will be used in the Health Ministry's new nationwide "sero-survey", meant to detect prevalence of antibodies that appear after a patient has recovered. The ICMR will lead the testing of 24,000 individuals in 69 districts at household level as part of this sero-survey.

The ICMR says the first manufactured batch of ELISA kits has a sensitivity (accurate positive test results) of 98.7 per cent and a specificity (accurate negative test results) of 100 per cent.

The Council stated in a release.

While real-time RT-PCR is the frontline test for clinical diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2, robust antibody tests are critical for surveillance to understand the proportion of population exposed to infection." ELISA antibody tests are different from the rapid antibody tests

previously used heavily by Indian authorities. The WHO has called ELISAs "highly sensitive and specific" tests that are suitable for "for testing large numbers of samples per day, as well as in blood banks or for surveillance studies".

While only Zydus-Cadila had earlier accepted a non-exclusive agreement to produce the test kits, ICMR stated that "now, ICMR has been approached by Cipla Pvt.

Migrant workers and their families wait for medical screening in Chandigarh before boarding a bus for the railway station for their journey home, on Thursday. Jasbir Malhi

Buses not in sight, people protest, throw stones in MP town near state border

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, MAY 14

HUNDREDS OF people headed for their homes in northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from Maharashtra, and transiting through Madhya Pradesh, on Thursday protested on the highway at Bijasan Ghat in MP's Barwani district when they thought there were no more buses to take them on the journey forward.

A few people reportedly threw stones at policemen in frustration. There were no reports of any injury, and the situation was soon brought under control, officials said.

A video clip circulating on social media showed police using force to discipline the migrant workers after they pelted stones and tried to block the highway. Barwani District Collector

Amit Tomar said the tension did not last long, and that the road has been cleared. The incident comes a week

after people blocked the highway in Barwani after being denied permission to enter MP from Maharashtra. Bijasan Ghat is the

entry point from Maharashtra to

Tomar told The Indian Express that the number of people who entered MP from Maharashtra on Thursday was much more than that on Tuesday and Wednesday. when 100 and 125 buses, respectively, could take them on the further journey to Dewas, 200 km to the northwest past Indore and the transit point from where these people continue their journey to the northern states.

On Thursday, nearly 200 buses were required, which had to be arranged from nearby districts and took time. Tomar said. According to reports, once more than 100 buses left Bijasan Ghat, people left behind thought there were no more vehicles to ferry them and started protesting.

Buses arranged by Maharashtra government take the migrant workers from Dhule to Bijasan Ghat. Most of these people work in districts such as Nashik, Ahmednagar and Aurangabad in Maharashtra. The MP government on Thursday said 15,000 people have been taken in buses from Bijasan Ghat to Dewas in

In top 10 Covid states, nine cities account for bulk of positive cases **KRISHN KAUSHIK**

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

just concentrated in a few states, they are highly concentrated in a handful of cities in these states.

A district-wise analysis of data for the 10 states with the highest number of positive cases in the country shows that just nine cities in these states account for two out of every three cases.

The nine cities—Delhi (all 11 districts), Mumbai (including Mumbai Suburban), Pune, Thane, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Indore, Jaipur and Chennai—had 46,941 cases as of May 13, which is 65.77 per cent of the total 71,372 cases in Maharashtra, Guiarat, Tamil Nadu, Delhi. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal,

Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. All these states recorded over 1,000 cases each. Only one other state — Telangana — had more than 1,000 cases, but districtwise data for it was not publicly available. Data till May 13 was



Migrants from Jharkhand wait for buses to take them to Panyel railway station in Navi Mumbai. Narendra Vaskar

Within these 10 states, an analysis of case load distribution across districts shows that cases in Maharashtra, Guiarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were concentrated in very few cities. Two to three cities accounted for 70 to 80 per cent of the state's total case load. In Maharashtra, just three

cities-Mumbai, Pune and Thane—accounted for almost 85 per cent (21,938 cases) of the state's 25,881 positive cases.

Top neuro depts raise alarm over sharp fall

Neighbouring Gujarat, too, had a high concentration of cases in a couple of cities. Out of 9,267 cases across 33 districts, more than 71 per cent, or 6,645 cases, were in Ahmedabad. If Surat is also taken into account, then these two cities had 7,612 or 82.2 per cent of the state's case load. Out of West Bengal's 23 dis-

tricts. Kolkata and Howrah accounted for 1,610 cases, which is more than 70 per cent of the

In Madhya Pradesh, which has 52 districts and 4,173 cases, more than 70 per cent cases were in Indore and Bhopal. than half of Tamil Nadu's 9.218 cases. Jaipur and Jodhpur accounted for more than half of Rajasthan's 4,307 cases. In case of Uttar Pradesh, five districts including Agra, Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Gautam Buddh Nagar and Meerut accounted for half of the state's total case load of 3,758.

Cases in Andhra Pradesh were concentrated in half of its districts, but within them, the cases were more spread out. There were 2.100 cases in 13 districts, of which 81 per cent were in six districts. Three of Punjab's 22 districts - Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Ialandhar—accounted for 653 cases or a third of the state's total 1,924 cases.

These 10 states had 75 green zone districts with 534 cases, 160 districts in orange zone with 7.735 cases, and 89 red zone districts with 63,103 cases. The red zone districts accounted for 88 per cent of the cases in these

Maharashtra considers lockdown in Mumbai, other cities till May 31

VISHWAS WAGHMODE MUMBAI, MAY 14

IN A meeting with his senior Cabinet colleagues on Thursday. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray discussed extending the lockdown in Mumbai $Metropolitan\,Region(MMR) and$ cities such as Pune, Malegaon and Aurangabad till May 31. He also asked the state administration to submit a report on what activities can be allowed outside containment zones in cities that are in the red zone category.

Uddhav chaired the meeting to discuss the way ahead after May 17. It was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil, Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat, Industries Minister Subhash Desai and Eknath Shinde at Old Mayor bungalow in Dadar. Maintaining that the lock-

Urban Development Minister

down will be extended in these areas, a senior minister said: "We discussed what relaxations can be given and what measures should be taken in red zones or hotspot areas such as Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Malegaon and Aurangabad. We all agreed to extend the lockdown in these areas till May 31, as saving lives is the priority."

Last week, in a meeting with all party leaders, Uddhav had indicated that the lockdown may be extended until May end to prevent the spread of Covid-19. He had also spoken in favour of extending the lockdown during a video conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on

Bus service to restart in 10 Haryana dists

Chandigarh: Haryana Roadways buses will start plying in the state today, carrying 30 passengers almost half the total bus capacity -- on board each bus to maintain social distancing. The service will restart in 10 districts and the buses will avoid Covid-affected districts. No passenger will be allowed to board the bus without online booking or to get off the bus at any spot except for the designated destination of the

in stroke reporting, blame corona fear KARISHMA MEHROTRA NEW DELHI, MAY 14

THIRTEEN NEUROLOGY departments in top public and private hospitals in the country have highlighted coronavirus's impact on non-Covid healthcare, documenting a 61% reduction in reporting of strokes, as well as a significant shortage of essential medicines. They have also highlighted the lack of personal protective equipment at their centres. Published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.

lack of "stroke risk control" during the pandemic may "eventually" lead to increased stroke-related mortality "across the country" in the coming days. "In

virtually all stroke cases...," the survey adds, "timely care in hospitals supersedes the risk of possible exposure to (Covid-19)". AIIMS neurology head M V Padma Srivastava, who was involved with the study, says she is getting just 30-40% of her usual daily patients, as well as fewer

cases in emergency. "Now that we have got the data, we are saythe research, covering centres that ing (lesser reporting) is not beget a high volume of stroke cases cause strokes are happening both in the US and India, states less," she said. "Along with geothat governments have not taken graphical barriers, people are takappropriate measures to "deal ing more chances with perceived with the developing atmosphere minor events, such as numbness. of fear of going to hospitals". which might actually be the har-

The survey cautions that a binger of a major event. It's a risk they are willing to take instead of contracting Covid-19 outside." The US has seen a similar

drop in reporting of strokes during the pandemic, the study states, adding, "The magnitude of decrease in India is deeply troubling, as India has a higher incidence of stroke compared with the United States.'

Along with stroke admissions, there is a decline in post-stroke rehabilitation, of three to six months, which could lead to stroke recurrences, the study states.

