

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

As state struggles to help millions stranded in lockdown, citizen-led initiatives and civil society organisations have stepped in PAGES 13, 14, 15

26 MIGRANTS DEAD, 17 IDENTIFIED: Arjun Chauhan, 22 (Kushinagar, UP); Kedar Yadav, 25 (Gaya, Bihar); Mukesh Vishwakarma, 30 (Bhadohi, UP); Satendra, 21 (Gaya); Govardhan Kalindi, 25 (Bokaro, Jharkhand); Ganesh Rajwad, 25 (Purulia, West Bengal); Chandan Rajwad, 24 (Purulia); Uttam Goswami, 30 (Bokaro); Doctor Mahato, 20 (Bokaro); Kirti Kalindi, 35 (Bokaro); Milan Badhokar, 28 (Purulia); Kaanilal, 45 (Bokaro); Rahul, 28 (Bokaro); Somnath Goswami, 26 (Bokaro); Raja Goswami, 28 (Bokaro); Ashok Yadav, 25 (Gaya); Ajit Mahato, 26 (Purulia)

DAILY FROM: AHMEDABAD, CHANDIGARH, DELHI, JAIPUR, KOLKATA, LUCKNOW, MUMBAI, NAGPUR, PUNE, VADODARA

Tragedy and Shame

CM suspends SHOs after trucks carrying migrants collide in UP; DGP admits numbers on move "huge"

ASAD REHMAN AURAIYA (UP), MAY 16

TWO TRUCKS carrying migrant workers from Rajasthan, Delhi and Ghaziabad collided on NH-24 at Mihauli under Auraiya Police Station in Uttar Pradesh around 3 am on Saturday, killing 26 people. Seventeen of them

had been identified by Saturday

Circle Officer (City) Surendranath Yadav said 32 people were still in hospital, while four had been discharged and sent to a quarantine facility in the district after treatment

The collision involved a trailer truck and a truck. While 45-odd men were travelling in the trailer truck, that was carrying sacks of wall putty, around 22 were in the truck. "The trailer had slowed down at a dhaba when the truck hit it from behind, causing both vehicles to fall into a ditch by the roadside. Twenty-four of the dead were travelling in the trailer truck. They got buried under sacks or the truck," Yadav said, adding that police were at the spot within half-an-hour.

Police suspect the driver of the truck may have fallen asleep at the wheel, ramming into the other vehicle. They are yet to identify either of the drivers.

On Saturday afternoon, the spot of the accident lay strewn with the belongings of the workers, including a blanket, clothes, a belt, water bottles, slippers and the *rotis* they were carrying.

Kaajal Kumar, 21, a native of Bokaro in Jharkhand, told The Sunday Express he was travelling with three others and that most of them in the trailer were lying amidst the putty sacks when a sudden jolt woke them up, "The whole truck was on us. I got buried under the sacks, but managed to breathe as my head CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ABHISHEK ANGAD

FOR EVERY migrant worker

who died in the Auraiva road ac-

cident, a lakh more are waiting

to return to their native homes

On May 2, Jharkhand started

an online portal asking its

stranded people to register if

they want to travel back home.

Between May 2 and May 14, 6.92

lakh people registered, accord-

ing to an official in the state's

labour department. "More than

10 lakh people are stranded in

various states. The number of

registrations are only expected

RANCHI, MAY 16



Food being carried by migrants at the site of the accident on NH-24, at Mithauli near Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh, Saturday. Vishal Srivastav

FULL COVERAGE P7

Can't help but

cry at migrant

plight, says

Madras HC,

seeks report

ARUN JANARDHANAN

"ONE CANNOT control his/her

tears after seeing the pathetic

condition of migrant labourers

shown in the media for the past

one month," the Madras High

Court said on Friday, and sought

a detailed report from the Centre

and the state on their numbers

Host states must be made ac-

The court was hearing a habeas corpus plea moved by

countable for the safety and well-being of migrant workers,

advocate A P Suryaprakasam seeking a direction to the police

of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra

to locate and produce over 400

Tamil workers alleged to be un-

der illegal detention in

N Kirubakaran and Justice R

Hemalatha said that while gov-

ernments have taken care of

every section of the society to the

The division Bench of Justice

and status in the next six days -

by May 22.

the court said.

Maharashtra.

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Among those in truck: Some who failed to get on train, workers denied wages

ASADREHMAN& **ABHISHEK ANGAD**

AURAIYA, RANCHI, MAY 16

THE GENERAL ward at Combined District Hospital in Auraiya district has only four patients on Saturday afternoon. The four are survivors of the early Saturday morning accident in Uttar Pradesh's Auraiya district, where a truck carrying migrants from Delhi and Ghaziabad crashed into a truck trailer from Rajasthan, killing 26 people, at least eight of them from Bokaro, Jharkhand.

On bed number 14, Umesh Kumar Kalindi, 27, native of

For every dead in Auraiya accident,

DEMAND vs TRAINS

Bengal, 2.69 lakh from

Chhattisgarh, 10 lakh

from UP, 5.5 lakh from

Bihar believed to be

Rajasthan, 2.7 lakh from

JHARKHAND: 6.92 lakh

registered, 50 trains to

WEST BENGAL: 2.5 lakh

CHHATTISGARH: 2.69

lakh registered, 8 trains

registered, 8 trains

a lakh are waiting to return home

2.5 lakh migrant

workers from West



Govardhan Kalindi's family survived on his earnings. Express

resting with tears in his eves and wall putty on his clothes and hair. Kalindi lost three members of his family in the accident.

"I lost my brother Yogeshwar, my nephew and my cousin in the accident," says Umesh, who worked at a marble factory in laipur. Another of his nephews. kas, survived the accident.

Umesh says he along with 30 others from the marble factory left on foot from Jaipur after a labour unrest over delayed payment of salaries.

"It was impossible to continue without money, so on May **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

West Bengal will cover cost of migrants' train journey home: Mamata

are some of the other states **ATRIMITRA** besides [harkhand which pri-

> CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Saturday announced that her government had decided to bear the entire cost of the return journey of migrant workers from West Bengal stranded in other states, even as the administration said an international flight carrying 160 citizens from Dhaka would

KOLKATA, MAY 16

land in the city on Monday. Earlier this month, the Centre had said 85 per cent of the cost of CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 SUNDAY

Page 9



It's back to the start for the migrant workers back home

Train lottery leaves migrants in lurch: 'When will my turn come?'

STORY

maximum extent possible, "guest workers and the agricultural work force are the neglected lot and they are the suffer-

> ers to the maximum". "In this Covid-19 crisis, the persons who fed the entire nation are the agriculturists and not the

people in any other occupation, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Nirmala Sitharaman announcing the fourth part of the Covid-19 economic package, in Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Tranche 4: Mining to aviation, Govt pushes reforms it has already pushed

AANCHAL MAGAZINE, PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

MOST OF the measures for eight sectors announced Saturday under the fourth tranche of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Covid economic package were either a new push to old reforms proposals or an aggregation of earlier decisions. The latter includes: commer-

cial coal mining; coal gasification projects; building a hub for aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO); privatisation of airports, and optimisation of Indian airspace.

The renewed push for commercial mining is a proposal over two years old. A way to auction coal mines/blocks for sale of coal under the provisions of the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015, and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, it was approved by the government in early 2018 and an order was issued on February 27, 2018. Subsequently, the Coal Ministry said it had identified "15 large coal blocks" for the pilot round of bidding in

December that year. In January this year, the Cabinet cleared an ordinance to introduce the amendments needed to relax conditions in the to commercial mining.

The government said coal gasification and liquefaction will BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



Less of a stimulus

THE FOURTH tranche entails a stimulus of a little over Rs 63,000 crore, of which the cost to the exchequer is only about Rs 8.100 crore. The focus is more on industrial reforms but many of these measures have been mired in implementation issues.

> **DEFENCE TO CUT IMPORTS PAGE 8**

be incentivised through rebate outs have already begun. A revival of Talcher unit of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

CASES: | RECOVERED: 30,152 | DEATHS: 2,752 940 TESTS: 2,134,277 | DOUBLING RATE: 13.45**



TOWATCH	CASES	24HRS	GROWTH*	RATE**			
■ Maharashtra	29,100	1,576	6.23%	11.56			
■Gujarat	9,932	340	4.29%	16.79			
■Delhi	9,333	438	5.21%	13.83			
■ Tamil Nadu	10,108	434	7.71%	9.34			
■ Rajasthan	4,635	207	4.21%	17.12			
■West Bengal	2,461	84	5.62%	12.80			
* Compounded Daily Growth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth							

CAUTION **CONCERN** HIMACHAL KERALA: A PRADESH: Numbers

PUNJAB: A slight resurgence seen here too. 52 cases in last slowdown in last three days, though one of three weeks fastest growing states

A GLIMMER

Based on daily data by Centre, ICMR, state governments

RAHUL MEETS MIGRANTS; OPPN ATTACKS GOVT

P3, 6, 7, 8, 11

WORLD



IN WUHAN, A NEW **FEAR: COULD MASS TESTING REKINDLE** DISEASE PAGE 12

IRAM SIDDIQUE &

VISHWAS WAGHMODE MUMBAI, MAY 16

LONG BEFORE dawn on May 15, Om Prakash Tiwari slipped out of Mumbai with his family of six on a 1,500-km journey in his taxi to home in UP's Pratapgarh district. He had registered 10 days ago for tickets on the special train for migrants, but couldn't wait any more for the answer to his ques-

tion: "When will my turn come?" Around sunset on May 8, Adil Khan, a 25-year-old zari

worker in Jogeshwari left the city on a special train to UP. He had submitted his application just three days earlier at the local police station.

to increase," the official said. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West

Bengal, Rajasthan and Odisha

marily feed the labour markets

in Maharashtra, Gujarat and

the southern states including

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telan-

not want to wait to return home.

especially since they the

Shramik Special trains have not

been able to meet the huge de-

mand. While Union Railway

Minister Piyush Goyal blamed

the states for not giving permis-

sion to receive the trains, chief

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Many migrant workers do

gana and Kerala.

Wedged between the two journeys is the despair that has forced thousands of migrants away from railway stations and onto highways in a desperate and dangerous bid to reach their homes, driven by the lack of jobs and rapid urban spread of the coronavirus.

For many, getting a seat on these special trains is like a lottery, based on a convoluted reg-

istration process and completely dependent on the destination states that either approve or put on hold district-based lists with no clear explanation.

In Maharashtra, the country's industrial powerhouse and key destination for migrants from across the country, the numbers are telling: 2.25 lakh people left on 191 Shramik Specials between May 1 and 15 – of the first 100 trains, 50 were to UP and 25 to Bihar; over 1 lakh others are estimated to have left in private vehicles and buses, based on permits issued.



Police try to control a queue to catch trains to Uttar Pradesh. outside CSMT Station in Mumbai on Saturday. Ganesh Shirsekar

And in Mumbai, which has emerged as the epicentre of the Covid crisis with 17,671 cases and 655 deaths, at least 1.13 lakh migrant workers have left the metropolitan region.

new cases in last week

On Friday, these migrant trains were at the centre of a political firestorm with Railways Minister Piyush Goyal accusing West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan of not giving permission to receive these trains, drawing strong rebuttals from the states — the first train from Maharashtra to West Bengal left Saturday.

Meanwhile, Tiwari's story illustrates the situation on the ground.

"We filled up the forms on May 6, with 25 others, at the Kala Chowki police station. But no one was clear about when my turn would come. We tried to get a permit for a bus but failed because the vehicle's tax papers had not been cleared," he said.

'That's when we decided to leave in my taxi. But they still would not give me a permit, saving only one other person was allowed to travel. There were CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Indian Express

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SUITS OF SICKNESS: HOW PANDEMICS AFFLICTED FASHION OVER THE CENTURIES

As the world struggles to cope with Covid-19, masks have been added to most wardrobes. For centuries now, people have tweaked their wardrobes—from headdress to hems to shoes—to cope with illness and

VIDEO OF THE DAY



TRACKING INDIA'S **COVID-19 JOURNEY** Where the coronavirus case curve is headed

EXPLAINED



IF FLIGHTS RESUME: Study estimates risk of coronavirus outbreak

EXPRESS AUDIO

Remembering football legends PK Banerjee and Chuni Goswami

states to ensure that de-notified

land of SEZs be utilised for the

request of the Special Economic

Zone (SEZ) Developers, the

Board of Approval (BoA) on SEZs

has approved 81 cases of de-no-

tification of SEZs subject to the

refund of all duties and tax ben-

efits and on receipt of 'No-objec-

tion' from the state concerned

given that land is a state subject.

privatisation of discoms (distri-

bution companies) in Union

Territories is also an extension of

the changes proposed in the

draft Electricity Amendment Bill

Policy Advisor, EY India, "Once

again, it is the supply side which

Said D K Srivastava, Chief

2020 released last month.

An announcement on the

As on June 30, 2017, on the

creation of infrastructure.

In this episode, we talk to football historian and author Novy Kapadia about these two giants and how they came to define Indian

FROM PAGE ONE

West Bengal will cover cost of migrants' train journey home: Mamata

train tickets would be borne by the Ministry of Railways, while the rest would have to be paid by

Banerjee's announcement came a day after Railway Minister Piyush Goyal accused a number of states, including West Bengal, of not granting permission to receive the trains. The states dismissed the minister's claim.

"Saluting the toil faced by our migrant brethren, I am pleased to announce the decision of GoWB to bear the entire cost of movement for our migrant workers by special trains from other states to West Bengal. No migrant will be charged. Letter to Railway Board attached," tweeted Banerjee, attaching Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha's letter to Railway Chairperson VK Yadav.

In his letter, Sinha wrote, "I would like to confirm that the entire cost of the movement by special trains to West Bengal, of the migrants of the state stranded in various parts of the country, shall be borne by the Government of West Bengal." Later in the afternoon, Home

Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay briefed reporters about this decision at state secretariat Nabanna.

"These trains are only for stranded people who are under distress, and not for normal movements. All migrant labourers, students, and pilgrims can come back to West Bengal without any tickets. The state government will bear the cost," he

Giving an update about the 105 additional special trains that Mamata Banerjee had announced on Thursday, the Home Secretary said: "Already seven trains have entered the state. Two more are coming. Total 105 trains are coming. Out of which, 28 are coming from Kerala, 18 from Maharashtra, 10 from Tamil Nadu, seven from Uttar Pradesh, six each from Delhi, Harvana and Raiasthan, five each from Gujarat, Karnataka and Telangana, three from Andhra Pradesh, two from Punjab, and one each from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Pradesh Madhya Uttarakhand."

Bandyopadhyay said the effort to bring back those stranded was a "huge and herculean ex-

"All the stations where the trains will stop will have a huge infrastructure of medical camp, police force, and other infrastructure," he added.

Providing details about the returnees, the Home Secretary said, "Appeals to the state government for special transportation had been made by 2,92,395 people. Also many people are coming back with their own vehicle or arranged vehicles. Already the government has issued 24,349 entry passes for 1,14,992 people. On the other hand, 2,15,915 persons went back to their state from West

Asked about the Centre's 'Vande Bharat Mission" bringing back Indians stranded abroad, Bandyopadhyay said a flight would arrive in Kolkata from Dhaka on Monday with 160 passengers. According to sources in the airport, it is expected to arrive around 12.30

"Those who are coming back from abroad will have to stay in institutional quarantine. If they want to stay in hotels, they will have to pay for it. We have already arranged several hotels,

and provided the list to the Ministry of External Affairs. We hope the ministry will circulate the list to the passengers," said the Home Secretary, adding that the state would conduct medical check-up of the passengers.

Waiting to return

ministers of West Bengal, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh hit back, giving details of the number of trains for which they have already given their consent.

Caught in this fight between the Centre and states, and finding no means to return to the safety of their homes, migrant workers have started to walk. Some 2.5 lakh migrant workers from West Bengal, 2.69 lakh from Chhattisgarh, 10 lakh from Uttar Pradesh, 5.5 lakh from Rajasthan, and 2.7 lakh from Bihar are believed to be stuck either in rented spaces, or shelter homes, or to be just on the roads walking through the night.

Iharkhand Transport Secretary K Ravi Kumar told The Sunday Express there was no pendency at the state's end. "We have shared with other states a list of stranded people who registered in our travel portal. As per the SOP, it is up to the sender state to share a list of passengers along with the trains, for which we give a No Objection Certificate. Till Thursday, we gave a go-ahead to 104 trains, and the remaining six were cleared on Friday," he said.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren had Friday tweeted, "We have given NOC to 110 trains of which 50 have arrived, bringing around 60,000 migrants.'

105 trains, with only eight reaching the state till Friday. State government sources said 2.5 lakh migrant workers have applied to return home. Trade unions estimated the number of stranded workers from the state at about 25 lakh.

In Chhattisgarh, 2.69 lakh people had registered to return to the state through social media and phone calls. "We had registered only 1.7 lakh people in lockdown part 2. Now the numbers have grown by a lakh," state Labour Secretary Sonmani Borah said.

Of these 56,140 people have managed to reach their homes. The state had demanded 30 trains from the Railways. "They have approved only 15 trains because we have been able to pay for only those as of now," Borah said. Of these 15 trains, eight have already brought in more than 11,000 migrant workers. "We are trying to get approval for more trains from Railways,"

According to sources in Uttar Pradesh government, about 10 lakh additional migrant workers are expected to return in the coming weeks. They said Maharashtra had 5.6 lakh workers from UP, Delhi had 5.1 lakh, Gujarat 3 lakh, Haryana 1.3 lakhs, and Punjab about 77,000.

As many as 3.39 lakh migrant workers have already returned to Madhya Pradesh, including about 2.43 lakh by buses, according to Additional Chief Secretary and in-charge of state control room, ICP Keshari. Of these, 1.72 lakh are from Gujarat, 78,000 from Maharashtra and 52,000 from Rajasthan. Others have returned from Delhi. Kerala, Haryana, Punjab, Goa, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. "About one lakh more are ex-

pected to return," said Keshari. In Rajasthan, as on Friday morning, 21,26,479 migrants or people had registered online with the state government to travel - from Rajasthan to other states or from other states back home to Rajasthan. Of these,

Tragedy and Shame: 26 dead was not covered by the putty. I

could hear others crying for help," said Kumar, who escaped with minor injuries and is admitted to Auraiya District His three companions, ad-

mitted to the Uttar Pradesh University of Medical Sciences, Saifai, Etawah, all received serious injuries. Kumar said he managed to borrow someone's phone and called his family back home. "They asked about the others, I told them I don't know."

Gopal Mahato, 22, who belongs to West Bengal's Purullia district, said the toll could have been much higher. Admitted at

the district hospital with injuries on his right leg, Mahato said, "Around 5-6 pm, 50-odd people in the trailer truck, mostly families, got off. It was not that hot any more and they felt they could walk. If they had still been in the trailer truck, more lives would have been lost, including women and children.'

The Circle Officer said that as per the information they had collected so far from the survivors, the trailer truck was carrying putty to Patna from Alwar, and had picked up passengers along the way in Rajasthan, including at Udaipur, Jaipur and Bharatpur. The passengers belonged to Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The truck had started from Delhi and, after entering UP via Ghaziabad, was on its way to Chhattarpur in Madhya Pradesh. "It is not clear how many got on at Delhi, and how many later," the police officer said.

An ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who died, apart from Rs 50,000 for each of the injured, has been approved from the PM's National Relief Fund. The Uttar Pradesh government has also announced similar relief.

Adityanath ordered suspension of SHOs of two police stations in Mathura and Agra. While Mathura and Agra border Rajasthan, Agra borders Delhi too. Explanation has been sought from police officers of the two areas. The CM also ordered a case against the drivers and owners of the two trucks. which have been seized.

The CM had Friday asked police officials to check migrants from walking or travelling in an unsafe manner on the road.

DGP Police HCAwasthy said steps were being taken to ensure this, but "the number of people who are moving is huge".

J C Crossing in Auraiya are four

other survivors - all of them

were travelling in the trailer

truck that met with the accident.

Ankush Chauhan, 23, who

has received emphasis while demand initiatives are still awaited.

RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh said the government stating that it has no opſiwari, 59. tion except privatisation is a "show of dearth of ideas on economic revival in times of crisis. "Without any social dialogue, the government is bringing gross changes and is going in the wrong direction... Government becoming shy of consultation and dialogue with trade unions,

WITH NUSHAIBA IQBAL

social representatives and stake-

holders shows lack of confi-

dence in their own ideas...," it

Can't help but cry at migrant plight, says Madras HC, seeks report

which would go to show that without agriculturists the world cannot survive." the court said. "Though belated, this court would like to know whether coordinated efforts have been taken by all the state governments in consultation with the central government to address the sufferings of the migrant

Referring to reports of migrant workers starving to death, and of 16 workers being crushed to death after they fell asleep on railway tracks in Maharashtra, the court said: "Even after the sorrow of sufferings of the migrant workers were reported in the media, nothing happened for the past one month as there was no coordinated effort between the states."

States where migrants go to work have a duty to ensure their safety and well-being, the court said. "India is a welfare state and Article 21 of the Constitution of India is paramount and safety and security and supply for food are important," it said.

"There are a number of toll gates available and those toll gates should have been made as checking points to provide food, shelter and medical help to the migrant labourers. However, it is very pathetic to note that neither the native states nor the states through which they were walking all along took care of them and failed to provide even the basic amenities such as food and shelter and even if they had been provided, they were negligible," the judges said.

The court said that all relevant data of migrant labourers in all states must be collected. and the host state must be made accountable for their safety and well-being - and that all states were expected to act together to render assistance to these poorer sections of society.

It directed the central and

migrant workers in each state/Union Territory were. "What is the number of mi-

grant workers stranded in each state, what are all the assistance provided to those migrant workers by the respective states and the Union government, and whether those migrant workers are allowed to cross state borders or prevented from crossing the borders and if they are prevented, whether they are provided with basic amenities such as food, shelter and medical assistance?" the court asked.

It also sought a report on the number of migrant labourers who had died on the way to their home states, and the compensation that was paid to their fami-

Train lottery

trucks leaving with hundreds crammed inside, but they didn't allow me. So at 2 am Friday, I left without any permit," said

According to Maharashtra government officials, the first step is for ticket hopefuls to submit registration forms at the local police station, where the names are grouped in batches of 25-30 based on destination dis-

Then, the DCP's office clubs the lists received from the threefour stations under its jurisdiction in larger bunches based on the same criterion. The districts are verified with the home ad-

dress on Aadhaar cards, a copy of which has to be submitted with the application. "A request is made to the receiving state independently by the respective DCP while informing us at the same time for follow-up action. Once the request is confirmed by the receiving state, usually by the next day, we send it to the Railways. It takes another day for the train to

be arranged and simultaneously, those who had registered are informed and buses organised to take them to the stations," said Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue), Nitin Kareer, the IAS officer who heads a nodal team for the process at Mantralaya, the state secretariat.

Shivaji Daund, divisional commissioner of Konkan Division, said the police commissionerate in Mumbai and the district collectors also coordinate with the Mantralaya.

Daund said "all those who have registered" will get to board the trains based on receipt of approved lists. "The station from where train will depart is based on the number of people on the list residing in the vicinity," he

Referring to cases like those of Tiwari and Khan, another senior official acknowledged that there is no clear order to the process - for instance, the destination state may not clear a list of migrants headed to one specific district, but clear another for a different location.

"The states have several issues to be sorted out, including arranging buses to ferry the migrants to various districts, organising for transit and food, and ensuring quarantine. This has posed major challenges," said the official.

"Also, as the Shramik trains were started from May 1, there were not more than two-three trains per day until about three days ago. But now, we have at least seven-eight trains leaving Mumbai each day. The state government is arranging for at least 200 more trains for which applications have been received, and requests for NoCs sent to other

That, however, is of little consolation to people like Tiwari. 'My money was running out in Mumbai, I could not afford to wait for the trains any longer," he said. By Saturday evening, his taxi had reached Kanpur, just about 250 km from home.

states," the official said.

Some who failed to get on train, factory workers

14, we left on foot. After we had walked a few kilometres, we were stopped at a police chowki and kept at a quarantine facility for 24 hours. Then, a local leader arranged a bus for us the next day. Around two hours after the bus started, we were stopped at Bharatpur at a police check post. The police official asked the bus driver to take the bus back. Fifteen minutes later, he told us to get on to the trailer truck carrying putty, which would have dropped us at Gaya (Bihar)," says Umesh, who earned around Rs 12,000 at the factory and sent half the money home. But the last time he got his salary was in February, he adds.

"I left Jharkhand for the first time in December last year because my mother was diagnosed with a kidney infection and we needed money," says

He says he did not want to leave Jaipur, but his wife had

"She was struggling with no money. There was no problem of food at the factory, but how could I eat knowing my children were going hungry," says the father of two, the elder one three and the younger a year old.

been asking him to come back.

Asked why he did not wait for a train from Rajasthan to go home, Umesh says, "I waited all this while, but people who worked at the factory were gradually leaving and I felt like I was betraying my family by staving at the factory. How long could I have waited?'

Umesh says he lost all his belongings in the accident, "I had kept my mobile phones, my Aadhaar card and other IDs in $someone\,else's\,bag.\,Now,I\,hear$ that the person is dead. I had Rs 2,500 too, but I guess that is gone now," says Umesh.

Recalling the moments before the accident, Umesh's nephew Vikas, who is among

those who survived, says he was lying on the truck with his brother Ranjan, talking of home, family "and how to keep them happy". At some point, the conversation trailed off and they drifted into sleep.

"Suddenly, there was a jerk and I was thrown away. My brother came under the truck... I thought he was no more and so I called my family and told them. But now I can't find him among the dead. Koi kuch bol nahin raha hain. Mera dimag kharab ho gava hain (Nobody is saying anything. My mind isn't working)," he said.

At Kheerabadi village in Chas block of Iharkhand's Bokaro district, Vikas and Ranjan's mother cried inconsolably on the phone. "My younger son called and said Ranjan is no more. Now he says kisi ne confirm nahin kiya," she said.

At Pandey Guest House near

works as a carpenter at a home décor firm in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, says he registered for the train service to take him back to Kushinagar district in UP. "Ten days ago, I had gone to a Jan Sewa Kendra in Bharatpur and

registered for the train service. I got a message on my phone that day, but after that, there was no response. I went to the kendra again, but the person there asked me to wait for a message regarding my travel. That never came so we decided to walk. When there is a crisis, everyone wants to go home. Why do you think people have been walking for days," says Ankush, who earned about Rs 20,000 a month. Next to him are his belongings in a big bag covered in white putty.

