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**'THEY'RE JUST LIKE ME': CART PULLER SPENDS LIFE SAVINGS TO SERVE THE HUNGRY**  
Goutam Das, a 51-year-old daily wage worker from Tripura who pulls a cart to sustain himself, has exhausted nearly all his savings to donate food for the poor.



**VIDEO OF THE DAY**  
**DIGGING MASS GRAVES**  
Brazil is struggling to bury its coronavirus victims



**EXPLAINED**  
**FIGHTING COVID-19 WITH PHONES**  
It is all but mandatory to download the Aarogya Setu app

**EXPRESS AUDIO**  
**Understanding the mental health impact of the lockdown**  
NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY  
In the latest episode of the Sandip Roy Show, Dr Pratima Murthy (NIMHANS) talks about the toll that the coronavirus lockdown is taking on our mental health.

FROM PAGE ONE

Surat to Puri

chants of 'Jai Jagannath' by passengers. Dalai is among the 1,250 passengers on the 20-coach train to Puri — two persons per three seats to maintain social distancing — where they will be quarantined for 14 days at panchayat centres before being allowed to go home. The journey is expected to take over 25 hours, with eight stops, mainly to manage drivers' shifts. "Arrangements for snacks, water and other eatables have been made at the eight stops. We have also made arrangements for medical emergencies, if any," says C M Garuda, director, Surat Railway Station. On Saturday afternoon, the passengers were taken to the railway station in buses run by the municipal corporation, and medically screened. According to officials, the list of passengers was prepared by local Odia organisations. "We paid for the tickets after it was approved by the Deputy Collector. The names and details were given to the Railways. We collected the amount from the passengers while handing them the tickets," says Bhagirath Behra, secretary, Surat Odia Welfare Association. Surat has nearly 15 lakh migrant labourers, working mostly in textile units. They have been restive over the last few weeks due to the lockdown, with at least three incidents of violence sparked by workers demanding that they be sent home. Saturday was not without its share of controversy, either, with Navsari MP C R Patil flagging off the train by waving a BJP flag, prompting the Congress to slam the gesture. On the train, it's not all about migrant workers. Sharad Chandra Sethy, 25, who is from Brahmapur town and runs a cable television business, had come to Surat with a friend on March 17. "After visiting Dwarka and Gir forest, we reached Surat on March 21 and stayed at a relative's place where we got stuck after flights were cancelled. I have never experienced such a critical situation, surviving on limited resources for more than a month," he says. Dalai, meanwhile, is hoping that he gets to see his family once before being placed under quarantine. "I told my wife that I will call her only after reaching Puri and finding out about the next leg of the journey home to Brahmapur. I can't wait to hug my wife and kids," he says. And despite having been separated from them for so long, he is sure that he will return to Surat one day. "How can I forget this city? It has given me money and happiness. If it takes a few more months for things to get normal, I will work in the fields and return when the factories start."

II crore jobs

Saturday, Union MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari said, "We have sent recommendations for a relief package to Finance Minister and Prime Minister and I hope it will be announced soon." A week ago, Gadkari had alluded to a Rs 1-lakh-crore revolving fund for MSMEs. As they are waiting for this package, MSMEs are bleeding. An illustrative case is that of Jatinder Singh, 45, who owns three units in east Delhi's Jhilmil Industrial sprawl that make special-purpose machine parts used in assembly lines. Just before lockdown, Singh, who has 24 workers in these three units, wrapped up an order for Rs 25 lakh for a customer in Uttar Pradesh. The order can't be dispatched, his units are shut, there is no word on when and how the lockdown will ease. "I have to pay a fixed electricity cost of Rs 2 lakh, which will keep adding every month. I have eight workers who were paid in rations. Their March payment was made. I don't know if workers will return after going through all this," he said. Singh's plight reflects that of

millions of others who make up India's most economically vulnerable enterprise grouping. Their problems are multi-fold: from the break-down of the credit cycle, lack of availability of working capital to paying salaries and fixed costs even as units are shuttered, and an inability to even encash their assets to maintain solvency. Add to this the question mark over labour availability as and when lockdown opens given that most of them employed migrants who are either stranded in camps or scrambling to return home. Many MSME promoters *The Sunday Express* spoke to are anguished and despairing. They say the third lockdown gives no clear indications on whether MSMEs will be allowed to operate at full strength or not — and this uncertainty could wreck the sector. "The most important thing is that now nobody will think of starting a new business, especially in the manufacturing sector. An SME or MSME does not have surplus money to take care on a rainy day," said Chandrakant Salunkhe, founder and president of SME Chamber of Commerce. Since a large number of state capitals have been classified in red zones, this is also a huge stumbling block for MSME owners to find points for sales across sectors. "Partial work resumption is not going to help as one will not be able to invoice the activities, even if I keep the economic activity alive, because production can happen but selling points are not open. Many state capitals are not green zones and most things happen from the capitals," said K E Raghunathan, Chennai-based SME owner and former National President, All India Manufacturers' Organisation. Even those operating in essential item segment seem to be impacted. Despite being considered essential, pharmaceutical MSMEs have reported facing serious issues with arranging accommodation for their workforce. MSMEs in India are a heterogeneous group in terms of size and structure of units, products and services offered, their scales of production, and use of technology, with a considerable number falling in the unorganised sector. Even as the government is working on a new definition of MSMEs, the present classification for manufacturing sector designates a micro enterprise as one with investment in plant and machinery not exceeding Rs 25 lakh, small enterprises with investment between Rs 25 lakh-Rs 5 crore and medium enterprises with investment between Rs 5-10 crore. For service sector classification, micro enterprises have investment in plant and machinery not exceeding Rs 10 lakh, between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 2 crore for small enterprises and Rs 2-5 crore for medium enterprises. A benchmark survey of 112 representative MSMEs conducted by SP Jain Institute of Management Research (SPJIMR) ahead of the first lockdown revealed an across-the-board underestimation of the pandemic. All SMEs are trying desperately to cut costs, and the first casualty would be a cut in labour, said Tulsijayakumar, professor of Economics and Chairperson, Family Managed Business, at SPJIMR, Mumbai. "A number of the respondents expressed their desire to downsize after lockdown ends. They have also been exploring legal dimensions of salary cuts, freezes, use of force majeure in their contracts. The biggest problem is that of cash flows, as also the government directive to pay wages," Jayakumar told *The Indian Express*. The largest item constituting financial burden, the respondents said in the survey, was labour costs (34 per cent), followed by raw material (18.8 per cent) and interest on loans (18.8 per cent). In the MSME services sector, hotels and restaurant segment is

All red

districts in the red zone, North 49, Kolkata, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and Purba Midnapore." According to the Union Health Ministry, a district is designated as a red zone if there are substantial numbers of active cases. The other parameters are the rate at which confirmed cases are doubling, and surveillance feedback. The state is also following the same criteria, Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha has said many times. According to the state government, there are eight green zone districts and 11 orange zone districts, while the Centre has pegged the number of Green Zone districts at eight. The state has categorised Birbhum as a green zone, but *The Sunday Express* is in possession of reports that show three residents of the district's Mayureshwar area tested positive on Thursday. According to the reports from a laboratory in Murshidabad Medical College Hospital, two women aged 58 years and 50 years, and a 57-year-old man have contracted the disease. Meanwhile, the annexure shared initially with the media was retracted by the state government after the number of infections did not tally with the figures mentioned in the press conference on April 30. According to the government, the number of positive cases at

the time was 931, with Kolkata (489) and Howrah (176) accounting for more than half. However, in the press briefing, authorities reported there were 572 active cases, and a cumulative 816 positive cases, including 139 recovered patients, 33 deaths directly attributable because of the virus, and 72 comorbid cases. "The information given with the letter was not true. That was some clerical mistake," said a senior administration official, explaining why the list was taken down from the official state government WhatsApp group on May 1. The retraction was accompanied with the message: "The enclosure to the letter written by the state Health Secretary to the Union Health Secretary mentions some number of cases that need correction. Correct enclosure follows. The incorrect may be ignored". However the correction was not uploaded, and the state government did not issue its daily bulletin on Friday. Following these discrepancies in data, on Saturday morning Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar once again lashed out at the Trinamool Congress government over anomalies in the data. "Give up 'COVID-19 data cover up operation' @Mamataofficial [Mamata Banerjee] and share it transparently. Health bulletin on 30/4, number of active Covid cases 572. No health bulletin on May

1! Information to central government number of cases 931," he tweeted. Speaking to TV news channel Aaj Tak, Kejriwal played down the threat posed by coronavirus and said "it is time to restart the economy". "If a district has 50 villages, for example, and 40 cases emerge in one, why should the entire district be declared a red zone? The village should be declared a containment zone and sealed off and others should not have to pay the price," he said. All 11 districts in Delhi are currently red zones under the Centre's definition, which covers any district with more than 10 cases. Referring to this, Kejriwal said, "Mera iss baat pe Centre se thoda matbhed hai (I have a difference of opinion with the Centre over this). I was hoping only containment zones will fall under (red zone) category. I am talking to the Centre about it. I believe we should open areas other than containment zones for economic activity... Make the conditions for declaring an area a containment zone more stringent, implement the odd-even system in markets if it helps, but it is time to restart the economy," he said. Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa held a meeting on easing of the lockdown Saturday, after which Revenue Minister R Ashoka said they would write to the Centre for clarity as the state's own list of districts in red zones

differed from the Centre's. The Union Health Ministry, which revises its zoning every Monday, has designated three districts in Karnataka as red zones, including Bengaluru Rural, which has no active coronavirus cases, apart from Bengaluru Urban and Mysuru. Incidentally, Karnataka's own zoning, as of April 28, listed eight red zones. Ashoka said, "There are no cases in Bengaluru Rural. So we will write to the Centre not to include it among red zones." Education Minister S Suresh Kumar said, "Even though Bengaluru Urban is a red zone, all areas other than containment zones in the city will not have restrictions. The red zone is actually only areas which are containment zones." The Centre has allowed states to restructure red and orange zones, according to distribution of cases. Its guidelines say that if a district is a red zone but, barring its municipal areas, it has not seen any case in 21 days, the state may declare areas outside the municipal limits as orange. Similarly, orange zone districts could classify such areas as green. Many districts, in fact, have been declared red or orange because their municipalities, with a higher density of population, have high cases. "This kind of classification will open more areas in an affected district for economic activity," a Home Ministry official said.