Calling this period a "learning curve", Dr Srivastava says, "I think the ICMR, DHR (Department of Health Research), we are all gearing up for new numbers as the scenario changes. Even in Europe, as proper non-Covid pathways have been established, they are

seeing strokes come back in an even bigger way.'

At the same time, Dr Srivastava says she has had cases of patients of stroke who have ended up getting coronavirus, highlighting the difficulty of completely separating corridors for treatment of

Covid and non-Covid patients. As per the study, it is reasonable to assume that peripheral Covid designated centres far away from larger establishments are now taking on extra burden.

The research, covering eight government and five private hospitals, also found an impact of coronavirus on other blood-vessel-related treatments. "Procedures for intravenous thrombolysis (blood clots) and endovascular (cases) have also

been severely affected, with an

overall reduction of 64.76% and

67.21%, respectively, the latter coming to a complete halt in five centres that had regularly provided this service," says the study.

On the shortage of PPE, the study says the risk of infection among healthcare workers "can lead to a reduced workforce available for stroke services". Only five of the centres had full PPE equipment for their healthcare workers. it says. Highlighting the shortage of medicines, it says "political action is required to ensure resumption of drug manufacturing".

It seeks awareness campaigns on "the high morbidity and mortality of non-communicable diseases, including stroke, and the high risk of a second wave of mortality due to these illnesses", and suggests that the government employ special ambulances and other emergency services for such cases.

196,375

#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** 234,431 United Kingd 223,096 144,749 174,284 **1,400,500** US

TOTAL CONFIRMED: 4,405,019

DEATH COUNT: 299,873

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 14

Can Covid-19 spread through stool? Paper reviews evidence

229,540

STUDIES SO far, including a few reported in The Indian Express, have shown evidence of SARS-CoV-2 genetic material in faecal matter. Does that mean the virus can spread through stool? More work is needed to determine that, according to a new review paper.

"Potential Fecal Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: Current Evidence and Implications for Public Health" will appear in an upcoming edition of the International Journal of Infectious Diseases, Rice University (Texas) said in a statement. The paper, currently available online, is led by an epidemiologist from the University. It reviewed an ever-changing body of literature on detection of the novel coronavirus in faecal matter of Covid-19 patients. The major takeaway: studies have mostly been finding only the RNA of the virus in stool.

"Most of the studies that have been done so far are picking up viral RNA in the faeces rather than infectious virus. However, a few studies have showed that infectious virus may be present in stool samples,' lead author E Susan

University statement. Amirian said the mere presence of genetic material is less

Amirian said in the

worrisome than if infectious amounts of viable virus are found in stool in future studies, as that would imply it is possible for it to be transmitted to others through faeces. She said if future research continues finding viable virus in stool, this could have impor-



A sewage treatment plant in Chandigarh. File photo

tant implications, especially for those working in the restaurant industry, nursing homes, day cares, etc.

"Ultimately, more research is needed to determine whether exposure to stool is spreading this virus and making the pandemic worse. But given this possibility, it behooves us

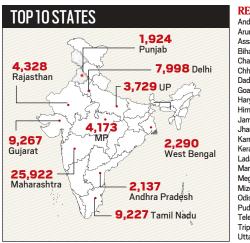
> to be more careful, especially in settings where people have an increased risk of morbidity and death due to Covid-19.'

Amirian said there's no downside to exercising an abundance of caution in following good personal hygiene practices until we know more. "There are plenty of other diseases

out there that are transmitted through fecal contamination, including hepatitis A and norovirus. Following a high level of precaution will help just in case Covid-19 can be spread this way.'

Source: Rice University

INDIA COUNT: 78,003 (2,549 DEATHS)



Chandigarh 59 793 Himachal Pradesh Jharkhand Ladakh Meghalava 538 Odisha

Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, May 14. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states/UTs with at least one case listed above. 26,235 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 32 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

NEW RESEARCH

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

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Freeing prisoners in emergency

Following infections inside Mumbai Central Jail, Maharashtra has started temporarily releasing half the prisoners in its jails. Which ones are being freed, what is the procedure, and what are other states doing?

SUSHANT KULKARNI& **SADAF MODAK**

PUNE, MUMBAI, MAY 14

ON TUESDAY, following an outbreak of novel coronavirus infections in Mumbai Central Jail, better known as Arthur Road jail, the Maharashtra government issued a circular that effectively facilitates the release of half the prisoners lodged in the state's jails, on temporary bail and emergency parole. Until Thursday, around 7,000 of a targeted 17,000plus prisoners had been released.

What led to the move?

Over the last several days, 184 persons (158 inmates and 26 staff) were found infected in Arthur Road Jail, besides a 54-year old woman inmate at Byculla Jail. While Tuesday's circular came after this, the government's moves to release prisoners had, in fact, preceded the outbreak

 $In \, March, the \, Supreme \, Court \, had \, directed$ decongesting of prisons and observed that the "bitter truth is that our prisons are overcrowded, making it difficult for the prisoners to maintain social distancing". With many Maharashtra jails severely overcrowded, housing prisoners four to five times their capacities, the state government became the first to take a move in that direction.

On March 25, a high-powered committee recommended release of undertrials charged with offences punishable up to seven years. It also directed release of convicts on emergency parole with a few conditions. On March 28, officials of the District Legal Services Authority began facilitating release of undertrials. Then on May 8 (following the outbreak in the jail), the state government amended the Maharashtra Prisons (Mumbai Furlough and Parole) Rules, and issued a notification enabling the release of certain categories of convicts.

How many will be released, and how many have been so far?

According to a report by the Prisons Department submitted on Monday, 5,105 prisoners had already been released as a result of the decisions on March 25 and May 8, another 3,017 were in the process of being released, and a further 9,520 would be released as a result of Tuesday's order. The to-



A prisoner's relative waits outside Mumbai Central Jail, better known as Arthur Road jail. This was before the outbreak inside the jail. Ganesh Shirshekar

tal of 17,642 represents nearly half the 35,239 prisoners lodged in the state's 60 jails before the lockdown.

By Thursday, the number already released was up to 7,000 - 5,200 on temporary bail and 1,800 on emergency parole.

Tuesday's order was for the release of all undertrials, relaxing the earlier category of those facing up to seven years imprisonment. but with exceptions including those charged with murder, rape, kidnapping, bank frauds, major financial scams, money-laundering, anti-terror laws, child sexual abuse as well as all foreign nationals. It also said inmates who reside outside the state can be released only after the lockdown period is over and public transportation is available.

The release is temporary. Initially, both bail and parole is valid only for 45 days, or till the application of Epidemic Diseases Act from the state is revoked, whichever is earlier. The 45day period would later be extended in blocks of 30 days each. But eventually, the prisoners are supposed to be back in the barracks.

Why is the release taking time?

While the decision has been taken by the government and the prisoners have been identified, the process of obtaining bail or parole has to be followed as earlier. The bail order has to be issued by a relevant court, while parole has to be sanctioned by authorised jail officer. "Even though the decision to release them has been taken, the prisoners have to

send bail applications to the designated courts. Selection of eligible prisoners, verification of their records and completion of all formalities takes time. The superintendent of a jail is authorised to grant parole, and there too there is a process to be followed. some paperwork to be done," said a senior officer in the Prisons Department.

The process of release faced another hurdle. It was begun at a time when lockdown restrictions were the most severe. Prisoners released had no means to reach various destinations. and a few non-profit organisations came forward to help in some districts like Latur. Some prisoners were found loitering on the streets.

In Pune, a released prisoner was murdered by a group of people; old enmity is suspected. In Mumbai, a released woman inmate could not reach her home in Palghar, and was given shelter by a woman jailer for a night before another inmate, newly released, offered to take her home with her.

How crowded are Maharashtra's jails?

Before the lockdown, the state's jails were accommodating 50% over their capacity. This is much higher than the national average occupancy in central prisons, which on an average

house 13 prisoners against a capacity of 10.

The Maharashtra Prison Department's report said the capacity in state jails is 23,547 while there were 35,239 prisoners before the lockdown. It warned against an outbreak in other prisons if they are not decongested.

Before the release began, Arthur Road jail was packed to more than four times its capacity – 3,718 prisoners in place of 804. In Pune's Yerwada Jail, 5,717 prisoners are housed, when its capacity is 2,449. The other important jails in the state, Thane Central Jail, Kalyan District Jail, and Byculla, all are similarly crowded, a majority of them undertrials.

"These cramped and crowded jails – mostly British-era central prisons in Maharashtra — are a ticking time bomb for the spread of infectious diseases. The barracks are very crowded, so are spaces of eating and cleaning," said the Prisons Department officer.