9,55,575 people have registered sent back on 191 trains across to travel out of the state and Maharashtra. In addition, 1.41 lakh mi-11.70.904, currently living out-

Data obtained from the government shows that 1,24,633 migrants/ labourers have been sent to other states by Rajasthan and 4,75,236 migrants/ labourers have been brought to the state so far. "A total of 13 trains have so far transported 16.167 migrant labourers to states including Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh," the data re-

side Rajasthan have registered

As far as the national capital is concerned, a total of 30,000 migrants from different states have left Delhi through 22 Shramik Specials as on Friday. In addition to these, several buses have been arranged by the home states of the migrants to bring them back from Delhi, including 13 buses to Punjab, five to Ladakh, and three each to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, the spokesperson said.

"The government has also received close to 28,500 applications on its web portal by migrants who are living in rented accommodations in the city and wish to go back to their home States. The applications would concern an estimated 82,000 individual migrants as many are combined applications having two to three names each, made by families," a Delhi government spokesperson said.

Nitin Kareer, Additional Chief Secretary, Maharashtra, said while he couldn't share the total number of migrants who want to go back, as he was yet to get figures from Mumbai Police. "As of now we have planned another 200 trains. So you can roughly say more 2.5 lakh migrants to be sent back." Till date, 2.45 lakh migrants have been

grants have been sent on 11,379 buses to Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat and Chhattigarh.

(With inputs from Deep Mukherjee in Jaipur, Gargi Verma in Raipur, Atri Mitra in Kolkata, Santosh Singh in Patna, Maulshree Seth in Lucknow, Zeeshan Shaikh in

Tranche 4: Mining to aviation, Govt pushes reforms it has already pushed

Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited via a Joint Venture/ Special Purpose Vehicles of nominated PSUs for manufacturing of urea through Coal Gasification route was cleared in December last year.

Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited, Gas Authority of India Limited and Coal India Limited entrusted PDIL to carry out a feasibility report for production of ammonia through coal gasification route.

On the liberalisation announced for other minerals, as per rules, all concessions have to be granted by respective state governments through e-auc-While the mineral index ap-

pears to be a new proposal, data for mineral-wise, state-wise reserves in leasehold and freehold areas is already available in the voluminous National Mineral Inventory compiled by the Indian Bureau of Mines.

The government also announced a hike in FDI limit for automatic approval to 74 per cent from 49 per cent in defence production. At present, FDI is allowed under the automatic route for up to 49 per cent and above 49 per cent through the

government route. The inflows, though, have been dismal. As per data furnished by 79 companies in Defence and Aerospace sector, until December, 2019, FDI inflows of only around Rs 1834 crore were reported in Defence

and Aerospace sector after 2014. The reform announcements in civil aviation were largely covered on May 1 when the PM held a meeting where it was decided that the Indian Air Space "should be effectively used in such a manner that the flying time is reduced benefiting the... public and also helping the airlines to save costs in close co-operation with the Department of Military Affairs".

This move, Sitharaman announced Saturday, will result in savings of Rs 1,000 crore annually for the aviation sector, in addition to reducing flight timings.

Also, for generation of more revenue as well as to bring in more efficiency at the airports, the Ministry of Civil Aviation was, in that meeting, asked to expedite the process of handing over six more airports on public-private partnership basis, by commencing the tender process within three months.

The government, however, announced that the Airports Authority of India will receive Rs 2,300 crore in down payment from revenue sharing by the party taking over the privatised

Sitharaman spoke about plans to make India a hub for aircraft MRO, something that was already announced in the full budget for 2019-20 back in July

Following this, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, in March, had slashed GST on maintenance repair overhaul (MRO) services for aircraft to 5 per cent from 12 per cent with full input tax credit (ITC) and changed the place of supply for B2B MRO services to the location of recipient. Asked whether any new

measures were being announced for the aircraft MRO sector, Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said: "In India, we have a very promising civil aviation sector so we want that MRO industry be located in India and as much (as possible) repairs should be done within the country. One problem used to be the competitiveness, the GST rate used to be 18 per cent.the rate had been brought down to 5 per cent with full input-tax credit. That is something that will make the MRO industry

very competitive". The government announced viability gap funding for social infrastructure with an aim to boost private investment - similar measures were outlined in this year's Budget.

The government had in

February announced setting up

of VGF window hospitals in the

PPP mode to improve coverage under Ayushman Bharat. The government also announced ranking of industrial parks in 2020-21 along with mapping the land banks on

Industrial Information System. Though 3,376 industrial parks/estates/SEZs in 5 lakh hectares have been mapped on IIS, this proposal isn't new.

Department Commerce, way back on September 13, 2013, had advised

state governments to file a detailed report on whether such data were being maintained and, if so, what the numbers of

THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL



A health worker checks a passenger on arrival from New Delhi, at Howrah station on Saturday. PTI

26 KILLED IN UP ACCIDENT

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

of the Home Department.

At least 26 migrant workers



Injured victims at district hospital in Auraiya, UP, on Saturday. Vishal Srivastav

tionary truck, both carrying passengers, on a highway near Auraiva in the early hours of Saturday.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also expressed grief over the incident. "Extremely saddened to hear of the tragic road accident in #Auraiya, Uttar Pradesh My condolences to the families of the migrant brothers and sisters who have lost their lives. May their souls rest in peace. Praying for recovery of those injured," Banerjee said in a tweet.

The UP government, too, has decided to give Rs 2 lakh to the kin of each deceased.

Meanwhile, The Trinamool Congress slammed the Centre over the death of 26 migrant TMC MP Sougata Roy said,

"The Centre should have ensured that the migrant workers return home safely. Instead of doing that the central government is busy blaming state governments for their misery. This has is the result of the Centre's sudden decision to announce the lockdown, which has forced many to hit the roads.'

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee said in a tweet, "The painful loss of lives of #MigrantWorkers forced to take desperate measures to return to their native places is a result of a botched up lockdown led by an arrogant and insensitive Govt that fails even to $take\,cognisance\,of\,the\,existence$ & suffering of millions."

In last few days, several migrant workers were killed in accidents in different parts of the country while on their way back

i) Five years Integrated M.Sc. (Economics) course with an option to exit after 3 years:

in aggregate (60% for SC/ST category students).

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Application Fee: Rs. 200/- for GM, OBC and Rs. 100/- for SC/ST, PWD candidates: NIL

Candidates should have completed B.Sc. or B.Sc. (Honours) in Economics, with

Econometrics, Mathematics and Statistics as other major courses in the degree with

B.A Honours Economics with minimum of 55% (50% for SC/ST) in aggregate.

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The candidates are required to apply online application of Central Universities Common

Entrance Test (CUCET) 2020 and appear for the common entrance test conducted by the

CUCET 2020 and the marks obtained by them will be considered for admission. For

For submission of online application to BASE University, please visit the School website at:

Online application commenced from: 16th March 2020

Last date for online application extended upto: **30th June 2020**

appearing Entrance test of CUCET and more information visit http://www.cucetexam.in

(A Unitary University, Government of Karnataka)

Follow measures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA, MAY16

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Banerjee, who also holds the

"Today #NationalDengueDay I would like to commend our health workers who are working tirelessly to combat dengue amidst the #COVID19 pandemic. Effective community engagement is the key to Dengue prevention and I urge everyone to protect themselves and follow preventive measures," the chief minister tweeted.

The Union Health Ministry recently wrote to the state government, alerting it about a possible outbreak of the disease, following a spike in the number of dengue cases in neighbouring Bangladesh.

SAMPLES TESTED ALMOST DOUBLED IN A WEEK: HOME SECY

7 more die; +ve rate decline brings cheer

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE STATE government on Saturday said the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) had claimed seven more lives, taking the toll to 160. If deaths due to comorbidities are taken into account, the count is 232.

Though 115 more infections had been detected till 9 am, pushing up the total number of positive cases to 2,576, the government said it was glad that the positivity rate had decreased from 4.69% to 3.33% in a week. The positivity rate is the proportion of positive cases among the total number of tests conducted.

Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay

"We are very glad to announce that, in our state the positivity rate of the infected persons has gone down significantly within a week," Home Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay told reporters in state secretariat Nabanna. Meanwhile, according to the

health department bulletin, 63 more patients were discharged from hospitals in the 24 hours till 9 am, taking the total to 892. The active case count rose to 1,452.

"The recovery rate in the

STATE COUNT TOTAL CASES 115 | 232 892 RECOVERED 77,288 SAMPLES TESTED TILL MAY 15

state is 34.63% now, which is nominally less than the national average of 35.09%. We are almost now near the national average,' said the Home Secretary.

COMORBID DEATHS

* INCLUDES 7

Bandyopadhyay said the number of samples tested had almost doubled over the last week. According to the health bulletin, 7,745 had been tested in the last 24 hours, pushing up the total number of specimens examined to 77,288.

"Total number of tests has almost doubled in the last seven days. On May 8, it was 35,767," said the Home Secretary, adding that the government had started one more laboratory for testing samples. With this, there are $22\,$

such laboratories in the state. At present, 9,667 people are still in government quarantine, while 50,258 people are in home quarantine, according to the health bulletin.

Rs 2 lakh relief for kin of 4 dead Purulia natives

Migrants' crisis result of botched-up lockdown: Trinamool

KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE STATE government on Saturday announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of four people, all natives of Purulia in West Bengal, who had been killed in a road accident in Uttar Pradesh's Auraiya district. The deceased were migrant workers who were trying to return to the state following the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the coronavirus pandemic, sources in the state government said. "GOWB offers its condo-

lences over the unfortunate death of 3/4 persons today in Auraiya district in UP. They died in UP, on their way home in Purulia Compensation@ Rs 2 lakh per head is reaching next of the kin here asap," read a tweet from the official Twitter handle

were killed and 53 were injured when a trailer rammed into a sta-

Bengal won't be

part of Centre's

ration card

to prevent dengue outbreak: CM tells people

Banerjee Saturday urged people to follow preventive measures to protect themselves from dengue

health portfolio, commended health workers who fighting dengue at this time of crisis.

The chief minister has cautioned officials not to forget the efforts to prevent any dengue outbreak amid the coronavirus pandemic.

THE MARINE PRODUCTS

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MPEDA) (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India)
MPEDA House, Panampilly Avenue, Kochi-682 036, Kerala.

Tel: 0484-2311979. Email: ho@mpeda.gov.in, Website: www.mpeda.gov.in

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ON DEPUTATION MPEDA invites applications for the post of Deputy Director (Personnel) on deputation basis.

For details please visit: www.mpeda.gov.in (NOTIFICATION-OPPORTUNITIES-ANNOUNCEMENT). Last date of receipt of application: 5.00 p.m of 08th June, 2020



भारतीय सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, पुणे Indian Institute of Information Technology, Pune

(An Institute of Information Technology, Pune)

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MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION Appointment of Vice Chancellor of Central University of Tamil Nadu

The Vice Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative nead, is expected to be

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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Minister of Road Transport & Highways; Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India

in conversation with

Anil Sasi

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BENGALURU DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS THIRD ROUND ADMISSION NOTIFICATION 2020-21

scheme: Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 16

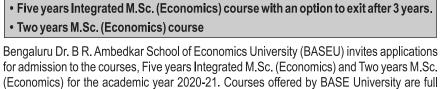
BENGAL FOOD Minister Jyotipriya Mullick on Saturday said the state will not be part of the Centre's 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme. The state minister, also a senior TMC leader, said the Bengal government's Khadya Sathi Scheme is sufficient to provide free ration to the people of the state.

"We had already decided that our state will not be part of the Centre's scheme. The decision was taken nearly six to seven months ago. We have our own Khadya Sathi Scheme. There are about 9 crore people who are beneficiaries of this scheme. So, I don't know how the Union Finance Minister's statements are applicable here," said Mullick.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the central government will make ration cards portable under the initiative 'One Nation, One Ration Card' to allow migrant workers access ration across the country.

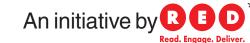
This will enable migrant beneficiaries to access foodgrains from any fair price shop in the country," she had said.

When it comes to providing ration to migrant workers, our state has been doing this for the



time and residential.

ELIGIBILITY:



Salute our Heroes





OWERGRID salutes the heroes of fight against COVID-19 pandemic which is posing a threat to the existence of mankind. The fight demanded extraordinary policy and administrative decisions. But most importantly, their implementation required a complete dedication by officials in the forefront much beyond the normal call of duty. Words will never be sufficient to thank enough the heroes in the fore front, administration and police officials, doctors and medical professionals and sanitation workers. Personnel from other

essential services like electricity, telecom, water supply, bank, petrol pumps, LPG suppliers also deserve highest accolades for their unstinted support to the society.

POWERGRID is resolved to ensure 24X7 electricity and telecom connectivity in the country, without which our fight would have been unimaginable. The resolution was displayed on April 05, 2020, in managing a 30% swing in the Power Grid when entire Nation switched off lights for 9 minutes. The planning, co-ordination and execution was phenomenal and unprecedented. In this time of crisis, we all stand united to come out victorious soon and rebuild our great nation to its glory. With warm regards,

Mr. Rajesh Kumar Executive Director POWERGRID, Kolkata



e are heavily indebted to all the frontline warriors — the doctors, nurses, police, paramedic, sweepers/cleaners, delivery staff and this is a tribute to them who in such circumstances are fighting the battle of the pandemic. We also salute the spirit displayed by all the employ-ees of JCl as also by the people of this country who have endured the lockdown. The team JCI has been ensuring continuation of all the operational activities through



dedicated work by its entire work-force. We have extensive plans for the post COVID-19 economic scenario for supporting the jute economy through expansion of diversified operations. The team JCI has also trained itself extensively availing online courses utilizing the lockdown time and equipped ourselves for the future challenges as an organization that is continuously learning from the changing scenario and evolving itself to meet the new challenges. The team JCI is committed to living by the motto — 'Hum Honge Kamyab' and wishes to spread the same. Jai Hind.

> Mr Ajay Kumar Jolly Chairman-cum-Managing Director The Jute Corporation of India Limited (A Government of India Enterprise)

Presently the whole world is affected by the Pandemic Covid-19 and our country is going through the Lockdown from 23rd March 2020 to till date.

e, at BCCL, are heavily indebted to all the frontline WARRIORS like the Doctors, Nurses, Police, Para Medical Staff, Sweepers/Cleaners, etc. We are also indebted to Ministry of Coal, Govt. of India, State & Dhanbad District Administration and all those who are directly and indirectly contributing to the battle against this dreadful pandemic. We are also thankful to the people

of our country who have observed lockdown and respected Government directives. We are certainly hopeful that we will ultimately win this war against the deadly COVID-19.

I am also indebted to employees and other stake holders of BCCL who effort by continuing uninterrupted production of coal to support the Energy Security of the Country. In such a situation it is of utmost importance to keep each and every employee of the company at workplace and its neighborhood safe and healthy.

I wish all to stay safe and healthy

he novel coronavirus (COVID–19) outbreak, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as pandemic on March11, 2020, has spread significantly across the country. Given the high rate of transmission among the citizens since first case was reported in January 30, 2020, in Kerala, Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown from March 24, 2020 with extended period till May 17, 2020, in three phases, to contain the contagion and win over the epidemic. With such unprecedented measures taken by both the central and respective state governments to contain the spread of COVID-19, the country's economy has been impacted and have caused hardship and disruption in part (NACTO).

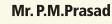
MSTC Limited (MSTC), a Mini Ratna Category-I CPSE under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India, with major business vertical being e-Commerce services, catering to various government entities (both Centre and state government, CPSEs, banks etc across the country) through e-procurements, e-auctions and allied activities of mines etc, has made all out effort to run the wheel of activity of business serving the essential and agricultural sector from t lockdown. MSTC has slowly opened and started most of its pan India offices since April 20, 2020 after ensuring all compulsory preventive and precautionary measures as per the guidelines of MOHFW, viz. thermal temperature scanning at entry and exit, providing face mask to all employees and ensuring wearing of the same, providing hand rubs at entry and ensuring hand sanitisation at entry, maintaining social distancing, cleaning and frequent sanitisation of the whole workplace as per norms, special transportation facility with 30-40% capacity are being arranged as per

requirement and more importantly ensuring use of Aarogya Setu app by all employees, stakeholders etc. As additional preventive measure and to maintain continuity of business, MSTC has also enabled work-from-home facility for its rest of the employees at all its locations through

its dedicated server with monitoring 24X7.

With Government of India's notification dated 15.4.2020 towards allowing select additional activities against lockdown measures for containment of COVID-19 in the phase 2 and with effect from April 20, 2020 till May 3, 2020, MSTC has also resumed its essential office functions at the Headquarters and Eastern Regional Office at Kolkata. As MSTC acts as an e-commerce service provider to various departments of government of India, several state governments, CPSEs, banks etc towards conduction of e-auctions for coal, iron-ore, mine blocks, petroleum products, stressed assets under SARFAESI Act as well as agricultural products viz. pulses etc on behalf of NAFED and maintaining and managing data and financials to sustain the supply chain consequential to such activities and disruption of which has impacted the Country's economy and in turn caused disruption in people's lives. Besides, MSTC has started a unique initiative, viz. Jaivik Kheti online portal along with Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Department of Agriculture (DAC), to promote organic farming globally and facilitate organic farmers to sell their organic produce — grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables. And, to facilitate door-to-door delivery, MSTC has joined hands with India Post, Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, government of India. Further to augment the fight against coronavirus for the nation, MSTC has already contributed to PM CARES Fund to the tune of Rs 5.54 crores to support India's COVID-19 pandemic response.

> **Mr. Surinder Kumar Gupta MSTC LTD**



Chairman-cum-Managing Director **Bharat Coking Coal Limited A Mini Ratna Company**











♦TheIndian **EXPRESS** MAY 17, 2020 **ADVERTORIAL**



Salute our Heroes



s you are aware that, the deployment of extraordinary measures by the Government to effectively combat the widespread COVID-19 pandemic including the nationwide lockdown is underway and the related facts and figures of the deadly coronavirus that continue to pour in, hold us in panic and distress. These are challenging times not just for us but for humanity at large, which call for extraordinary forbearance and resilience both physically and mentally.

I would like to commend our workforce for their unflinching dedication and commitment towards maintaining our industrial operations while following all the guidelines issued by the Government & World Health Organization and preclautionary personal hygiene and social distancing. I would like to call these people as our Energy Warriors. It is a matter of great pride that, like in the past, the Energy Warriors of OIL have once again risen to the occasion and pledged to support the nation through their commitment and contribution of a day's salary to the PM CARES Fund, created to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Additionally, the company has also contributed Rs 38 crore to the above fund under its Corporate Social Responsibility. Also, as a responsible corporate, OIL has undertaken and continues to undertake various measures to arrest the spread of the virus in our operational areas. To name

- Mass awareness generation campaigns amongst the public (both in rural and urban areas).
- OIL Officers Association has also supported nearly 2,000 needy families with necessary basic items like eatables, masks etc,
- Donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Guwahati Municipal Corporation.
 Regular sanitisation of our installations across the nation and also public places in Assam and Rajasthan including entire Duliajan township, Border Security Forces Complex, Jaisalmer etc by OIL's Fire Service Department.
- In-house development of sanitiser by our Chemical Department.
- Our pump station has also created a UV sanitiser machine in-house from recycled products which can sanitise a N95 mask in 20 seconds and the same is used.
- Further, our OIL doctors and medical staff are providing free consultancy to general public on the dreaded disease. A dedicated control room handled by team of OIL executives has been operating to help and guide people on COVID-19, in and around FHQ, Du-

At the end I would like to convey to all of you that the challenges of fighting with COVID-19 have actually given us the chance of showing strength and uniting against the disease. We all are in this together and we shall emerge safe, strong and victorious. For the next few days of the lockdown stay at home, keep maintaining social distancing and follow strict personal hygiene.

Take care of yourself, your loved ones and family and stay safe. Jai Hind.

Mr. Sushil Chandra Mishra Chairman & Managing Director **Oil India Limited** lobally we are been wrapped up by the dreaded Covid19. As if the whole world is fighting together just to survive. But we all know there is always a ray of silver lining hiding just behind the darkness. It's not too far when again we all will be living in a bright and beautiful world, more stronger than ever. Our heart fills with enormous joy and gratitude for the unseen heroes who are fighting day in and day out with a smile for the society. Let's get together and build a beautiful world where pages and prosperity provails poet Covid19 also tiful world where peace and prosperity prevails post Covid19 also.

We salute those heroes and join our hands with them abiding by the law and order. I am very optimistic about the positivities and opportunities it will bring along in new business ventures in manufacturing and agriculture. We just need to have more patience at this moment.



Mr. Yatish Kumar **Braithwaite & Co Ltd, Kolkata**

he COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon the world a challenge that is unprecedented in nature and scale. The selfless battle being waged against the invisible enemy by doctors and health workers, state administration, police, media and other frontline workers is exemplary and truly commendable. Support being extended by people from support services like milk, vegetable vendors,

pharmacists, financial institutions like banks is worth appreciating, given the circumstances. Their brave efforts to keep the show running, drives a sense of hope in such trying times.

Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) employees too continue to work under challenging conditions on the high seas and the remotest corners of the country to achieve uninterrupted supply of Crude and Natural Gas to the nation amidst the lockdown.

Our CSR efforts have been directed towards equipping frontline workers in their relentless fight against the novel coron-

avirus by providing dry ration & protective items to the COVID-19 impacted families.

I take this opportunity to convey my sincere gratitude to all the frontline workers.

May the almighty give them enough strength and resilience to deliver further and win one of the worst battles human race has ever fought.

Mr. K R Durga Prasad, Executive Director-Basin Manager, MBA Basin, ONGC, Kolkata

BCC and its subsidiary HSCL express their solidarity with National COVID warriors who are fighting this dreaded pandemic day in and day out in order to save the humanity. Our prayers are with them in this hour of crisis.



Mr P K Gupta **NBCC & Chairman - HSCL**

resently, the World is going through a dire threat from Covid-19 pandemic and the whole country is going through to Lockdown. Even in such a difficult state the Coal Miners of the company have been putting their $whole \, sole \, effort \, by \, continuing \, uninterrupted \, production \,$ of coal to support the Energy Security of the country for which appropriate SOP has been prepared for all the mines as per guide-

lines received from DGMS and advisories received from different statutory bodies. In such a situation it is of utmost importance to keep each and every employee of the company at workplace and its neighborhood safe and healthy. ECL has taken all proactive measures of the safety of the Colliery, Co-workers and Company under a project in Mission mode named "MISSION SuDESHH-Mitwa"(A proactive approaches a friend(Mitwa) for achieving the goals of SuDDESH, i.e Sustainable Development, Environment, Safety, Health & Hygiene).

We are heavily indebted to all the frontline WARRIORS i,e the Doctors, Nurses, Police, Para Medics, Sweepers/Cleaners, etc. and this is a tribute to them who in such a situation are fighting the battle of the dreadful pandemic. We are also indebted to all our stakeholders, the employee of our organization, the people of this country who have endured lockdown, respected Government directives and we are certainly hopeful that we will ultimately win this war against the deadly COVID-19.

Wishing all to stay blessed, safe and harmless.

Mr. Prem Sagar Mishra Chairman-cum-Managing Director **Eastern Coalfields Limited**











Plasma therapy trials to begin in Beliaghata ID Hospital

Kolkata: A state government official on Saturday said the administration, in collaboration with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), was set to commence clinical trials of convalescent plasma therapy with the objective of treating Covid-19 patients in the city after the Drug Controller General of

India gave its approval. The purpose of the clinical

trials is to understand the efficacy of blood plasma of a recovered Covid-19 patient in the treatment of others suffering from the disease. The trials were likely to begin at the newly constructed Critical Care Unit of the Beliaghata ID Hospital next week, said the official.

"The CCU unit of the Beliaghata ID Hospital is almost ready," the official said, PTI

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

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manufacture, shop assembly & testing before dispatch, packing and forwarding.

transportation, insurance, handling, delivery, erection, testing & commissioning of

1 No. 220 V. 200 AH battery bank of plante Lead acid cell (110x2 volts) including MS

Stand and 1 No. 220V/60A float +80A float cum boost battery charger for (3x5.65

MW) Andhra Power House from munofacturers or authorized dealers who regularly

nanufacture/provide the equipment of the type specified and have adequate

technical knowledge and experience in respect of all tems covered under Scope of Supply and services in Tender Specification No.: HPSEBL/PHE/ANDHRA HEP-

(12:30 Hrs.)

(12:30 Hrs.)

Hs. 2800/

Hs. 32,000/

The detailed tender notification can be viewed/downloaded free of cost from

website www.tenderwizerd.com/NPSEB and tender document can be had after

making prescribed payment. The configendum/addendum in connection with

above d-tender (if any) shall be uploaded on www.tenderwizard.com/HPSEB

website only and shall not be published in newspapers, hence, bidders are advised

to visib/verify the tenderwizard website for the latest updates related to the tender.

Sci- (Partap Thakur) Superintending Engineer (Designs), Power House Electrical, HPSEB Ltd., Sundernagar, Distl. Mandi (HP)-175010

Presse contact on Mobile Nos : 82619 22200, 52610 33300 and 96250 33300

08.06.2020 (3.00 Hrs.)

17:06:2020 (15:00 Hrs.)

Up to 17,06:2020 (11:00 Hrs.)

From 20,05,2020 (10,00 Hrs.) to 08,08,2020

From 20.85.2020 (10.00 Hrs.) to 88.86.2020

BATTERY BANK/2020-1 as per the following:

Request for online tender

documents (did sheets)

Last date of submission of

Date of opening of Tender

Earnest Money Deposit

Cost of Tender Specification

Date of pre-bid meeting

Issue of artine tender



CHANDRA ROY, SFA (VETY)

ashastra Seema Bal fondly remembers therishes the valiant act of brave heart Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) who made supreme sacrifice of his life on the line of duty for Nation. Shil Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety) was deployed at E coy, Dronapal of 41st Bastalion, SSB in Dantewada, Chinattisgarh. On 17,05,2010, he boarded bus for TAC Headquarters, Dantewara to handover feed of dogs. After completing Government bonafide duty he boarded bus from Dronapar. An IED explosion was triggered by the Naxals on Dantewada-Sukma highway Chhaltisgarh on this bus. He attained martyrdom Dantewada-Sukma in the IED blast on this day in the year 2010. We salute the supreme sacrifice of the brave soldier

SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL



A rickshaw puller waits for passengers at Tollygunge in Kolkata on Saturday. Shashi Ghosh

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India

Head Office, C-4, G Block, Information Technology Department, Star House-II, 8th Floor, dra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai-400051. E-mail: Headoffice.it@bankofindia.co

TENDER NOTICE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR PROCUREMENT AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF CASH MANAGEMENT AND
CHANNEL FINANCE SOLUTION

Details available on the Bank's Corporate Website www.bankofindia.co.in under "Tender" section from 14/05/2020. Last Date of Submission -



Office of Superintending Enginee 3rd Circle P.W.D. Pithoragarh **National Competitive Bidding**

(E-tendering)

Latter No 1594/ 62M 03/2020 Date 16 -05-2020 **Short Term Tender Notice** The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department

Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Single Bid System) on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available form date 23-05-2020 & onward on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in Name of Work Earnest Cost of Validity Period of Contractor's

NO.		(in Lac)	(in Rs.)	Tender	Completion	registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Improvement &	1.52	4000.00	90	12	Category 'C'
	Reconstruction		+	Days	Month	or Above for
	work in Simalta		18%			Road works
	motor road km		GST			in any State
	4.00 & 5.00 in					Govt./ Govt. of
	constituency					India/ Govt.
	champawat					Undertaking
	District-					_
	champawat under					
	State Sector					

NOTE- It is mandatory to submit the price of the tender and the draft of GST amount

EASTERN RAILWAY

E-tender is invited by Principal Chie Engineer, Eastern Railway, Kolkata rom and reputed and eligibl contractors of Railways and those of approved list of Govt, of India/Public Sector undertaking for the under mentioned work: E-Tender No. W2_623_12_COVID19_1_20-21 Dated: 14.05.2020. Name of the work and its location: Daily sanitization/ disinfection of Head Quarters office (FP, OKG & NKG) for COVID 19 for a period of 5 months. Approximate cost of the work: ₹ 23,16,930. Earnest Money Deposit: ₹46,300. Date & time of closing of tender: 08.06.2020 at 14.00 hrs. The details of tende documents are available at website www.ireps.gov.ln Tenderers are requested to submit their offer online on the above website. No manual offe

Tender Notices are also available at website:

Tomorrow, first repatriation flight to land in Kolkata from Dhaka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA, MAY 16

THE FIRST repatriation flight from Bangladesh to Kolkata, carrying 160 people, will arrive here on Monday, capping days of wordy duel between the Bengal government and the Centre on the issue.