II more trains

officials said two trains were planned for Saturday from Kerala — one from Tirur and the other from Ernakulam — to Danapur in Bihar. Two more are to leave from Kota in Rajasthan to Barauni and Gaya in Bihar Sunday. Another train is scheduled from Bengaluru to Danapur. Officials estimate Kota might see a train leaving with stranded students and migrants every day for the next few days. On Saturday, Railways issued a Standard Operating Procedure for Shramik Special trains, which said states must fill at least 90 per cent of the 1,200

capacity on each train for it to run. The document also said trains will run for destinations beyond 500 km. One meal, at originating stations, will be given by states while on board, Railways will give complimentary meal and water, as per guidelines finalised. Throughout Saturday, the Railways was busy resolving coordination issues with states. After the departure of the train from Sabarnati to Agra, a large number of people sought that the train be extended to Kanpur, something the state governments of UP and Gujarat hadn't informed the Railways. Sources said, "at the last moment", West Bengal withdrew

clearance it had given to evacuate pilgrims from Ajmer to Kolkata, forcing the Railways to change its plans. The train finally took off late Saturday after written permission from the state. Similarly, while Rajasthan government had put out advertisements seeking trains from the Centre for stranded migrants, sources said the state has so far sought trains from the Railways. While Chhattisgarh sought 28 trains on Saturday, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren tweeted with details of three more trains. Sources said Jharkhand was the only state that transferred ticket money in advance. Sources said that in the case of one state, the administration

brought migrants to the station and started making a list of passengers — a practice that flew in the face of social distancing norms. At stations in Jharkhand and Maharashtra, supporters of local parties gathered with banners. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday directed that no such gathering of political supporters would be allowed. The secrecy around the trains, though, continued. Railways said that this was to avoid crowding at stations. "There is no hurry. Maintaining social distancing and health protocol, trains will run every day for the entire period of the lockdown," a top railway official said.

among the worst impacted, with an estimated 7.3 million jobs on the line. The challenges for this sector range from supplies to labour, real estate to credit, overheads and utilities, delivery commissions and rental contracts. More so, when urban centres that fuelled this sector's growth are the worst hit and continue under lockdown. Even in essential services like medicine, MSMEs are no better off. "Transporting our workers while maintaining social distancing is adding to our costs and this is very difficult, especially with a reduced level of production," said Ashok Madan, ED, Indian Drug Manufacturers' Association (IDMA), adding that this is a burden for the 7,000 MSME pharma units across the country. While RBI data shows credit outstanding to the sector has contracted, many economists said credit availability may further tighten with banks turning more risk averse now. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday held a video conference with bankers to discuss credit flows including provision of working capital post lockdown to MSMEs. Milind Kamble, founder of Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said banks have been reluctant in extending credit to MSMEs. "A six-month startup, which got an order for supplying masks worth Rs 90 lakh was not extended credit by the bank. Lack of ade-

quate working capital is the biggest challenge," he said. D K Joshi, chief economist at Crisil said while the government in its first stimulus focused on distribution of food grain and cash transfer in bank accounts of poor and needy, the next has to address this sector. "We feel the focus of the next set of stimulus should be around small and medium enterprises so as to support their survival as they are the biggest job creators," said Joshi. He pegged the stimulus to the tune of Rs 3.5 lakh crore required, including what has already been announced by the Finance Minister. (With reporting by Prabha Raghavan, Sunny Verma, Sandeep Singh)

**TOMORROW: NO CREDIT, DEPLETING WORKING CAPITAL, NO DEMAND — THE TRIPLE WHAMMY**

**Aarogya app**  
contact tracing mechanism is mostly reliant on positive cases having downloaded the application before they tested positive. A component of the application's effectiveness is its wide-spread usage — hotspot predictions and contact tracing require a critical mass of the population to be on the app. Data accessed by *The Sunday Express* from the app shows 24 districts with major clusters, which account for at least half the cases across the country, have 15 million downloads or 18 per cent of total user base. With a population of roughly 88 million in

these districts, as per Census 2011 data, this user base is 17 per cent of the population in these zones. The highest user base is in Delhi (4 million users), Pune (1.5 million), Mumbai suburban and Mumbai (2 million), and Thane (1.4 million). The data showed that 62 districts in the red zone had 25 million downloads. The data further shows three million people who have downloaded the app on their phones show some Covid symptoms. Follow-up phone calls with these users show that roughly one per cent of them (30,000) need a closer examination from a doctor. Roughly 3,000 users need some form of medical care or testing. Saying there is still "a long way to go" considering that only one in six Covid positive cases have the app on their phones, app developer Lalitesh Katragadda said the next goal is to reach another 200 million users, as the developers believe they may have saturated the "elite" mobile user base. IT Ministry officials and industry developers of the Aarogya Setu app admitted that the Home Ministry's fresh direction will be hobbled by the fact that not all employees have smartphones. "The instructions will of course only apply to those with smartphones," said a top IT Ministry official who helped with the app's development. "Clarifications from MHA could be there, but as for the IT Ministry, we are working out a technolo-

ical solution for non-smartphone users. The spirit behind the order should be looked at. As long as they have a smartphone, they should have the app. The law should be read like that." When asked if employers would be held responsible if employees without smartphones can't download the application, a Home Ministry spokesperson said, "The directives are clear." The IT Ministry official said, "Ultimately, it's employers who should be concerned about safety and health of their companies. In fact, this was a request from companies, industry associations, and empowered groups — that the app could be used as a mechanism to open up the economy."

**Daily stress up**  
quietly upped its testing game. It began with gradual expansion of the testing base in phases, to eventually include all those with flu-like symptoms, regardless of travel or contact history, in hotspots. In addition, manpower was diverted from other programmes, and equipped laboratories in government sector, and later in private sector too, were roped in to conduct tests. Currently, there are 419 laboratories, including about 100 in private sector, which conduct tests — there were just about 20-30 in March. There is a reason for the push. According to NITI Aayog's presentation shared with states last week, if the lockdown was lifted

as scheduled on May 3, the number of cases was estimated to touch 65,000 by May 15, and 2.7 crore by August 15. With about 4 per cent of samples testing positive as per the current trends, just to identify that many cases would require testing on a massive scale. "These numbers are being revised every day. Now, new numbers are being calculated based on the new restrictions and relaxations. But we need to be prepared to test more," said a source. With 2,411 cases being reported in the last 24 hours — the highest single-day jump so far — the total number of cases touched 37,776 on Saturday. The death toll has gone up to 1,233, including 66 deaths in the last 24 hours, while 10,017 have recovered so far. "We had a clear goal: 1 lakh tests daily. We expanded the testing base with timely revisions in testing strategy to include all patients of influenza like illness (ILI)," said C K Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, who chairs the empowered group on availability of hospital beds, testing facilities etc. "We roped in not just ICMR labs but also anybody with ability to do molecular tests. We procured kits in large numbers, both from domestic and foreign companies, and have told states to procure whatever they can," he said. Fourteen institutions, including AIIMS-New Delhi, PGIMER-Chandigarh, CMC-Vellore, JIPMER-Puducherry, SCPGIMS-Lucknow, have been picked as "mentors", to guide the medical colleges/labs/hospitals in carrying out tests. Another 15 institutions are working as depots for supplying testing kits/material to these labs. Till date, 45 real-time PCR kits, including those manufactured by 20 domestic companies, have been validated by ICMR centres. Foreign missions were roped in for procurement of testing kits. A comparison of the current daily testing figures around the world shows that it is about 1,50,000 in the US, 1,20,000 in the UK (which just started mass testing), 50,000 in Germany and 15,000 in South Korea. While critics have pointed out testing figures don't seem impressive given India's population, the government has maintained that a little less than half the districts remain free of COVID-19. Mishra said there are enough kits for the RT-PCR tests, with the RNA extraction kits, which had limited stock earlier, starting to roll in, and several domestic manufacturers of the viral transport medium kits also diversifying into the RNA extraction kits. The first machine from Roche, which can test 1,300-1,400 samples daily is also up and running. The government is now targeting 1 lakh-1.2 lakh tests per day. Meanwhile, private labs are yet to become major players — of the 74,600 tests done on May 1, only about 11,000 samples were tested in private laboratories.