Have there been coronavirus infections in prisons in other states?

States including Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi have recorded Covid-19 cases in their prisons. Following the Supreme Court order, most states have constituted a high-powered committee and come up with their respective categories of prisoners eligible for release.

According to data collated by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, most states have made similar exceptions against the release of inmates charged with offences including murder, rape, terror, drug trafficking, child sexual abuse. While the Supreme Court had said the categories for release should be determined but not be limited to the nature of offence, duration of sentence, and previous criminal record, most states have adhered to these and granted release only to those facing charges that involve punishment up to seven years in jail.

Haryana and Odisha have directed the release of all prisoners above age 65 on a temporary basis, with exceptions. Goa has directed undertrial review committees, set up in each district as per a previous Supreme Court order, to undertake the responsibility of releasing undertrials.

Committees across the country can recommend release of 14 categories of prisoners, including women and those with severe

COVID ECONOMIC PACKAGE: DAY2

How 'One Nation, One Ration Card' works

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

AS PART of the Union government's Covid economic relief package, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday announced the national rollout of 'One Nation, One Ration Card' - a system of inter- and intra-state portability of ration cards — in all states and Union Territories by March 2021. Portability will enable migrant workers

and members of their family to access Public Distribution System benefits from any fair price shop anywhere in the country, Sitharaman said. Twenty states and UTs are already on board to implement the scheme.

One Nation, One Ration Card

Under The National Food Security Act, 2013, about 81 crore people are entitled to buy subsidised foodgrains - rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg, and coarse grains at Re 1/kg - from designated fair price shops under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

About 23 crore ration cards have been issued to beneficiaries across the country. However, the cardholder can buy foodgrains only from the specific fair price shop in her locality to which she has been assigned.

Once the One Nation, One Ration Card system becomes operational nationally, each beneficiary will be able to buy subsidised



Migrant workers board a bus on the **MP-Maharashtra border.** Nirmal Harindran

foodgrains from any fair price shop in India. Thus, a migrant worker from, say, Basti district of Uttar Pradesh, will be able to access PDS benefits in Mumbai, where she might have gone in search of work.

Biometric authentication

The new system, based on a technological solution, will identify a beneficiary through biometric authentication on electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices at the fair price shops. So, end-to-end computerisation is required for ration card portability to be
Integrated
Management of Public been installed in around 90% of fair price shops nationally. Also, about 90% of ration cards have been seeded with the Aadhaar numbers of the respective cardholders.

Once 100% Aadhaar seeding of ration cards is achieved, and all fair price shops have been covered by PoS devices, a migrant worker will be enabled to use their existing/same ration card at any fair price shop in the country. The Integrated Management of Public

Distribution System (IM-PDS) portal (http://www.impds.nic.in/) will provide the technological platform for inter-state portability of ration cards. A different portal, annavitran.nic.in, will

host the data on the distribution of foodgrains through E-PoS devices within a state.

Annavitran will enable a migrant worker or her family avail PDS benefits outside their district but within their state. While a person can buy foodgrains as per

her entitlement under the NFSA at the place where she is based, members of her family can still go to their ration dealer back home.

In the works for two years

While the Covid-19 crisis has exposed the stark reality of the condition of migrant workers, work on the ration card portability project had begun with the launch of the

operational. As of May 9, ePoS devices have Distribution System (IM-PDS) scheme in April 2018. The idea was to reform India's PDS, which

has been historically marred by inefficiency and leakages. The scheme envisaged a technological solution involving the use of Aadhaar to identify beneficiaries.

20 states and UTs on board

It was initially proposed to roll out One Nation, One Ration Card by June 1 this year. Seventeen states and UTs — Andhra Pradesh. Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu – are already on board. The states of Odisha, Mizoram, and Nagaland are expected to come on board by June 1.

Intra-state more popular While inter-state ration card portability

is available in 20 states already, it is not very popular yet. According to data available on the IM-PDS portal, only 275 transactions had been done until May 14. However, the number of transactions us-

ing intra-state ration card portability has been quite high. Data on the Annavitaran portal show about 1 crore transactions took place using the facility last month.

Cats can infect cats with Covid, without symptoms: unpacking a new study

KABIR FIRAQUE NEW DELHI, MAY 14

ON WEDNESDAY, researchers published a paper with evidence that cats can transmit the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 to one another, and without showing symptoms. The fact that cats can get infected has been known for some time now; what do the latest findings add to existing knowledge?

Previous cases & findings

The most famous case of infection among cats, big or domestic, has been that of four-year-old Nadia, a Malayan tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo. She tested positive last month, having apparently caught the virus from a zoo employee who had not shown symptoms. Within weeks, a few more tigers and lions at the zoo tested positive.

Among domestic cats, the first known infection happened in Belgium. This was after its human started showing symptoms.

There has also been at least one previous study, published in *Science*, that suggested domestic cats can infect infect one another. Chinese researchers inoculated a number of cats with the virus, and placed three of the cats in cages alongside other caged cats, which had not been inoculated. Later, the cats were euthanised; the virus RNA was found in all the inoculated cats and in one exposed cat, but not in the other two exposed cats.

The newest research

The new paper, by researchers from the US and Japan, is published in the New



Temperature check in a cat cafe. AP

England Journal of Medicine.

The researchers isolated the coronavirus from a human patient and administered it to three cats. SARS-CoV-2 showed in nasal

swabs of two cats the following day, and in all three within three days.

The day after administering the virus, the researchers placed a second cat in each cage. These three were not administered the virus. Within six days, all of the cats were shedding the virus. And all of it was detected in nasal swabs, but none in rectal swabs.

Each cat shed SARS-CoV-2 for up to six days. None of them showed symptoms, and eventually all of them got rid of the virus.

What is new, why it matters

The key finding was that cats can be asymptomatic while carrying the virus. 'That was a major finding for us ù the cats did not have symptoms," lead researcher Yoshihiro Kawaoka said in a statement issued by the University of Wisconsin.

Also, all the cats went on to clear the virus. In the Science study, in which the researchers euthanised the cats. Also, the Chinese researchers wrote they could not take nasal swabs because the cats were aggressive.

The latest findings, according to the researchers, suggest that cats may be capable of becoming infected when exposed to people or other cats positive for SARS-CoV-2. Other researchers have previously suggested reasons why cats may be vulnerable to infection from humans: feline and human cells have similar ACE2 receptors, which are enzymes that facilitate the coronavirus's entry in the body.

The general view remains that a cat is more likely to get Covid-19 from a human, than a human getting it from a cat. The researchers have advised people with symptoms of COVID-19 avoid contact with cats.

What it does not mean

On Thursday, the Associated Press quoted the American Veterinary Medical Association as saying that just because an animal can be deliberately infected in a lab "does not mean that it will easily be infected with that same virus under natural conditions". It said "there is no evidence to suggest that animals, including pets, that may be incidentally infected by humans are playing a role in the spread of COVID-19."

The existing guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say that based on the limited information available so far, the risk of pets spreading coronavirus to people "is considered to be low.'

10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD



In Singapore. Reuters

SINGAPORE Migrant curbs to start easing from June

Singapore: Singapore will gradually lift some of the measures targeting the migrant workers to prevent the spread of the coronavirus from June, as a senior minister asked the public not to be "overly alarmed" by the spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country. Singapore reported 752 new cases as of noon on Thursday, taking the total number of infections in the country to 26,098. The vast majority of the cases are work permit holders residing in foreign worker dormitories. All 323,000 workers will be tested to ensure they are virus-free before resuming work, a minister said.

JAPAN Emergency state lifted in most areas

Tokyo: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lifted a state of emergency in large parts of the country on Thursday but said it would remain in place in Tokyo until the coronavirus is contained. Abe lifted the emergency in 39 of Japan's 47 prefectures but left it in force in the capital and in the second-largest urban area of Osaka, as he tries to cushion the economic blow while stopping the virus. "While controlling spread of the virus as much as possible by acting on the premise that the virus is all around us, we will restore ordinary work and daily life," Abe said.

UNITED KINGDOM New antibody test approved

London: A new antibody test to establish whether someone has been infected with coronavirus in the past has been approved by health officials, it emerged on Thursday. Public Health England (PHE) said the antibody test, by Swiss pharmaceutical company Roche, was a "very positive development". "This is a very positive development because such a highly specific test is a very reliable marker of past infection," said Professor John Newton, national co-ordinator of the UK Coronavirus Testing Programme.