The flight under 'Vande Bharat' mission will arrive at Kolkata International Airport here from Dhaka on May 18, said West Bengal Home Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay on Saturday.

The development will hopefully bring down curtains on political row between the state government and the Ministry of External Affairs for the last two days, after Bengal alleged that the Centre was discriminating between states in terms of deploying repatriation flights for residents of different states.

Denying the charge, MEA Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava had said the Centre does not differentiate between states, and its 'Vande Bharat' mission is for all stranded Indians. Adding fuel to the fire, the state government on Friday said it had "long back" communicated to the Centre the preparations made to welcome back people stranded abroad, while replying to the Union government's assertion that repatriation flights can be facilitated to Kolkata if Bengal confirms the arrangements to receive and quarantine passengers.

"IMPORTANT"

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any manner whatsoever

Bengal won't allow bus fare hike: Minister

Number of app-based cabs will increase from 100 to 1,000 tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY16

THERE WILL be no hike in fares of buses as demanded by the private operators for running their vehicles with a maximum 20 passengers, maintaining social distancing norms over the Covid-19 pandemic, West Bengal Transport Minister Suvendu Adhikari during a press confer-

ence in Nabanna on Saturday. "Our Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee always takes pro-people decision. In the current situation, people are already in distress. So, she does not want to increase their burden. Private bus and taxi operators had proposed a fare hike, but we are not ready for it. Other than fare hike, $they\,can\,demand\,anything\,from$ the government, which we will

negotiate," Adhikari added. The minister said, "Since the last two weeks, government buses are plying in the green zones. For three days, bus service have also resumed on 15 routes. We are strictly maintaining social distancing norm, not allowing any passenger without mask and keep the passenger count to 20. On the first day, we had problems in restricting the number of passengers to 20 per bus, but with the help of police we have implemented the rule effectively."

He also said from Monday, the state government would increase the frequency of bus services. "We will increase the number of buses from Monday. We will minimise the gap from one hour to half an hour. Buses and taxis will ply only between 7 am and 7 pm of a day in the red and orange zones, while there would be no such restriction in the green zones," he added.

General Secretary of the bus owners' association, Joint Council



Minister Suvendu Adhikari

of Bus Syndicates, Tapan Banerjee said: "This is very unfortunate. We did not approach the government. They approached us with the fare revision proposal. Now, they are saying that they will not allow the fare hike. In this circumstances, bus owners will not able to start services. With the existing fareand to limit the number of passengers to 20 in order to maintain social distance norm, it is impossible to make the business viable. Now, let the government decide, how to keep our business running."

The Transport Department started the app-based cab services from Saturday.

"From today, 100 cabs have been allowed. But from Monday, the number will increase to 1,000," Adhikari said.

Meanwhile, Ola spokesperson said, "As per the directive of the State Transport Department, Ola has resumed services for emergency and essential travel needs in Kolkata. Citizens who require transportation for hospitals visits, and emergency service like travelling to police stations or Government offices can book a cab through the app... Our driver partners have been trained to follow safety measures and the fleet of cars is sanitized as well as equipped with masks and hand gloves to ensure the ride is reliable and safe.'

He further said that keeping in mind the regulations, only two passengers could travel in a cab and no one would be allowed to sit next to the driver.

NOTICE BOARD

CORPORATE ASSOCIATE DIARY

APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS, HONOURS

Official GRSE Statement on Covid 19

An ASI of CISF deputed in GRSE and having history of diabetes & hypertension tested positive for Covid 19 and passed away stands in solidarity at this hour with the bereaved family. All CISF personnel who reside within the barrack accommodation of GRSE Main Unit have been placed under quarantine and their samples have been immediately sent for testing. Personnel found Covid positive



have already been shifted for treatment at State Medical Facilities designated for treatment of Covid 19, as per extant norms. The State Administration has been highly supportive in providing prompt hospitalization facility to these Paramilitary personnel and also in sanitising their barracks...

Providing a helping hand – the Lake Kalibari

The rising affluence of the city, luxurious lifestyle and fast urbanization can provide little vibration of life in the day to day life of the residents of our remote villages. The Lake Kalibari temple, established in Kolkata about 70 years ago and which is devoted for the well being of the mass, across all sections of the society, has recently supplied food items to the villagers of Budhokhali, Narayanpur and Narayangunge in the remote Namkhana block of Kakdwip, through the help of the local administrative authorities for around a week.

(PMGKAY)-status of lifting of food grains by states from FCI

One of the most important initiatives of Govt. of India in its fight against Covid 19 pandemic is the announcement of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) providing free food grains to the needy population. The salient features of the scheme are:

Government of India would not allow anybody, especially any poor family, to suffer on account of nonavailability of food grains due to disruption in the three months.

80 crore individuals, i.e, roughly two-thirds of India's population would be covered under this scheme. Each one of them would be provided double of their current entitlement over next three months. This additionality would be free of cost.

P.C. Chandra Jewellers has re-opened 6 of their showrooms in West Bengal and Tripura.

Kolkata, 11th May 2020: P.C Chandra Jewellers, one of the leading jewellery houses of eastern India have already reopened 6 showrooms across Bengal and Tripura from early May'20. The Company has restarted its operations in Bankura, Purulia, Durgapur (City Centre), Katwa, Balurghat and Agartala.

Being a responsible the organization, PC Chandra Jewellers is following stringent safety measures across all reopened showrooms. These safety measures include mandatory use of thermal scanner, installation of washbasin at the entry point, compulsory use of hand sanitizer at entry and exit points, wearing mask and gloves, frequent showroom cleaning and sanitizing and many others. Since it's a jewellery company where patrons try out products, the Company has decided to follow zero-contact business. Showroom timings are within daylight from 11 AM to 5.30 PM, also, a restricted number of people are allowed inside the showrooms, considering the aspect of social distancing. Most importantly, jewellery is being sanitized before delivery, ensuring maximum hygiene.

CLW BUILT WAP-7 LOCO COMPLETES 20YRS



Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) built "NAVKIRAN", first WAP-7 electric loco of 6000HP bearing serial no 30201was flagged off from CLW on 10th May 2000, exactly 20 yrs back for the service to Indian Railways and the performance of this loco is guite very encouraging . With change of electric traction technology world over, the GTO based technology which was used initially was later changed and upgraded to latest Insulated Gate Bi Polar transistor (IGBT) based converter technology which is more energy efficient world over.

General Manager, Metro Railway holds a high level meeting

Shri Manoj Joshi, General Manager, Metro Railway held a high level meeting at Metro Rail Bhavan today on 11.05.2020.

During this meeting, he took stock of the preparedness of Tapan Sinha Memorial Hospital to combat COVID-19 pandemic. He advised medical officers to take all possible steps to provide best medical facilities as per rules to COVID-19 patients if they come for treatment at this hospital.

LGIE on Leadership at DSP

A Large group Interaction was organised at DSP, wherein Shri Anil Kumar Chaudhary, Chairman, Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) in a web conference with nearly more than 500 numbers of E-6 and above level executives of Durgapur Steel Plant discussed at length on the production achievements of DSP in-



cluding the present market and other external scenarios affecting production performance. The web conference saw participation of CEO, DSP & ISP, Shri AV Kamlakar, Executive Directors, CGMs and other senior executives of DSP.

Step towards Atmanirbharta: Warship IN LCU L-57Indigenously built at GRSE, Commissioned

Kolkata, 15 May 20: The Seventh of the Eight Landing Craft Utility (LCU) IN LCU L 57, built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), Kolkata, a Mini Ratna Category 1 & leading shipyard of the countrywas commissioned today at Port Blair by Lt. General PS Rajeshwar PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC INCAN. The ship is the 103rd warship delivered by GRSE.

GRSE is also supporting the nation's fight against COVID-19 through contributions to PMCARES fund and distribution of 'Masks', 'Sanitisers', 'Soap' and food grains to the needy amongst the community around

Currently GRSE has a strong order book of over Rs.27000 Crore equipping the shipyard with a deep pool of revenue-generating projects..

SE Railways All passenger train services cancelled till 3rd May 2020 in view of COVID 19 lockdown.

All ticket counters for bookings including UTS & PRS, will remain suspended till further orders. No advance reservation of train tickets, including E tickets, till further advice, however, facility of online cancellation will remain functional.

ECL MEETING



A meeting of all Area Sales Managers and Quality Managers was held in the Conference of CMD's Office . The meeting was presided by CMD,ECL in presence of D(T)P&P and D(T)OP . GM/TS to CMD, HoD(Marketing & Sales), HoD(QC) and all other executives of Marketting & Sales and Quality Control Department of HQ participated. D(T) OP and D(T) P&P expressed their concern towards reduced despatch level due to less demand under lockdown situation and invited suggestions from all regarding improvement in despatch as well as quality parameters.

SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY HAS ALREADY RUN 788 TRIPS OFPARCEL EXPRESSTRAINS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

South Eastern Railway has come forward to fight against the Coronavirus pandemic by adopting various measures including movement of Time Tabled Parcel ExpressTrains formaintaining uninterrupted supply of essential commodities to every nook and corner of the country during nationwide lockdown. South Eastern Railway has already run 788 trips of Time Tabled Parcel Express Trains towards different destinations in the country during this national crisis. These Parcel Express trains have been carrying essential commodities. South Eastern Railway during the above period, has already carried 10,940 tonnes of parcel goods containing 4,53,278 number of packages to different places in the country.



EVGENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, C S R INITIATIVES, APPOINTMENTS, MOVEMENTS, CELEBRATIONS

THE OUTBREAK NATION





Migrants from Maharashtra on their way to West Bengal, in Ranchi on Saturday. PTI



Survivors of the accident in Auraiya outside the hospital on Saturday. PTI



Food being distributed to migrants waiting to be screened for train travel, in Ludhiana on Saturday. Gurmeet Singh



Migrant workers waiting for a train to UP, at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai, on Saturday. Pradip Das,

THE RUSH CONTINUES

Migrants workers at Chandigarh railway station rushing to register for a train to Bihar, on Saturday, Kamleshwar Singh

BY THE NUMBERS

119 Migrants killed in accidents across country since lockdown

UTTAR PRADESH MAY 16: 26 dead (24 in Auraiya, 2 in Unnao) MAY 14: 7 dead (3 in Barabanki, 2 in Jalaun, 1 each in Jaunpur, Bahraich). MAY 13: 6 dead in Muzaffarngar MAY 11: 2 dead in Gorakhpur

MA 5: 6 dead in Mathura MAY 8: 1 dead in Lucknow MAY 7: 2 dead in Lucknow MAY 12: 3 dead in Kanpur Dehat

MARCH 29: 1 dead in Rampur

MADHYA PRADESH 24 MAY 16: 6 dead between

Sagar and Chhatarpur MAY 15: 3 dead near Guna MAY 14: 9 dead near Guna MAY 9: 6 dead near Narsinghpur

MARCH 28: 4 run over by truck near Mumbai APRIL 28: 1 killed on Malegaon-Mumbai Agra Rd MAY 7: 3 killed on Shirpur-Mumbai Agra Road MAY 8: 16 run over by train

RAJASTHAN MAY 8: 6 dead in Sirohi

in Aurangabad

BIHAR:

MAY 14: 2 dead in Samastipur MAY 5: 2 dead in Arrah

UTTARAKHAND: MAY 15:3 dead in Champawat

CHHATTISGARH: APRIL 21: 2 migrant workers dead

MAY 10: 2 dead in Ramgarh

Survivors of the Auraiya accident admitted to a district hospital on Saturday. Vishal Srivastav

At Jaipur unit, workers say not paid for months

Oppn takes on Yogi govt, Centre over migrant deaths

New Delhi/Lucknow: Hitting out tion as to why the government is at the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress and the Samaiwadi Party called the death of migrant workers in a road accident in Auraiya on Saturday "murders", while the BSP asked parties in power to rise above petty politics and ensure the safety of migrants trying to return home amid the lockdown.

In Kolkata, the TMC slammed the Centre over the incident and blamed its "botched-up lockdown" and "arrogant" approach for the suffering of lakhs of them across the country.

In Delhi, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the incident has again raised the quesnot facilitating migrant labourers' journey back to their homes. The UP unit of the Congress ac-

cused the state government of being insensitive towards the plight of migrant workers and demanded Adityanath's resignation.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav tweeted, "Let's see for how long those heartless people and their supporters would justify this negligence despite knowing everything. These are not deaths but murders." BSP chief Mayawati asked Adityanath to ensure that his directives on the safety of stranded labourers returning home were being implemented by the officials.

HAMZAKHAN

talk about long working hours and delayed wages. On Saturday, several of the 24 workers, who died in an accident in Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh used to work at RSG Stones, which has at least two units in Jaipur alone.

At the RSG unit in Vishwakarma Industrial Area (VKI), the workers, talking to The Indian Express, said that their wages have become irregular in the last couple of months. "For March, we got our pay for the first ten days only on April 17. For the remaining days of March, the payment came in the first week of May," a worker said, requesting anonymity.

'We did overtime in March and are yet to be paid for it. It's as good as forgetting about it now. And we don't know when we AT ONE of the Jaipur units of RSG will be paid for April," said an-Stones, named after its founder other, as they crowd around a Radhev Shvam Gupta, workers — mobile phone to see gruesome images of the accident. They say that their co-workers who died in the accident worked in a bigger unit in Mahlan, which is about 44 kilometres away from

> their workplace in VKI. Another employee says, "The managers couldn't care less. We used to work from 7 am to 7 pm but after the Union government came up with orders for a complete shutdown between 7 pm to 7 am, the managers merely changed our timings to 7 am to 6 pm, so that some of us can go back in time.

"During a pandemic we have to cook our own food and work too. There is no relief or any in-

centive for us. If at all we complain we are told that we are free to leave," the employee said. They say that their colleagues in Mahlan too, who worked under a contractor, were unhappy about the wages

As per their website, RSG Stones identifies itself as "a leading stone mining and processing company in India. RSG Stones has operated successfully in the stone industry for over a quarter of a century, bringing you the world's finest stone products and solutions. We are pioneers in Marble and Quartzite Mining in Rajasthan, India."

It says that its units in Rajasthan "are equipped with Italian Breton and Socomac machinery, yielding more than 200,000 sq. ft. of polished slabs annually." Calls to Ashish Gupta, CEO of RSG Stones, went unan-

Driving auto from Delhi to Bihar, couple killed in **UP** accident

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, MAY 16

A MIGRANT worker and his wife were killed on Saturday morning when the auto they were travelling in to get to Darbhanga district was hit by a mini-truck on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway in Bangarmau region of Unnao district.

The couple's eight-year-old son Krishna, who was travelling with them, survived the accident, officials said.

The deceased were identified as Ashok Chowdhary (35) - who used to drive an auto in Delhi - and his wife Chhoti (33). The family had left the national capital for Darbhanga on Friday.

According to the police, the auto had pulled over to the side of the highway and Krishna had stepped out to relieve himself when a truck rammed the vehicle from behind.

Both Ashok and Chhoti suffered serious injuries, they added. Local residents rushed the couple to a hospital where were declared 'brought dead'.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem, Bangarmau Police Station Circle Officer Gaurav Kumar Tripathi told The Indian Express. Krishna suffered no injury and is currently with officials of the district's Child Line, a police officer said.

The police have seized the truck but the driver managed to escape, said Bangarmau Police Station House Officer Shyam Pal Singh.

Uttar Pradesh Minister Yogi Aditynath announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin and directed officials to make arrangements to send the bod-

In MP, eight more migrants die in mishaps

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, MAY16

MADHYA PRADESH on Saturday witnessed yet another chain of road accidents involving migrants that left eight of them dead and at least 29 injured.

In the deadliest of three incidents that took place Saturday, four women and two men were killed, and twelve were injured, after a truck overturned near Buxwaha in Chhatarpur district on the Sagar-Chhatarpur road.

A group of 20 migrants had boarded the truck at Bhopal and were on their way to Sidharth Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. The overloaded vehicle was returning from a textile unit in Budhni in Madhya Pradesh.

Buxwaha police station incharge RNTiwari told The Indian Express that the driver was allegedly drunk and was among the injured. He and the cleaner had charged Rs 1,000 each from the travellers.

Five of the migrants died on the spot and one on the way to a hospital. The injured persons were treated at Banda in Sagar district and those critical were referred to the district hospital in Sagar.

In Guna district, a tempo carrying a family trying to reach Dharavi in Mumbai overturned while avoiding a bike. Sharafat Ali. 45. died while 11 others were injured, two of them seriously, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Shivani Garg said. The family was returning from Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh, where it had been

stuck due to the lockdown. In Barwani district, Aniket Thakur (22), a resident of Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh, was

Institute suspends Kashmiri

killed when a vehicle rammed into the back of the the truck he was traveling in. The incident happened near Gavghati on the Agra-Mumbai Road in the after-Nagalwadi Police Station in-

charge Majhar Khan said the truck was carrying 45 migrant labourers from Mumbai to Azamgarh.

More than 25 migrants have lost their lives in road accidents in Madhya Pradesh in recent

MP seeks advance notice from states

The state government on Saturday wrote to Chief Ministers of seven states seeking advance intimation of the movement of migrant workers.

"Though we are arranging

food, vehicles and medicines free of cost to the migrants, the system falls apart because we don't get to know how many are reaching MP, at what time and by what means (of transport)," Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan wrote to his counterparts in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Raiasthan. Iharkhand, Karnataka, Telangana and Chhattisgarh.

"In the absence of advance intimation, many workers arrive simultaneously, derailing the arrangement. Many workers get disturbed and create law and order situation. They themselves suffer due to this," said Chouhan, highlighting the lack of coordination between the states. On Saturday, he asked collectors to ensure that workers travelling on overloaded trucks are made to get off, and vehicles arranged for their onward journey.

Post-lockdown, quick turnaround of Kerala economy unlikely: study

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 16

A STUDY commissioned by the Kerala government on the economic and fiscal impact of Covid-19 in the state has stated that an immediate turnaround of the economy after the lockdown ends is unlikely. It estimated that a stimulus package of Rs 17,000 crore is required to revive the Kerala economy.

The study was conducted by the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), an autonomous institute of the state government, in Thiruvananthapuram.

It has predicted three months as the recovery period for most sectors. However, adverse effects will likely last six months for sectors such as tourism, entertain-

The study stated that agriculture has to be the centrestage of recovery package. "Interventions in the sphere of production alone, without concomitant initiatives on other parts of the value chain, could be

self-defeating. Hence we call for linking the producers directly with the consumers by making effective use of the existing institutional architecture and encouraging new innovative interventions," stated the study, conducted by a team led by GIFT Director Prof K J Joseph. On the stimulus package, it

said the Union government could transfer money directly to producers of goods and services and workers, or give it to the state government for onward transfers. The report estimates loss of

state output due to the lockdown, shortfall in revenue receipts of the government, loss of earnings of the self-employed and workers as well as the finances required to revive the economy. The finance of the state is crucially dependent on the state's GSDP, which was hit by supply shock and demand shock.

The supply shock on sectors heavily dependent on other states is likely to be harder and more prolonged than those with supply chains within the state.

At Odisha quarantines, migrants being trained as health workers knew that not only thousands

DIPANKAR GHOSE NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE ODISHA government has started conducting training sessions for migrants returning to the state to groom them into community health workers. These sessions are being conducted at panchayat-level quarantine centres where the migrants have to stay for a while following their return.

The state government is also offering an honorarium of Rs 150 per day for those at the guarantine centres who want to contribute in daily work.

Odisha has seen a sharp rise in the number of Covid-19 cases following the return of migrants. Ganiam district, for instance, had two cases on May 2, but is now the worst hit-district in the state with 252 cases and 1 death. The state has so far reported 737 cases of Covid-19 and three people have died, according to an Odisha government dashboard.

D K Singh, Principal Secretary, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department, told The Indian Express, "We but lakhs of migrants will return. The government decided to involve panchayats and they were given the responsibility to set up quarantine centres. We are calling them temporary medical camps. As of today, in about 7,000 panchayats, we have set up around 15,000 camps. The bed capacity is about 6 lakh. Currently 1 lakh people are staying, but this number is increasing every day.'

Singh said, "We thought that since these people are staying, it would be a good idea if they are sensitised about various aspects of not only Covid, but other issues too. So we involved agencies like UNICEF. They are training panchayat-level officers, civil society members. Asha and Anganwadi workers who are, in turn, training the returnees.'

Ganjam Collector Vijay Kulange said, "More than 45,000 people have returned to Ganjam so far. We have developed a counter system at the railway station. They screen the migrant, register him, stamp him and give him a bottle of water, packed food and tissue paper. The person then boards a bus to the designated quarantine centre in heir block," he said.

"In -morning, they have physical training for an hour. After breakfast, there is a Covid class. We are going to develop them into community health workers. Once a person leaves the quarantine, goes home, he will work as a basic health expert for his home, his lane, his community. He will be able to tell people what social distancing means, how to take care of old people and so on," Kulange said, After lunch, those living at the quarantine centre can volunteer for work. "Then there is entertainment in the evening and dinner," Kulange said.

Singh said, "If these people want to volunteer for work such as cooking, development of the school, which most of these centres have been set up in, they will be Rs 150 per day as honorarium. This is to keep them engaged and informed. Ultimately, they will go back to their villages and though we have a massive information campaign, they will be the best

type of messengers."

student over alleged post **LALMANI VERMA**

DEHRADUN, MAY 16

A PRIVATE engineering college-JB Institute of Technology (JBIT) in Dehradun on Saturday suspended a Kashmiri girl student for allegedly making objectionable posts on social media. The girl is student of BTech (Civil Engineering third year) and belongs to Srinagar where she is at

In the letter, it has been said that the Institute haD received some screen shots mentioning that the girl has posted highly objectionable content on social media. "As JBIT Group of Institutions is always strongly against these kind of anti-national and anti-social activities hereby we strongly condemn this activity," read the letter. College Director Amit Kumar Bansal, who issued the suspension letter, was unavailable for comment.

College deputy registrar Dinesh Agarwal said that the girl was contacted on Saturday and she had denied the allegations and she also claimed that the ID shown in the post did not belong to her, but her photograph has

According to college authorities, in response to the allegations the girl took to Twitter and said, "Actually I want to say all of ew that um not a terrorist nor a supporter of terrorism. I had deleted my IG id before lockdown. This is my fake ID my name is (name) instead of

(name) but yeah these pics are

mine. That's y um tweeting. I re-

spect india army. Jai Hind (sic)." Agarwal, however, said that the girl had been suspended to prevent any aggression among other students and people because some had contacted him over phone on the issue. He said the local police as well as the cyber cell had been communicated with a request to check the authenticity of the screenshots

The Cyber Crime police station in-charge Bharat Singh said he has not received any complaint from the college. The Sahaspur police station senior sub-inspector Ravindra Negi too had the same response when asked about information given by college au-

and posts.

Agarwal said the college took the action as a "responsible institution". "Any further action will depend upon the findings of inquiry that will be done by the police," he said noting that he has sent a complaint by email to Cyber Crime police to inform about the

He said that in one post, the date shown is that of February 14, 2019 and the post was in reference to the Pulwama attack on the same date last year.

Agarwal said he and other college staff and students had received these screen shots from an unknown number. He said that in screenshot, the girl had reacted on some posts and her reaction was highlighted as an "anti-na-

tional" act. After the Pulwama attack, several right wing organizations had staged protest against Kashmiri students in Dehradun last year.

"When some posts were made again regarding that incident, then college had to be cautious and have a reply ready if someone asks what the institute did in the matter. The suspensionletter has been posted on college's facebook ID as well," Agarwal said.

Separate

ABANTIKA GHOSH

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

& DIPANKAR GHOSE

IN A tacit admission that the fight

against Covid-19 in urban areas is

hobbled by the lack of field health

workers, the Centre has issued a

guidance document that calls

upon municipal authorities to get

all hands on deck. This includes

not just health and sanitation

workers on their payroll but any

available manpower in nearby ar-

eas whose information can be ac-

cessed through the CovidWarriors

asked for religious leaders to be

used as community volunteers for

which currently constitute 79 per

cent of India's case load. These

are BrihanMumbai, Greater

Chennai, Ahmedabad, Thane, all

Delhi MCs, Indore, Pune, Kolkata,

Jaipur, Nashik, Jodhpur, Agra,

Cuddalore, Greater Hyderabad,

Surat, Chengalpattu, Ariyalur,

households, representing 17.4 of

all urban population. This would

In what seemed to be prepa-

ration for greater flexibility to

states, the Health Ministry

brought out two containment

plan documents: one for large

outbreaks, and one for others. A

large outbreak is defined as an

size of the perimeter of the con-

tainment and buffer zones, and

also laid down procedures for

travel related and other cases, for

the time when travelling would

be allowed. Earlier, these zones

were clearly defined as a 3-km ra-

dius containment zone and a 7-

It laid down: "Geographic

quarantine (cordon sanitaire)

strategy calls for near absolute in-

terruption of movement of peo-

ple to and from a relatively large defined geographic area where

there is single large outbreak or

multiple foci of local transmission

of COVID-19. In simple terms, it is

a barrier erected around the focus

of infection. Geographic quaran-

tine shall be applicable to such ar-

eas reporting large outbreak

and/or multiple clusters of COVID-

19 spread over multiple blocks of

km radius buffer zone.

Both documents left out the

area with 15 or more cases.

have increased since that time.

Aurangabad,

The government has also

There are 30 municipal areas

website.

better outreach.