**Concrete mixer**  
construction has stopped due to the lockdown. "We allow trucks and other large vehicles to pass because they carry essential supplies. Initially let this vehicle through as well, but then it struck me that construction activities have stopped due to the lockdown," Traffic Subedar Amit Yadav said. Yadav said the vehicle was stopped, and police started to question the four men seated in the driver's cabin. The policemen heard voices coming from inside the giant vehicle, and asked the crew to open its belly. A video that went viral showed worker after worker emerging from inside the mixer, clutching bags and small bundles of their belongings to their chests. "It appeared inhuman to travel in this way in 40-degree plus heat, but the workers did not seem to mind," Yadav said.

Police said the workers and the vehicle's crew initially claimed they had started their journey near Indore, but later admitted some had started from Nashik, and picked up the others who were walking along the highway. It was not clear how much the labourers had paid the vehicle's crew for the ride to Lucknow. Yadav said the workers and the crew had claimed that the ride was free, but he had his doubts. However, the police, who have seen hundreds of migrants crossing the Maharashtra and Gujarat borders into Madhya Pradesh on foot over the last several weeks, were not harsh. DSP (Traffic) Umakant Chaudhary said the vehicle would be taken to the Sanver police station, while the workers were taken to a garden resort. A spokesman at the police station said the driver of the vehicle, Sahib Zakir Hussain, 35, has been booked for violating Section 144.

**Jadhav**  
during an online interaction on Saturday. *The Indian Express* has learnt National Security Advisor Ajit Doval had, in one of his interactions with then Pakistan NSA, Nasser Khan Janjua, "gently nudged" Pakistan to release Jadhav. Salve, who was speaking from London, said, "We were hoping that through the back-channel, we may be able to persuade Pakistan to let him go. If they want to say on humanitarian grounds or whatever, we want him back. We said, let him go. Because it's become a big ego problem in Pakistan. So, we were hoping they would let him go, they haven't." The online session was organised by Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad, an all-India lawyers' association associated with the RSS. According to Pakistan, Jadhav was arrested on March 3, 2016. India was informed on March 25, 2016, when the Pakistan Foreign Secretary raised the matter with the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad. India immediately sought consular access. Jadhav was sentenced to death on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017. In May 2017, India moved the ICJ against the "farical trial" by Pakistan's military court. In July last year, the ICJ, in its verdict, directed Pakistan to allow consular access and effectively review the death sentence. The court observed that Pakistan had breached international law by not granting consular access. But, with Pakistan not moving forward — it has allowed an Indian diplomat to meet Jadhav under watch — Salve said on Saturday, "I think we have reached a point where we may have to decide whether to go to ICJ for further consequential directions. Because Pakistan has not moved ahead." He said ICJ had rejected Pakistan's stand that their laws provide for review and reconsideration, and said there must be "effective review and reconsideration." "We have come this far, they cannot now put him (Jadhav) to death; our consular officers have to be given access," he said. He said Jadhav's alleged confession must be disregarded — without which there will be no evidence. "Pakistan, till date, has refused to share the FIR, the chargesheet or the military court judgment," he said. "We (India) have been writing to Pakistan asking to show evidence against Jadhav to better assist him. They refuse to part with it. We will not give it to you (they say)," he said. "I think they (Pakistan) have a serious problem on their hands. Other than the confession, they have nothing." "Their domestic courts may find that sufficient. They know if it comes to a fair consideration and a fair trial, they will have no choice but to release him. Someday, we shall have him back," said Salve.

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# 3 THE OUTBREAK WEST BENGAL

## CORONA WATCH



An artist's impression in Kolkata. Partha Paul

### RG KAR HOSPITAL Junior doctor jumps from sixth floor, dies: Cops

Kolkata: A 25-year-old junior doctor of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata allegedly committed suicide by jumping off the emergency building on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Poulami Saha, a second-year post-graduate trainee at the sick neonatal care unit of the hospital, and was allegedly suffering from depression, police said.

According to police, the junior doctor jumped from the sixth floor around 11 am, before her shift started at the fever clinic of the hospital. She was rushed to the emergency ward of the hospital where doctors declared her dead. The state-run RG Kar hospital has been designated for coronavirus patients.

"It seems that she committed suicide by jumping from the hospital building. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination. No suicide note has been recovered. We have learnt that she was suffering from depression since the last few days. We have started a probe into the matter," said a senior Kolkata Police officer.

"I was at the hospital to pay a visit to a relative. Suddenly I heard a loud noise and saw a body lying in a pool of blood," said an eyewitness. ENS

### Govt to pvt hospitals: Resume services

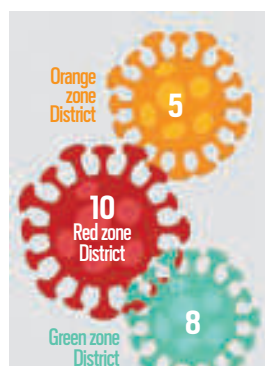
Kolkata: The state Health Department Friday issued directives to private hospitals and healthcare facilities to resume normal services in a planned manner. Ensuring the safety, protection and comfort of the medical staff engaged in such facilities needs highest priority, it said.

"There are reports that patients in need of regular critical care related to blood transfusion, dialysis, chemotherapy, owl, obstetric care, institutional deliveries, immunisation are facing hardship due to private hospitals and healthcare facilities either remaining non-functional or turning away patients out of fear of contracting COVID-19.

"Some hospitals are insisting on COVID-free certificates before allowing the patients in. This situation needs to be redressed," the department said in a notification. PTI

## LOCKDOWN LOWDOWN

Two more weeks of lockdown, but more things will be up and running, depending on where you live



### CONTAINMENT ZONES

Areas within red and orange zones where there is a significant risk of spread of infection; its boundaries to be determined by district administration

#### RED ZONE

A district is designated red depending on the total number of active cases, doubling rate of confirmed cases, extent of testing and surveillance feedback, based on directions from Centre.

#### ORANGE ZONE

Districts which are neither red or green

#### GREEN ZONE

Districts with zero confirmed cases till date; or no confirmed cases in the last 21 days

### ZONING ROW: THE BENGAL GOVT LIST

After the Central government classified all the districts of the country in three coloured zones — Red, Orange and Green — as per the coronavirus cases, there are now two separate lists as the West Bengal government had last week also put out a list of districts under Red, Orange and Green zones.

As per the West Bengal government, there are

**4** Red Zone districts — Kolkata, North 24 Parganas, Howrah, East Medinipur

**11** Orange Zone districts — South 24 Parganas, Hooghly, West Medinipur, Nadia, East Burdwan, Kalimpong, West Burdwan, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Murshidabad and Malda

**6** Green Zone districts — Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Birbhum, Bankura, Purulia and Jhargram.



**RED ZONE:** Kolkata, Howrah, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, East Medinipur, West Medinipur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Malda

**ORANGE ZONE:** Hooghly, West Burdwan, East Burdwan, Nadia, Murshidabad

**GREEN ZONE:** North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Bankura, Birbhum, Cooch Behar, Purulia, Alipurduar, Jhargram

Based on MHA classification

### WHAT IS ALLOWED

#### CONTAINMENT ZONES

- Local authorities should ensure 100 per cent coverage of Aarogya Setu among residents
- No movement of people allowed in and out of these zones, except for medical emergencies, and for maintaining supply of essential goods and services

#### RED (excluding containment zones)

- Out-patient departments (OPDs) and medical clinics, with social distancing norms and other safety precautions
- Movement of individuals for non-essential activities allowed, only between 7 am and 7 pm
- Movement of vehicles, only for permitted activities, with a maximum of 2 persons plus driver in four-wheelers, and with no pillion-rider in case of two-wheelers
- Private offices can operate with up to 33 per cent strength, with the remaining persons working from home
- E-commerce permitted only for essential goods

- Urban areas
- All standalone shops, neighbourhood shops and shops in residential complexes can remain open, without any distinction of essential and non-essential.
- In malls, markets and market complexes, only shops selling essential goods allowed
- Industrial establishments like SEZs, export-oriented units (EOUs), industrial estates and industrial townships with access control allowed.
- Manufacturing units of essential goods, including drugs, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, their raw material and intermediates allowed. Manufacturing of IT hardware; jute industry with staggered shifts and social distancing; manufacturing units of packaging material allowed
- Construction work limited to in-situ construction (where workers are

- available on site and no workers are required to be brought in from outside)
- Rural areas
- Liquor shops can stay open
- All industrial and construction activities, including MNREGA work, food-processing units and brick-kilns
- All shops, except those in shopping malls, can open
- All agriculture activities allowed — sowing, harvesting, procurement and marketing operations in the agricultural supply chain
- Animal husbandry activities, including inland and marine fisheries.

- WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED
- Cyclerickshaws and autorickshaws; taxis and cab aggregators; intra-district and inter-district buses; and, barber shops, spas and saloons.

- ORANGE ZONE
- IN ADDITION TO ACTIVITIES ALLOWED IN RED ZONES
- E-commerce allowed
- Liquor shops can stay open
- Taxis and cab aggregators will be permitted, with one driver and one passenger only.
- Inter-district movement of individuals and vehicles, but only for permitted activities.
- Four-wheelers can carry a maximum of two passengers, besides the driver; pillion-riding is allowed on two-wheelers. (None of the above is allowed in containment zones within orange zones)

- WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED
- Inter-district and intra-district plying of buses

- GREEN ZONE
- All activities allowed, except the limited number of activities prohibited throughout the country, irrespective of the zone.
- Liquor shops can stay open
- Buses can operate with up to 50 per cent seating capacity; bus depots can operate with up to 50 per cent capacity.