Coronavirus may never go away: WHO

EMMA FARGE & MICHAEL SHIELDS GENEVA, MAY 14

THE CORONAVIRUS that causes COVID-19 could become endemic like HIV, the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday, warning against any attempt to predict how long it would keep circulating and calling for a "massive effort" to counter it.

"It is important to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities, and this virus may never go away," World Health Organisation emergencies expert Mike Ryan told an online briefing.

"I think it is important we are realistic and I don't think anyone can predict when this disease will disappear," he said.

"I think there are no promises in this and there are no dates. This disease may settle into a long problem, or it may not be,"

However, he said the world had some control over how it coped with the disease, although this would take a "massive effort" even if a vaccine was found a prospect he described as a "massive moonshot".

More than 100 potential vaccines are being developed, including several in clinical trials, but experts have underscored the difficulties of finding vaccines that are effective against coronaviruses.

He also expressed cynicism about the prospects for eradication even with a vaccine, saving, "we have some perfectly effective vaccines on this planet that we have not used effectively for diseases we could have eradicated", as per a New York Times report.

Ryan noted that vaccines exist for other illnesses, such as



WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

POSSIBLE DRUG APPROVAL 'BEFORE THE SUMMER'

THE EUROPEAN **Medicines Agency** predicted there could be licensed drugs to treat coronavirus in the next few months and that a

vaccine might even be

a "best-case scenario."

approved in early 2021, in

DR MARCO Cavaleri said approving medicines might be possible "before the summer," citing ongoing clinical trials. Cavaleri cautioned many experimental vaccines never make it to the end and that there are often delays

eliminated.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus added: "The trajectory is in our hands, and it's everybody's business, and we should all contribute to stop this pandemic."

Ryan said "very significant control" of the novel coronavirus was required in order to lower the assessment of risk. which he said remained high at the "national, regional and



A medical worker conducts a coronavirus test for a child as residents queue up in Wuhan on Thursday. Reuters

Millions of children could die of preventable diseases as health services are overtaxed

THE NEW YORK TIMES NEW YORK, MAY 14

ABOUT 1.2 million children in more than 100 countries are at risk of dving from preventable causes every six months because health services are overstressed or curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic, UNICEF said this week. The figure is in addition to the

2.5 million children age 5 or younger who already die every six months in 118 low- and mid-

Different ways in which the outbreak affects children

OVER THE course of the pandemic, the many indirect ways in which the pandemic has affected children have been highlighted. This is visible in a number of sectors — in education, where many have fallen off the radar; or in healthcare, as the UNICEF report elaborates. Reports also found that the outbreak would push many families that rose above the poverty line below it once again, which is predicted to affect many children.

13,800 children who die every day will be joined by more than

6,000 others whose lives could have been saved. UNICEF said the

published in the Lancet Global Health journal by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "Under a worst-case sce-

estimate was based on a study

nario, the global number of children dying before their fifth birthdays could increase for the first time in decades," Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's executive director, said in a statement.

The spillover effects of Covid-19 have also heightened the threat to expectant mothers. UNICEF said 56,700 more maternal deaths

First Covid-19 cases detected

Psychological suffering from virus growing, warns UN chief

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS, MAY 14

SECRETARY-GENERAL Antonio Guterres urged governments, civil society and health authorities on Wednesday to urgently address mental health needs arising from the pandemic, warning that psychological suffering is increasing.

The UN chief said in a video message launching a policy briefing that "after decades of neglect and under-investment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress."

He pointed to "grief at the loss of loved ones, shock at the loss of jobs, isolation and restrictions on movement, difficult family dynamics, and uncertainty and fear for the future."

Guterres said those most at risk and in need of help are front-line health care workers, older people, adolescents, young people, those with preexisting mental health conditions, and those caught up in conflict and crisis.

The 17-page UN briefing stressed that "the mental health and well-being of whole societies have been severely impacted by this crisis and are a priority to be addressed urgently.'

The UN said "a long-term upsurge in the number and severity of mental health problems is likely" and warned that if action isn't taken COVID-19 "has the seeds of a major mental health crisis" as well as "a physical

US: Wisconsin Supreme Court strikes down stay-at-home order

NEIL VIGDOR NEW YORK, MAY 14

THE WISCONSIN Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected the extension of the state's stay-at-home order, siding with Republican legislators in a high-profile challenge of the emergency authority of a statewide official during the coronavirus pandemic. Governor Tony Evers, a

Democrat, had extended the prohibition on most travel and operations of nonessential businesses until May 26. But in a 4-to-3 ruling, the court said that Wisconsin's top health official had not followed the proper process. Although the opinion cen-

tered on the technical method by which the limits had been set, several conservative justices conveved their dismay at the restrictions themselves. This comprehensive claim to

control virtually every aspect of a person's life is something we normally associate with a prison. not a free society governed by the rule of law," Justice Daniel Kelly wrote in a concurring opinion.

The ruling, Evers's office said, appears to end statewide provisions that required Wisconsin residents to stay home. Within hours, some taverns were making plans for reopening. NYT



A crowded pub in Wisconsin following the court order. AP

Window to fight pandemic closing, warns whistleblower

New York: Dr Rick Bright, the whistleblower who was ousted as head of a federal agency involved in developing a coronvaccine, warned Congress Thursday the outbreak will "get worse and be prolonged" if the US does not swiftly develop a national testing strategy and devise a plan for distributing a vaccine.

"The window is closing to address this pandemic because we still do not have a standard, centralised, coordinated plan to take this nation through this response," said Dr Bright.

He told lawmakers on a House health subcommittee that the country could be facing "the darkest winter in modern history" if the administration did not act swiftly.

He told lawmakers that he had pressed federal officials early on to stockpile remdesivir, a drug that has proved helpful to virus patients, but was ignored. Trump said Thursday that Dr. Bright was "nothing more than a really, unhappy disgruntled

Don't want to speak with Xi: Trump

DOINA CHIACU WASHINGTON, MAY 14

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Thursday said he was very disure to contain the novel coronavirus, saying the worldwide pandemic cast a pall over his trade deal with Beijing.

The coronavirus outbreak originated in Wuhan, China, in December and was spreading silently as the United States and China signed a Phase 1 trade deal hailed by the Republican president as a major achievement.

"I'm very disappointed in China," Trump said in an interview broadcast on Fox Business Network.

"They should have never let this happen. So I make a great trade deal and now I say this doesn't feel the same to me. The ink was barely dry and the plague came over. And it doesn't feel the same to me." the US president said.

The US president's pique extended to Chinese President Xi Jinping, with whom, Trump says repeatedly, he has a good relationship, "But I just - right now I don't want to speak to him. I don't want to speak to him,' Trump said. **REUTERS**

in Bangladesh Rohingya camps AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COX'S BAZAR, MAY 14

TWO ROHINGYA have become the first to test positive for coronavirus from the vast refugee camps in Bangladesh that house almost a million people, officials said Thursday.

Health experts have been warning for some time that the virus could race through the sprawling, unsanitary camps that have been home to the refugees since they fled a military offensive in Myanmar more



Rohingya refugees at a camp in Cox's Bazar. Reuters/File

than two years ago.

Local health coordinator Abu Toha Bhuiyan said the two refugees had been put into isolation, and authorities stepped up prevention measures and were scaling up testing. In early April authorities im-

posed a complete lockdown on the surrounding Cox's Bazar district after a number of cases, restricting all traffic in and out of the camps. Bangladesh authorities also forced aid organisations to slash their camp presence by 80 per cent. Rights groups and activists have expressed concerns that the camps are hotspots of misinformation about the pandemic because of an internet ban imposed last September.

Imran says Pak more vulnerable to poverty, hunger as cases rise

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, MAY 14

PAKISTAN IS more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than the coronavirus-induced lockdown and it is important to keep a balance between health needs and financial problems of the people, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Thursday even as the number of cases in Pakistan rose to 36,717 and the death toll to 788.

Khan chaired a meeting of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to discuss the latest pandemic situation in the country.

Addressing the meeting, Khan said that it is important to keep a balance between health needs and financial problems of the people.

"Our population is more vulnerable to poverty and hunger than lockdown. We should take decisions by keeping in mind the ground reality about the problems faced by the people," he

Khan said adopting safety measures was a key to fight the disease but instead of forced implementation, the people should e sensitised to adopt them.