Tiruvallur,

Solapur and Meerut.

containment

plan for large



WATCH



People line up for ration in Bengaluru on Friday. PTI

BIHAR

Migrant dies after snakebite at health centre

Patna: A 22-year-old migrant worker, who had reached Motihari from Jaipur on Friday night, died after being bitten by a snake at a primary health centre. Hari Rai was bitten on Friday night and died at a quarantine centre in East Champaran on Saturday. Rai's family alleged that though he had complained about the snake bite, the PHC doctors, who asked him to stay the night, did not offer any treatment and sent him to a quarantine centre, where his condition deteriorated. Police took him to to a Motihari hospital where he died during treatment. ENS

MAHARASHTRA

Another death in Mumbai police force

Mumbai: An assistant police inspector who tested positive for Covid-19 died at a civic hospital on Saturday, an official said. The 33-year-old officer, attached to Shahu Nagar police station in Dharavi, was found unconscious at his home in the early hours of the day and rushed to Lokmanya Tilak Hospital in Sion, where he died, the official said. The officer was on sick leave as he suffered from cold and fever.He had undergone a swab test on Wednesday and his reports came out positive on Saturday, the official said. This is the eighth Covid-19 death reported in the Mumbai police force.

MADHYA PRADESH 50 Tablighi foreigners sent to jail

Bhopal: More than 50 foreign members of the Tablighi Iamaat were arrested and sent to jail for taking part in religious activities in violation of visa conditions. They were produced before court after their quarantine period was over. They had been quarantined for more than a month after cases had been registered against them at seven police stations in Bhopal. ADG Upendra Jain said the quarantine period was longer because they were kept together and produced before the court only when no case was reported in the last 14 days. ENS

———— Lockdown 3.0 Ends Today —

States seek more say, want to open up further

While some states have suggested to the Centre to extend the lockdown, most want to decide on zones and restrictions when the third phase of the lockdown ends

HARYANA

Haryana has suggested to Centre that all shops in main markets and shopping complexes should be allowed to open in the Lockdown 4.0 beginning May 18, irrespective of the zone. However, the curbs in containment zones should continue, the state government has suggested to the Centre. The shopping malls, multiplexes, educational institutes will continue to remain shut. Haryana government has also suggested that if the Metro operations of DMRC are allowed to resume, it should have some restrictions, including allowing only people with Metro Smart cards. Salons and optical shops may also be allowed to open on alternate days. Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has supported restarting of domestic flights as well as opening of schools and universities.

PUNJAB

From May 18, there will be no curfew in the state, but the lockdown will be there till May 31. said chief minister Amarinder Singh. He indicated the resumption of limited public transport services and the "maximum possible relaxation" in the noncontainment zones from May 18. The containment zones will be sealed to enable the resumption of shops and small businesses in

DEEPTIMANTIWARY

FIFTY-THREE days after the lock-

down was announced and mi-

grants hit the road to reach

home, the Centre has an-

nounced a portal that will have

a national database on stranded

migrants in a bid to streamline

Saturday wrote to all states, in-

forming them of a National

Migrant Information System

(NMIS), an online dashboard de-

veloped by the National Disaster

It will not only help states ac-

cess real-time information on

how many migrant workers are

stranded where, but also help

plan future arrivals. With mobile

numbers of migrant labourers

being fed in the database, the

government also intends to use

it for contact tracing, keeping

the worker informed of when

and how he/she can travel

home, reverse migration and

even update migrants on when

and where they can find work in

central repository and help the

sending as well as receiving

State/district to ask for and give

their acceptance in an online for-

mat seamlessly. This system will

help in speedy communication

between states without creating

additional work at the level of the

field officers," Bhalla's letter said.

"The portal will maintain a

Authority

Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

their movement.

Management

(NDMA)

the future.

To streamline

movement of

migrants, Centre

launches portal

A health worker screening visitors at a hospital in Shimla on Saturday. Pradeep Kumar

non-containment areas, the CM announced, adding that lockdown details will be announced by Monday after going through Centre's guidelines. The chief minister said the state government has asked the Union government for a simpler categorisation of containment zones.

ASSAM

The Assam government has recommended to the Centre to extend the Covid-19 lockdown by two more weeks. "In addition, we have submitted to the Centre our view on how lockdown should be implemented

The development comes

against the backdrop of mi-

grants walking home hundreds

of miles away and several inci-

dents in which they have lost

system has been designed in a

manner that states can upload a

batch file of individual data on the

portal. As many states have al-

ready collected data on migrants,

this can be integrated through

ing to the migrating persons —

such as name, age, mobile no.

originating station, destination

district, date of travel etc - has

been standardised for uploading.

The portal will generate a unique

NMIS is a geo-spatial platform de-

veloped as a decision support sys-

tem for the current pandemic sit-

uation. Allaying any fears of

central overreach, NDMA has

said, "It may be noted that the sys-

tem may not require any substan-

tive additional work on part of the

field officials. It will also not take

away the governance power from

the state government, within the

will enable destination states to

plan logistics much more effec-

tively as they would have exact

numbers before the migrants

arrive. "Origin states will also

have all the data at one place for

transportation as well as future

planning," it said.

NDMA has said the system

overall guidelines of MHA."

In a note, NDMA has said

ID for each migrant.

It said the key data pertain-

Programming

Application

Interface MHA has said

According to the MHA, the

in Assam," Sonowal said. State health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said that the government told the Centre that it does not want to follow the concept of classification by zones red, orange or green - and rather go by localised contain-

BIHAR

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has demanded extension of lockdown till May-end as Covid case continues to surge. He has asked the Centre to augment the testing capacity to 10,000 samples per day from 2,200.

RAJASTHAN

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has suggested that after lockdown 3.0, the states should get to decide the zones and restric-

KERALA

Kerala wants to resume intra-state passenger trains, domestic flights within state, metro rail service, intra-district public transport, auto-taxi and restaurant services when the third phase of lockdown ends on Mav 17, said the state government in its suggestions to the Prime Minister, Kerala is also planning to open liquor outlets and allow dining at restaurants maintaining social distancing.

TAMIL NADU

The government has requested the Centre not to resume regular air, rail services till May 31, except special trains for migrants. Sources said gyms, cinemas, malls and religious centre centres will remain closed in the state till further orders. Indicating that the state is likely to extend the lockdown till May 31, all public places such as parks and beaches also will be closed till this month-end, barring exceptions for industries and some individual shops.

WEST BENGAL

After participating in the video conferencing with Prime Minister, Mamata Banerjee announced that the State Government will divide the Red Zone in three parts.

TELANGANA

The Telangana government has issued orders permitting shops and establishments dealing with automobiles and their spare-parts, air-conditioners and air-coolers in the red zone to remain open in Hyderabad and municipal bodies. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had said lockdown in the state would

Inform of Shramik train need, Rlys to ground level staff

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE RAILWAYS, which is running Shramik Special trains daily to take stranded migrants home, instructed its zonal authorities on Saturday to ensure that ground-level functionaries, like station masters, immediately inform local general managers or divisional railway managers if district or state authorities intimate them of the requirement of such trains.

The instructions asked general managers and divisional railway managers to use "full discretion" and ensure trains are provided at the earliest.

This came on a day when 24 migrant workers were killed in a road accident at Auraiya in

Uttar Pradesh. "This is very important considering the situation prevailing in the country now," the instructions said.

Divisional railway managers

who received the communica-

tion told The Sunday Express that this was, in a way, reiteration of some communications on the same lines in the past. In an apparent bid to reach out to District Collectors, Railway

Minister Piyush Goyal Saturday tweeted that District Collectors should give a list of those stranded in their areas and the proposed requirement of trains to the state nodal officer and also to the state nodal officers of Railways.

"To provide relief to migrant labour, Indian Railways is ready to run 'Shramik Special' trains from any District in the Country. District Collectors should prepare lists of stranded labour and destination and apply to Railways through the State nodal officer," Goyal tweeted, adding, "Along with this, the District Collectors should give a list and destination to the State Nodal Officer of Railways."

In the political circles, it was at first viewed as a prelude to Railways wanting to run Shramik trains even to states where the state governments were not prompt in giving permissions for such services, or mounting indirect pressure on them — an extension of the ongoing political battle between the Centre and Opposition-ruled states, especially West Bengal.

By Saturday, about 15 lakh stranded people had been transported to home states by 1,150 such trains running since May 1. outbreak areas one or more districts that are contiguous based on the distribution of cases and contacts."

All ILI/SARI cases reported in the last 14 days by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) in the containment zone will be tracked and reviewed to identify any missed case of Covid-19 in the community. The documents draw on the experiences of 2009 H1N1 Influenza pandemic on geographic quarantine.

In what could be a sign of things to come in Lockdown 4.0, when more relaxations are expected, the containment plan says: "All mass gathering events and meetings in public or private places, in the containment and buffer zones shall be cancelled / banned till such time, the area is declared to be free of COVID-19 or the outbreak has increased to such scales to warrant mitigation measures containment."

Health secretary Preeti Sudan on Saturday held a meeting with the municipal authorities in these 30 places to discuss the government's Covid strategy. On Saturday morning, India

Howrah, Kurnool, Bhopal, Amritsar, Villupuram, Vadodara, overtook China in the number of Udaipur, Palghar, Berhampur, Covid cases after its total caseload touched 85.940, with 3.970 new According to 2011 Census cases and 103 deaths in the last 24 there are 2,613 towns/cities with hours. So far, 30,152 people have such settlements with 6.54 crore recovered. population residing in 1.39 crore The guidance document on

preparedness and response to Covid-19 in urban settlements prepared by the Directorate General of Health Services says: "In most cities/towns the disease surveillance system is not as well organised as in rural areas. This is more so pronounced in these urban settlements. Hence the surveillance system shall be strengthened for surveillance and contact tracing mechanism. This would include identification of the health workers in the posts/dispensaries, health ANMs, ASHAs, Anganwadi Workers, municipal health staff, sanitation staff, community health volunteers and other volunteers (NSS/NYK/IRCS/NCC and NGOs) etc. The trained manpower available on www.covidwarriors.gov.in will be contacted for their readiness to deploy-

ment at short notice.' In a separate meeting with district administrations on Saturday, the Health Ministry also shared an IT tool that would help the district administration assess the future need for Covid care infrastructure. and if there is apprehension of that being insufficient, make alternative arrangements.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Passengers arrive in Patna from Delhi via Rajdhani Express, on Saturday. PTI

After biggest single-day spike, J&K cases at 1,121

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, JAMMU, MAY 16

WITH 108 new coronavirus cases reported over a 24-hour period, Jammu and Kashmir Saturday witnessed its highest single-day jump in cases, taking its tally to 1,121.

A 70-year-old man who had the virus also died on Saturday

- the twelfth virus-linked fatality in the state. The Budgam resident tested positive after dying of cardiac arrest at a city hospital.

Though the number of cases has started to increase the Union Territory is ahead of most states in almost all parameters — a recovery rate of 48.34 per cent, positivity rate of 1.47 per cent and a mortality rate of 1.07 per cent.

Sitharaman announces reforms to slash defence import spend

KRISHN KAUSHIK NEW DELHI, MAY 16

WITHANaim to reduce India's import bill for the defence sector, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the government will bring reforms to make India more self-reliant in defence production.

The main moves include corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Board (OFBs), raising FDI limits in defence manufacturing, having a time-bound procurement process, notifying a list of weapons that cannot be imported and indigenisation of spares, she said

India is among the top three importers of arms in the world. In March, MoS, Defence, Shripad Naik told Parliament that India imported defence equipment worth Rs 45,705.57 crore in 2018-2019.

India has been gradually in-

creasing the indigenisation of the defence platforms. The share of indigenisation in defence platforms wentup from 72.4 per cent in 2016-2017 to 75.9 per cent in 2018-2019.

The government Saturday said there will be a notified list of weapons and platforms that will be banned for imports and there will be a push towards "indigenisation of imported spares".

The list of equipment banned for imports will be prepared by the Department of Military Affairs headed by the Chief of Defence Staff. The government will, however, allow import of necessary equipment not manufactured

Sitharaman mentioned that the FDI limit in defence manufacturing under the automatic route will be raised to 74 per cent from 49 per cent now. On the corporatisation of the 41 ordnance factories to "improve autonomy, accountability

and efficiency in ordnance supplies", Sitharaman said they may even be listed on stock markets for greater transparency.

It has been a long-pending idea, which has been fraught with controversy. Last year, thousands of workers of ordnance factories went on a strike against "privatisation". The strike ended after the government assured them that there was no plan to privatise.

Corporatising ordnance factories was part of the government's 100-day agenda after the BJP returned to power.

Several committees appointed by the government have recommended corporatisation of OFB.

Project Management Units will be set up to support management of contracts, Sitharaman mentioned, and said that the unrealistic performance criteria for equipment in the past had resulted in delayed search and single vendor selection.

Now Expected To Run At Regular Intervals

As Rajdhani arrives in Goa, most happy to be home, some object to Covid test charge

SMITA NAIR MARGAO, MAY 16

AS THE Rajdhani on Saturday brought 282 passengers — from New Delhi and a few other stations — to Goa, a few passengers The Sunday Express spoke to expressed their grievances on being charged Rs 2,000 for testing while

others were happy to be home. Saturday's train saw massive arrangements by the state government as they expected over 600 passengers to reach Goa. This came after a train reached Goa from New Delhi with a halt in Margao on Thursday.

While the Shramik Express ferries daily wagers and

stranded workers to their home states, the Rajdhani emergency train service is now expected to run at regular intervals, ferrying those who can afford to pay train tickets to return home, or settlers who have their second home

"Initially the train bookings were for 629 passengers, but as the train had several stops... we now understand many have got off," said an official.

The train chugged into the Margao platform around 2.20 pm. The administration had fielded 10 officers to collect Rs 2,000 from every passenger with 10 tables used as barricades for exit from the train platform. Once the testing fee was paid,

each passenger was given a stamped pass to take a seat in the state public transport's bus service to the hospital in Margao where they would undergo TrueNat tests. The buses then left for the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium at Fatorda where the passengers had to wait for their test results before being sent to home quarantine.

Colonel Anil Jotwani who has a house in Colva was seen requesting a free test, referring to his documents. "I am a retired Army officer and my documents clearly say I am not supposed to be charged this fee. Nobody heard the plea though," he said. "My children live here and I had to return. I am traveling from

With Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announcing on Thursday that only non-Goans will be asked to pay for the Covid tests, some were upset with everyone being charged. "I am a Goan from Goa, I cannot return to Delhi. I am from Aldonha and I live and work here... I am willing to go through all the testing and quarantine guidelines but why is a Goan being asked to pay. We are returning home too," said Linita Fernandes. "We have already paid for our tickets which comes to Rs 3,500."

There was another case of a family of seven refusing to pay as they kept making calls, including to the office of the Chief

member. Officials were overheard telling the passengers that they were informed of the guidelines before booking the ticket, along with an SMS that was sent to them before boarding the train.

Officials said they cannot make exceptions and were directed to charge the testing fee from every passenger. "Emergency trains are going to increase and we are expecting full capacity arrivals. If every test gets paid for by the state government, then we are looking at Rs 15 lakh per train. This is something the state government, especially Goa, cannot afford," said an official.

Across **THEAISLE**



Twitter@Pchidambaram IN

There is no clarity whether the government will make cuts in other items of expenditure. The cuts announced so far will save the government Rs 41,490 crore and will be available for Covid-19-related expenditure. That expenditure will only restore the original level of expenditure and, therefore, will not amount to a fiscal stimulus

The Rs 20 lakh crore whodunit

IN BUDGET 2020-21, the Central government planned to spend Rs 30,42,230 crore in the current year. The shortfall on the revenue side would be financed by borrowing Rs 7,96,337 crore. This was the budgeted fiscal deficit, equivalent to 3.5 per cent of GDP.

Coronavirus changed all those calculations. It was evident to every economist that the borrowing could not be limited to Rs 7,96,337 crore, India must borrow more; only the government was in denial. On May 8, the government reluctantly admitted that it will borrow an additional amount of Rs 4.2 lakh crore taking the total borrowing to about Rs 12 lakh crore. The fiscal deficit (assuming no change in the estimate of GDP) would be 5.3 per cent.

Mere Gap-filling

I had pointed out that the additional borrowing would be a fiscal stimulus only if it was used to provide cash and other forms of support to the poorest families at the bottom half of the population and to re-start the completely stalled economy. Worryingly, I hear that the additional amount of Rs 4.2 lakh crore will be used for 'gap filling'. The government expects to take a big hit on estimated tax revenues and proceeds of disinvestsment. If the 'gap' has been estimated at about Rs 4.2 lakh crore, the additional borrowing will fill that 'gap'. This is unavoidable, but the amount of Rs 4.2 lakh crore certainly cannot be counted as a fiscal stimulus.

Look at a simple statement of accounts:

his community and religion in his weekly

Tamizhan in 1907. Thamizhan had a

separate column devoted to women.

Along with contemporary politics Thass

also extensively wrote on classical Tamil

literature. He started serialising the biog-

raphy of Buddha in the same journal. He

used the question and answer section of

the journal to address various social and

cultural issues. He was also a pioneer prior

to Ambedkar in criticising the Swarajya

movement. He observed that the move-

ment was driven by four kinds of arro-

gances - caste, religion, education and

wealth. Simultaneously, he also attacked

the renowned poet Subramanya Bharathi

for mentioning the word 'pariah' in one of

his poem. He also criticised congress men

who were shedding tears to the sufferings

of people in South Africa but ignored the

from Buddhist viewpoint as well as

rewrote Indian history in an entirely dif-

ferent light. His book, Indirar Desa

Sarithiram (History of India), can be clas-

sified as the first book of subaltern history

in India. He worked with literary texts and

epigraphical evidences published during

that time. His technique involved using

Thass is not a ritual. It is to emphasise the

relevance of his ideas to understand and in-

terpret the cultural history of contempo-

rary Dalits. Though he received diksha from

a monk in Sri Lanka, his interpretation of

Buddhism was entirely different from both

the schools of Buddhism. That's why he

called it 'Tamil Buddhism'. He insisted caste-

lessness as the founding value of Buddhism.

He differed with the Maha Bodhi Society on

the question of caste and never compro-

His strong position on refusing sub-

caste identity becomes very relevant to

the contemporary Dalit movement, Sub-

caste identity is the main obstacle in or-

ganising Dalits under a broader political

platform. Dalits have one strength at their

disposal, and that is their numerical

strength. A sub-caste identity spoils it.

Dalits cannot escape it if they continue in

the religion which supports it. So, conver-

That is the message Thass left us.

Viluppuram constituency in Tamil Nadu.

curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column

Suraj Yengde, author of Caste Matters,

Ravikumar is an MP representing

sion to Buddhism is the only way out.

mised with anyone lenient to caste.

Celebrating the birth anniversary of

oral narratives to construct history.

Thass also interpreted Tamil classics

plight of untouchables in India.

REVENUE Rs 30,42,230 All revenue (Tax, non-Tax, Capital Receipts, Borrowing)

4,20,000 Addl borrowing Less Shortfall in Revenue 4,20,000 30.42.230 NET TOTAL REVENUE

EXPENDITURE All expenditure Less Cut in MPLADS

3,960 Less WIthholding

There is no clarity whether the government will make cuts in other items of expenditure. The cuts announced so far will save the government Rs 41,490 crore and will be available for Covid-19-related expenditure. That expenditure will only restore the original level of expenditure and, therefore, will not amount to a fiscal stimulus.

LIQUIDITY NOT FISCAL STIMULUS

I suspect the government will count the mis-labelled Rs 1.7 lakh crore package announced on March 25 as a fiscal stimulus. Actually, the additionality was only Rs 60,000 crore in cash transfer plus Rs 40,000 crore being the value of the grain (not budgeted earlier). We can therefore count Rs 1 lakh crore as a fiscal stimulus.

I also suspect the government will count the RBI's steps to provide additional liquidity as a fiscal stimulus. To confuse liquidity with expenditure is conceptual confusion. Liquidity works on the supply side, **fiscal stimulus** is needed for the demand side. Be that as

DA, DR increase 37,530 NET TOTAL EXPENDITURE 30,00,740 it may, the RBI has provided additional liquidity support of Rs 5.24 lakh crore

Rs 30,42,230

since March 27; in turn, the banks have parked with the RBI an additional about Rs 4.14 lakh crore since that date! By stretching the argument in favour of the government, if the additional liquidity translated into additional credit that carried a subsidised interest rate or is written off, perhaps the interest subsidy or written-off amount can be counted as fiscal stimulus. All that is in the realm of conjecture. Besides, outstanding bank credit has fallen from Rs 103.8 lakh crore on March 25 to Rs 102 lakh crore today.

On May 12, the Prime Minister grabbed the headline with the announcement of a Rs 20 lakh crore Economic Stimulus Package — but left the page blank! Beginning May 13, the Finance Minister started giving out the 'details' of the package. The people left fuming were the (1) farmers; (2) migrants; (3) workers who had been laid off or retrenched; (4) workers in unorganised and unregistered businesses who had lost their jobs; (5) self-employed who had no work; (6) the poorest families who lived every day from hand to mouth; (7) the lower middle class that

had run out of cash and was forced to borrow; and (8) nearly 5.8 crore MSMEs who fell outside the Finance Minister's MSME package. (In the second tranche the FM announced one fiscal measure for migrants: free food grain for two months valued at Rs 3,500 crore.)

On analysing the first tranche, and giving a wide berth to the government, I concluded that Rs 3,60,000 crore may be the additional expenditure. On similar analysis, the second tranche yielded a figure of Rs 5,000 crore and the third, regretfully, nothing clear.

EXPENDITURE SANS BORROWING?

All these numbers, I am afraid, miss the central issue. Additional expenditure is possible only if there are additional revenues/resources. If not, we are stuck with the budgeted expenditure of Rs 30,42,230 crore. On additional revenues/resources, the government is ominously silent.

Let me state categorically, if there is no additional borrowing, there can be no additional expenditure and, logically, no fiscal stimulus. All over the world, additional borrowing is the key to fiscal stimulus: borrow more and spend more, and if the borrowing reached an uncomfortable level, monetise part of the additional borrowing/deficit, that is, print money.

Absent additional borrowing, there will be no fiscal stimulus to stimulate demand in the economy. The Rs 20 lakh crore will be another jumla. We will be self-reliant (Atma Nirbhar) in jumlas.

Iyothee Thass, India's first subaltern historian



 $AMIDSTTHE\,trying\,times\,of\,Covid-19, the$ Dalits of Tamil Nadu are gearing up to celebrate the 175th birth anniversary of Pandit Iyothee Thass on May 20. Thass is a legendary figure in classical Tamil literature and philosophy, and practitioner of the Siddha system of medicine who could also easily work in English, Sanskrit and Pali.

After organising the tribals of Nilgris in 1870s, he established Advaidananda Sabha in 1876. He launched a magazine called Dravida Pandian along with Rev John Rathinam in 1885. In 1886. Thass issued a statement, almost half-a-century before Ambedkar, saying that the socalled untouchables were not Hindus.

Thass was against sub-caste identifications. When Rettamalai Srinivasan, another prominent Dalit leader, who participated in Round Table Conference along with Ambedkar, started 'Paraiyar Mahajana Sabai' at Madras in 1891, Thass established 'Dravida Mahajana Sabai'. Thass submitted a petition to the Congress Committee, with hundreds of signatures by Dalits, asking them to declare the word 'pariah' as contemptuous. During the time of the 1901 Census, he urged the untouchables to register themselves as casteless Dravidians. He repeated the demand during the 1911 Census. Thas also urged the British to refer to untouchables as 'original Buddhists' even if Dalits chose to mention their sub-caste.

Thass was a forerunner to Ambedkar in conversion to Buddhism. He met Colonel Olcott of the Theosophical Society along with a delegation of prominent Dalits in 1898 and pleaded his help in reestablishing Tamil Buddhism. With Colonel Olcott's help, Thass visited Sri Lanka and got diksha (initiation) from Bikkhu Sumangala Nayake. On his return, he established the Sakya Buddhist Society in Chennai with branches in Burma (now Myanmar), Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Fiji and South Africa – gesturing to his acceptance among India's indentured labourers in

these colonies. Thass was a pioneering Dalit intellectual who theorised the epistemology of





RWA and balance in a world hit by coronavirus

THE PRESSURES of running a Residents' Welfare Association, or RWA as they are better known in Delhi, are very similar to running a home. What you have is a huge joint family. But, at the end of the day, what matters is one should feel happy about coming home.

Over the 10 years that I have been associated with the RWA in my Vasant Kunj society, there have been ups and downs. Like in a family, our share of disagreements and disputes. However, my team and I have managed to earn the confidence, goodwill and faith of its people.

It's this that has come in handy for us, as RWAs across Delhi chart out their course in the post-Covid-19 world. We have all heard accounts of RWAs' highhandedness, RWAs going beyond their brief in interpretation of government relaxations, and members having to seek police help to get around them.

From the beginning of the lockdown my team and I kept communication open and left a lot of the decision-making to residents. One of the first hurdles we faced was in the delivery of newspapers as some feared these could be carriers of the virus. We decided that people who wanted the papers should be allowed to get them. For several days, the supply got stopped as the agent himself felt the trip was not worth the cost as not enough people were taking the newspapers, but eventually, it came down to choice.

We advised that residents not use the neighbourhood parks, in accordance with lockdown regulations regarding overcrowding, but if people came out to take a walk in accordance with basic precautions such as masks and social distancing, there was no finger-pointing or shaming. We equipped the security guards with masks and thermal scanners. Deliveries to doorsteps were stopped but people could always step out for their needs. The elderly staying alone were allowed to bring in help if they needed, including getting vegetables and household goods delivered.

Yes, there were moments of despair among residents, calls saying they were mentally and physically exhausted. But while it was tough and important to take the steps needed, what was also important is that we retained balance. In talks we had with them on coronavirus regulations, police and government officials



Delhi govt had asked RWAs to allow movement of essential services. Amit Mehra

had told us to be very, very strict. What we were, were firm and reasonable, advising precautions, trusting the residents and praying that everyone knew what was afe and what not

One only needs to be a dictator if there is no communication; rigidity has no place in 'welfare', the second word in that RWA acronym. Our message to residents consistently was: this too shall pass.

Paraphrasing an appreciative resident, given a chance to be "hostel wardens", we tried being "local guardians". The ball was left in the residents' court.

Holding our nerves, conveying positivity, emphasising precautions and not giving in to paranoia worked like it would at any home – whatever the apex body of the house portrays, carries down. This was not as easy it sounds as the same lockdown movement rules applied to us as well.

One of the contentious issues that this approach helped us deal with was that of domestic helps. We left it to the discretion of residents again, after setting a basic SOP. Yes, most of the residents chose not to call back their helps, but it was their personal choice; they knew they could.