—As per MHA guidelines

### NOT ALLOWED ACROSS ALL ZONES

- Domestic and international air travel; travel by rail and Metro; inter-state bus transport; and inter-state movement of individuals by road — except when permitted by MHA.
- Reopening of schools,

- colleges, and other educational and training/coaching institutions
- Hotels and restaurants, cinema halls, malls, gymnasiums, sports complexes

- Places of worship closed to the public.
- Persons above 65 years and those below 10 years, those with co-morbidities or pregnant to stay home, except for meeting essential needs or emergencies

TO KNOW WHICH ZONE YOUR DISTRICT IS IN, VISIT: [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

# Toll reaches 48 with 15 more deaths; 127 new infections

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 2

FIFTEEN MORE patients died of novel coronavirus and 127 new positive cases were reported in the last 48 hours, according to a bulletin by the state government.

The bulletin did not reveal the total number of active cases in the state. On Thursday, the state government said that the state had recorded a total of 572 active positive cases, 33 deaths and 139 recoveries. Active cases are minus recoveries and deaths. In the last 48 hours, 60 patients have been discharged from hospitals after being discharged.

Back of the envelope calculation put the total number of active cases till Saturday to 624 while the toll rose to 48.

The state BJP and the Central government have regularly accused the Mamata Banerjee-led government of underreporting coronavirus cases. Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha had on Thursday revealed that 105 persons infected with the coronavirus had died in the state, but maintained that only 33 of these deaths could directly be attributed to COVID-19.

According to Saturday's bulletin, as many as 2,410 samples were tested in the last 24 hours taking the total to 20,976.

Meanwhile, eight coronavirus positive indoor patients were diagnosed at NRS Medical College and Hospital on Saturday. As many as 42 COVID-19 patients recovered and were discharged from MR Bangur Hospital. West Bengal Police arrested 130 people and warned another 283 for allegedly posting fake posts in April, tweeted from West Bengal Police.



Locals guard the entry point of a locality at Barasat in North 24 Parganas, Saturday. Partha Paul

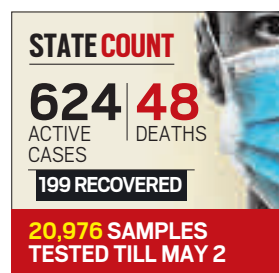
## Accused of irregularities in PDS, ration dealer's house ransacked in Murshidabad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 2

A MOB ransacked the house of a ration dealer at Salar in Murshidabad district on Saturday and set several items on fire outside the house, alleging irregularities in the public distribution system (PDS) in the area.

The villagers alleged that they were not getting proper foodgrains and essential items that they were entitled to receive from the local ration shops. They also alleged that they were getting poor quality foodgrains, and also lesser than the specified quantity. Following the incident a large contingent of police reached the spot to bring the situation under control.

Speaking on the incident, State Food Minister Jyotipriya Mullick said, "It is an unfortunate incident. We have already instructed the



ernment has promised to give 5 kg of rice per month for free to each card holder during the prevailing COVID-19 lockdown.

"We have already show-caused all the ration dealers where there have been protests. We are also looking into all possible aspects at the local level under the supervision of the Block Development Officer. We will take strong action if anyone is found guilty," Mullick said.

Slamming Opposition leaders in Murshidabad district, Mullick said, "Both the incidents in Murshidabad were instigated by local BJP and Congress leaders. I request all parties not to engage in any political blame game in the current situation. We all are in a crisis and poor people are the worst sufferers now," he added.

According to him, in both the places, people were demanding 5kg rice per week, which has not been promised by the state government.

The Indian EXPRESS JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

## The Indian EXPRESS E-ADDA

WHERE NEWSMAKERS DROP IN FOR A CANDID CHAT.



Express E-Adda hosts

### Dr Randeep Guleria

Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences; Head, Clinical Research Group, national task force for Covid-19

in conversation with

**Ravish Tiwari**  
Political Editor  
The Indian Express

**Kaunain Sheriff M**  
Principal Correspondent  
The Indian Express

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## 2,400 students return from Kota, to be isolated

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 2

AFTER BEING stranded at Kota in Rajasthan for more than a month due to the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, about 2,400 students from West Bengal returned to the state on buses Friday.

The buses entered the state via Bihar and Jharkhand. While some buses went to Siliguri, others went to Asansol. After a medical check-up there, students were sent towards their homes.

IAS officer P B Salim, who co-ordinated the process, said, "A total of 2,400 students came in 103 buses. Two convoys of buses



A bus carrying students arrives in Kolkata. Partha Paul

reached Asansol and one convoy reached Siliguri."

He said social distancing was maintained in the buses. "These students will be taken to their

home districts in govt buses. There they will be screened and quarantined," said Salim.

The buses reached Siliguri and Asansol within 1 pm and the first

bus with students from Kolkata reached the city at 5 pm.

Muhammed Sahil (20), a resident of Mominpur in Kolkata who was in Kota to prepare for competitive exams, said, "We were helpless. The institutions we are enrolled in sent us food. But, we tweeted almost every day, tagging the West Bengal government and requesting evacuation. We are grateful to the governments of Rajasthan and West Bengal." Yuvaraj Chowdhury, a resident of Kharagpur, said, "I was staying alone in a rented accommodation. And arranging food was a daily struggle. Some organisations helped us a lot. I am happy the government made arrangements to bring us home."

**Office of the Executive Engineer**  
**Provincial Division, P.W.D. Bageshwar**  
 Phone/Fax.No:- 05963-220006 Email ID:-pdpwdbgr@gmail.com

**Short Term Tender Notice (e-Tendering)**

The Executive Engineer, Provincial Division, Public Works Department Bageshwar invites Online Short Term (Single Bid System) e-Tender for the following works on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand. All information regarding tender will be available on <https://www.uctenders.gov.in> from 06.05.2020

Sl. No	Name of work	Cost of tender form (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs. in Lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Renewal work by S.D.B.C. in State Guest House approach road in Km 1.2 & 3(200m) under Annual Repair for Financial year 2020-21 (Length-2.200Km)	2000.00+ 18% GST	0.55	60 Days	06 Months	Category "D" & Above in Road works
2	Renewal work by P.C. in Garur-Kapoti-Falyati Motor road in Km 1 to 4 under Annual Repair for Financial year 2020-21 (Length-4.00Km)	3000.00+ 18% GST	0.95	60 Days	06 Months	Category "D" & Above in Road works
3	Renewal work by P.C. in Dangoli-Sailani-Darimkhet-Harbar-Pandrapali-Balighat-Dofar-Dharamghar-Kotmalya-Pakhu-Thal-Saatsiling motor road (SH.60) in Km 36(330m), 37, 38(670m) under Annual Repair for Financial year 2020-21 (Length-2.00Km)	2000.00+ 18% GST	0.50	60 Days	06 Months	Category "D" & Above in Road works
4	Fabrication, Erection, Bearing fixing, Riveting and painting work in 30m span bridge over the Lahur River near Jakh Khari under District Sector in District Bageshwar.	2000.00+ 18% G.S.T	0.60	60 Days	09 Months	Category "D" & Above in Road works
5	Renewal work by P.C. in Bageshwar-Girechhina-Someshwar Motor road in Km 3.4, & 7 under Annual Repair for Financial year 2020-21 (Length-3.00Km)	2500.00+ 18% GST	0.70	60 Days	06 Months	Category "D" & Above in Road works
6	Renewal work by S.D.B.C. in Km 3.4,5 & 12 of Karnprayag-Simali-Gwaldam-Chaukuri-Thal-Munsiyari-Jaujivee Motor road (Bajinath-Bageshwar Section) under SPAR (Length-4.00Km)	4000.00+ 18% GST	1.20	60 Days	09 Months	Category "C" & Above in Road works

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE**  
 Office of the Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, 2nd Cross, Jaladarshini Layout, MSR Nagar, Mathikere, Bangalore - 560 054.