Emphasising the need for pooling resources, he added that "no leader can rest easy until every individual in every nation is able to access a vaccine free of

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Born into carnage, 18 babies in Afghanistan face an uncertain fate

MUJIB MASHAL KABUL, MAY 14

WHEN THE carnage was over, the dead bodies bagged and the guns put away, what was left behind spoke of the true extent of the tragedy: 18 newborn babies, many covered in blood and most now motherless - casualties of war before they had even left the hospital.

Even for a country steeped in violent death to the point of numbness,the assault on a maternity clinic in Kabul on Tuesday was unfathomable in its cruelty.

Afghanistan is adept at the rituals of violent death. There are procedures for handling the victims, and even well-practiced routines for discarding the remains of the suicide bombers who come to kill and be killed.

But what do you do with so many babies, all too similar in their little shapes and raw faces, most of them now without the first people in their lives and evacuated from a blown-up hospital?

The oldest, born five days earlier, and the youngest, delivered in a safe room after the attack had begun, are lucky: Their mothers survived. Many of the others have barely completed a full 24 hours in this violent world, their mothers murdered next to them.

The heart-wrenching effort to identify the babies at the maternity clinic and reunite them with their families began in the immediate hours after the at-



The newborns, a day after the attack on the clinic. NYT

tack, before the special forces had even left the scene.

Dozens of men gathered around as a community elder

emerged from a hospital that was still drenched in blood with a list of mothers' names. The babies had not yet been named.

"The child of Suraya!" the community elder shouted. "The child of Suraya - she was healthy, I myself helped load it into the ambulance.

"The child of Gul Makai evacuated to the Ataturk hospital," he shouted.

Gul Makai, 35, is a housewife, married to a taxi driver. Her seventh child was born with breathing problems, so they had remained at the hospital.

When the attack began, she said, she and the two other mothers in her room faced a dilemma: Should they try to escape and leave their babies behind? Or should they stay?

The other two mothers stayed, and were most likely dead, she said - she had not

seen them. Gul Makai left her baby, rushed to the hallway, jumped out, and was evacuated through one of the back doors.

Gul Makai stopped a motorcycle, told the man what had happened, and pleaded with him to take her to her home. From home, she called Azizullah to tell him she was safe.

But the baby. For several hours, Gul Maki had no news of her child. And all those hours? "I just wailed," she said. When the community elder reading the list outside the attacked hospital announced that "the child of Gul Makai" had been taken to Ataturk hospital, Azizullah rushed there and called his wife to come over, so

she could identify the baby.

There he was, in a little shirt with pink sleeves and yellow cartoons on its chest: the "child of Gul Makai.'

Outside the ward on Wednesday morning, Azizullah paced with other fathers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles. They had brought the documents needed to pick up the babies, as they were told: national IDs of the father or mother, the signature of

the local community elder. But the doctors and the officials from the health ministry were in meetings. The family members outside — some who had just come from burying the dead mothers – grew restless,

Finally, by early afternoon after much emotion and near-fistfights, the hospital began discharging the babies, one by one. By the end of the day, the identities of 11 were confirmed and handed to their families. For some, it was relatively

easy once the process finally got underway. Others left with only A young woman, in her 20s,

wept in the hallway outside the ward. She was there to collect her sister's child, she said. The sister was dead, and her husband was in the army serving on the front lines of the war in Ghazni. No matter how much she

begged, the doctors said that what she wanted was simply not oossible. One hospital official blocked the door to the ward.

"Go bring a man," he said. **NYT**



9 \$26.15 **②** ₹38,100

⊙ ₹75.56

SENSEX: 31,122.89 ▼ 885.72 NIFTY: 9,142.75 ▼ 240.80 NIKKEI: 19,914.78 ▼ 352.27 HANG SENG: 23,829.74 ▼ 350.56 FTSE: 5,727.35 ▼ 176.70 DAX: 10,265.68 ▼ 276.98

RUPEE DECLINES 10 PAISE TO CLOSE AT 75.56

Sensex dives on WHO warning, US Fed chief remarks; economic package fails to enthuse

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI MAY14

STOCK MARKETS on Thursday reeled under heavy selling pressure. While the economic package announced by the government failed to boost market sentiment, rising COVID-19 cases in the country and weak global cues after US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell warned of a "highly uncertain" near-term outlook for the United States, added to the

Markets also took a knock after the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the coronavirus "may never go away".

The BSE Sensex, which tanked as much as 956 points at one stage, closed down by 886 points, or 2.77 per cent, at 31,122.89, while the Nifty Index fell 241 points to 9,142.75.

On the sectoral front, barring FMCG and pharma, all other indices ended in the negative territory.

The rupee also declined 10 paise to close at 75.56 against the US dollar amid a strengthening greenback and weak domestic equities.

EXPLAINE

Global developments, lockdown 4.0 key factors

MARKETS WILL react to the Finance Minister's announcements in the following sessions. Besides, the guidelines for the next phase of lockdown will also be on their radar. At the same time, global markets are also not showing any sign of stability yet.

The prevailing volatility is unlikely to subside any

Markets witnessed a gapdown opening, tracking weak cues from the both domestic and global fronts.

"The rise in COVID-19 cases and lack of clarity over the impact of stimulus packages weighed on the sentiment. Besides, weakness in the global markets further dented the sentiment. The Nifty index shed nearly 2.5 per cent and we had a similar trend on the sectoral front, most indices ended in the red," said Ajit Mishra, VP

Research, Religare Broking. S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities, said, "Markets traded weak throughout the day with IT stocks dragging indices as Gartner predicts IT spend to decline 8%. Automobile stocks led by Maruti staged a smart recovery even as Reliance dragged," RIL shares fell 4 per cent to Rs

1435 45 on the BSF Analysts said the focus would remain on the FM's announcements over the next few days as the Finance Minister will be sharing further details on other beneficiaries of the stimulus package.

"Markets will react to those announcements in the following sessions. Besides, the guidelines for the next phase of lockdown will also be on their

"At the same time, global markets are also not showing any sign of stability yet. In short, we do not expect the prevailing volatility to subside any time soon thus traders should plan their positions accordingly and focus more on money management aspects," Mishra said.

According to analysts, the stimulus package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday was more of leveraging on existing institutions and postponement of activities such as tax deducted at source instead of fresh infusion of cash.

A section of the market said the announcements were short of expectations.

Markets were expecting a fresh infusion of liquidity which could have been in the form of external borrowings, using forex reserves or the Reserve Bank of India's balance sheet, among others.

But the government did not announce any such things. Moreover, public sector units such as REC and PFC will have to mobilise Rs 90,000 crore for the stressed power distributions companies.

Oil prices rise 3% on dip in US crude stockpiles and IEA data

REUTERS NEW YORK, MAY 14

OIL PRICES rose on Thursday after the International Energy Agency forecast lower global stockpiles in the second half of 2020, even as worries remain over a second surge in coronavirus infections in coming months.

Crude prices have ticked up in the last two weeks as some countries relaxed coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns to allow factories and shops to reopen.

Brent crude futures rose 88 cents, or 3 per cent, to \$30.07 a barrel, at \$30.12 per barrel at 1530 GMT (1130 EDT).

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 81 cents, or 3.2 per cent, to \$26.10 a barrel.

US crude inventories fell for the first time in 15 weeks, the EIA said Wednesday, with a fall in US crude stockpiles of 745,000 barrels to 531.5 million barrels in the week to May 8.

Performance

Govt prepares for staggered resumption of flights: Stamping of boarding passes suspended

PRANAV MUKUL

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

THE CENTRAL government has started work to prepare for resumption of commercial domestic flights, something that may happen in a staggered manner over the next one month, senior government and industry officials said. To this effect, government agencies have began laying the groundwork in terms of safety and policy measures required to start flight operations.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security issued a circular Wednesday doing away with security personnel stamping boarding passes of flight passengers at airports. "In view of the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic and countermeasures being taken to contain its spread by touch/contact, it has been decided to dispense with the procedure of stamping the passengers' Boarding Pass...after completion of pre-embarkation security check of the concerned passenger, till further orders," the circular said

Additionally, the government has also circulated a set of draft standard operating procedures with various stakeholders including airlines, airports and ground handling companies seeking their

The government has circulated a set of draft standard operating procedures with various stakeholders

views on measures for ensuring social distancing and health safety of passengers and staff. These include downloading of Aarogya Setu app, increasing of passenger reporting time at airports, mandatory web check-in, among other such procedures.