Over the course of the past few days, as the government comes around to the view that "We have to learn to live with this virus", we have received innumerable messages from residents. One of them wrote, "Should have thanked your earlier, but here it goes, thanks for ensuring sanity prevails in B-5&6 during the lockdown. From all that I have heard, from office and friends, depending on people's good sense rather than cracking down, it is rare." Another wrote, "I'm proud our RWA has adopted a logical approach to the whole thing and is not behaving as a dictator".

Several other RWAs have talked to us, asking how we have put in place the gradual un-lockdown. Whenever asked, we have shared our experience.

We understand that these words of appreciation could really be words of relief, and could as easily change into words of fury if things don't go as hoped for. However, Covid-19 is not going to leave us anytime soon. If we knew that two weeks later all will be normal, we perhaps would have reasoned with our residents and restrained movement. But, as

we all know, that is not going to happen. I think the crisis has forced us all to change our ways and our thinking. Change is never easy but it is necessary. At your individual level too, don't you see change in the way things are being done at your home or office?

Ameena Talwar is part of RWA, B5&6, Vasant Kunj, South-West Delhi

The entire national capital is a red zone

Out of **MEGHNAD DESAI**



IN MAY 2014, when Narendra Modi surprised everyone by winning a majority for the BIP on its own, many dreams were being floated about India 2.0. He was bold, a master of communications and had executive experience as Gujarat chief minister for over 12 years. But even so, he proceeded with caution in economic matters. He was a staunch champion of fiscal prudence and Arun Iaitlev delivered a declining budget deficit, Budget after Budget. Modi left the economic policy machinery he had inherited pretty much alone. He set up new initiatives such as Make in

Crisis offers Modi an opportunity

India but left the old Congress economy intact. He wanted to make it work better but not change it. He opened up new initiatives on health, cleanliness, and gender-friendly policies such as on LPG and outdoor defecation.

It has taken the coronavirus crisis to bring out the radical in Modi. He has a spectacular second victory to his credit with a larger majority. He has nothing to fear from the Congress which has inflicted injury on itself. The emergency has brought him the opportunity to become the leader of the entire nation more than just Hindu Hriday Samrat. He has thrown off the defensive posture of the fiscal conservative. There may be skittish debates among the retired economists as to whether the latest package is really 10%of GDP or only 8,25%, but its boldness is welcome. India was the joint fourth largest economy pre-Covid-19 with the United Kingdom. It can do its own thing just as the UK can. The rating agencies may complain but they always do. In the post-Covid-19 world, the Indian economy will emerge more intact than many developed countries.

In reaction to the oil price shocks of 1973 and 1979, inflation became the biggest enemy, imposing the discipline of low debt GDP ratio, low budget deficits and Central Bank independence. The Great Sudden Stop (GSS) — the Covid-19 shock —

invalidates all those rules. Inflation is no longer the principal threat. It is livelihoods of millions. The debt GDP ratio is questioned as a suitable target. What matters is the cost of servicing the debt as compared to the GDP. As long as the GDP growth rate in nominal terms exceeds the interest rate. you are fine. Modi has rightly decided to go for the bold option.

The GSS has exposed the long-run sickness of 70 years of Indian planning - chronic open and disguised unemployment which compels massive migration across India. India's most precious resource are its people, who have suffered neglect. Here is a chance to forge an economic strategy which will aim at full employment rather than making machines to make machines. It will require massive industrialisation in rural and small-town areas. It will require taking subsistence farmers out of perennial poverty and give them full-time industrial employment. All the shibboleths the factory Acts, labour laws and restrictions on land sales — which have kept millions in the low-income trap for decades have to be jettisoned.

India frittered away the demographic dividend. But now the population growth has peaked and will fall. The population is young and will be so for the next 30 years. This is the window for India to get to the top. Quite rightly, Modi has decided to 'Spend Whatever It Takes'.

Fifth

Humanity needed, not charity

ITHAS taken this pandemic to bring home the horrible reality that decades of bad political and economic policies have dehumanised millions of Indians. It is sad but true that the desperate people forced to walk hundreds of kilometres home are seen as lesser human beings than their more privileged brethren, brought back on Air India flights and naval warships. I am deliberately not using the words 'migrant workers' to describe those who have endured unspeakable suffering. It is labels like this that help dehumanise those Indians who continue to live the most degraded lives because of 'socialism'.

Speaking of socialism, Sonia Gandhi and her children surfaced, last week, to attack the Modi government on behalf of the suffering. They have no right to. It is because of economic policies followed by the Dynasty to which they are heirs, that millions of Indians still live in extreme poverty. These policies are born of an ideology that I like to call feudal socialism. This feudal socialism is based on the premise that at the top will always exist a small, privileged ruling class that controls the destiny of our poorest citizens by taking responsibility for 'alleviating' their poverty. As long as they are happy to live in poverty, we bestow upon them such scraps from the high table as free electricity, water, food grain and other subsidies. Instead of real jobs we give them MGN-REGA dole. We build for them schools that are not really schools and healthcare that is not really healthcare. The people we have seen in the food queues in our slums, penned up in urban hovels and being beaten when they tried to walk home, are the 'beneficiaries' of feudal socialism.

My reason for supporting Narendra Modi in those early months that he was Prime Minister, was because I believed him when he promised to take India in a new economic direction. The millions of Indians who voted him back to power for a second term also believed this. They saw that he did not manage to create the millions of new jobs they needed but were happy that he had at least run the welfare schemes that make up their safety net better than Congress governments ever did. Today they feel truly betrayed that he did not care enough for them to ensure that they had transport to get home before the first lockdown. If keeping them in the cities was deliberate, then why were they not given shelter, food and financial support?

As someone who belongs to the Khan Market gang Modi has such contempt for, it gives me pleasure to tell him that he has created a new Khan Market gang that is more heartless than we ever were. This gang speaks for him on social media and are 'proud to be followed by Modi'. When journalists like Barkha Dutt and Rana Ayyub try, through their outstanding reportage, to draw attention to the horrible suffering of our poorest citizens, this gang abuses them and charges them with being 'anti-national' and 'anti-Hindu'. They feel nothing for those who have suffered so terribly. To them they are not human at all, they are just 'migrant workers'. They feel only for their own kind. If those brought home by Vande Bharat were made to walk hundreds of kilometres in the sun, or line up in food queues, the new Khan Market gang would be appalled. They are frankly a despicable lot and do Modi no favours by speaking for him on Twitter.

Last week the Prime Minister returned to those old promises he made of taking India in a new economic direction. This time those same old promises were packaged as Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. He is going to build a self-reliant India, he tells us, by reforming the economy, building modern infrastructure, using technology to improve governance and creating a demand and supply chain that will be local. Sounds good. May I suggest though that all he really needs to do is throw government regulations and inspectors into the trash and let the economy breathe. It is not government help that is needed to create wealth, it is when government gets out of the way that wealth gets created.

Those desperate men and women who have spent the past two months walking home are cogs in the wheels of the great entrepreneurial machines that exist despite government. Too much time has been wasted in the past six years by Modi on his government schemes to create entrepreneurs, skill India and get India to 'stand up'. They have all failed, because in a democracy that aspires to building a free market economy, all government needs to do is get out of the way.

What is the government's job is to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are not abandoned when there is a pandemic. What is the government's job is to help those still walking on the highways to get home. When they get home, instead of throwing bags of food grain at them, please encourage local officials to open free kitchens that can supply them with two meals a day. These are things only governments can do. Is it because these desperate people are seen as 'migrant workers' and not human beings that these things have not been done? Meanwhile, since the Prime Minister is talking of economic reforms, could he begin by dumping feudal socialism for good?

10 SUNDAY STORY

Begin Again

Pramod Rai, Kamlesh Sahu, Ravi Maurya, Dinesh Kharadi and Ajay Manjhi are the "luckier" ones, having made their way back to their villages after long journeys. As they rework their budgets and life, what keeps them going is the whiff of their dreams

'Jobs that pay in the village don't last long... City life is stressful but reassuring'

SANTOSH SINGH

PRAMOD RAI, 40, TRUCK DRIVER

Danapur Diara, Patna, Bihar RETURNED FROM: Kolkata, on March 27

N MARCH 26, after the first phase of the lockdown was announced, Rai set off for his village on a truck along with 44 other men. The group completed the 700 km journey in 20 hours. "Throughout the journey, the thought of reuniting with my family kept playing on my mind," he says.

"Unlike earlier, he did not bring anything for the family this time, not even the famous Kolkata sindoor (vermillion) or sandesh. He also did not bring clothes for the children," says wife Seema, 37.

THE JOB HE LEFT BEHIND: Rai earned a living in Kolkata for 15 years, transporting grains and essential goods between local markets. For driving his truck for 18 hours every day, he earned around Rs 7,000 every month. "I sent Rs 6,000 home," says Rai, who has studied till Class 6. His employer paid him Rs 5.000 for his work till March 22. "But I had to pay Rs 2,000 to a local dhaba owner before leaving, and Rs 1,000 was spent on the truck fare back home," he says.

In the past month, Rai has been in constant touch with his truck owner in Kolkata, Ramashanker Yadav, to check if he still has his job.

FAMILY: Wife, and four children (ages 2, 4, 5, 7). Rai's two brothers, Vinod and Subodh, work in Kolkata and Haryana respectively and haven't returned home since the lockdown began. Rai's family and his brothers' families - 10 members in all - share the three-room brick house they built a few years ago with their pooled savings.

"Together, the three of us own one bigha of land, from which we get about 250 kg of wheat a year," says Rai.

MONEY IN HAND: Rs 2,000. "When he arrived at the quarantine centre at the village high school, he gave me all his savings. With that money, I bought ration for three months, but I don't know how we will manage after that. It has been a month since he returned from the centre, but he still hasn't found a job. He spends all his time with the children or playing cards," says Seema.

Rai says there are very few opportunities in agriculture either in the village. "This region (the Ganga riverine belt) remains flooded for four to six months every year and that is why we grow only one crop here - either wheat or maize," he says.

EXPENSES: Seema says the lockdown and her husband's situation have made her realise the value of education. "I want all my



Rai earned a living in Kolkata for the past 15 years, transporting essential goods between local markets. Santosh Singh

children to study in private schools as government schools do not offer proper education," she says. The couple's eldest son Rohit, 7, goes to a private school. "I pay Rs 300 per month at the school. It is tough, but I want all my children to study well so that they don't have to face hardships," says Rai. "We have spent Rs 800 on buying pulses, spices and noodle packets already. I have only about Rs 1.200 left now."

Sitting on the cot with his father, Rohit talks about how he is learning alphabets now. Like other grown-ups in the village for whom

Kolkata has always been a preferred destination for the men of the village, Rohit hopes to go to the city too. "Our forefathers also worked in Kolkata. It is closer home than Delhi and Haryana. We feel at home there,' says Rai.

Seema says she loved how Rai described the city, during his visits home once or twice a year. "I was hoping to see the Dakshineswar temple, but he never took us," she complains. "Maybe I can plan the trip once coronavirus is over," says Rai.

But Seema isn't convinced. "He doesn't even

remember our wedding anniversary. I will believe him only once he takes us there," she says.

SAVINGS: None, no debt.

WHAT NEXT

"Setting up a dairy is an option but we don't have cooperatives to buy milk at a good price," says Rai. "There are jobs that pay Rs 300 a day, but they don't last more than 10-15 days... Village life is peaceful but has a lot of uncertainty. In Kolkata, life was



"Not many dreams, but if I work here, I can stay with my wife," says Maurya. Express

'I bought a mini Taj Mahal replica during one of my Mumbai trips... It reminds me of my room there'

ASAD REHMAN

RAVI MAURYA. 25. FACTORY WORKER BACK HOME IN:

RETURNED FROM Kalyan, outside Mumbai, on May 3

Mahuli village, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

INCE 2015, Maurya has been working in Kalyan at a factory which dyes cloth. When the first phase of the lockdown was announced, he set off for his village with a group of men but was caught by police and kept at a shelter home in Nashik. On May 2, Maurya was among the 847 migrant workers who returned to Lucknow on a special train. "I only had Rs 500 then, of which I spent Rs 370 on the train ticket," he says.

THE JOB HE LEFT BEHIND: At the factory, says Maurya, he earned Rs 11,500 every month. "I would send my wife Rs 4,000 every month. She kept half of the money and gave the rest to my mother." says the 25-year-old. "I got only half my salary for March, and haven't received any money from my employers since," he adds.

While his wife Veenu, 23, is happy that her husband has returned safely, "it has been very difficult to ensure food for the family". "For almost two months now he has not given me any money. We have been living on roti and dal. We have some land on which we grow wheat, sugarcane and sometimes vegetables. The wheat we harvested recently wasn't very good, but we ground it and are using it to make chapattis," says Veenu.

FAMILY: Wife, parents, and two younger brothers. The family lives in a crumbling tworoom kuchcha house and all members work on a two-bigha field owned by Maurya's grandfather. "We are growing some vegetables on the field now," says Veenu.

Since Maurya is still in quarantine, he can't go. "My wife and I are responsible for providing lunch at home, while my parents pay for the items needed to cook dinner," he says.

MONEY IN HAND: "Right now, I have no money with me. My grandfather doesn't share the money that he earns from the produce of the field with us, only gives us food grains," says Maurya.

He had come home for Holi, and says he spent all his savings — around Rs 3,000 on the celebrations. "I thought I would earn when I resumed work, but then after the lockdown was announced, we didn't even have enough food, forget salary," he says.

EXPENSES: Maurya's wife spends about Rs 2,000 to purchase grains, pulses, vegetables and oil for the family every month. "We mostly eat meals without vegetables now... Sometimes, we just have salt or chutney with roti," she says. "Earlier, if I managed to save some money, I would buy make-up items like bindi, kajal. Now, we don't have money for food, so I don't buy them anymore. Earlier, I would also give Rs 200 to my father-in-law, who has been saving up to get the house repaired; not now," she adds.

SAVINGS: None, no debt.

WHAT NEXT

"After my 14-day quarantine ends, I will look for jobs. I have heard that the government is trying to arrange work for migrants," he says. "I don't have many dreams. If I get the job, I will be able to stay with my wife and won't even have to pay rent... I can also get my house repaired sooner," says Maurya.

While he doesn't want to return, he has brought a miniature Taj Mahal souvenir as a reminder of this time in the town. "I had bought it during a trip to Mumbai. It reminds me of my room there... But life in the village is much better," he smiles.

'The work was gruelling but I could buy ice-cream, clothes once in a while'

DEEP MUKHERJEE

DINESH KHARADI, 24, LABOURER AT A CHEMICAL FACTORY **BACK HOME IN:**

Dungarpur, Rajasthan RETURNED FROM: Himmatnagar Guiarat on May 3

a month on the premises of a chemical factory in Himmatnagar, Kharadi left town with nine other labourers without informing his employer. It took the group over a day to cover the 100-km distance to Dungarpur district on foot. THE JOB HE LEFT BEHIND: For the past two

NMAY 2, after being stranded for

years, Kharadi helped manufacture copper powder for making power cables at the factory. He was paid Rs 300 daily for a 12-hour shift. After the first phase of the lockdown was announced, work dried up and he did not receive any salary for April. "My cousin worked at the factory and he encouraged me to join. I earned about Rs 9.000 every month, of which I sent back Rs 6,000-7,000," he says

Looking back on his life in Himmatnagar, Kharadi says he doesn't miss much. "Gruelling work hours is the only thing I remember," he says. "I had an ice-cream occasionally. Sometimes I bought clothes from the local market." **FAMILY:** Wife, three children (ages 6, 4, and

2), sister and father. The sevenmember family shares a tworoom kuchcha home. His father owns two bighas of land on which they grow maize. However, due to scarcity of water, Kharadi says, the crop hasn't been sown yet. "Now that he is here, we don't want him to leave again. He can find some mazdoori (daily wage work) here," says father Chunilal, 45.

MONEY IN HAND: Rs 300.

"When he returned home.

there was hardly any money. I walked for 7 km to go to the bank and withdraw Rs 2,000," says Jija, 22, Kharadi's wife. It was part of the Rs 2,500 the family got from the state government when their daughter turned one. "We wanted to spend the money

on her, but now we are using it for our sur vival," she adds. Kharadi says he has been struggling to find work since his return home. "I can't afford to sit at home. I know how to paint and will try

EXPENSES: The family, says Kharadi, needs at least 50 kg of wheat (around Rs 20/kg in the market) and oil worth Rs 1,500 every month. "For now, we just have 10 kg of wheat which was given by the government. We are trying

to find something to do here." he says



"Little to do here, but not sure I want to go to city now": Kharadi. Express

SAVINGS: None. "My father has around Rs 50,000 in his

to stretch it to two weeks. We

have no money left and soon

we may not have enough to

withdrew from the bank, the

family gave Rs 1,000 to repay

buying grocery items "We

dren attends school, but Kha-

radi says educating them is his

only dream. "I don't want

them to be labourers," he says.

None of the couple's chil-

have Rs 300 left," she says.

Of the Rs 2,000 that she

eat," says Jija

account, collected over several years. He is out of work now too. My wife and I have no savings," says Kharadi.

DEBT: None; repaid loan to neighbour.

WHATNEXT

"I am not sure about going to any city for work anymore. I spent the last few days in Gujarat without money. I didn't have any food to eat, and my employer didn't help," he says. "But there is hardly anything to do here either... But I am afraid to speak to my employer in Gujarat. I left without informing him."

'I'll find work here or leave when it opens up. We will not starve, I'm sure'

GARGI VERMA

KAMLESH SAHU, 27, CONSTRUCTION WORKER

BACK HOME IN: Nandgaon, Raipur, Chhattisgarh **RETURNED FROM** Hyderabad, on April 4

NTHE first week of April, Sahu returned to Nandgaon from Hyderabad, about 780 km away, hitch-hiking and walking most of the way. "I took lifts from truck drivers carrying essentials, and walked when I couldn't find anything. At the Odisha border, I was put in a government vehicle that dropped me at the Chhattisgarh border. I sneaked in undetected at night," he recounts. "I didn't want to be put in a quarantine facility. I walked all the way to be with my children. I don't want to leave them," he adds.

THE JOB HE LEFT BEHIND: Sahu earned about Rs 5,000 working at construction sites in Hyderabad. He managed to send home most of the salary. "I am the eldest in my family. I have two younger sisters, both of whom need to be married. My father died five years ago, after which I had to take up a better paying job outside the village," he says.

FAMILY: Mother, wife, two daughters (ages 6 and 3), and two younger sisters. "My wife also worked at construction sites in and around our village and in Raipur to supplement the family's income. Since the lockdown began, we have all been at home," he says. Sahu lives in a two-room kuchcha home with his family.

MONEY IN HAND: No cash. "We have Rs 4.000 in my mother's bank account. It is the pension that she receives under a government scheme. The money will be used for my sisters' weddings," he says.

Though he worked in March, Sahu says the contractor did not pay his wages. "When I call the contractor, he abuses me saying that he will not pay the money because I left without telling him... I will now find work here or go with my wife when she starts working. We will not die of hunger, I am sure," he says.

EXPENSES: "Recently, we received rice from the state government and sugar... We have some potato and tomato growing in front of the house. We have been eating that till now," says Anusuia, 25, Sahu's wife. "I had told him not to go so far in the first place... but he wanted to earn some extra money," she says.

Anusuia is also concerned about her crumbling home. "The house needs to be repaired, but we can't do it now. We need the money for food. Once I start working, we will fix it," she says.

SAVINGS: Rs 4,000 (mother's pension).

DEBT: None. He recently paid off a loan of Rs 3.000 with a heavy interest. He had taken the money to carry out his father's last rites.

WHATNEXT

"I will do any job here, take loans and pay them off... But I will not go back," says Sahu.

'Never saw even a film there but city gave a chance'

ABHISHEK ANGAD

AJAY MANJHI, 23, **CONSTRUCTION WORKER BACK HOME IN:**

Chota Amra, Saraikela district, Jharkhand RETURNED FROM: Hyderabad, on May 2

ORTHE past three years, he had been working as a 'metal bender' at the IIT Hyderabad expansion project. On March 21, work at the site stopped and, around mid-April, the workers got agitated and some violence ensued. While Manjhi says he wasn't part of it, the incident made him long for home. "I just wanted to get back," he says. On May 1, he boarded the Shramik Special train organised the government for migrant workers to return

THE JOB HE LEFT BEHIND: At the IIT Hyderabad project, Manjhi earned Rs 400 per day (about Rs 11,000 every month). "We paid Rs 70 daily for meals and stayed in makeshift



Manjhi is yet to receive payment for the lost work days in April. Abhishek Angad

tin sheds. We didn't have to pay rent. I only spent Rs 400-500 per month on soap, shampoo etc. I never even saw a film, I saved all the money," says Manjhi, who discontinued his education after Class 5 because of lack of funds.

The 23-year-old says he chose to go to Hyderabad "only because it offered opportunities for a better life". "A neighbour who worked in Hyderabad told me that the job would get me good money. I jumped in," he says. "Hyderabad offered me the opportunity to earn and save some money. That's all. We were happy, until the lockdown. *Tab mazdoor hone* ka asli matlab pata chala (We realised the ugly

reality of being a migrant worker)," he adds. Manjhi says he received his wages for February and March, and his company promised him payment for the lost work days in April as well. "I am in touch with my contractors. They said they will let me know when work resumes," he says.

FAMILY: Parents, an older brother and his wife and daughter, and a younger brother. The family stays in a two-room pucca home, and his parents and brothers work on the three bigha land that they own. They are now preparing the fields for sowing paddy.

MONEY IN HAND: Rs 1,000 when he returned from Hyderabad.

"In March, he sent us Rs 25,000, which we have been using for agriculture work and to sustain ourselves. My son has provided for us for long, but I don't want him to go back to the city again... The government needs to give us some support," says Manjhi's father.

EXPENSES: The family spends about Rs 200 every day on buying groceries. Manjhi's niece attends the local government school, so they don't have to pay any fee.

SAVINGS: Rs 60,000, no debt.

"I feel good to be back home, but that is not enough. If I am unable to go back, life will be very difficult for us. In the meantime, I may have to work under the MGNREGA, but the job pays only about

Rs 200 per day, and the wages are often delayed by a month. I could also sell vegetables here or go to Ranchi to work as a daily wage labourer," he says, adding, "One day I hope everything returns to normal

THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD



PAKISTAN 2 more graft cases against ex-PM Sharif

Lahore: Pakistan's antigraft body has approved the filing of two additional corruption cases against embattled former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London for medical treatment. The NAB Lahore on Friday also initiated another probe against Nawaz, Shehbaz and Maryam for acquiring thousands of kanals in violation of rules making it part of their Jati Umra Raiwind Lahore residence. Maryam recently said her father is a high-risk patient and therefore his cardiac catheterisation/coronary intervention has been postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

NEPAL

First Covid-19 death as tally rises to 281

Kathmandu: Nepal registered its first COVID-19 death after a 29-year-old woman died following breathing difficulty, the health ministry said on Saturday. The woman who died on Thursday was confirmed as coronavirus positive during PCR test at the National Public Health Laboratory here, the ministry said in a statement. "A detailed investigation and a series of tests show that this is the first death due to COVID-19 in the country," read a statement by Dr Sameer Kumar Adhikari, deputy Health Ministry.

THAILAND

No new cases. no additional deaths: Govt

Bangkok: Thailand on Saturday reported no new cases or deaths as the country begins to reopen businesses and ease restrictions. "Today there are two zeros ... thank you all Thais who have given their cooperation," a spokesman for the government's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration, Taweesin Wisanuyothin, said. This is the second day since March 9 that the country has reported no new daily cases. Thailand on Sunday will allow malls and department stores to re-open. It will also shorten a nighttime curfew by one hour.

SOUTH KOREA

162 cases traced to Seoul nighclubs

Seoul: South Korean officials say they so far confirmed 162 coronavirus cases linked to club goers in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, but also expressed cautious hope that infections are beginning to wane. Health Ministry official Young-rae on Saturday said the country may have ducked a major surge in transmissions in a region where half of its 51 million people live, pointing out that the daily increase in infections have been within 30 over the past days despite a jump in tests.

From 'respect' to 'sick and twisted': US-China ties continue to deteriorate

STEVEN LEE MYERS NEW YORK, MAY 16

"EVIL." "LUNACY." "Shameless." "Sick and twisted." China has hit back at American criticism over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic with an outpouring of vitriol as acrid as anything seen

The bitter recriminations have plunged relations between China and the United States to a nadir, with warnings in both countries that the bad blood threatens to draw them into a new kind of Cold War.

A cycle of statements and actions is solidifying longstanding suspicions in Beijing that the US and its allies are bent on stifling China's rise as an economic, diplomatic and military power.

"After the pandemic, the international political landscape will totally change," Wu Shicun, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said in a telephone interview. "The confrontation between China and the United States — in terms of trade, technology, the Taiwan issue, the South China Sea issue — will be a bigger problem.'

The tensions spilled over into the United Nations on Friday



President Donald Trump with senior military leaders in the White House on Saturday. AP

when China said that the urgency of the pandemic demanded that the United States pay its delinquent U.N. assessment, which by some calculations exceeds \$2 billion. The American Mission to the U.N. responded by saying that the United States customarily pays its assessments at year's end and that China was "eager to distract attention from its cover-up and mismanagement" of the coron-

"I have a very good relation-

Refugees at Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. A day after the first coronavirus cases were confirmed in

Possible new risk to younger patients: strokes

day and didn't have diabetes,

high blood pressure or the kinds

of medical conditions that can

set the stage for strokes in young

Detroit, New Jersey and other

parts of the country have reported

a flurry of such cases. Many are

now convinced that unexplained

strokes represent yet another in-

sidious manifestation of Covid-19.

Though many of those patients

had diabetes and hypertension,

none had heart risks known to in-

crease the odds of a stroke. Many

The cases add to evidence

were under age 65.

Neurologists in New York City,

adults, which are rare.

ship, but I just — right now I don't want to speak to him," Mr. Trump said of Mr. Xi on Thursday. A spokesman for China's foreign ministry, Zhao Lijian, brushed aside Mr. Trump's threat to sever relations, saying on Friday that the two countries should cooperate.

China's leaders have struck back through party-run media outlets that said the United States and other democracies had ignored warnings and disastrously mismanaged the crisis. China has repeatedly held up its response as a model that other countries should follow, not criticise.

"Such lunacy is a clear byproduct, first and foremost, of the proverbial anxiety that the U.S. has suffered from since China began its global ascension," Global Times, a nationalist Chinese newspaper, said on Friday of Mr. Trump's comments. "It is also a combination of envy

MAY RESTORE SOME W.H.O. FUNDING

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Saturday his administration was considering proposals about the WHO, including one in which Washington would pay about 10% of its former level

TRUMP UNDERSCORED that no final decision had been made and that **United States funding** for the World Health Organisation remained frozen at present, in a posting on Twitter

and panic on behalf of Washington elites.'