No. : BBMP/EE/MLM/E-Proc/01/2020-21 Date : 02-05-2020

**TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
 (Two Cover System) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP invites tender on item rate basis from the registered Contractors of BBMP or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or any State Government Organisations for the works given below.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Amount put to tender (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Rs. in Lakhs)
1.	Providing Drinking Water Facility in Malleshwaram Assembly Constituency - MLM Constituency.	105.00	Rs. 1.57 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
2.	Development Works at Sadashivanagara Police Station in Ward No. 35.	55.00	Rs. 1.10 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
3.	Construction of Dialysis Center at Sy. No. 109 Mathikere in Ward No. 36. (On BEL Road).	55.00	Rs. 1.10 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
4.	Construction of Anganawadi Center in Maruthi Extension in Ward No. 65.	70.00	Rs. 1.40 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
5.	Additional Development Works in Bangalore Seva Kendra, BBMP Building, Near Azad Ground in Ward No. 65 - MLM Sub Division.	65.00	Rs. 1.30 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
6.	Improvements to Footpath & Drain Near Brigade Gate Way (Railway Parallel Road) in Ward No. 66, Subramanyanagar.	70.00	Rs. 1.40 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
7.	Improvements to Footpath & Drain Near Brigade Gate Way (Railway Parallel Road) in Ward No. 66, Subramanyanagar.	80.00	Rs. 1.60 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
8.	Repairs to Footpath & Construction of Compound Wall at 18th Cross Govt. School in Malleshwaram in Ward No. 35.	95.00	Rs. 1.90 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
9.	Construction of Restoration Works & Other Development Works in Ward Mathikere Sub Division - MLM Sub Division.	100.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
10.	Construction of Restoration BWSSB Cut Portion Works & Other Development Works in Ward Mathikere Sub Division - MTK Sub Division.	50.00	Rs. 1.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal)
11.	Improvements to Roads and Drains in Mathikere Sub Division - MTK Sub Division.	200.00	Rs. 3.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
12.	Construction of Multi Utility Complex in 16th Cross (Near Indian Gas) Malleshwaram in Ward No. 65, (Phase-1).	100.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
13.	Construction of Health Center at 3rd Cross Road in Mudduramma Badavane in Subramanya Nagar (Bhattu Murthy House)	50.00	Rs. 1.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal)
14.	Construction of Anganawadi Center, School Building, Coaching Center, Youth Center in Ward No. 45.	200.00	Rs. 3.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
15.	Dismantling Old Ward Office and Construction of School Building at Subramanyanagar in Ward No. 66.	200.00	Rs. 3.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
16.	Construction of BBMP Samudaya Bhavana and Other Development Works at Subramanyanagar in Ward No. 66.	400.00	Rs. 6.00 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
17.	Additional Works for Dialysis Center, Doctors Quarters and Other allied Works in Ward No. 64.	100.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
18.	Construction of Damaged Compound Wall and Improvements to Fencing along Railway Parallel Road Malleshwaram Sub Division - MLM Sub Division	100.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
19.	Improvements to Roads and Drains at B Block and Surrounding Area in Subramanyanagar, Ward No. 66.	70.00	Rs. 1.40 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
20.	Development and Improvements to BBMP School Buildings at Kodandaramapura and Improvements to Drains Surrounding Area in Kadumalleshwaram, Ward No. 65.	75.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
21.	Construction of Toilet Blocks to BBMP High School Kodandaramapura Kadu Malleshwara, Ward No. 65.	90.00	Rs. 1.80 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
22.	Development and Improvements to BBMP School Buildings at Kodandaramapura and Improvements to Drains Surrounding Area in Kadumalleshwaram, Ward No. 65.	75.00	Rs. 1.50 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)
23.	Improvements to Roads and Drains at B Block and Surrounding Area in Subramanyanagar, Ward No. 66.	70.00	Rs. 1.40 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh through e-portal and Balance Amount in the form of B.G.)

(1) Pre Bid Meeting will be held on 03-06-2020 at 4.30 pm at Office of the Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, 2nd Cross, Jaladarshini Layout, MSR Nagar, Mathikere, Bangalore - 560 054. (2) Last Date & Time for receipt of Tenders : 05-06-2020 upto 4.00 pm. (3) Opening of Technical Bid on 08-06-2020 at 4.00 pm. (4) Opening of Financial Bid Document : Will be intimated later to the successful Technically Qualifying bidders. The Details regarding participation for this tender can be obtained by logging on to : <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division.  
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### Pollution control board preparing report on biomedical waste disposal

Kolkata: The West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) is preparing a report on compliance of guidelines for proper disposal of biomedical waste generated at hospitals treating patients suffering from COVID-19, an official said on Saturday.

The report will be submitted to the National Green Tribunal next month. The report will record how the health and urban development departments, and state agencies are following the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for scientific and hygienic disposal of such medical waste.

"We are not regulators and don't have that mandate. We, as watchdog, will record how the guidelines are being complied with and prepare a dossier which will be submitted to the NGT in June," the official told PTI.

Using double layered bags, mandatory labelling and colour coded bins for the management of waste generated during diagnosis and treatment of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients are part of the guidelines. PTI

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER**

23 ASSAM RIFLES, 03<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2020

WARRANT OFFICER KAMJANG KUKI  
 RIFLEMAN BISWA SONOWAL  
 RIFLEMAN MANJEET SINGH  
 RIFLEMAN SAJEEVAN S  
 RIFLEMAN JAMES DEB BARMA  
 RIFLEMAN JERUSALEM THARA  
 RIFLEMAN TANIK LAL PATEL  
 RIFLEMAN LUNMINLAL HAOKIP

The Tagra Teyees family proudly remembers above Martyrs who in the true traditions of the Assam Rifles made supreme sacrifice while bravely combating terrorists in Changsha, Mon District (Nagaland) on 03 May 2015. May the Almighty grant eternal peace to their soul. Their gallant action will continue to inspire us all.

**DEEPLY REMEMBERED BY COMMANDANT & ALL RANKS**  
 23 ASSAM RIFLES 'TAGRA TEYEES'

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**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**

Iron International Limited (A Government of India Undertaking), Ministry of Railways has been awarded with the works of "Civil, Building and Track Works" of Dedicated Freight Corridor Project (Vattarana - Sachin Section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor Phase-2), Package-CTP-12, worth Rs. 2,500 Cr under JICA finance. In this connection, IRCON desires the association of experienced contractors and vendors in the following fields of Railway construction activities:

1. Earthwork & blanketing for formation works
2. Minor Bridges and RUBS
3. Major Bridges & ROBS
4. Building Construction and Station development
5. Track Construction using NTC and other Track Machines
6. Supply of reinforcement steel, structural steel etc.
7. Supply of track ballast
8. Operation of Departmental Crusher etc.

Project Director/IRCON/Mumbai, for and on behalf of, IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED, invites Expression of Interest from interested parties. In this connection, an Associates Web Meet will be held through Video Conferencing on 17-05-2020. The agencies intend to participate may enroll themselves latest by 14:00 Hrs on 16.05.2020 through email to [ircon.3018@ircon.com](mailto:ircon.3018@ircon.com) and confirming on the mobile phone number +91 70430 74902 (Praveen Sharma, AGM/Tender & Proc). Link for online Web Meet and time shall be provided to the registered parties by 17:00 Hrs on 16-05-2020. For & on behalf of Iron International Limited (Rampogal) Project Director

**GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF: POWER & ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT**  
**MIZORAM : AIZAWL**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

No. T.17013/1/01/18-EC(P)/Com/ 4  
 Dated Aizawl, the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020

The Engineer-in-Chief, Power & Electricity Department on behalf of the Governor of Mizoram invites tender for Sale of Renewable Power (Non-Solar) on Short Term Basis from trader having valid Inter State Trading License issued by CERC, and having past experience of consultancy/ trading service on behalf of State Power Utilities to enable PEDM for Sale of its surplus Renewable power (Non-Solar) for the period from 22.07.2020 to 31.12.2020.

1.	Last Date and time of submission of tender Document	21.05.2020 12:00 Noon
2.	Date and Time of opening of tender document	21.05.2020, 1:00 PM
3.	Earnest money Deposit	Rs. 5,00,000/-
4.	Cost of Specification	Rs. 1,000/-

The Tender document is available at the website <https://www.power.mizoram.gov.in> and it can also be had from the office of the undersigned during office hours from the date of issue of tender.

Sd/-  
**LALDUHZUALA SAILO**  
 Engineer-in-Chief, P&ED  
 MIPR NO - 09



PICKING UP PIECES  
 Women work at an agricultural field off EM Bypass in Kolkata. Partha Paul

### TIT FOR TAT LETTER

# Don't try to usurp power during pandemic crisis: CM hits out at Governor

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 2**

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Saturday wrote a 13-page letter to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, accusing him of trying to "usurp powers" amid the coronavirus crisis, and asked him to desist from using official communications and logos on social media.

On April 23 and 24, Dhankhar had written two letters, including a 14-page one, to the CM.

"When I read your two letters and many earlier ones as well, I felt more sad than angry. My second emotion was one of amusement," Banerjee wrote, listing Dhankhar's "choicest epithets".

Referring to the letters, she wrote, "Such words and such communications of such content, tenor and tone from a Governor to an elected CM are unprecedented in the annals of Indian constitutional and political history."

"I beseech you to desist from intensifying your efforts to usurp powers, especially during the humongous crisis which the nation and WB is grappling with... remind you to also desist from... using the official communications/logos between Nabanna (Secretariat) and Raj Bhavan for continuous tweets in the social media, hold my officers responsible for things about which they do not have liberty to open their

mouths in the social media, and hold press conferences unilaterally attacking my Government, Ministers and Officers."

She further wrote that she had a list of the Governor's communications, in which he had used words about the CM and her minister and officers, which "can only be described as vituperative, intemperate, intimidating, abusive and insulting."

She also quoted a few expressions used by the Governor, such as "like loose cannons in public domain; driven by external script; theatrics and politicking, law unto oneself... bravado mode of collision". However, she added that "preaching without practice and sermonising while violating, does not behave you or your office."

However, within half an hour the Governor responded on Twitter saying, "Response to my letter dated April 24 has been sent by Mamata Banerjee today and is in public domain. Hence, this comment prior to response at the outset in this critical time I urge her to focus on grim situation and work in togetherness towards alleviating untold public miseries."

He added that while he found no substance in her version, both in fact and law, he appreciated her stance "for full co-operation with State Government".

"Persistently I had been beseeching her to work in togetherness as we are faced virtually with roof falling situation. Hope she acts as such," he tweeted. He added that a reply would be sent as her letter had content which he could not "subscribe as it eclipses essence of constitution."