"...suggestions were sought on a draft discussion paper from airlines and airports. The suggestions have now been received. The final SOP is yet to be issued," a government spokesperson for the Ministry of Civil Aviation, said.

A senior official said that while the civil aviation ministry was awaiting a nod from Ministry of Home Affairs before allowing airlines to take bookings for scheduled commercial flights, the Centre was also in discussions with various state governments considering it was important for states to be on board with

"Initially, nod for flights may be given for some of the green zone districts but most of the ma-

orange zones, and for that it is essential that we have state governments on board," the official said.

The official also alluded to the possibility that initially it may just be Air India that will be allowed to start domestic repatriation flights on the lines of the international Vande Bharat mission, In the second phase of this mission, Air India will fly around 30,000 passengers from 31 countries. Some of the flights under this mission also connect airports within the country such as Delhi-Varanasi. Delhi-Bengaluru, Mumbai-Kochi, etc. However, these flights are only for passengers arriving from international stations and bookings have not been opened for domestic passengers.

An executive at a low-cost airline said that even though the carriers have been running operations for cargo flights in passenger aircraft, the size of the operation has been scaled down to unprecedented levels and the carriers might require some time to prepare for commercial passenger operations. "We have been told by the government that we might get 10 days to take bookings and prepare technically, and are hopeful for some clarity once the guidelines for Lockdown 4.0 are released," the executive said, on condition of anonymity.

Truncated April

WPI data: 10.12%

deflation in fuel,

power basket

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA

THE GOVERNMENT on Thursday

released truncated data for April

wholesale price-based inflation

saving there was limited transac-

tion of products in the market due

Commerce Ministry, wholesale

price index deflation in primary ar-

ticles was 0.79 per cent in April, as

As per the data released by the

to the outbreak of COVID-19.

NEW DELHI, MAY14

Briefly —

Indiaasks G20 nations to ensure access to vaccines

New Delhi: Commerce Minister Pivush Goval on Thursday called for an agreement among G20 nations to enable the use of flexibilities under a WTO pact on intellectual property rights to ensure access to essential medicines, treatments and vaccines at affordable prices.

COVID-19 to have deflationary impact: CEA

New Delhi: Chief Economic Advisor K V Subramanian COVID-19 pandemic has severely dented the demand for non-essential or discretionary goods, creating deflationary conditions.

Jet-KLM deal for Dutch biz fails to take off

New Delhi: Jet Airways' proposed sale of its business in the Netherlands to KLM has been scrapped as the European country's airport slot coordination organisation, ACNL, rejected the deal.

RBI sells net \$4.05 bn in March

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India turned net seller of the US dollar after it sold \$4.054 billion in March on a net basis in the spot market, recent RBI data showed. PTI

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

 $relaxed\,the\,25\,per\,cent\,minimum$

public shareholding norm and

advised exchanges not to take pe-

nal action till August 2020 in case

The Sebi move is aimed at eas-

ing such compliance rules amid

the disruptions caused by the

coronavirus pandemic. The deci-

sion has been taken after receiv-

ing requests from listed entities

and industry bodies as well as

considering the prevailing busi-

ness and market conditions, it

MUMBAI, MAY 14

of non-compliance

Except banking & finance, essential sectors outperform Sensex: Report Share prices of companies in essential sectors have

outperformed the Sensex, with the exception of banking and finance, even as sectors that are non-essential have fallen more sharply than the Sensex, as per Care Ratings

HEALTHCARE GAINS While the share prices of

healthcare sector companies on average have increased 6.6% in 30 days of post lockdown trading, share prices of companies in other essential sectors including FMCG, IT, Energy, Telecom and Oil and Gas have fallen but still outperformed the Sensex

Banking and finance company share prices have fallen more than the Sensex by 12.1% and 11%, respectively, despite being essential services as investors are concerned on how their assets will perform under current circumstances

GENEVA/BRUSSELS, MAY 14

WORLD TRADE Organization

head Roberto Azevedo will step

down a year earlier than planned

in August, he said on Thursday, in

a surprise move as the trade body

struggles to rein in global tensions

and coordinate responses to the

been director-general since 2013

and is serving a second term that

was due to conclude at the end of

The 62-year-old Brazilian has

COVID-19 pandemic.

August 2021.



SECTORS LOSE Standstills in construction and auto manufacturing during the lockdown have led to the the benchmark index by 15.9% and 5.2%, respectively

16% Sector Index

SENSEX

AVERAGE PRICE OF THE SENSEX IN 30 TRADING DAYS POST-MARCH 24 HAS **FALLEN 16%, COMPARED TO AVERAGE PRICE** IN 30 TRADING DAYS BEFORE LOCKDOWN

post lockdown compared relative to Sense

Key essential sectors outperforming Sensex					
Healthcare	6.60%	22.60%			
FMCG	-1.90%	14.10%			
Energy	-3.50%	12.50%			
Telecom	-5.90%	10.10%			
Oil and Gas	-10.90%	5.10%			
Key essential sectors underperforming relative to Sensex					
Bankex	-28.10%	-12.10%			
Finance	-27.00%	-11.00%			

30-day Average price

Finance	-27.00%	-11.00%	
Key non-essential sect	ors under performing r	elative to Sensex	
Basic Materials	-20.00%	-4.00%	
Auto	-21.20%	-5.20%	
Consumer Durables	-21.50%	-5.50%	
Industrial	-23.60%	-7.60%	
Realty	-31.90%	-15.90%	

with average price from Feb 10 - March 23

Compiled by ENS Economic Bureau

Source: Care Ratings

Vijay Mallya's move to appeal against UK extradition hits a block

'Big victory' and a 'milestone', says CBI

PRESSTRUSTOFINDIA LONDON/NEW DELHI, MAY 14

IN A huge legal blow to Vijay Mallya, the embattled liquor baron on Thursday lost his application seeking leave to appeal his extradition to India in the UK Supreme Court, setting a 28-day clock on his removal from the UK.

The UK court's decision marks a big legal setback to the 64-year-old flamboyant businessman, who last month lost his High Court appeal against an excharges of fraud and money laundering related to unrecovered loans to his now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines.

Mallya had 14 days to file his latest application to seek permission to move the higher court on the High Court judgment from April 20, which dismissed his appeal against a Westminster Magistrates' Court extradition order certified by the UK Home Secretary.

The latest decision, referred to as a "pronouncement", means that under the India-UK Extradition Treaty, the UK Home Office is now expected to formally certify the court order for Mallya to be extradited to India within 28 days.

The Central Bureau of Investigation has described the move as a "big victory" and a "milestone". "Vide order dated 20.04.2020, a Division Bench of UK High Court has dismissed Mallya's appeal against the lower court order recommending his extradition to face trial in India," CBI spokesperson RK Gaur said.

The agency had filed a charge sheet on the conclusion of the investigation on January 24, 2017,

Nirav Modi extradition case adjourned

London: The UK court hearing the extradition case of fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated \$2 billion. on Thursday adjourned the trial to be resumed from September 7.PTI

for extradition of Mallya on January 31, 2017. Based on the request, he was arrested by the UK authorities on April 20, 2017, but was given bail within hours.

"The court having signified its intention to refuse to certify a point of law of general public importance with a view to an appeal to the Supreme Court," notes the pronouncement by Lord Justice Stephen Irwin and Justice Elisabeth Laing at the Royal Courts of Justice in London presiding over the appeal

It sets the 28-day "required period', as defined by Section 36 and Section 118 of the UK Extradition Act 2003, within which the extradition must be carried out.

The UK Crown Prosecution Service said Mallya's appeal to certify a point of law was rejected on all three counts – of hearing oral submissions, grant a certificate on the questions as drafted, and grant permission to appeal to the SC.

The case will now make its way back to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel to formally certify the extradition order, with Mallya's removal expected to take place

against 3.72 per cent in March. The fuel and power basket saw a deflation of 10.12 per cent in April, against 1.76 per cent in the previous month. All commodities WPI could not be computed due to

product group index, it added.

France to go ahead with digital tax this year

REUTERS PARIS, MAY14

FRANCE WILL go ahead with its tax on big digital businesses this year whether there is progress or not towards an international deal on the issue, its finance minister said on Thursday.