Communist Party-run news outlets have lashed out specifically at Mr. Pompeo for arguing that the outbreak might have leaked from a Chinese lab.

"If this evil politician Pompeo is allowed to continue his swaggering bluff, one fears that United States 'great again' can only be a joke," said a commentary broadcast on CCTV, China's main state television network. NYT

No cases, all patients recovered: Cambodia

REUTERS PHNOM PENH, MAY 16

CAMBODIA'S LAST patient with the new coronavirus has recovered and left hospital, leaving the Southeast Asian country with zero cases, the health ministry said on Saturday, while urging continued vigilance.

No easing of restrictions related to the virus — including school closures and border entry checks and quarantines - were included in the Ministry of Health statement. Cambodia has re-

A 36-year-old woman from Cambodia's northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey was released from the Khmer Soviet Friendship Hospital in the capital, Phnom Penh, and was presented to the media in a livestream on Saturday, thanking the health authorities.

Cambodia's last reported new

case was on April 12. Health Minister Mam Bunheng urged people to remain vigilant and take precautions such as not gathering in large groups. "We think that most of the cases, generally, are imported, so we must be careful with all checkpoints at the border, at airports, at ports, at land checkpoints," Mam Bunheng told reporters.

"People who travel from abroad must have a certificate confirming they don't have COVID-19. Only then would we allow them in, and once they are in, they will be quarantined for another 14 days," he said.



Residents queue for testing in Wuhan on Saturday. Reuters

In Wuhan, a new fear:

whether mass testing

could rekindle disease

BRENDA GOH WUHAN, MAY 16

where the COVID-19 pandemic

began, revs up a massive testing

campaign, some residents crowd-

ing the test centres expressed con-

cern on Saturday that the very act

of getting tested could expose

on social media groups among

the 11 million residents of

Wuhan, people told Reuters as

they converged on open-air test

sites at clinics and other facilities.

Many said, though, that they

support the voluntary campaign.

sprang back into action after con-

firming last weekend the central

Chinese city's first cluster of new

infections since it was released

from virtual lockdown on April 8.

The new cases — all of them peo-

ple who had previously shown no

symptoms of the disease -

spurred Wuhan authorities to

launch a citywide search for

worry in the (social media)

groups about the tests, which re-

quire people to cluster, and

whether there's any infection

risk." said one Wuhan resident

who asked not to be named. "But

others rebutted those worries,

saying such comments are not

district in central Wuhan, a vol-

unteer was patrolling and

At a testing kiosk in Jianghan

supportive of the government."

"Some people have expressed

asymptomatic carriers.

Wuhan health authorities

Safety has become a hot topic

them to the coronavirus.

Charting long term measures

FOR SOME countries that have reopened for the most part, the next challenge lies in finding ways to prevent new waves of infection while resuming various activities. The mass testing in Wuhan has drawn concern from some experts, who questioned the efficacy of the exercise while highlighting its expense - particularly if it's replicated multiple times or over a larger region.

spraying disinfectant at a long line of people. Many people observed social distancing, such as queuing 1 metre apart, and there were signs to remind them. But just as many did not.

At another open-air testing kiosk, where throat swabs were taken, yellow and black stickers on the ground kept people from converging. But at the back of the long queue, about 40 people gathered with no guidance from officials or volunteers. Residents said the authorities have not told them when they would get the results of their tests. **REUTERS**

Germany: Thousands protest against curbs

REUTERS BERLIN, MAY 16

THOUSANDS OF Germans

across the country took to the streets on Saturday to protest against restrictions imposed by the government to contain the coronavirus pandemic, police and organisers said

Germany's death toll from the virus has been lower than most of its European neighbours and some lockdown measures have already been relaxed. However, protests against the

measures Chancellor Angela Merkel insists are needed to slow down the coronavirus outbreak have become more vocal and demonstrators have filled the streets for the second weekend in a row

Derided on social media as "covidiots" who risk causing a



In Munich, Saturday. Reuters

second wave of infections that could lead to a tightening of restrictions, protesters staged demonstrations at several locations across the capital Berlin and the surrounding state of Brandenburg.

In Stuttgart, where some protesters last weekend had been flouting social distancing rules and not wearing face masks, police expected another rally of up to 5,000 people.

for her outspokenness and her

lost some vision and hearing in

recent years, relatives said, but

she remains active and social,

whether playing bingo or holding

court in the center's dining room.

alone in her room — she's always

with people," Chazen said,

adding that her aunt has always

stuck up for others. "She has al-

ways had a reputation for speak-

ing up," Chazen said. "If she

thinks something is unfair, she'll

"You'll never find her sitting

She uses a wheelchair and has

advocacy for fellow residents.

SHE'S FORREST GUMP, SAID A NEPHEW

AT A ROHINGYA CAMP

such camps, officials said those who tested positive have been isolated. AF

She's 108, lived through the Spanish flu and just beat Covid-19

that the coronavirus attacks not

just the lungs, but also the kid-

Doctors at Mount Sinai

Health System in New York

have also seen an unusual

number of young stroke pa-

tients. Though strokes seem to

affect a very small number of

Covid-19 patients, they appear

to be related to a broader phe-

nomenon that has emerged in

critically ill patients: excessive

Patients with severe Covid-

19 may develop clots in the legs

and lungs that can be life-threat-

ening, doctors said. NYT

blood clotting.

neys, brain, heart and liver.

COREY KILGANNON NEW YORK, MAY 16

RONI CARYN RABIN

RAVI SHARMA was doubled over

on his bed when his father found

him. He'd had a bad cough for a

week and had self-quarantined

in his bedroom. As an emer-

gency medical technician, he

knew he was probably infected

move the right side of his body,

and could only grunt in his fa-

ther's direction. His sister, Bina

Yamin, on the phone from her

home in Fort Wayne, could hear

Now, Sharma, 27, could not

with the coronavirus.

NEW YORK MAY 16

LAST MONTH, relatives of Svlvia Goldsholl received troubling news from her New Jersey nursing home: She had contracted the coronavirus and was in isolation.

With the coronavirus proving especially deadly for older people, the prognosis seemed dire for Goldsholl, who turned 108 in December.

"This is killing people in nursing homes all over New Jersey and the country," said Nancy Chazen, a niece of Goldsholl. "Quite honestly, I thought that was going to be the end -1

mean, she's 108.' Two weeks later, relatives received another call.

"They told us, 'She's fully recovered," said Chazen, whose aunt has become one of the oldest Covid-19 survivors in the world.

Cases were reported in areas

the sounds, "Call 911," she told

her father, "I think Ravi's having

a stroke. He worked out every

Sharma was far too young for

a stroke." She was right.

like New York, Detroit. NYT

Goldsholl's case is a rare bright spot in New Jersey, whose current death toll from the virus - 9,946 through Thursday - is second only to New York State's.

Roughly half of the deaths in New Jersey — 5,168 through Thursday — have come at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Nationwide, roughly onethird of the 86.607 coronavirus deaths have been nursing home patients or workers.

Long-term care facilities have become hot spots, filled with a vulnerable population and requiring close interactions



Sylvia Goldsholl's case is a rare bright spot in New Jersey. NYT

between residents and caretakers, many of whom have comnlained that they had not received enough protective

equipment.

Goldsholl, who lives in the Allendale Community for Senior Living in Allendale, New Jersey,

was born on December 29, 1911, and grew up in the Bronx, the eldest of four children of Russian immigrant parents.

As a child she lived through the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918 and 1919, and she also lived through two world wars and the Great Depression.

"She's Forrest Gump," said a nephew, Larry Goldsholl.

Goldsholl told News 12 New Jersey that, "I survived everything because I was determined to survive.'

Larry Goldsholl said that when he heard his aunt had contracted the virus, "we didn't know what to think because she has survived so much at this point."

"We thought, "Well, this could be it,' but knowing Sylvia, I should have known better," he said.

"She's pretty spunky, and it seems like people who live that long have good immune systems."

Michael Brienza, an administrator for the Allendale center, said Goldsholl was never hospitalised or put on a ventilator.

"She's got a survivor's mentality," he said. "Her family supported her through all this and, like she says, love helps you get

through things.' Goldsholl worked as a book-

eeper and never married or had children, her relatives said. She lived in her childhood home until moving to New Jersey 20 years ago and finally moved into the center in Allendale 13 years ago.

Officials at the home described her as an inquisitive person who likes smart conversation and who is known as "Big Sister"

"If she wants to mail a letter to the mayor of New York City, she'll mail the letter," she said.

make sure people know."

"I don't know her secret to longevity," her nephew said, "but she's very feisty." NYT

New York: US crude prices jumped 7 per cent on Friday to their highest since March, on strengthening fuel demand as countries around the world eased travel restrictions they had imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus. **REUTERS**

NON-LIFE INDUSTRY EXPANDED 14% TO ₹15,866 CR IN YEAR-AGO MONTH

Lockdown, pandemic take toll on general insurer business, contracts 10.4% in Apr

GEORGE MATHEW MUMBAI, MAY 16

THE ONGOING nationwide lockdown forced by the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the general insurance industry, with most of the players witnessing negative growth in their premium income in April 2020, and antici-

The domestic general insurance industry, consisting of 33 players, has contracted 10.4 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to Rs 14,206 crore in April. In April 2019, the industry expanded 14

pating the decline in the busi-

ness to continue till September

per cent to Rs 15,866 crore. Except state-owned New India Assurance (NIA) and United India Insurance (UII), all top 10 general insurers in the country, mainly from the private sector, have been hit by the slow-

'FALL MAY CONTINUE TILL SEPTEMBER

■ The overall depressive trends in the industry due to COVID-19 pandemic will continue till September 2020, expects the industry.

down. Bucking the trend, NIA, the largest Indian general insurer, has managed to grow its monthly premium by 7 per cent y-o-y to Rs 3,161 crore in April, the first month of the new fiscal

2020-21 "It could become possible due to the company's strong presence on the digital platform. Our entire team has risen to meet the challenges. The loss of premiums in the motor segment

was compensated by health and property segments. The premium for property risks have gone up," said Atul Sahai, CMD,

The listed NIA has also managed to grow its miscellaneous business which has compensated its loss of premiums in cargo, hull and aviation, a few segments severely impacted by the ongoing countrywide lockdown.

The overall depressive trends in the industry due to COVID-19 pandemic will continue till September 2020. "Hopefully all the segments including motor portfolio will look up," Sahai said.

The industry with Rs 15,784.66 crore of premium, showed a 10 per cent decline in March while for the whole year at Rs 1.89 lakh crore of annual premium, it has grown 11 per cent — the lowest in recent years. For the rest of the 11 months, the

domestic general insurance industry had grown 15 to 16 per cent on average

United India Insurance has seen its premium remaining almost flat at Rs 1,389 crore during the month. Standalone health insurer, Star Health, at Rs 402 crore, has pulled off the highest growth at 50 per cent yo-y in the industry during April

ICICI Lombard, which has been degrowing its premium income to seek a profitable growth for the last one year, has seen a 9 per cent decline in its premium income to Rs 1,395 crore in April, as against 9 per cent growth rate at Rs 1.533 crore in April 2019.

"We have seen degrowth in motor and travel but managed to retain the growth in health and property portfolio in April," company sources said.

Most of the other major private sector general insurers like

showed a degrowth of 21 per cent at Rs 876 crore premium income. HDFC Ergo General Insurance (Rs 601 crore, down 16 per cent), Reliance General Insurance (Rs 721crore, 9 per cent decline), Tata AIG General Insurance (Rs 602 crore, 10 per cent fall), and Iffco Tokio general insurance (Rs 503 crore, 25 per cent fall) faced a slowdown

in April. After expanding at 15 per cent to 16 per cent till February, the domestic general insurance industry had started degrowing since March 2020.

The general insurance industry had missed its much expected target of Rs 2 trillion crore annual premium mark in 2019-20 as disruptions caused by nationwide lockdown triggered by COVID-19 pulled down the industry's total pre-

mium in March.

The GPS satellite system, as well as cellphone towers, make it possible for governments and network operators to track smartphones and many other types of mobile phones

APPS THAT USE PHONE

LOCATION DATA

APPSTHAT GO BEYOND **CONTACT TRACING**

Some countries, notably China, have developed apps that collect personal health data, travel and other information useful for disease control

Health code app: Chinese citizens must carry a "health code" app that rates their risk level to enter shops or ride on trains. for example

Facing harassment as we denied MCA official club membership, says Delhi Gymkhana Club

AASHISH ARYAN NEW DELHI, MAY 16

THE DELHI Gymkhana Club has alleged that it was facing harassment at the hands of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) as it "resisted pressure" to give membership to Navrang Saini, a high-ranking official at the Ministry.

"Insofar as the complaint of Navrang Saini is concerned, it arises out of the Club having resisted pressure to give him membership. The Club verily believes that since (Mr) Saini was a high-ranking member in the MCA, the harassment that the club has been facing from the Department of Corporate Affairs harps back to that episode," the club said.

Saini, currently a wholetime member of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, was serving as a director general during his last stint at the

The allegations by the Delhi Gymkhana Club are a part of its reply affidavit filed with the National Company Tribunal (NCLT). The Indian Express has reviewed a copy of the affidavit.

The MCA had late last month on April 24 moved a plea before the NCLT that a management committee appointed by it should immediately take over Delhi Gymkhana Club as there was "fraudulent and rampant mismanagement of affairs" prevalent at the century-old

The NCLT had then agreed to hear the petition and asked the club's 16-member governing body, headed by retired Lieutenant General D R Soni to respond to MCA's plea by May

The allegations by the Delhi Gymkhana Club are a part of its reply affidavit filed with the **National Company Law Tribunal**

on Monday.

In its reply affidavit, the club has, without naming anyone, also said that regional director of the northern wing of MCA, approved action "without application of mind".

"It is trite that in the matter of a private club, such as the answering respondent, there cannot be any element of public interest as so understood to enable the Petitioner, the Union of India to file a petition." the club said in its reply.

"He has mechanically, without application of mind agreed with the investigating officer and recommended action, a glaring defect that goes to the root of his formation of his opinion and renders it non-est," the club said in its reply affi-

Asserting that there was "no element of public interest" as the Delhi Gymkhana Club was a "private club formed for the use of its members or other permitted persons", the management committee of the club has requested the NCLT to dismiss the management takeover petition filed by the MCA.

The "real aim, intent and purpose" of the petition by MCA, the management committee of the club said, was to cause the "corporate death" of the place, and therefore it was shocking that the government wanted to takeover the club,

RIL rights issue set to open on May 20, closing date is June 3

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, MAY 16

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES (RIL) on Saturday said its Rs 53,125-crore rights issue will open for subscription on May 20. The closing date of the issue is June 3, RIL said in a stock exchange filing.

The issue was approved by the rights issue committee of the board of directors at a meeting held on Friday. The letter of offer will be filed with the BSE, the NSE and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The abridged letter of offer, application form of the rights issue and rights entitlement letter will be sent to the eligible equity shareholders of the company. The company had earlier fixed May 14 as the record date for the issue

This is the first rights issue by RIL in nearly three decades. It will be priced at Rs 1,257 a share in the share ratio of 1:15 (one rights share for every 15 shares held). The issue amount is Rs 53.125 crore.

The payment terms will be 25 per cent on application and balance in one or more calls. On application, the shareholders will pay Rs 2.50 on face value and Rs 311.75 on premium, totalling to Rs 314.25 per rights equity share. The remaining Rs 942.75 will be payable in one or more subsequent calls as determined by the board of directors

Ambani had in August last year unveiled plans to cut debt to zero by 2021. As part of this plan, RIL has been seeking strategic partnerships across its businesses while targeting to deleverage the balance sheet.

At the end of March quarter, RIL had an outstanding debt of Rs 3,36,294 crore. It also had cash in hand of Rs 1,75,259 crore, bringing the net debt po-

BRIEFLY —

Exports of non-medical masks allowed

New Delhi: The government on Saturday eased mask export restrictions by permitting outbound shipments of non-medical and non-surgical masks of all types, including cotton, silk, wool and knitted. However, all other types of masks such as N-95 and surgical masks will continue to remain prohibited for exports. A notification is "amended to allow the export of non-medical/nonsurgical masks of all types (cotton, silk, wool, knitted)," the DGFT said.

Power ministry writes to states about package

New Delhi: The Power

Ministry has written to all states and UTs extending Rs 90,000 crore financial package to assist the stressed distribution companies (disinformed the states that power generation companies are suggested to give 20-25 per cent discount on fixed charges to discoms. Communication in this regard has been sent late on Friday, the Ministry said.

NRAI partners DotPe for digital ordering

New Delhi: National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) on Saturday said it has partnered commerce platform, DotPe, to increase omnichannel sales, providing business-to-business digital ordering solutions fully integrated with a payment gateway for its member restaurants and cloud

The race to deploy COVID-19 contact tracing apps

Technologists and health officials around the world are racing to develop smartphone apps to trace who has been in contact with carriers of the novel coronavirus



HARIKISHANSHARMA

AS PART of the COVID-19 relief

package, the Union Cabinet may

soon approve a proposal to prom-

ulgate an Ordinance to amend the

Essential Commodities (EC) Act,

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food

and Public Distribution has circu-

lated a draft of the Ordinance to

amend the EC Act, and the same

may be approved by the Union

timeline by which the govern-

ment wants to amend the EC Act,

Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan

on Saturday said "nothing is im-

be decided at the Cabinet level. We

need to look at the practicality,"

Paswan said.

"We are examining it. It has to

Paswan's comments came a

day after Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman announced that gov-

ernment will amend the EC Act.

However, asked about the

Cabinet in its next meeting.

According to sources, the

1955, it is learnt.

WHAT IS CONTACT

Contact-tracing, a tactic that traditionally relies on patients' memories of their movements, identifies people they might have infected so they too can be isolated

is that apps will log an overwhelming number of erroneous contacts. Privacy worries could limit uptake of the apps

Cabinet may soon okay plan to

Essential Commodities Act

Asked about the

timeline by which the

government wants to

Paswan said "nothing

After the amendment, com-

modities such as cereals, edible

oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and

potato are expected to be deregu-

lated. "Stock limit will be imposed

under very exceptional circum-

stances like national calamities,

famine with surge in prices.

Further, no such stock limit shall

apply to processors or value chain

participant, subject to their in-

stalled capacity or to any exporter

subject to the export demand," the

government said in a statement is-

Describing the EC Act as

"anachronistic", the Economic

Survey 2019-20, too, recom-

mended the "jettisoning" of

sued on Friday.

Minister Ram Vilas

is impossible"

amend the EC Act, Food

FIRST GENERATION APPS THAT USE BLUETOOTH **TECHNOLOGY**

Singapore's TraceTogether, launched in March, was the first Bluetooth-based contact-tracing

Australia, Malaysia and the United Kingdom have launched similar Bluetooth apps

APPS THAT WILLUSE THE **APPLE-GOOGLE BLUETOOTH APPROACH**

No app: Later this year, Apple and Google will include the tool in software updates, meaning users can log contacts without having to download an app. They said they would build special software to make Bluetooth apps work better

government is sensitive to the

plight of the migrant labourers and

the poor, and his Ministry is doing

everything possible to ensure that

8 crore migrant labourers and their

families will be provided under

of migrants. Congress may say give

more quantity of foodgrains for

free. The NFSA, under which 5 kg

per person subsidised grain is

given to 81 crore through PDS, was

framed during the UPA time. But,

the Modi government is doing

maximum. This is not the end of

all. The Prime Minister is sensitive

and aware of the situation,"

about 8 lakh metric tons of food-

grains have been allocate for free

foodgrains (5kg per individual per

month during May and June) dis-

tribution to 8 crore migrant work-

ers who don't have a ration card.

According to Food Ministry,

Paswan noted.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

Paswan said free food grains to

"This decision is in the interest

no one is hungry.

Jio, Airtel, Voda Idea seek GST input credit promulgate Ordinance to amend dues or soft loans against pending refunds

AASHISHARYAN NEW DELHI, MAY 16

Interacting with media via THETHREE major private telecom Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea, have approached the government seeking either refunds of their pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) input credit or soft loans against the fund to help them tide over the liquidity issues due to the

> to the development said. The three companies have sent letters asking that either these input tax credit (ITC) for the GST paid be allowed to them or they be allowed to take loans using this credit as a collateral.

ongoing lockdown, sources close

Reliance Jio has pending ITC refund of Rs 18.000 crore, while Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea have pending Rs 10,000 crore and Rs 7,000 crore respectively. The three companies did not respond to mails seeking their response to the letter, or if they had gotten any response from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

A meeting in this regard was also held between the Cellular Operators Association of India

Telcos may need to find another way out of liquidity crisis

WHILE A soft loan against GST input credit is likely to help telcos tide over the current liquidity crisis, it may be problematic for the government to allow the same as it would have to follow the same process for other companies and sectors as well.

The telcos may have to find another way out from the current liquidity crisis as there is little hope of input tax credit refund from the Finance Ministry.

(COAI) and DoT officials. The DoT, however, has not responded to the COAI or the telcos' demands, according to sources.

"We have not heard anything definitive on what the government intends to do with this excess money that is now owed to the companies. We had a meeting as recently as about two weeks ago when we met with the DoT secretary and raised this concern." COAI director general Rajan Mathews told The Indian Express.

The issue was raised in

November last year as well when the SC had ruled against the telecom companies in the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) matter. The telcos then approached the Finance Ministry seeking a refund of the ITC owed to them, but failed to get a positive response.

"As of now, this has become the ITC for entire last financial year. We had approached the finance ministry in the last week of March with the same request that it be refunded or some loans at MCLR (marginal cost of funds based have not heard back on that," an executive at one of the telcos, said.

Apart from the Rs 35,000 crore ITC refunds, original equipment learnt to have approached the government asking it to clear the Rs 20,000 crore pending dues owed to them by various public sector units. There has been no response on that either, the sources said.

"Both (telcos and OEMs) were told by the Finance Ministry that there would be no payments or refunds as of now due to severe liquidity crisis in the government," an executive who attended the meeting with the Finance Ministry said

Under pressure to work out a solution to keep the telcos alive following the AGR judgment, the DoT had last year written to the Finance Ministry, requesting the matter to refund the pending ITC of telecom firms be referred to the GST Council, so it could be expedited.

"Nearly half of all the small and large telecom vendors and outlets have remained closed over the last 7-8 weeks. So there is no cash flow as such," a senior executive at

US adds new sanction on Chinese tech giant Huawei

ASSOCIATED PRESS BOSTON, MAY 16

THEUS government has imposed new restrictions on Chinese tech giant Huawei's ability to use American technology, stepping up a conflict with Beijing over industry development and security.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said Friday that Washington wants to prevent Huawei from evading sanctions imposed earlier on its use of American technology to design and produce semiconductors abroad

There has been a very highly technical loophole through which Huawei has been able to in effect use US technology," Ross told Fox Business. "We never intended that loophole to be there."

Huawei Technologies Ltd,

"There has been a very highly technical loophole through which Huawei has been able to in effect use US technology'

WILBUR ROSS COMMERCE SECRETARY

China's first global tech brand and a maker of network equipment and smartphones, is at the center of US-Chinese conflict over Beijing's technology ambitions. American officials say Huawei is a security risk, which the company denies. China's government has accused Washington of misusing security warnings to harm a rising competitor to US technology firms.

Under the new rules, foreign semiconductor makers must obtain a US license to ship Huaweidesigned semiconductors to the

Chinese company that were produced using US technology. The move "looks like a victory

for the people who really want to drive the nail, or what they think will be the nail, in Huawei's coffin," said Adam Segal, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

China threatened retaliation against US companies.

China's foreign ministry said on Saturday the United States needed to stop the "unreasonable suppression" of Chinese companies like Huawei, and a Chinese newspaper said the government was ready to retaliate against Washington.

China will firmly defend its companies' legal rights, the foreign ministry said in a statement in response to Reuters' questions on whether Beijing would take retaliatory measures against the US.

Saudi wealth fund boosts US holdings, buys stakes in Citi, Boeing, Facebook

DUBAI/BENGALURU, MAY 16

SAUDI ARABIA'S sovereign wealth

fund has bought minority stakes in major American companies including Boeing, Facebook and Citigroup, a regulatory filing showed, giving it a portfolio of nearly \$10 billion in U.S.-listed stocks. The \$300 billion Public Investment Fund (PIF) has been buying minority stakes in companies across the world, taking advantage of market weakness in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak

The PIF disclosed stakes worth \$713.7 million in Boeing, about \$522 million in Citigroup, \$522 million in Facebook, \$495.8 million in Disney and \$487.6 million in Bank of America, the US STAKE IN MARRIOTT

\$514 mn

■The PIF has a nearly \$514 million stake in Marriott and a small holding in Berkshire Hathaway, according to the filing. The PIF also disclosed an \$827.7 million stake in oil company BP, which has **American Depository Receipts** (ADRs) listed in the US.

Securities and Exchange Commission(SEC)filingonFriday

The PIF has a nearly \$514 million stake in Marriott and a small holding in Berkshire Hathaway.

allegations against WhatsApp' **REUTERS**

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 THE ANTITRUST watchdog is look-

ing into allegations that Facebook's WhatsApp is abusing its dominant position by offering payment services to its vast base of messaging app users in the country, three sources told Reuters on Friday. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is reviewing a complaint filed in mid-March alleging that WhatsApp was bundling its digital payment facility within its messaging app, allowing it to abuse its market position and penetrate India's booming digital payments market, the sources said.

WhatsApp and Facebook did not immediately respond to repeated requests for comment. The CCI also did not respond

Two of the sources told Reuters at a critical time for WhatsApp,

'ABUSING MARKET POSITION' ■The Competition

'CCI reviewing antitrust

Commission of India (CCI) is reviewing a complaint filed in mid-March alleging that WhatsApp was bundling its digital payment facility within its messaging app, allowing it to abuse its

market position.

the complainant in the case was a lawyer, but declined to divulge the identity of the person. Reuters could not independently ascertain who filed the case.

The complaint, which has previously not been reported, comes

payments platform in India, where it has been beta testing it with 1 million users since 2018.

which is working to fully launch its

Lack of regulatory clearances have meant WhatsApp has struggled to offer the service to its around 400 million users in India, its biggest market worldwide. The CCI can order its investigations arm to conduct a wider probe into the allegations, or throw out the case if it finds no merit in it.

"The case is in initial stages ... senior members of CCI are reviewing it but a final decision hasn't been reached," said the first of the three sources.

The antitrust complaint alleges that WhatsApp's large user base meant it was dominant in the messaging app market, and the company was forcing its payments feature on to its existing

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



kitchens, delivery personnel, grassroots NGOs and volunteers have been working to help the hungry. The Rotary Club of Mumbai Queen's Necklace has served over 60 lakh hot meals and food kits across Mumbai. Thane and Palghar. The project has raised Rs 11 crore till date, with funding from Rotarians as well as corporate donors. Businessman Sanjiv Mehta, who heads the project, said, "There is a maker, a funder and a distributor. Everyone is needed." Most initiatives take the support of NGOs, which often have the logistics, personnel and expertise, but not the funding. Retail

> For two-decade old organisation Goonj, disasters mean activating its deep network.