In Saturday's letter, Banerjee cited three supreme court judgments and said, "You may (politely) bring your grievance to my attention (not write to Ministers, Departments, Officers or go to Press or Public) and, if it is still not resolved to your satisfaction, there is unfortunately no other power in you, so long as my Government commands the confidence of the legislature... howsoever much you may disagree or dislike decisions of the state government, in cases of legislation or even otherwise, you are obliged to sign and accede to the state government's wishes, subject, where applicable, to your single right of referral back."

At the end, Banerjee told Dhankhar that he had limited powers to bring about any change and urged him to act "politely".

### 260 handloom workers sent to Cooch Behar from Nadia on special buses

# 'Is Trinamool govt hiding Covid data?' BJP asks people

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 2**

THE BJP in West Bengal has launched an online opinion poll on "Role Of West Bengal Government On Fight Against Covid-19" to reach out to masses amid the prevailing lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak. Earlier this week, the opinion poll has been launched on the official website of Medinipur MP and Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh where the saffron party has shot four questions asking people whether the Mamata Banerjee government is suppressing facts regarding coronavirus situation in the state.

The opinion poll questions, featuring both in Bengali and English, asked people if they believed that the Bengal government was hiding information pertaining to the coronavirus pandemic; who were responsible behind people not getting free rice and pulses sent by the Centre; if the CM's appeasement policies led to violation of lockdown rules in some particular area. It also alleged that West Bengal had the lowest rank in terms of coronavirus tests conducted per million population, and asked if people thought that this would compromise the battle against the pandemic.

The opinion poll came after BJP leaders accused the state government of hiding facts on

the actual number of deaths and positive cases in the state and slammed the administration for the alleged PDS scam.

"We have been saying it for a very long time that the state government is inept in handling the COVID-19 situation and has failed to control it. It has been hiding facts on COVID-19 positive cases, and cremating bodies in middle of the night. In addition, people here are not getting ration, which has been provided by the Centre. There is huge corruption in PDS in several villages where people are not getting rice, dal and other essentials. Through this poll, people will be able to give their opinion about the state government in handling the present crisis," said Ghosh.

Sources said this is the BJP's attempt to read the pulse of people at a time when they are not physically present on the ground.

TMC leaders, however, were not available for comments.

Meanwhile, Ghosh on Thursday filed a PIL before the Calcutta High Court, questioning the legality of a death audit committee set up by the state government to look into the causes of patients' death, before declaring whether they are caused by COVID-19. The PIL also questioned the state health department's decision to ban patients from keeping mobile phones with them in CCUs and ICUs of hospitals.

**"IMPORTANT"**

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**On the pandemic and what makes the crisis worse for India**

I want to set out five thoughts that should inform everything that we think about. This is a very unusual cycle that the world and India face. It is very severe, sudden and new territory. So the first point is that there is so much uncertainty on everything — how the pandemic is going to evolve, how people are going to respond, what policies are going to happen. We are really shooting in the dark and that is something we must all keep in mind. A corollary of that is, in this business, today, for governments around the world, there are no good choices. The choices span from bad to the very, very bad or disastrous, so we should be a little bit careful about how we assess all these things... Because of this uncertainty, every country is responding very differently, both in terms of health and economic response. But I think there is a growing consensus that regardless of how advanced countries are weighing this trade-off between lives and livelihoods, especially as it informs how the exit from the lockdown should happen, those trade-offs are different for developing countries like India. The hardship is greater, the ability to protect them is weaker, in countries like India, the health capacity is not that good, the ability to even enforce severe lockdown policies is more difficult.

Therefore, the trade-off for countries like India, it is only fair and appropriate that it should err more on the side of prioritising the present and preserving livelihoods and so on.

So as we talk about the exit discussion we should keep that in mind. However, something we can categorically say is that any exit from the lockdown, however we do it, different states are going to do it differently. I think that backing it up with comprehensive and ramped up testing is absolutely essential. That is what is going to determine how much we can, where we can ease and how we can sustain it.

Lastly, what is different about India in this crisis is that although of course it is going to be severe around the world, but even before this crisis hit India, our economy was weakening quite substantially and our financial system was naturally quite fragile. This crisis in a sense comes on top of an already weakening economy which is what I think makes the Indian situation even a little bit more difficult and challenging than other countries. The last point I would make is that with this crisis, the states and the Centre have a lot of coordination to do, the states are on the front-line of the response on the health side, social safety side, managing the migrants, which we should talk about. Therefore I think Centre-state coordination and cooperation is of utmost priority in India and we should not forget this while talking about it.

**On where the economy is headed**

If we look at what the IMF is forecasting for the advanced countries, it is on an average a slowdown of eight-and-a-half percent... it roughly means that the IMF is saying that for all the advanced economies, one month of GDP will be lost. Firstly, India was already weakening, secondly, the kind of lockdown policies in India have not been any less severe than in the advanced countries, and finally, India has a fiscal response of less than one percent of the GDP whereas, on average, the advanced countries have an estimate of eight-and-a-half percent of the GDP so far. If you put all this together, even allowing for the fact that India is a more dynamic economy, I cannot see how India's growth rate cannot decline by orders of magnitude that the IMF is projecting for the advanced countries. The IMF's forecast for India is absolutely mystifying and bizarre. I would say these are very imprudent basis on which to plan the response. Almost kind of lulls us into false complacency. I think we should plan for negative growth rates in this financial year.

**On how to deal with the crisis and the need to spend**

First, about the magnitude. Let's look at it first from the need point of view, rather than the affordability point of view. What we have said is that supposing you look at the health care response that is required, then the social safety net and then maybe the stimulus. So these are the three things that we may need to do. And the number that Devesh Kapur (of Johns Hopkins University) and I came up with is a very conservative number, which was that the extra spending would need to be something like five percent of the GDP. So we need to find about five percent of GDP or Rs 10 lakh crore. Affordability, because as it is that the economy is weakening, revenues are going to come down, so it will translate into substantially higher deficits, and so let's confront the affordability question. You will notice, what is very interesting is that all our former central bankers have come down on the side of saying that look if you do too much down the lane, our ratings go down, our debt gets out of control and so the economy is in trouble.

So my response to that is, in this case, we should be driven by need and we can afford it. And let me take some of the broader concerns. One is that our credit rating will go down and that is going to hurt us going forward. Now remember that this is a situation that all countries are confronting. Secondly, remember that the whole deficit financing and all these issues arise if people think that suddenly we have become irresponsible. In this case categorically around the world we know this as an exogenous shock nobody was responsible for. Finally we have to be clear of how we are perceived after the crisis and will depend upon how we behave after the crisis. If government policy is reasonably responsible going forward, which I think it will be, then affordability is not an issue. So I think we can

Arvind Subramanian was the guest at the first e-Adda hosted by *The Indian Express*

# 'Covid response: we should be driven by need, not affordability'

In the first e-Adda hosted by *The Indian Express*, Arvind Subramanian, India's former Chief Economic Advisor and now visiting lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School, joined us from Boston. He spoke on the coronavirus pandemic, how the crisis may aggravate pre-existing vulnerabilities and why India should plan for negative growth this year

Subramanian was in conversation with *The Indian Express* National Editor Harish Damodaran (left) and Executive Editor (National Affairs) P Vaidyanathan Iyer

The IMF's forecast for India is absolutely mystifying and bizarre. I would say these are very imprudent basis on which to plan the response. Almost kind of lulls us into false complacency

afford this. Then the second question is — finance. Where should it come from? I think it should come from a variety of sources. Devesh and I set out five things. One is from abroad — NRIs, multilateral institutions. Then we also said cuts in expenditure, which many states have already done. Then of course the two things are printing money and issuing more bonds to the public. So we need to do everything so as to not burden any one sector.

Now let us take your question of deficit financing head on. Any responsible government cannot just say we are going to print money, etc. But I think here this can be done responsibly. How? The concern is two-fold. It is unprecedented. So therefore does it mean that we are going to break all convention suddenly and become irresponsible. The second concern is of course the difference with advanced countries, which is that they have been trying for 10 years to raise inflation and they haven't been able to. We are not a very high inflation country but we are also not zero or one percent in the last three years. So it is a

concern. We have to be careful about that. And finally, I think there is also a huge overhang of liquidity already in the market which people are worried about. Those are the concerns we should take seriously. My response to that would be, one, it seems like it is going to be a deflationary shock that for sometime at least prices are going to be lower rather than higher. So I think that we should keep it in mind. Secondly, we can finance some part of it responsibly but making clear that it will be one off and will not be repeated again and again.

Finally, the states question... one of the quickest ways of getting money to the states would be to increase their deficit financing via the RBI. So bottomline is, yes, we have to be careful and responsible, but the bigger thing is we save and do all these things for a rainy day. When a rainy day comes, you have to spend. This is not a rainy day. This is a deluge. This is *pralay* in terms of economic things.

**On high food stocks, forex reserves and low oil prices being a source of comfort**

There are two dimensions to this. In a sense, if you think about even a deficit financing or monetary financing, the fact of food, the fact that fuel prices have collapsed, and the fact that our currency doesn't collapse because of reserves, means that the inflationary concern going forward is much less. Because these are the three main sources of inflation. Food prices going up, fuel prices going up, currency going down. So in a sense that is a kind of insurance and buffer that we have, in order to be a little bit more ambitious and bold in our response to our crisis. The second way, in which this is very important, is that our food stocks are turning out to be the most effective, quickest, efficient, equitable social safety net that we have. Because remember in this situation, the two social safety nets are food and cash. Cash is proving to be more difficult to get to people's hands because of bank accounts, the last mile problem, but because we have both the stocks and this public distribution system, we have been able to roll it out very much. So these are the ways that the three Fs come in handy. But I will say one thing that our stocks have been a boon this year but just like you save for a rainy day, I think these stocks have to come down and they have to be distributed as quickly as possible. I think we can't come out of this crisis with even more stocks of food because of a combination of not having used it enough and the bumper harvest khari adding to it. We don't have the capacity. Everything coming together says push the food out, for the moment give people without ration cards, so that it is actually killing many birds with one stone.