France offered in January to suspend until the end of the year instalments of its tax on big digital companies' income in France while an international deal to rewrite the rules of cross-border taxation was negotiated this year. "Never has a digital tax been more legitimate and more necessary," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told journalists. "In any case, France will apply as it has always indicated a tax on digital giants in 2020 either in an international form if there is a deal or in a national form if there is no deal," Le Maire said

Azevedo said that he had taken a "personal decision" after talking with his family and that his also in the best interests of the ormove was not due to health reaganisation.

"As members start to shape sons or because of specific political ambitions.

Sebi relaxes minimum public holding norms

According to the text of an address to the WTO's members, Azevedo said he thought it was

World Trade Organization head Roberto Azevedo. File

the WTO's agenda for the new post-COVID realities, they should do so with a new director-general," he told a virtual meeting of

WTO head to step down a year early

ing period for the 25-year-old body, which has seen its role in settling disputes undermined after its Appellate Body was paralin December by Washington's decision to block the appointment of judges. Since the COVID-19 crisis hit.

national members on Thursday

His departure comes at a test-

Azevedo has called for governments to refrain from imposing export restrictions on food and medical supplies. The WTO club of 164 mem-

bers, which is designed to set global trading rules, has also not produced any major international

accord since abandoning its "Doha Round" of negotiations in 2015. Its members are negotiating an agreement to cut subsidies for fishing to allow a revival of depleted fish stocks, while a smaller

group are discussing a possible

10,000 on companies for each

and forced technology transfers. Such issues might have been addressed at the WTO's biennial meeting due to have taken place in Kazakhstan in June. That has now been pushed back to mid-or late-2021. Azevedo said his depar-

deal on e-commerce. However,

key differences remain and they

are far from the consensus re-

United States, Japan and the

European Union, are pushing for

more fundamental reforms. They

say global trading rules need to re-

stronger China-and address prob-

lems such as state-led subsidies

flect new realities - notably a far

Some members, notably the

quired to agree both deals.

in place before then. Azevedo said the WTO could not stand still while the world around it changed, nor ignore the "new normal" that had emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

ture would allow a successor to be

'Fiscal deficit likely to more than double to

PRESSTRUSTOFINDIA MUMBAI, MAY14

WITH THE government's Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package, the country's fiscal deficit is likely to be more than double to 7.9 per cent in the current financial year, ac-

cent of GDP this fiscal. The Centre has announced an additional borrowing of around Rs 4.2 lakh crore, or 2.1 per cent of GDP. The government debt as a percentage of GDP has been rising since FY11.

UN forecasts pandemic to shrink world economy by 3.2% **UN experts hail**

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA UNITED NATIONS, MAY 14

THE UNITED Nations forecast Wednesday that the COVID-19 pandemic will shrink the world economy by 3,2 per cent this year, the sharpest contraction since the

Great Depression in the 1930s.

The UN's mid-year report said the impact of the coronavirus crisis is expected to slash global economic output by nearly \$8.5 trillion over the next two years, wiping out nearly all gains of the last four years.In Ianuary, before COVID-19 became a pandemic, the UN had

Pandemic has led to a 3 per cent drop in global trade in the first quarter of 2020: UN

forecast a modest acceleration in growth of 2.5 per cent in 2020. Meanwhile, the pandemic has led to a 3 per cent drop in global trade in the first quarter of 2020 and this downturn is expected to accelerate in the next quarter to project a whopping

quarter-on-quarter decline of 27

per cent, the UN trade body has

India's 'impressive' stimulus package **United Nations:** Top UN experts have hailed as "impressive" India's

Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package, the largest so far among the developing countries, to revive its economy, which has been severely hit by the lockdown. Chief of the Global Economic Monitoring Branch Hamid Rashid

said in response to a question that the stimulus package announced by the Indian government on Tuesday "is a very welcome development." **PTI**

In a circular, Sebi said it has

SHAREHOLDING: RULE THE SECURITIES and Exchange ■ The rules have been Board of India (Sebi) on Thursday

ATLEAST 25% PUBLIC

relaxed for listed entities for whom the deadline to comply with MPS requirements falls between the period

from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 ■ Under Sebi norms, listed entities need to have at least 25%

public shareholding

decided to grant relaxation from applicability of minimum public

laxed for listed entities for whom the deadline to comply with MPS requirements falls between the period from March 1, 2020 to

shareholding (MPS) require-

ment. The rules have been re-

August 31, 2020. Under Sebi norms, listed entities are required to have at least 25 per cent public shareholding. Stock exchanges have been asked to not take any penal action against such entities in case of non-compliance during the said

period. Penal actions, if any, initiated by exchanges from March 1, 2020 till date for non-compliance of MPS requirements by such listed entities may be withdrawn, the regulator said.

As per the norms, exchanges can impose a fine of up to Rs day of non-compliance with MPS requirements. Besides, exchanges can intimate depositories to freeze the entire shareholding of the promoter and promoter group. This circular will come into force with immediate effect, it said. Many public sector companies are yet to fulfill the 25 per

cent minimum public shareholding norms, and have been seeking deadline extensions. In July 2019, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her maiden Budget speech urged Sebi to consider increasing the minimum public holding in listed firms to 35 per cent from 25 per cent. However, Sebi board is yet to take a view on this proposal.

7.9% in FY21'

cording to an SBI research report. The report had earlier estimated the fiscal deficit to be 3.5 per

Football isn't necessarily a necessity - it's a game, it's a sport. I mean, what if we go through all this rigmarole of trying to get back started and we have a second peak and we're stopped anyways?."

GLENN MURRAY,

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION STRIKER

Football's new 'sanitised' era

From socially-distanced team buses to elbow bumps, Bundesliga will have new guidelines when it restarts this weekend

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE BERLIN, MAY 14

PLAYERS ARRIVING in several sparselypopulated team buses, substitutes wearing masks and goal celebrations limited to elbow bumps - when German football returns to the pitch this weekend, it will have to follow a draconian set of guidelines. The German Football League (DFL) presented political leaders with a 51-page document of guidelines to earn the right for the Bundesliga to become the first of Europe's

big five leagues to resume action. The matches will be surrounded by extraordinary measures to protect players and officials from infection by coronavirus. And the weighty text underlines that "all of the measures are conditional on the fact that they do not divert indispensable resources from the fight against COVID-19 for the rest of the population".

Testing and quarantine

The central pillar of the DFL's plan is the mass testing of players, coaches and backroom staff. They are tested at least twice a week and once on the eve of matches. Any that test positive for the virus are separated from the rest of the team.

The decision to quarantine teams rests with the authorities in each of Germany's federal states, which explains why the entire team of second-division Dynamo Dresden was placed in quarantine after two players were found to have coronavirus but Borussia Moenchengladbach, in a different state, continued to train after cases were found among their squad.

Empty stadiums

Only around 300 people will be allowed into the stadium on matchdays. They are divided into three zones to avoid any contact between each group. Only players, match officials, first aid personnel and a small group of photographers are allowed on the pitch.

In the otherwise empty stands there will be just a handful of reporters and TV camera operators. Outside the stadium itself is the third category of personnel in-



The stadiums for rest of the Bundesliga season will be empty, although there will still be home and away teams. Reuters file

cluding security guards. It is the police's job to prevent supporters gathering outside the stadiums

Team arrivals

The teams will arrive in several coaches to ensure each occupant is sitting 1.5 metres (five feet) apart. Everyone in the vehicles must wear masks. The social distancing rules must also be respected in the changing rooms. When the players come onto the pitch, handshakes are banned, there will be no team photos or handshakes and no team pennants will be exchanged.

On the pitch

Players and the match officials do not need to wear masks, but everyone else on the pitchside does, including substitutes on the bench. The match balls will be disinfected regularly during the action. Players have been told that physical contact should only be made as a result of play during the match and embracing or highfives to celebrate goals is to be strictly

SCRAMBLE TO THE FINISH

There will be a total of 213 people allowed in the stadium - 98 around the pitch (including players, coaches, ball boys and photographers) and another 115 in the stands (including officials and media). There will be less than 100 other people allowed just outside the stadium for occupational reasons.

avoided. "Contact with elbows or feet is preferred," the document states.

The DFL urges players to show "exemplary behaviour".

Media coverage

Eight pages of the health document detail the measures that the TV teams must take to avoid contact, including erecting

plastic screens between interviewer and interviewee. Just 10 journalists will be admitted to each match. There will be no press conferences and the mixed zone where reporters can normally ask players questions, will be closed.