Volunteers have felt the scale of deprivation acutely. I had not realised how broken this system is'

Vivanta and Ginger brand of hotels, provided meals for healthcare workers as well as stranded workers in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Coimbatore and Agra.

Khaana Chahiye, another citizen-led initia-

tive. Every day, he steps out at 7.30 am to pick

up food packets and deliver them to Dharavi, Kurla, Chembur, Govandi and Mahul. "Once I

started seeing the ground reality, I understood

entrepreneur Juveca Panda joined hands with

non-profit Youth for Unity and Voluntary

Action (YUVA) to distribute eight lakh cooked

meals to frontline workers

and Bhiwandi's powerloom

workers. For stranded con-

struction workers, food is

prepared in a kitchen at a

stadium in Nerul and then

transported by Mumbai

Mobile Crèches, an NGO

with expertise in setting up

day-care centres at con-

struction sites. "They had the

logistics in place to deliver

the food," Panda says. Hospitality brands, too,

leveraged their massive

kitchens and manpower to

provide meals. The Indian

Hotel Company Limited

(IHCL), which owns the Tai.

In Mumbai, an extensive network of

the meaning of privilege," he says.

In Delhi, where the February riots had already pushed many families into financial distress, the lockdown has been a double blow. "Many homes were burnt during the riots.

Some middle-class families were reduced to zero. Had they not been affected so badly, they could have survived this lockdown," says Amir Siddiqui from Project Umeed, which runs 43 relief centres in the city. He recounts how difficult it is for the suddenly impoverished people to seek help, prompting them to tie up with mosques in the area. "We started dropping off ration kits at the mosque. They find it more comfortable to take it from the *imam* than to accept charity," he says.

"But usually it's in a certain

pocket of the country. We had never thought that all our networks will be needed at once," says founder Anshu Gupta. To adapt to many inter-state restrictions, the organisation has had to swiftly decentralise, says Gupta. "We started buying locally from grocery shops, vendors and farmers," he says. In Kolar, Karnataka, a region known for its tomato and mango production, when farmers started distress selling, Goonj decided to buy the produce over the cost price

and distributed it among 5,000 families in the district. "We had not prepared cooked meals before but we decided to do so because people were going hungry. In the past month, we've fed over 2,000 people in Bengaluru, and we still get at least 100 calls a day," says Chandan Sharma, who looks after Goonj's operations in Karnataka. Through the lockdown,



REACHING OUT

Two women offer food to another in Chennai

tion and provided 1.4 lakh meals, says Gupta. Elsewhere, too, social workers hit the ground running as the implications of the lockdown began to be clear. Around March 30, members of Ankuram, a Hyderabadbased NGO, spotted migrants from Madhya Pradesh walking on the highway. They persuaded them to return, and moved them to their shelter, where they were offered food and water and convinced to stay - instead of walking 800 km home. "We convinced hundreds more to stay at the shelters," says founder M Sumitra. "Initially, we provided

the organisation has delivered 8 lakh kg of ra-

food. Later, as many decided to cook on their own, we provided dry rations and vegetables. We arranged counselling for those who showed signs of depression. Many felt guilty that they were just eating and sleeping without doing any work," says Sumitra. When they finally found a way to leave, after the easing of restrictions, some migrants from Bihar, UP and Maharashtra made Sumitra and her team members promise that they would visit them in their homes whenever possible.

It is not just food alone. As several blood banks began drying up in lockdown, organisations rushed to arrange blood for emergencies. "We cannot organise blood donation camps with social distancing. So, we send 10-12 donors daily to hospitals," says Taranjit Singh Nimana of the Bhai Ghanaiya Ji Mission Sewa Society, an organisation in Punjab. "We have a list of 40,000-50,000 blood donors ready in Ludhiana. But these days, even regular donors are hesitant; just a message on WhatsApp is not enough. You have to call and counsel them.'

As a child, Murugan S lived on the streets of Kochi and begged for food from strangers. One day, the police shifted him to an orphanage

where he was cared for by nuns for many years. Since then, he has been paying the favour forward. The 34-yearold's NGO Theruvoram, meaning street Malayalam, has been lifting the homeless and the destitute off the streets in six districts of Kerala and taking them to safe homes in the lockdown. "Almost 90 per cent are from other states. We give them a bath, fresh clothes and then transport them to a mental health centre or a hospital," he says.

Extending a hand does not always come from a po-

sition of privilege. In the village of Kaladera, near Chomu in Jaipur district, a community of printers and dyers have started a kitchen to help 900 migrant workers stuck nearby. "The local authorities give dry ration only to native villagers. How would the workers manage?" says Krishna Kumar Dosaya, a member of the Chippa Samaj. It is a hard time

for the community, too. "Those who buy in bulk have cancelled all orders. But our elders would say that no matter what disaster strikes, everyone has to live together, no one should go hungry," says Dosaya.

For many volunteers, the crisis has meant a new familiarity with the city they share with fellow citizens. Before he began going there to distribute food, Nakul Heble was only vaguely aware of the existence of a community of semi-skilled workers from north India living by a lake near his home in north Bengaluru. For about a month now, Heble and a friend have gotten to know them better, as they make frequent trips to drop off rations, and watch their desperation as money and supplies ran out. "We depended a lot on people within the community to help identify the most vulnerable. For them, this pandemic is not about the virus, but hunger and survival," said Heble. With it, there was also an anxiety about being believed. "They would say, 'Agar khana mila hai, toh hum kyun jhooth bolenge? (Why would we lie if we had got the food?)"
Heble says. Watching government indifference push the vulnerable to desperate measures and being swamped by their distress for days can take a toll. Heble and his friend had to "move away from the Google spreadsheet" for a week when it became too much.

"Your phone number becomes a helpline number. You are taking calls through the day," says Seema Mundoli. The author and academic with Azim Premji University is a part of a group of 100 academics, researchers and students, who began by responding to distress calls early into the lockdown. It grew into the Stranded Workers Action Network, that has taken calls from 16,000 distressed workers from across the country. The SWAN works as a control room of relief, with volunteers divided into zones by the language they speak. All calls for help are entered into a first information sheet, and different sections then take on the work - either of transferring cash, or getting local organisations to send food or even making payment to gas agencies when workers have run out of cooking fuel "Sometimes, it can take quite a few days for things to move. We also find that even NGOs are getting overwhelmed and running out of resources," says Mundoli.

She has just gotten off the phone with a worker in Bellary, Karnataka, distraught because he can't return to Madhya Pradesh. "It was easier to somehow get food and ration to people. Now, after two months, people are just frantic about going home. But the process is so non-transparent that we are struggling to help," says Mundoli. The volunteers usually help workers register on a government portal, direct them to the nearest police station to again register — and then tell them to wait. "We try convince them not to start walking. In the south zone, we have had no success in helping with travel. In Maharashtra, we managed to collect funds and arrange a truck to drop workers to the Madhya Pradesh border," she says.

By pitching into the crisis, the volunteers have felt the scale of deprivation acutely. With the knowledge comes indignation. "I had not realised how broken the system is. Politicians and administrators who are trained to respond to the crisis have responded with an utter lack of care. A few good officers trying their best is not enough," said Mundoli. "By leaving the cities, the workers have questioned all of us in a big way. Governments would like to lure them to stay put, but no one wants to answer why they left," says Goonj's Gupta.

The "end" of lockdown, then, cannot mean a switch back to normal. "I know a lot more about the lives people live. Empathy has grown in me. And I don't

'Once I saw the

ground reality, I

understood the

meaning of my

privilege,' says a

volunteer in

Mumbai

think this work is something I can stop. A lot more people are going to need help. Jobs will be lost, people will suf-fer," says Heble. While they have run out of funds, the two friends are gearing up to meet municipal officers or legislators to bring some attention to the community.

In Goa, Koshy has set up a directory of workers to help match their skill sets with jobs that come up. So far, they have managed to find rain harvesting experts to train labourers in building recharge pits and are appeal-

ing to householders to hire them for day jobs. "It is about hunger and survival, and if it is not taken care of now, people will get into a lifelong debt cycle. Eventually, there will be another wave of distress migration from villages," says Gupta.

Longer version on indianexpress.com

DIGITAL NATIVE



Nishant Shah

Nishant Shah is a professor of new media and the cofounder of The Centre for Internet & Society, Bengaluru

After the Crisis

When the pandemic is behind us, the new normal will see a curb on our rights and safeties

THEN THE world officially went online not just used the internet but realised that we will have to live on it, amid the shutdowns and lockups, something strange happened. Those of us privileged enough to be able to work remotely and continue to be productively engaged, thus hanging on to a semblance of normality in an uncertain world, started to recognise the fatigue of screen space. We were already struggling with the fact that we were living with screens — they were in our hands, pockets, bags; by our pillows, and, with us, on our toilet seats. And then came the video-conferencing explosion. All work got reduced to staring at the screen — suddenly making a lot of us realise that despite the presence of ubiquitous computation, our work and life had a lot of time for in-person and physical activities.

As we shifted, taking for granted access, affordability, and affordances, into this online world, we have all been exploring what it means to work in these distributed environments. There are long editorials about "Zoom fatigue", "platform tiredness" and "camera craziness" as we feel exhausted trying to remain productive and connected on the flattened interfaces of our screens. There is also a growing realisation that while the digital world offers many advantages, it takes an immense amount of labour. This hidden labour and its costs, otherwise performed by invisible workers or insidious algorithms, are now in our faces, clearly showing us that digital shifts are not cheap and administrators using it as an excuse to reduce costs are merely burdening their employees with additional, invisible labour.

The struggle is real. It seems trivial when compared to those who cannot work, are trapped away from home and family, or are threatened with loss of job and income as we continue extending the measures to flatten the epidemiological curve. And yet, this is in many ways the future of what is to come when the world opens up. One of the things we have to prepare for is that this pan-



LOST WORLD

Once this is over, the digital is going to be the lever for change

demic is an exercise in resource management and control. In the guise of the emergency, different administrators who were resisting the digital shift because of lack of knowledge or fear of loss of control are suddenly accelerating the shift, being facilitated almost entirely by for-profit corporate services instead of communitydriven open-source environments that have been developing over the years. It is also a practice run for normalising digital labour as a part of our work, even as we continue to shoulder the full share of responsibilities that we always did.

When we get back, there is going to be a huge thrust to convince us that things are back to normal. The impulse for normalisation is not going to go back to the old baseline. The work that we put in, taking enormous responsibility for caregiving towards family and colleagues, working beyond the call of duty to make up for the lack of institutional and governmental resources, is going to become the new normal. The digital is going to become a lever by which people are going to be laid off, their jobs replaced by automation. It is going to come with the promise of efficiency and transformation - code for restructuring organisations for profit and transforming the nature of work and distribution of resources.

The digital shift is long in the making, but the sudden shift has given many leaders the opportunity to experiment with their employees in real-time, seeing how much more work can be piled on people, extorting them to perform more and sacrifice their free time and health to the betterment of an economy where they are going to be asked to work more for less even as the few people who control it will be the only ones that profit from it. In the past, technological shifts fueled by other crises — the rise of computation after the end of World War II, the increase in digital security after the Y2K scare, the naturalisation of surveillance technologies after 9/11, the introduction of no-privacy governance databases after charges of terrorism, all come to mind - have led to dramatic re-ordering of life and sociality.

This pandemic is not an exception. As all that we know is suspended, there is a startling shift into a universe without safeties and entitlements. The new normal is not going to be an older one — which, even as it was problematic, at least had the bounds of rights and safeties. It is going to be one where the crisis is going to be normalised and we are all going to be forced, in our digital environments, to be stuck, experiencing this crisis, in how we work and live, long after the crisis is over.

No Means No

Deconstructing the nuts and bolts of 'rape culture', consent and active accountability



BY SHELJA SEN

DEAR BOYS,

AM WRITING this letter to you without any agenda to blame and shame. If you have been following the social media stories and news recently on "rape culture", then you know what I am talking about. To begin with, I do not agree with the term "rape culture" that is being loosely thrown around as it assigns a single identity to all of us. People are multistoried, as is our culture. A single story of "rape culture" removes possibilities of boys and men being compassionate beings, who can stand up for gender equality, respect and uphold consent. The other issue I have with it is that it ends up othering the problem as if it is out there and we do not have anything to do with it. There is no "us" and "them" here. Misogyny seeps in our lives, homes and workplaces without us even

Let me say it loud and clear - consent matters, whether you are married, in a long-term relationship, or just there for casual sex or a "hook up". Ît matters across gender, age, sexual orientation, class, caste, religion, everything. It does not matter if she has said "yes" earlier, if you have done it before, or you have heard from somebody else that she is "easy." And no, you cannot blame it on your raging hormones, your manliness, the fact that you were too intoxicated or that you misread the signals. There are no greys in affirmative consent — it is black and white. Consent could range from checking if she is okay about getting messages from you to holding her hand, kissing her or having sex. It might be awkward and might break the flow but do it. Do not keep pushing as you might have heard, "girls like to be chased." No means no. Don't make assumptions that suit you. There are four elements to transgressions - consent, power, age appropriateness and context. Suppose a Class X boy posts a picture of a Class VI girl in his private WhatsApp group, it is a transgression on four counts — no consent, no equality of power (he is a lot older and is a male), not age-appropriate, and, in the wrong context. That is why it is ridiculous to equate the girl's Snapchat to the #boislockeroom on Instagram.

If, by chance, you are a bystander (online or otherwise), then rather than staying passive, take an active role. If you are a child, talk to an adult you trust who will be ready to take action. Reach out to the person who is being targetted in whatever way you can and show solidarity. It could be as simple as saying, "This is not okay, what can I do to help?" If possible, gather like-minded people and address the



IT TAKES TWO **TO AGREE**

Activists hold a protest rally in New York in opposition to US Supreme Court nominee

Brett Kavanaugh and in support of Christine Blasey Ford, the university professor who has accused Kavanaugh of sexual assault

issue with the perpetrator. Every little step you take counts. If you stay passive, you continue supporting patriarchy.

We also need to go beyond all the mudslinging and talk about active accountability and what it means.

AWARENESS: There is no learning in public humiliation, expulsions and social-media shaming. It just leads to people not taking responsibility — "I am not sure if I even did anything wrong", "Guess I will just have to be more cautious" — to gaslighting the victim with "it's all in your head". Altogether, no learning, justice or healing and maximum damage. We need to have conversations with our boys at home and in schools on sex, especially in terms of gender politics, consent, respect, empathy, transgressions. We need schools to step up and start a dedicated weekly classes on these and on diversity - on issues of gender, sexuality, neurodiversity, disability, body types, race, class, caste, justice, power, religion — not once in their school life but every week from Nursery to Class XII. That might be the most important lesson they will take with them as they step into the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: The seeds of gender criminality has its roots in our language. Language is the thread that weaves the dominant beliefs regarding gender, where gender is seen in binaries — boys as smarter, tougher, braver, girls as weaker, prettier, nicer and any other gender as abnormal (I will leave the injustice of that for another column). No wonder when they grow up, men take charge and women are taken charge of. Their identities get restricted, where women need protection from men who are "tough" and "strong." The "boy code" or "manning up" does not leave much scope for sensitivity and gentleness. Such are the warped and restricted dichotomies we set up for our children from a young age. But then there is another dangerous dichotomy – good girls and bad girls. Bad girls do not need protection, they are "free for all". These are the girls who fall prey to the male gaze, who earn the label of "slut" in school, where all genders are united in saying, "she asked for it." Media has to acknowledge the way it feeds into the dangerous discourse around gender and consent (Watch any Bollywood song to see how it plays out)

ACTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY: In a way, it was

There are four elements to transgressions—consent, power, age appropriateness and context

heartening to see that the recent social-media uproar was not shrugged off as "Boys will be boys," or "Aisa toh hota rehta hai (These things keep happening)". The biggest tragedy will be if we let it go and resume everyday life with another uproar in a few months' time. Active accountability means that if there has been a wrongdoing, then there is an apology for the transgression and action - a statement of commitment, "I am sorry I messed up. I will do what it takes to repair the damage." It could be in terms of writing an apology, accepting his role in it, meeting a therapist, doing community work, or even police action, depending on the situation. Simultaneously, the girls who have been at the end of the harm need healing, too, so that they can move towards their preferred future and reclaim their life. Schools and colleges need to have a clear protocol for restorative justice.

To all of you adults out there, this is not about the children, this is about us. To raise our children well, we have to raise ourselves first. We need to come together and take collective responsibility in making our world more equitable, free of gender violence and misogyny. Are you up for it?

Dr Shelia Sen is therapist, writer and co-founder of Children First, a child & adolescent mental health institute. Write to shelia.sen@childrenfirstindia.com

Healing **Touch**

The importance of art in the age of the coronavirus

Nachiket Chanchani

AS THE government of India looks to gradually reopen the economy, creative and cultural industries, a sector that has already been impacted by the ongoing pandemic, may be among the last to recover from the economic downturn. As the arts nurture public health and as cultural diversity is an essential aspect of the nation's fabric, it is critical to keep this sector afloat.

For several reasons, creative and cultural industries are poised to suffer enormous losses. Many of India's performing arts, museums and heritage sites have come to be tied to tourism, another sector poised to recover slowly as travel and social distancing restrictions will continue for some time. The perception that the arts and humanities are not essential to our society is entrenched. Since many artists, arts organisations and cultural workers have been the recipient of meagre grants from the government and philanthropic trusts even before the pandemic, their resources will diminish first. To counteract this, the development of a forward-looking cultural policy is the need of the hour. Recent symbolic gestures by the Union Ministry of Culture — such as inducting regional weaving traditions into national lists of intangible cultural heritage and illuminating the forecourt of the Red Fort with oil lamps — will neither preserve these practitioners nor the sites.

A recognition that the arts positively affect our bodies and minds is an elementary first step in formulating a new policy. Art fosters awareness, enhances social skills, increases self-esteem and slows cognitive decline. Many studies have shown that activities such as viewing a painting, listening to music or watching a performance strengthen learning,



reduce anxiety and heal trauma. Therefore, the arts are promoters of healthier commu-

nities in the intermediate and long term. If the past is any guide, then by turning to it we might learn of other benefits of investing in the arts in times of crisis. As a famine extended its grip in Bengal in the 1940s, artists such as Zainul Abedin and Chittaprosad made sketches of the unfolding human tragedy. Some exhibited their work, others arranged for their speedy and inexpensive publication. Even as these ventures drew the colonial government's ire, they inspired fellow Indians to contribute resources to ease the suffering of those most impacted by the catastrophe.

Two decades later, a severe drought hit Bihar. Pupul Jayakar, the then head of the handicrafts board, encouraged the women of the Mithila region to transfer compositions they had hitherto reserved for their nuptial chambers to paper. With Indira Gandhi's support, Jayakar marketed these rustic paintings to urban audiences by emblazoning their images on trains, hanging them in hotel lobbies, selling them in emporia and showcasing them at international festivals. Since then, a dediA THING OF **JOY AND BEAUTY**

A Madhubani painting by Padma Shri winner Sita Devi, one of the early Mithila artists

cated group of anthropologists, designers, museum professionals and government officers has revived many other ritual art traditions, including some on the verge of extinction. As a result, their makers have enjoyed fame, their rural communities have prospered and new forms of cultural expression and regional

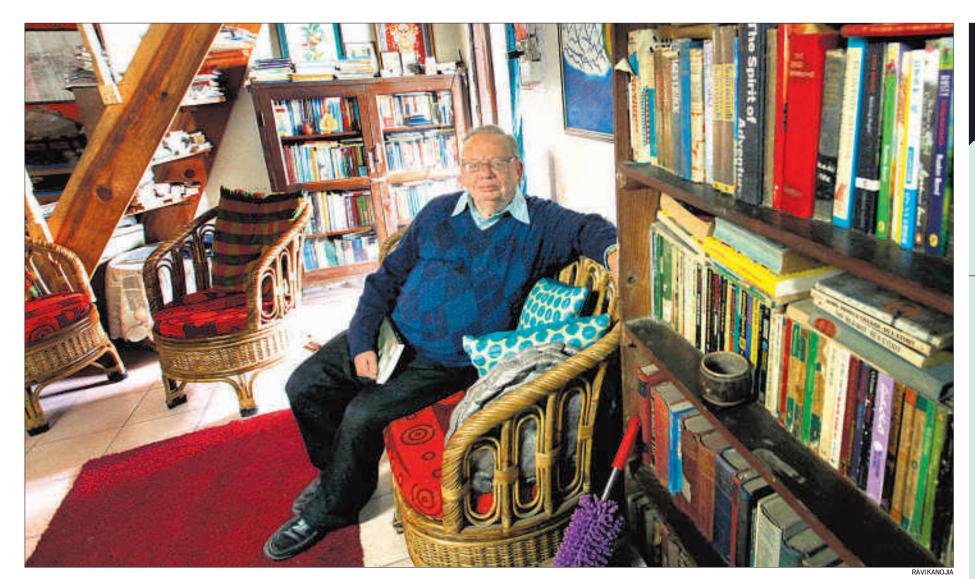
identity have flowered. Alongside arts practitioners, now is the time to support arts scholars. Given the closure of Archaeologial Survey of India-protected monuments, budgets allocated for repaving walkways, growing exotic flowers on lawns and installing dynamic lighting systems should be transferred to fellowship schemes for students and scholars of archaeology. Funds apportioned for the construction of grandiose experiential museums in the recently-concluded budget session should be transferred to charitable trusts devoted to advancing the history, conservation and enjoyment of art. These trusts should be allowed to help existing museums pay the salaries of positions critical to their missions and cover other essential expenses. The Ministry of Culture should publicise its pension and medical aid scheme for artistes facing hardships, simplify the application process and expedite fund disbursal.

Over the past decade, The National Missions on Manuscripts and Libraries have scanned thousands of manuscripts. These digital resources should immediately be made freely available online. Scholars must be given grants to begin translating these texts from the ancient languages into contemporary tongues. Subventions should be given to presses to publish these works. The Ministry should give stipends to humanities researchers to write accessible essays and podcasts for a broad audience, including school children. Finally, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations should work with embassies worldwide to encourage private collectors and connoisseurs of South Asian art to donate funds to artistic organisations in India.

As cultural historian Lakshmi Subramanian recently reflected, music is one of the few transmissions in the human chain that can be safely amplified now. Governments might remunerate practitioners of musical and performing arts if they consent to teach students basic singing techniques through teleconferencing facilities. Following the lead of global pop stars, India's agencies should initiate schemes that will disburse funds to local musicians who livestream melodies from their homes.

Today, India's eyes are on China, where the pandemic began and which is now carefully reopening its economy. If we also take into account China's modernising initiatives in the 1950s and 1960s that aspired to pull millions of its citizens out of grinding poverty, then we will see that they led to a paradigm shift in China's cultural landscape. Many practitioners of long-cherished traditions found themselves tilling fields or working in assembly lines on factory floors, hundreds of kilometres from their hometowns. As these erstwhile practitioners aged and their unique skill-sets became rusty, an array of artistic practices that helped to shape China were endangered. Some artistic traditions even disappeared. Our creative and cultural industries are essential - they nurture public health and preserve cultural diversity, and so, these are among the nation's most valuable assets in the age of coronavirus and in the years to come.

Nachiket Chanchani is an associate professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, US



Devyani Onial

ONG BEFORE the world discovered the virtues of windows in this season of social distancing and staying home, Ruskin Bond let the world in through his. With the mountains on one side, the valley below and the road ahead, the view from Ivy Cottage in Landour, a corner of the hills that was once the head $quarters\, of\, the\, American\, mission ary\, commu$ nity in India, is varied. "A long and ne'er-saydie search for the perfect window. This would be one way to sum up my life," writes Bond, one of India's most loved and prolific writers, in A Book of Simple Living (2015, Speaking Tiger). "Windows are all important, and not just for writers. I get the sunrise on my bed first thing in the morning. It wakes me up," he says. At his previous home, Maplewood Lodge, he found the solitude he sought, living next to the forest and writing from his window seat. Many of his best-known short stories, that make up classics such as The Night Train at Deoli (1988), Time Stops at Shamli (1989) and Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra (1991), emerged from that workstation.

It wasn't lonely though. A small plump squirrel would climb on to his window-sill, "a little out of breath with the effort" and eat groundnuts out of his hand, and, at night, the moths would beat softly against the window panes. "Mussoorie hasn't been this quiet since I came here in 1963. There were only two taxis then. I think, we have about 600 now. But the streets are near-empty," says the author, who was born in Kasauli, grew up in Jamnagar, journeyed through Dehradun, England and

The Orange Minivet Drops By

Ruskin Bond on the joys of simple living in complicated times, looking inward and gazing out

From his room now, he can see the road but the hum of everyday life is missing. The birds seem to have decided to compensate for the missing footfalls by increasing their number of flights. "In the early morning, I see far more birds than I used to and a greater variety, even some that hadn't been coming before. Yesterday, there was an orange minivet. It's more of a forest bird, it did not venture here earlier. Usually you will see parrots in the plains but they have been coming up for a holiday now that the tourists aren't," says Bond.

The hill station that sees traffic jams stretching to hours in the summer is now almost entirely made up of its local residents. "Mussoorie, of course, will miss the tourists because it's a town that thrives on tourism. All the business people are suffering," he says. The days are quieter and the trickle of tourists, book lovers and even honeymooners up the Delhi, before putting down roots in Mussoorie. stairs to Bond's room, whose visits asking for

THE CRICKET STILL SINGS Ruskin Bond at his home in Landour, Mussoorie

blessings have always perplexed the author who has remained single lifelong, has dried up. Will the ease with which strangers turn up at writers' doors, join and leave conversations and the intimacy of touch that is such a big part of what India is, change in a world scarred by COVID-19? "In many ways, India is an informal sort of a country. In some other countries, you would be looked on with suspicion, whereas here it's perfectly natural to talk to a stranger about the journey, or to grumble or make a complaint and everyone joins in," he says. The fear of the virus may make people wary of each other but Bond says, "I think people will go back to doing what they were before. We go back to old habits. In India, it's hard to break with custom."

Writing for a living from the 1950s, when he was a young man of 21 to now, when he turns 86 on Tuesday, Bond has taken us through the natural world, past mofussil towns and to the deep well of solitude. This, he feels, could be a moment to review and reorient our relationship with nature. "There is a feeling among people that this, to some extent, is the outcome of human interference with the natural world. I think it was Thomas Hardy who said God created a beautiful world and left it to us to look after it, which we didn't do too well. Hopefully, we will take better care of this wonderful inheritance," he says.

It may also be a time to connect to ourselves. "Maybe people will also get a chance to discover themselves in this enforced solitude, to become more thoughtful because we can't rush around as we used to, and we must try and make life as simple as possible to be reasonably happy and avoid complications. To live within one's means and not be overambitious, that's the road to contentment, if not happiness. Of course, it may be tougher to make a living now for sometime," says Bond.