**On the need to get credit pumping into the system**

Remember we started talking about the twin balance sheet challenge, then in

Small firms, medium-sized firms, large firms, everybody needs credit because the more you get credit, the more you will ensure that they survive through the crisis and not come away with more permanent damage

December we spoke about the Four Balance Sheet challenge, now it is almost as if it will be easier to count the balance sheets that are not challenged than the balance sheets that are challenged because the problem is proliferating because of this shock. Helping the financial sector and the corporate sector is absolutely critical. The first issue... This has to not only come from the government but also from the RBI and to be fair to the RBI, they have taken a number of good steps. The problem is the following. Essentially what the RBI has done is to lower rates and make liquidity much more abundantly available. That is necessary and possible. But what we need is actual credit flowing to the entire corporate sector. Small firms, medium-sized firms, large firms, everybody needs credit business because the more you get credit, the more you will ensure that they survive through the crisis and not come away with more permanent damage.

So the dilemma is that more liquidity is not credit, how do you get the credit pumping into the system. To be fair, there are two problems to this. One there was a complete risk aversion even before this began, because of all the problems with the financial system. There is fear of lending because you may be later on investigated. I think some kind of re-assurance should be given so that decisions taken now will have a measure of protection. Otherwise, bankers are not going to take them. Secondly, the risk from those decisions should not be with the banks, they should either be with the government in the form of a completely separate fund, or maybe the RBI. That is a tricky call. For example, if the RBI buys corporate bonds directly, some purists will be against it. But again, how we do it is less important than making sure that the credit actually flows to all parts of the corporate sector.

Full text on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

**VOICE BANK**

**SWATI PIRAMAL**  
VICE CHAIRPERSON, PIRAMAL ENTERPRISES

**You said that testing more people would help. However, that's a limitation of machines and kits. Germany and Korea made them and could ramp up production, but we have limited testing. So we have to think of an alternative strategy.**

Our capacity is limited but we need to figure out how to allocate the testing. Should we focus on the super spreaders or randomise? There has to be a simultaneous effort by the government. But, we must work on expanding testing. It's as high priority as the health response and stimulus response because that is going to make our exit from the lockdown carefully, correctly, effectively, and sustainably.

**FREDDY SVANE**  
AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK TO INDIA

**What sort of an opportunity has this crisis given India?**

We have this architecture, the Jan Dhan, Aadhaar Mobile (yojana), it's not perfect, but if we can ensure its presence in every household, we can create the basis for a universal basic income. But one pushback is that we do not have the fiscal resources to afford it. We could use wealth taxes, elimination of middle-class subsidies and dedicate those resources towards universal basic income. Why can't the rich and those who have secure jobs contribute a little to help the poor. Secondly, the situation of urban migrants. Can we move away from place-based social benefit (PDS) to person-based social security?

**ANAND PIRAMAL**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PIRAMAL GROUP

**The government moves swiftly when it comes to politics, but on economic policies, the twin balance sheet problem and the five percent stimulus, they are slower. What is their mindset?**

I am not privy to government motives, but if you look at the global financial crisis, the government had a very large fiscal response in 2008-09, deficits and inflation got out of hand, and we had a major crisis in 2013. These circumstances are different. We can do much more with stimulus, especially with insurance, the private sector, and SMEs, but my hypothesis is that the global financial crisis could be the clue to why the government is acting the way it is.

**RAMA BIJAPURKAR**  
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

**At this stage we are struggling with the lives vs livelihood question. Will we get to a point of no return?**

We can't let the pandemic get out of control, that's a point of no return. You want to avoid extreme situations. You don't want people to starve. And you want people to go back to some aspect of security, so you want to deal with migrants appropriately. On the production side, you don't want to kill production permanently. Rather than markers of no return, we need to act to ensure that we don't reach there on the health, or economic and humanitarian side.

**RAKESH BIYANI**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FUTURE RETAIL

**What are the options available to the government for raising capital? Is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) a good mechanism? In retail, policies are merged with all kinds of ideas that don't make sense.**

Until a year or two ago, the government was relaxing FDI substantially. There was some reversal on this when it came to the retail sector, for e-retailing and so on. About, encouraging FDI as opposed to hot money, we should be open. We don't want excessive concentration in any industry, we need competition in all our markets. FDI provides the competition that keeps a check on monopoly or actions by incumbents. Large incumbents in any markets are detrimental to growth, productivity and efficiency.

# 6 THE OUTBREAK NATION

WHAT STATES ARE DOING AS LOCKDOWN-3 KICKS IN

## As some unlock, others choose to stay shut

### Chandigarh to lift curfew

The Union Territory of Chandigarh has decided to open up the city, barring containment zones, beginning May 4, when curfew will be lifted. But restrictions will continue till May 17. All sector markets can function from 7 am to 7 pm following the odd-even formula. Liquor shops in the markets will also be allowed to open. Residents will be allowed to use their vehicles without passes, with a driver and two passengers, from 7 am to 7 pm. No pillion rider will be allowed on two-wheelers. The odd-even formula will apply for vehicles.

### Mumbai, Pune to remain shut

Shops, offices, and industries will continue to remain shut in Mumbai and Pune. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has decided to restrict activities permitted in four of the 14 "red" districts of Maharashtra. These include Mumbai, Mumbai (suburbs), Thane and Pune. Additionally, a total lockdown will prevail in Malegaon. On Friday, the Centre had announced that all standalone shops, neighbouring (colony) shops and shops in residential complexes will be permitted to remain open in areas outside containment zones, red zone or hotspot districts on certain conditions. But Maharashtra decided not to extend this exemption to shops located in the area of all municipal corporations within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, the Pune Municipal Corporation, the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, and the Malegaon Municipal Corporation, which collectively account for 91 percent of cases in the state. While liquor shops will be permitted to open in other regions, they won't be permitted in these areas, officials said. Several categories of industrial units and their supply chains, also have been disallowed. But developers in Mumbai and Pune will be allowed to continue construction of ongoing projects. Also, only those projects where workers are available on site will be permitted.

### Assam opens borders

The Assam government will open borders with other Northeastern states, excluding



ON TRACK BACK HOME: On an Ahmedabad-Agra special train on Saturday. Javed Raja

Sikkim, from Sunday to allow stranded residents to return. The returnees will be screened, and quarantined if required. Authorities urged those who do not have an immediate reason to return to the state to stay put where they are. The persons who do not return - or find it difficult to return due to logistical problems - would be given a financial assistance of Rs 2000 per month. On Saturday, the government also allowed reopening of liquor outlets across the state with immediate effect.

### Kerala for Sunday shutdown

In the third stage, Kerala will go for a complete shutdown on Sundays in all three zones. Shops, offices or vehicles will not be allowed on Sunday. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said public transport would not be allowed even though the Centre has allowed it with 50 percent passenger capacity. Liquor shops will not be allowed in any zone. In green and orange zones, small textile shops will be allowed to open with less than 5 staff members.

### Tamil Nadu to ease restrictions

The government eased restrictions in non-containment areas and allowed resumption of construction activity, road works, opening of Special Economic Zones, among others, from May 4. Relaxed norms announced for Chennai city, except containment zones, include permission for construction work if workers live on the premises, all construction and road-laying work in public sector, operation of SEZs, export-oriented units and export processing zones with 25% staff, IT and IT-enabled services with 10% staff if companies provide transportation for workers.

Also allowed are shops selling essentials between 6 am to 5 pm, e-commerce firms delivering essentials and operations of restaurants between 6 am to 9 pm only for take-aways. In other parts of the state, industries outside urban limits are allowed to function with 50% staff strength. However, textile factories in industrial estates in urban areas are not allowed to start operations.

(WITH ENDS IN PARENTS)

## MAHARASHTRA PANEL

# 'Centre should borrow from RBI, help states'

SANDEEP ASHAR

MUMBAI, MAY 2

AS STATES scramble to raise funds to fight the coronavirus pandemic, a high-level panel appointed by the Maharashtra government has recommended that the Centre should borrow from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and "pass it on" to states to help them avoid a debt trap, *The Indian Express* has learnt. The panel has contended that forcing states to borrow from capital markets could prove counter-productive, given that large-scale borrowing would be needed to cushion the economic impact of the lockdown that has already crossed 40 days.

Instead, the panel suggested that "RBI itself should raise loans... The Centre can then directly borrow from the bank and pass it on to states. This will allow borrowing at much lower interest rates". The committee's report, likely to be submitted to the state government Monday, also favours a graded lockdown exit strategy.

The 11-member expert committee, comprising senior serving and retired bureaucrats, was set up by the Maharashtra government early last month to recommend measures to revive the state's economy, from agriculture

and manufacturing to real estate and excise.

Heading into the third phase of the lockdown, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has announced additional exemptions. But the Maharashtra panel has suggested an alternative approach "A negative list of activities that would remain prohibited should be prepared," the panel suggests. A senior panel member said the suggestion was valid for other states, as well.