Holed up in hotels

Wherever possible, visiting teams must book an entire hotel or, at the very least, an entire floor. The hotel has to be disinfected before the players arrive. Players are banned from the hotel's weights room and must respect the required distance from their teammates even at mealtimes.

Private lives

At home, players must live in near-quarantine conditions, without seeing their neighbours or friends. The same rules apply to all of a player's family members. The players are not even permitted to do the family's

(Live on Star Sports 2: 7pm onwards on Saturday

Domestic performers get award money after 4 months

DEVENDRA PANDEY MUMBAI, MAY 14

JUST DAYS after this newspaper reported that several domestic players were yet to receive their award money after four months of announcement, the BCCI transferred the amount

to the bank accounts of 10 cricketers.

The eight male players who received Rs 1.5 lakh each are: Sidak Singh (Puducherry), the highest wicket-taker in the under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy; Aryan Hooda (Jharkhand), the highest run-getter in U-16 Vijay Merchant tournament; Abhishek Yadav (Jharkhand), the highest wicket-taker in Vijay Merchant tourney; Manan Hingrajia (Gujarat), the highest run-getter in the under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy; Apurva Anand (Guiarat), the highest wicket-taker in the under-19 Cooch Behar Trophy; Vathsal Govind (Kerala), the highest run getter in under-19 Cooch Behar Trophy; Milind Kumar (Sikkim), the highest run-getter in Ranji Trophy and Ashutosh Aman (Bihar), the highest wicket-taker in the Ranji Trophy.

Shafali Verma, the best woman player in junior cricket, and Deepti Sharma, the best in senior domestic tournaments, received Rs 1.5 lakh each as prize money. All the awards were announced at a function held in Mumbai in January 2020. The Indian Express had reported that the families of junior cricketers were badly affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. Sidak's father has a cloth business that has run into problems. In Bokaro, Abhishek Yadav, the son of a Class D railway employee, wanted his money for his grandmother's treatment but his father had to take a loan for it.

Six players confirmed that they had received the money by Thursday evening.

Prabhakar's dues cleared

Former India all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar, whose five-year ban for alleged match fixing ended in 2005, will finally get his pending dues - pension, benevolent fund, and one-time benefit money, amounting to over Rs 1 crore — as BCCI accepted his request to grant him the money. The decision comes after the board cleared the dues of former India captain Mohammad Azharuddin, of approximately Rs 1.5 crore, in December 2019.

Johri granted extension

The BCCI Apex Council also decided to ex-

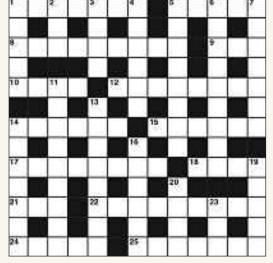
SANIA MIRZA ___L I V E___ Six-time Grand Slam champion Sania Mirza will be the guest at The Indian Express on Friday, May 15, at 4pm. Sania, who returned to the court in January post motherhood, will talk about the impact of the pandemic on tennis, among other topics. THE EVENT CAN BE **FOLLOWEDON** THE INDIAN EXPRESS' FACEBOOK PAGE

tend its contract with chief executive officer

has come to an end," sources said.

BY PETER VIDAL

CROSSWORD 4118



ACROSS

- Considers changing gear on the roads (7)
- Optical student? (5) Cash lender pointlessly providing for yachts perhaps (9)
- Biblical character left to reflect(3)
- Not the top team (4)Journalist about to take a
- drink(8) Look pleased about one literary comparison (6)
- Fish hook tip used by the Spanish (6) Drug involves girl in basic
- changes (8)
- Ray gives us a big smile (4) Old prophet in the limelight
- Duet bound to be off-key
- that's certain (9) Poet is soundly swindled (5)
- 25 Word for word (7)

They may be used for storing

- stretchers (5) Travel over a port in India (3) Healthy dislike may make
- one so (4)Outbursts of temper appear
- in parts of the play (6)Spoken exam on history of
- shepherds (8) Toothsome friend with a
- restaurant reservation (9) Alter a number on the side (7)
- Volume of noise mind out!
- 13 Request with certain satisfaction(8)
- To get ahead, take the other fellow's place (7)
- They believe in British industry (6)
- A mode of address for one mother and another (5)
- 20 Go and act (4)
- 23 Upset the fruit barrel (3)

Solutions Crossword 4117: Across: 1 Collapse, 5 News, 9 Easel, 10 Emotion, 11 Contaminates, 13 Astern, 14 Abrade, 17 Ghost stories, 20 Awesome, 21 Irony, 22 Sets, 23 Sturgeon. Down: 1 Crew, 2 Lash out, 3 Alliteration, 4 Steamy, 6 Edict, 7 Sinister, 8 Sound barrier, 12 Gangways, 15 Anemone, 16 Street, 18 Overt, 19 Hymr

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis







CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson

ANYWAY CHARLIE, I'M SORRY WE QXAДИХ 60 ОЦТ ТОМВИ BUT THIS LITTLE CREEP'S PARENTS ARE SO DESPERATE TO GET AWAY FROM HIMA CAUTE IN A WHILE THAT THEY.









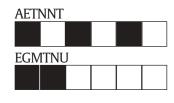
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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 quip.





VIZAMEI: Iţ iz time ţor na to **turm to** esch othet; **not on** esch othet: -]esse]sekson SOFULION: CKOOM, DOTTY, TENANT, NUTMEC

Difficulty Level 5s Instructions

SUDOKU

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

Difficulty Level 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium: 4s = Hard 5s = Very Hard; 6s =

9 6 3 8

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4109 2 9 6 4 7 8 5 3 1 5 2 9 7 6 3 8 9 8 9 5 6 3 2 7 1 4 5 8 2 3 6 7 4 1 5 6 1 2 8 7 4 2 8 3 6 9 8 6 9 7 3 4 1 5

DAY TODAY

You're still in a sensitive mood, perhaps too sensitive. If you should begin to feel that your imagination is running away send those letters which you've with you, come back to earth been thinking about for far too and get stuck into one of your

your horizons.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) There are people around who are prepared to create

more adventurous hobbies. It's

havoc if you let them. The risks seem slight at the moment but they will grow, so the sensible thing to do would be to deal with causes of discontent, now. On balance you'll probably lose if you prevaricate for too long.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

switch from the desire to compete, to the need to cooperate. Others may be confused by your changing

opinions but, then, they often are! Any travel arrangements require an extra check. especially if they're mainly far away or overseas.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) You're really rather

tenacious when you actually get going. Once you have the bit between your teeth you will be impossible to shake off, as other people will very soon discover. Pity the poor individual who tried to put one

over on you. They will soon

regret their mistake LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)



should have reminded you that it is a waste of time trying to do things in a

roundabout manner, even if you are eager to spare others' feelings. There is no substitute for being utterly open and being lazy.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) You are liable to lose interest in one particular person, or in a prospective

social gathering. On the other hand, your desires could become much deeper and more intense, meaning that you'll be fussier about whom you mix with. Quite right, too.

Rahul Johri by one year. Johri had tendered his resignation to board secretary Jay Shah a few months ago and his tenure was supposed to end in April. However, the board decided to give him an extension as many in BCCI felt that his expertise will be handy in dealings with the ICC.

Junior selectors' tenure ends

The board has informed two junior selectors, Gyanendra Pandey and Rakesh Parikh, that their tenures have ended. The BCCI had called for application for the post of two junior selectors in January and the positions are yet to be filled. Until now, Pandey and Parikh were asked to watch junior tournaments, including the under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy. "The board has sent them official communication that their tenure

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) One thing you should be doing this week is building up personal contacts, so make all those phone calls and

someone may be delighted to definitely time to broaden hear from you. is restored.

the face.



shortly to raise all those deep emotional issues, like who you can and can't rely on. Find unusual ways to put your point across, and try a little lateral thinking! The answer is staring you in

hearts. The Sun is

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)



and spontaneous in your reactions. It will be important to give others the benefit of the doubt, for then they'll be more inclined to indulge vour whims.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20) The general mood of the times is still



useful indeed if you took the initiative and got other people to talk to each other for a change. There is no substitute for good communication. AQUARIUS (Jan 21- Feb 19)

Nothing stays the



become ever more confident. There's something about the changing astrological 'weather that will make you happier to be assertive, independent and in control.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Change happens hourly, so try to keep up! Aim to settle important personal

tasks this morning when you still seem to have the balance of cosmic energy on your side. Bv mid-afternoon you will have to take other people into account to a greater degree.

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