As someone who always worked from home, his day hasn't changed much, maybe got busier, writing, and reading out stories for All India Radio, dipping into his rich repertoire, narrating a ghost story, a humorous anecdote and the tall tales of Jim Corbett's khansama. The writer promises a new offering soon.

"I have written some 10,000 words during the lockdown. They are partly philosophical, thoughts and observations. So far the title is, 'Where have all the people gone?' But that sounds rather pessimistic. I will perhaps change it to 'Have a Wonderful Life'." he ruminates. That's a dose of optimism we can all do with in these uncertain times. We could also turn to the last lines of his autobiography, Lone Fox Dancing (2017), "I'm afraid science and politics have let us down. But the cricket still sings on the window-sill.

DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and

The Eyes Have It

Lockdown blues? There's a kaleidoscopic new world waiting to be discovered

ATURE LOVERS these days must be tormented to be stuck indoors, watching TV documentaries on natural history. And yet, as I discovered decades ago, there are enough astonishments lying around, in the house, garden, or even a flowerpot, for you to discover, enjoy, and photograph. Decades ago, I became fascinated by what things looked like in magnum close-up and got myself a small microscope whose lens was basically a glass bead. But you could see the features of an ant's head with it, or details of a bee's wing. Of course, I had to photograph these, so I snapped open my father's ancient "fold out" Zeiss Ikon, aligned the lens as close to the microscope's eyepiece as possible and clicked. The pictures resembled primitive Xray images but were exciting for me. You could see the hooks at the edges of the bee's wing with which the hind and front spans attach so they work as a single wing.

Then I graduated to my first single-lens reflex — a heavyweight Russian Zenit-E that fired like a rifle and had an excellent 58 mm normal lens. I got myself a bellows unit, which, when attached between the body and the lens, enabled you to obtain up to a four-times the magnification on a sliding scale. An entire new world opened up.

Peer into a water drop and see the whole world suspended inside it. Or, the photographer's favourite - spiders' webs strung like strings of pearls on the foliage on dewy mornings. Even better, a bejeweled dragonfly's wings you could photograph at leisure because the insect was still too chill to fire up its engines! Most enthralling of all, on a cool, moist morning in Mumbai's Borivali National Park, was discovering what's called leaf "guttation" — the exudation of sap from a leaf as spherical droplets, arranged like a tiara on the edges of a leaf. Dewdrops on rose petals is another old photographic cliché, which you can fake with a sprayer. Another wonder was the details of a skeleton leaf — the intricate filigree of its veins is truly amazing. You could see the barbs and barbules that made up the edges of feather vanes, en-



WHO IS THAT ALIEN?

A robber fly

abling it to keep its shape after a bird had run its beak

Other "everyday" things, too, when seen real close-up could take your breath away. The translucent flakes of an orange, backlit by the sun (or even a lamp) against a velvet black background was like a work of art. And then, I discovered ice cubes. When just formed, they had the most astonishing internal structures, and by using coloured transparent paper you could compose the most magnificent works of modern art. Another source of magical and ghost-like abstract imaging was the swirls and curls of smoke rising from a resting cigarette, in a pitch-black room with just one spotlight (I used my slide projector) to light them up. Lately, I discovered you can photograph rainbows on the playing side of a CD, useful for explaining the basic physics of light to children and why a duck's

Get up close to insects and other creepy crawlies, the fearsome details of an ant's mandibles will reveal themselves. You'll also understand from where Hollywood directors got their "inspiration" to create the look of the Martians! Look deeply into the beady eyes of a cockroach or those bright, obsidian eyes of a jumping spider on the wall. Always focus on the eyes. A robber fly once flew into the room and I went really close to make out the thousands of lenses that made up its giant compound eye!

head shimmers purple and emerald. I've framed some of

Northern Lights!

these images and conned many by passing them off as the

To capture flying insects was a completely different ball game. Back in the mid-1970s, I discovered the work of Stephen Dalton, who had made it his passion to do just that, with strobe lights and infra-red triggers and whatnot in his very life-like dioramas. He used the peerless transparency film, Kodachrome, and the results were outstanding — bees and wasps and butterflies in take-off, or mid-flight, pin-sharp from head to toe! This sort of thing galvanises you even though there's no way you could develop the sort of equipment required. So, you do the next best thing: wait for wasps to hover close to their nests, when they move the least (but still far too much) or you go after those wonderful flying machines: hoverflies. These guys can suspend themselves stock still in mid-air and if you're quick on the draw you can nail them. Even so, I used up a criminal amount of expensive film on them (this was before digital), with just a couple of acceptable results to show. But it is worth it, every time (the equipment is so much more advanced today!). You may just find a kaleidoscopic new world ready to be discovered.

Light Filters In

Jericho Brown on winning the Pulitzer Prize for poetry and being a poet in the time of the pandemic

Nawaid Anjum

"IT'S FUNNY winning the Pulitzer Prize in the middle of the pandemic. You can't go out to party and shake a bunch of hands," says Jericho Brown, winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize for poetry. But even as he stays at home in Atlanta in the United States, Brown, 44, has suddenly found the world reaching out to him. Since the announcement of the award, he has been giving back-to-back interviews. "I have never talked to so many people from across the world in such a short period of time before," Brown says, over the telephone. Brown's win — just like that

of fellow Black playwright Michael R. Jackson for his off-Broadway musical A Strange Loop seems to symbolise the triumph of a community. The first Black queer poet to win the honour for his third poetry collection, The Tradition (2019, Copper Canyon Press), Brown is also the director of the creative writing programme at Emory University. Before the news of his win broke, he had been busy working on some essays about growing up in

Louisiana and his work life. "There is a notion that in the United States you can get what you want if you work hard enough. In the essays, I wonder how true that is in a country where people work very hard but barely get by," he says. If things were normal, he would have headed out for a drag show, a karaoke session or to a strip club to celebrate his Pulitzer win. But, in the new normal, Brown did the next best thing: introspect and meditate. "I did it with the same intensity that I would have partied with," he says, bursting into a guffaw.

The interplay between the other and the self has been the hallmark of Brown's poetry. Part of what he reflected on after the win was the significance of being a poet in this particular moment of history. "Poetry is about resilience. It holds out hope because it changes our minds. That can lead to a change of action," he says. His win comes 70 years after the African-American poet Gwendolyn Brooks became the first Black poet to win the Pulitzer for Annie Allen (1949). "Brooks's works made way for the books that I am able to bring in this world," says Brown, who dedicates one of his poems to her. Between them, six Black poets, including Rita Dove (1987) and Yusef Komunyakaa (1994), have won the award. Like Dove, Brown is interested in exploring "the most intimate moments, the smaller, crystallised details we all hinge our lives on." Born as Nelson Demery III in Shreveport,

Louisiana, Brown's landscaper parents did yard work, His childhood memories are of going to the Baptist church with his deeply religious parents and his father beating up his mother. Having discovered his sexual orientation early, Brown kept thinking of committing suicide. All of that is in the past. He has changed his name and learnt to live with his many identities — a Southerner, a queer and a Black man, blending them all into a single, cohesive identity: a poet.

In his poems, Brown dwells on the contentious relationship with his father, the quiet submission of his mother, and the vulnerabilities of being a Black man in America. In As a human being, he writes about how he fought "your father and won, marred him/He'll have a scar he can see all/ Because of you/ And your mother/The only woman you ever cried for..."

In his writing, he adheres to the tradition of American poets like Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson in the same measure as he follows in the footsteps of Brooks or Dove. His poems in *The Tradition* — on a wide range of subjects like Blackness, queerness, fatherhood, legacy, worship and trauma – capture the quests of survival and beauty amid cruelty and violence. There is also a deep undercurrent of



A POET OF WITNESS Jericho Brown, winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in poetry

politics that runs through them. "When I write, I am not trying to make political statements. But I do know that a political statement will be made because that's the history of poetry all over the world," he says. An ardent admirer of former US President Barack Obama, Brown is, however, quick to point out that there had been other Black people in the US who were "capable and smart enough" for the job. "He was the first Black President, but he

was not the only one we could've had," he says. And so, Brown grapples with racial injustice, normalisation of terror and naturalisation of inequality in his work. The increasing number of hate crimes against Black men in the US often come up in his poems. "I am a they in most of America," he writes in Stake. "Sometimes you is everybody," he writes in another poem.

Brown's previous collections include Please (2008), which explored the intersection of love and violence, and The New Testament (2014), which meditated on race, sexuality and faith. "There is an amount of tenderness in all my poems. No matter how much steeped in violence the poem might be, it restores tenderness because that, too, is a part of the human condition. If I am a poet of witness, then I can't only witness a tragedy, I am a poet who can also see joy," he says.

In The Tradition. Brown invents a new poetic form called duplex, which weaves together elements of the sonnet, blues and ghazal. Brown, who listens to a lot of ghazals, besides songs by Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and Stevie Wonder, says it was born of his interest in linking forms that could encompass different kinds of identities. "A poem is a gesture toward home," reads one such poem. Does his poetry take him home? "What a poem really should do is lend access to all our experiences. It should be honest about all the forms walking around in you," says Brown, who has been living with HIV since 2012. In one of his poems, he refers to his body as "a temple in disrepair", in another, he writes of being "con-

sumed by a single diagnosis of health". His illness has long made him aware of the uncertainty of life but the pandemic has been an eye-opener. The US response to it, he says, has been "embarrassing and humiliating". President Donald Trump has recently asserted that COVID-19 will "go away at some point without a vaccine" but Brown knows how far from truth that is. In the poem Virus he writes, "I want you/To heed that I am still here/Just beneath your skin and in/ Each organ/ The way anger dwells in a man/Who studies the history of his nation...If I can't leave you/ Dead, I'll have/

In camera football kicks off Behind closed doors, hoopsters prepare

Devoid of the usual riot of colour and noise, Germany's 'ghost games' begin

ASSOCIATED PRESS DORTMUND, MAY 16

GERMAN SOCCER is normally a riot of color and noise. No longer.

The Bundesliga season resumed Saturday with what German fans call 'ghost games,' played without spectators, and in Dortmund it was hard to tell that the city's beloved team was playing at all.

Instead of thousands of fans chatting and drinking beer outside the stadium, there were only a few locals out for a weekend bike ride as Borussia Dortmund hosted Schalke in a usually fierce local rivalry. On the field, there were fireworks as Erling Haaland scored in a 4-0 win after two months of no games. Outside the stadium there was near silence. Passersby occasionally asked whether a game was actually going on.

Police relaxed as it became clear that fans wouldn't gather outside - a concern for authorities ahead of the game - and potentially spread the virus. "It is really very calm in the city and regarding the virus dangers I can only praise the Dortmunders and the fans," police spokesman Oliver Peiler said. The song "You'll Never Walk Alone," a favorite of Dortmund fans as well as Liverpool supporters, echoed around the stadium ahead of kickoff. It was so quiet that the starting whistle could be heard outside - unthinkable at a regular game.

The arena has an 81,000 capacity but league rules permit just 213 people, including players, to be inside for the game, none of them supporters. Players tried to keep contact to a minimum, even during celebrations and the traditional salute to the - now empty - stands at the final whistle.

In the city center ahead of the match. longtime Dortmund fan Marco Perz sat outside the German Football Museum in a jacket patched with club emblems. He said he hasn't missed a home game since the 1990s. "I'd normally be on the South Stand right now, in the yellow wall," he said, referring to the vast terrace which underpins Dortmund's reputation for passionate support. Now Perz is planning to watch the game with a friend over food and a beer. "The main thing is to see the game," he added.

On the next street, face masks were on



Borussia Dortmund players celebrate a goal while practising social distancing. AP

A DIFFERENT BALL GAME

- No one in stands meant no groans for a goal conceded, none of the angry roar if a referee makes a bad decision and no booing.
- Some substitutes didn't touch each other but Jadon Sancho highfived Thorgan Hazard before coming on. Another social distancing faux pas was players and substitutes of all teams walking in together but sitting physically away from each other. It seemed like the protocols were tight on the pitch but loose off it.
- Take away the background din of fans and suddenly the focus falls on words. One of the commentators said Schalke defenders were 'social distancing' from Dortmund strikers and another compared Erling Braut Haaland to a 'blonde greyhound'.

sale in Dortmund's yellow and black, with the stallholder saying they were the most popular on offer. Local authorities had pleaded with fans not to mass outside the stadium. "Anyone who stands in front of the stadium because they want to follow the game has got it wrong," Dortmund mayor Ullrich Sierau said Wednesday. "It's an appeal to the good sense of all fans, and I'm sure that the fans of both Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund are sensible people."

Dortmund fan Nicole Bartelt said she would stay away from the stadium - which she called "the temple" - in the hope of showing fans could be trusted to return sooner rather than later for games. If fans gather, 'we'll end up waiting even longer to be back,' she said. Police were spread along the road by the stadium in vans, on motorbikes and horseback. There have been clashes between fans at Dortmund-Schalke games before, but the police had little to do except remind TV crews to stand further away from each other as they filmed team buses arriving. One bus driver blasted out a Dortmund club song as he drove away.

Dortmund's last game was in an empty stadium too, but with big crowds outside. Thousands of Paris Saint-Germain supporters gathered outside the Parc des Princes as their team beat Dortmund in the Champions League on March 11. Those scenes - and the decision of PSG players to sing along with the fans showed that a game risks spreading the disease even without letting a single supporter into the arena.

to chase their American dream

SHIVANI NAIK MUMBAI, MAY 16

SIYA DEODHAR is in Class 12, but getting good grades - although important - is only her second priority.

She is 5'7", wears shoe size 7.5 and weighs 55 kg - all of which mean she will get thoroughly bullied on a basketball court if she doesn't devote the 17th year of her life to gaining muscle and strength, and improving her speed. "I'm very good at no-look, short and long passes. But I'm working on my accuracy in shooting and have started attempting 3-pointers," says the guard, who is trying to crack a college scholarship in America's NCAA.

The Nagpur teen has been to a bunch of camps - including one at Tampa, Florida, that serves as a brief look-in into what the life of an aspiring hoopster in the US could look like, in March 2019. She's also been on international Basketball Without Borders camps previously, and every experience has taught her just how physically intimidating the challenge is, to crack the high echelons of pro women's basketball.

"I have to make changes to the body and strengthen it. Indian diet is balanced, but usually 2-3 months ahead of a tournament I get protein powders prescribed," says the daughter of a businessman, who owns a service station and is into construction. A former judoka himself, Siya's father told her she should learn to swim like everyone, but insisted she take up a team sport. "I form bonds easily with teammates but as a point guard, I like being the leader on the court,' says the player who quickly realised that basketball in Nagpur, where she could dominate opponents playing as an all-rounder, was like being a shark in a small pond.

The American experience was sobering, as she says: "It's physically tough. There you have to prove yourself." So, the lockdown has been spent working on her weak core and adding zing to her sprints on her home court, "I'm studying Commerce, and I might pick Management studies. Or maybe Law,' says the determined youngster.

While the world is hemmed in by the four walls of their homes, the unexpected break came at perhaps the right time for





Deodhar, Grishma Niranjan, Ann Mary Zacharia. Express

Bangalore's Grishma Niranjan who was recovering from an ACL tear - though she missed making the state senior side and u18 nationals. "If it hadn't been for the injury, I'd have never gone to the gym and started lifting weights. The gap in our game and US' is really huge. By the time we start playing, they are already in the gyms lifting weights," says the 5'6" Karnataka girl.

Primed for an off year at a prep school in Connecticut this August, Grishma is glad she learnt from scratch about weights and gym work. "I knew nothing till injury forced me into the gym. Now my body feels stronger with muscle gain."

NCAA inroads

Perhaps the biggest improvement (also the most optimal use of being restricted to a gym indoors) was made by the hugely touted Harsimran Kaur of Kapurthala, a 6'3" talent, expected to make inroads into NCAA, given she got the maximum playing time as First Five when the group of hoopsters trained in Florida last. Harsimran (shoe size 11) is a well-travelled hoopster, with stints in Australia, Japan and the US - who realised that merely shooting up in height might also not be enough.

"Start of 2019, I was tall and thin, and knew nothing about a gym," she chortles. It took her 2-3 months to even get started on the weights properly, and playing 3X3 which compresses high intensity play in 10-minute spans. "We usually are exhausted and finished by the end of the third quarter and it affects shooting in the fourth quarter. I realised my legs were very weak and that I should work day and night on strengthening," she recalls.

While the lockdown gym work is helping her load up strength, Harsimran went to extreme lengths to improve herself. "I trained with football players on their field and sometimes ran on hockey turfs. I trained in hurdles and sand jumping and with sprinters. My attitude changed completely this last year," says the Punjab girl who's studying for her SAT scores aiming for a Division 1 NCAA scholarship.

"Also, a big difference was in food. I accepted that I had to eat everything - pork, beef, lamb and not just chicken to do well. Locker rooms in US have fruits and protein shakes and protein bars. I've started carrying them too," says India's most exciting talent, adding "naak, aankh band karke khaana hai to do well."

Another promising youngster from the Florida trip a year on, is Ann Mary Zacharia of Kottayam. A 6'1" centre, she's hamstrung by the lack of a gym during lockdown near home, but has doubled her squats and lunges, having watched individual trainers in US work their charges into one almighty sweat even without equipment.

It hit home when she played an Asian u16 meet against stronger players from Hong Kong. "I'd receive the ball but couldn't hold onto it as I'd get pushed a feet backwards. I couldn't even stand steady. You need muscle and incredible lower-body strength for post-play. But also, their speed comes from excellent footwork which Indians are not that good at. I have only dumbbells to train with. But through this lockdown, I've practised on footwork and shadows," she says.

Their weaknesses in conditioning and strengthening all these years have kept the hoopsters far too busy in the backroom, to miss the foreground of playing action. All that could change in the future.

BRIDGE

- NORTH **♥**AK1085 **♦** 10873 **♣**103 SOUTH (you)
- **★**10654 ♦ AQ
- ♣AK2 West leads the CO against South's 4H after South opens 1NT and North transfers. Playing in a Teams game, the goal is to make the contract, without worrying too much about overtricks. You will need

to make some extra tricks by ruffing (preferably by ruffing diamonds in the short hand). Can you see any problems?

THEEASTHAND: ★ AJ992♥6 ★65 ★98754 I prefer the line of play at the other table. At trick two he didn't play trumps at all. He laid down the DA from hand. Did he forget how to take a finesse? Of course not. In a teams event overtricks are of relatively low importance, and by saving his trumps, he was virtually assuring

West won his DK and played a trump. declarer won in dummy and ruffed a diamond. It was now easy to reach dummy again for another

Contrast this to what happened at the first table. Declarer won the club lead and greedily played a trump to dummy to take the diamond finesse. West took the king and played a second round of trumps.

Oops. Big trouble for declarer – he could no longer ruff both of dummy's losing diamonds in his hand. He was able to take the DA, cross with a club ruff to ruff one diamond loser, but then couldn't get back to dummy. He tried a spade, but West won and played a heart taking out declarer's last trump. Declarer ended up losing two spades and two diamonds for down one and a 12 imp loss.

Declarer East (Contract: 6C)

JUMBLED WORDS

the answer for the given quip.

- WEST ♠ 863 **9**2 ♦ QJ106 ♣A543 EAST ♠ A5 **₩**AQ J ♣KQJ10762
- South leads the SJ, and you win and draw trumps in one round. What is your best plan to make twelve tricks? Be specific about which cards you intend to play from each hand

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to

STEELY

IILTDY

Answer: The sky is filled with **stars**, invisible by **day** - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

SOLUTION: ABASE, BRASH, SLEETY, TIDILY

the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get

The sky is filled with ___, invisible by __- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (5,..,3)

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2269

QUICK CLUES

- An organized group of singers (5)
- Concave (8) West Indian island (7) Rifles, pistols or rev
- Small anchor (7) Mended or repaired (7)
- Be unable to manage properly?
- Referees (7)
- Find acceptable (7) Scope of concern (7) Likes better (7)
- Move to music (5)
- Soccer(8) State of U.S.A(6)
- Ropelike hairstyle (10) Broad boat (4)
- One before the first (6) Custody (6) First course of an elaborate meal?
- Stage whisper (5)
- Tropical fruit (10) Billowy (7)
- Unfinished detail (8)
- Young dog (5)

- Door(6)
- Directions (4)

CRYPTIC CLUES **ACROSS**

- Mulligan, for one, finding a nail?
- They're more than can be excused
- Talks vaguely about what one breakfasted on in America
- In any event it lends style
- He makes way for us (7) A poor actor among the graduates
- in the islands (7) Burning less material? (4,7) Furies, in ancient Greece or
- Ireland? Certainly! (7) His mark was made in India (7)
- Hitting round the wrist ?(7)
- Asked to appear at court ?(8)

for hanging hammocks (5)

Examination one hopes to pass

SUDOKU 41

Difficulty Level 4s

To solve a Sudoku puzzle

must appear in each of the

each of the nine horizontal

nine vertical columns, in

rows and in each of the

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;

3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;

5s = Very Hard; 6s =

Difficulty Level

every digit from 1 to 9

Instructions

- Thieving gentleman dropping Les
- after a little jazz played repeatedly for the rabble (8)
- Doctor blamed for pandemonium They come to tell of the confusion
- of the confusion of the greens (10) Skin problem caused by cutting
- cane (4) Record time in completion of
- partition (6) People mending pipes?
- This Armstrong rested, with
- companion, on near side of moon Partly British way to dodge one's
- debts?(5) What dolts convert Sydney Harbour into a lake?
- Delightful place, see, when one's
- in the money! (7) "Remade my scheme", they complained (8)
- Beautiful girl has exercise with German expression (5)

18. Caught taking percentages for old

Solutions to 2268 QUICK CLUES Across: rintendents, 9 Recruit, 10 Chapati

the address (6)

22.

11 Iliad, 12 Press-gang, 13 Hoipolloi, 15 Riata, 16 Forum, 18 Cogitated, 20 Recovered, 23 Chair, 24 Antonym, 25 Volcano, 26 Disciplinarians. **Down**: 1 Straightforward, 2 Puccini, 3 Roundworn 4 Not up, 5 Exceeding, 6 Dears, 7 Niagara Reticular, 17 Recites, 19 Tuatara, 21 Vinci

Arrival of many getting cross after

Prince enters diocese church for

They're drunk to sing wildly

a fashionable illness (6)

CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Picture postcard, 9 Riot act, 10 Effendi, 11 Obeli, 12 Resistive, 13 Appointee, 15 Egypt, 16 Ovary, 18 To the last, 20 Girasoles, 23 Glove, 24 Alameda, 25 Urethra, 26

Attorney General. **Down:** 1 Persona non grata, 2 Close-up, 3 Unanimity, 4 Eater, 5 Overspent, 6 Tiffs, 7 Annuity, 8 Driven to the wall, 14 Titillate, 15 Evergreen, 17 Abreast, 19 Another, 21

4 9 7 3

2 8 5

8 4 2 3 1 9

2 9 7

1 3 8

7 1 6

6 2 9 3 8 1 4 5 7

3 7 4 6 2 5 8 9 1

5 6

9 5

8

5

4 3

If it's your Birthday

Sunday May 17

Personal, professional and domestic issues will be thrown into the melting-pot. Don't worry, as any confrontation will benefit from a hard exchange of views.

Monday May 18

a new dawn is about to break. Just when and how, you can't say, but things can only get better. What you need to do first is map out a strategy.

Tuesday May 19

You could be coming up for a fairly easy period. You'll have a pleasant and fulfilling period and get the most out of mixing with people who are more experienced than you.

Wednesday May 20

It's an energetic period and you may be ready to do battle, but you would be heavily advised to stay your hand and settle for a compromise. It's far better to concentrate on healing old wounds and making peace.

Thursday May 21

You are in no mood to compromise, even though you are peace-loving. Romantic connections are highly-charged, expect your share of emotional drama.

Friday May 22 In the best of all worlds, only the best can happen. That's the conclusion drawn from today's alignments. The greatest asset in your armoury is raw, pure charm.

Saturday May 23

7 6 5

It's a positive day. That's why you'd do well to concentrate on initiatives and enterprises which are already underway before you try to set up fresh projects and partnerships.

5 3 6 2 9 7 1 4 8

2 1 8 5 6 4 9 7 3

4 9 7 1 3 8 5 2 6

182953764

8 4 2

9 4 3 7 1 6 2 8 5

6 2 9 3 8 1 4 5 7

3 7 4 6 2 5 8 9 1

8 5 1 4 7 9

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

moment, quiet and secretive the next. You might even stretch a partner's patience to the limit. A minor financial earthquake is on the way, but hopefully it will bring no more than a brief blip in your

Finally, at long last

of a new cycle. The happy result is that personal hopes and projects which have been stalled since last year will soon be under way. Family members will support your progress.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) Having settled personal matters, you may spare a little

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

time for financial arrangements, especially joint concerns. Old friends may offer the most support, so you'll be linking up with people you've not seen for some time. At work, make all important changes after Tuesday.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

indulge yourself now that Venus is so pleasantly placed, so do make an almighty effort to keep routine chores to a minimum and allow some time for yourself. You might meet a very fascinating stranger,

perhaps someone who will be

important in your life over the

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Monday's Moon falls

deep in powerful parts of your chart, restoring your morale and re-energising the parts that other stars fail to reach. It might be Wednesday before you feel confident enough to have your say without worrying about what

CANCER (June 22 - July 23) You'll be keeping

people will say in return.

your cards close to your chest until midweek at least,

treasuring your fantasies and perhaps sharing a secret with a special confidant. Yet the Moon's shift of position after Wednesday could bring everything that's been hidden into the open.

It's difficult to gauge

your mood, for you may be bright and sociable one

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)



Mars approaches the beginning

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) You're entering a fascinating new cycle, one which

continues until next month. You'll be working behind the scenes for part of the time, keeping many of your actions secret and letting only the chosen few into your private world. A financial windfall is on the way at the

Could you be chasing

a lost love? Perhaps! The stars indicate nostalgia for passions past, yet don't fall into the trap of judging a present partner according to what happened long ago. Nostalgia is

all very well, but needs to be kept within strict limits. SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

You're still impaled on the horns of a dilemma, wondering whether to go ahead with a major personal adventure, or to hold back. In the short-term you'll prevaricate and postpone, so partners will have to be patient, won't they? Travel

can't handle. CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20) Bit by bit the mist is clearing. And little by little, day by day,

plans may be subject to slight

delays, but nothing you

your special long-range goals are becoming easier to achieve. In love, amorous individuals are primed to enjoy a romantic affair. Those of $you\ with\ responsibility\ for$ children will have your

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21- Feb. 19) What do you fancy this week? A



spending someone else's money. In love, it is oldfashioned romance which suits you.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) As the Sun sweeps

reward very soon. Money

the way.

matters improve on Monday, by

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