On an exit strategy, the committee is of the opinion that economic activity should resume as soon as possible in non-infected areas, with "clear demarcation of containment zones within hotspots".

Just as the cities are the worst-hit, the panel has pointed out that the disruption in the demand-supply chain had also impacted the state's agricultural economy, which continues to be the source of livelihood for nearly 50 percent of the population.

To avoid further losses, it has asked the government to ensure that all mandis run by Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) remain functional. Wary that farm loan credit from institutional lenders for the upcoming kharif season will dip sharply in the post COVID-19 scenario, the

panel has asked the government to source additional funds from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to meet the shortfall.

Mass closures and losses to the government's own treasury have also triggered a delay in the implementation of the farm loan waiver scheme. As per estimates, loan arrears of nearly 12 lakh eligible farmers are yet to be written-off. In this context, the panel has recommended that the state approach the RBI for rescheduling the arrears. "The state should bear the interest for such rescheduling," the report states.

With Maharashtra estimating a loss in tax revenue to the tune of nearly Rs 50,000 crore during the lockdown, the panel has pushed for early resumption of real estate and infrastructure work, and wine shops, in urban belts. After GST, excise is the second biggest revenue grosser in the state.

Serving officials on the committee, with Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Manoj Saunik as convener, include Additional Chief Secretary (Planning) Debashish Chakravarty, Principal Secretary (Industries) B Venugopal Reddy, Principal Secretary (Finance Reforms) Rajagopal Devara, and Secretary (Agriculture) Eknath Dawle.

## Toll 521: Health cover for all

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MAY 2

WITH 36 deaths, Maharashtra recorded the highest single-day jump in deaths on Saturday. The total death toll in the state reached 521 and 790 new cases were recorded across the state. Mumbai alone recorded 547 new cases and 28 deaths — its highest deaths in a single day — taking the total death count in the city to 322.

Even as the toll and the tally increased, the number of patients discharged across the state touched 2,000 on Saturday.

Fifty-six patients, including a three-year-old girl, were discharged from a hospital in Mira Bhayandar township in Thane district, an official said.

The total patient count in Maharashtra now stands at 12,296, with Mumbai reporting a total of 8,359 cases.

As cases continue to surge, state health minister Rajesh Tope said all families in Maharashtra will be covered under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya Yojana's (MJJAY) medical insurance cover up to Rs 1.5 lakh. "We have 1,000 hospitals empanelled. Any patient visiting these

hospitals for surgeries listed under the insurance scheme will be treated cashless," Tope said.

The MJJAY is a state-run insurance scheme that covers 2.25 crore families and provides a medical cover of Rs 1.5 lakh.

"We had already covered about 85 per cent of Maharashtra's population under the scheme. Now remaining 15 per cent is also covered," Tope said.

With several private hospitals operating on skeletal basis, the health minister said district collectors have been instructed to take action against hospitals that refuse to treat patients.



## CORONA WATCH



A youth sells masks made of gamusa (Assamese towel) in Guwahati. Dasarath Deka

## MAHARASHTRA Palghar case accused tests positive

Mumbai: One of the men accused in the Palghar lynching case tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday night. The district administration said the lynching suspect is asymptomatic, but was hospitalised and kept in isolation on Saturday morning. He had been kept among a group of 20 suspects in a lock-up in Wada. "All suspects being taken into custody are tested. His report was inconclusive earlier, and on retesting, he tested positive," said Palghar Collector Kailash Shinde. ENS

## RAJASTHAN

### Can test 10K samples a day: minister

Jaipur: Rajasthan has reached testing capacity of 10,000 samples per day, Health Minister Raghu Sharma said Saturday, even as state's effort to ramp up testing continues to face delays. "The department had set a target of 10,000 tests a day which we have now achieved," Sharma said. However, owing to delay in arrival of RNA machines and a dearth of automatic RNA kits, doctors are forced to do extraction manually. ENS

## TAMIL NADU

### Migrant workers stage protests

Chennai: Migrant workers on Saturday staged a flash protest in different parts of Chennai, demanding authorities send them to their home states like Jharkhand immediately, an official said. The workers, mostly involved in construction activities, suddenly converged at locations including Velachery, Pozhichallur and Guindy Industrial Estate, he said. Groups of people from states including Odisha and West Bengal, meanwhile, thronged the Collectorate at Vellore District, urging authorities to facilitate their return. PTI

## PM chairs meet to discuss agriculture sector reforms

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

AS THE government prepares to rejuvenate the economy by easing the lockdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held a meeting to take stock of reforms in the agriculture sector and discussed various measures, including development of 'e-NAM into a platform of platforms' to enable e-commerce and creation of commodity-specific boards or councils to boost agricultural exports. The high-level meeting, also attended by Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, deliberated on the "pros and cons" of bio-technological developments in agriculture.

The meeting comes at a time when reforms in the agriculture sector remain stuck. In July last year, the government constituted a nine-member high-powered committee of Chief Ministers with then Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis being appointed as convener. The committee was supposed to submit its report within two months but it managed to do so only much later — the recommendations are yet to be made public.

"PM Narendra Modi held a meeting today to deliberate on the issues and reforms required in the agriculture sector. Special empha-

sis was given on reforms in agriculture marketing, management of marketable surplus, access of farmers to institutional credit and freeing the agriculture sector of various restrictions with appropriate backing of statute," the PMO said in a statement.

"The focus was on making strategic interventions in the existing marketing eco-system and bringing appropriate reforms in the context of rapid agricultural development," said statement.

In a series of meetings this week, the Prime Minister has already reviewed several sectors such as power, education, civil aviation, defence, aerospace, coal and mining; and discussed strategies for boosting investment.

The PMO stated, "Concessional credit flow to strengthen agriculture infrastructure, special Kisan Credit Card saturation drive for PM-Kisan beneficiaries and facilitating inter and intra-state trade of agriculture produce to ensure fairest returns to farmers were some of the important areas covered. Developing e-NAM into a platform of platforms to enable e-commerce was one of the important topics.

Discussion also emanated on the possibilities of uniform statutory framework to facilitate new ways for farming which will infuse capital and technology in agrarian economy."

## In MP, recoveries beat new cases; CM says on right track

MILIND GHATWAI & DIPANKAR GHOSE  
BHOPAL, NEW DELHI, MAY 2

MADHYA PRADESH Saturday reported 73 COVID-19 cases but the number of people who recovered was more than 100, prompting the state government to claim that its fight against the pandemic was on the right track.

Also, while Indore continues to be a hotspot with over half the cases in the state, data released by the administration has shown a downward trend in percentage of cases testing positive over the past week.

While Bhopal reported six cases Saturday, Ujjain did not report a single case and Indore reported 30. So far, MP has reported 2,788 cases and 624 people have recovered. Chief Medical and Health Officer, Indore, Praveen Jadia said 115 patients were discharged from facilities in the city.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the state will follow the Centre's guidelines on easing restrictions, but in special cases, collectors will meet crisis management groups and take decisions. "For the first time, the number of active cases has come down. We are on the right track to defeat Corona," he said.

Amulya Nidhi of NGO Jan Swasthya Abhiyan said the testing rate in MP was much lower than other states with high case

counts. While the state has tested 602 samples per million, the figures for Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and Rajasthan were 1,325, 1,096, 2,485 and 1,575, respectively, he said.

Meanwhile, Indore administration is spotting signs of recovery. On April 25, Indore's case count was 1,176 after 5,594 samples were tested — 21.02 per cent tested positive. This was a dip from the 25.12 per cent on April 17. Till May 1, 1,545 out of 8,433 samples have tested positive — 18.32 per cent.

The mortality rate, as compared to April 25, has gone down from 4.84 per cent to 4.78 per cent, and recovery rate has gone up from 9.09 per cent to 14.82 per cent. If data from the last seven days is considered, 122 people recovered and the percentage of positive cases is 12.99 per cent.

Indore Commissioner Akash Tripathi said these were signs of recovery. "These results are coming from three places — flu OPDs where people with symptoms are getting themselves tested, yellow hospitals where suspected patients have been accommodated and from the survey by health teams on periphery of containment zones," Tripathi said. "We are now giving samples to private labs to test. The rate has been fixed at Rs 2500 per test." A senior official advised caution. "The data is encouraging, but any laxity at this point can lead to a spike."

## Final draft of new education policy silent on student role in decision-making bodies

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE FINAL draft of the New Education Policy (NEP), circulated among ministries last month for feedback, is silent on student participation in decision-making bodies, committees, and institutional processes of a university or college.

The final policy draft limits itself to giving students "plenty of opportunities to be involved in sports, culture/arts clubs, activity clubs, community service projects". It also speaks of creating a "systematised arrangement" to support "students from rural backgrounds, including increasing hostel facilities as needed".

However, the provision on setting up "systems and mechanisms" to enable student partici-

pation in the institutional processes of higher education institutions is missing from the document shared by the HRD Ministry with ministries for their feedback, before the approval of the Union Cabinet.

This provision in the draft NEP was submitted by a group of experts, led by former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, to the HRD Ministry in June last year, and uploaded online for public feedback. It was also there in the revised draft prepared by the ministry in December 2019 based on the two lakh suggestions received by the government.

The change is significant as it comes in the backdrop of a fierce face-off between JNU and its students over the university administration refusing to involve elected student representatives in

its decision to increase the hostel fee. The student agitation at JNU against the hostel fee hike lasted over three months, forcing the Union government to step in and even resulting in the transfer of then Higher Education Secretary R Subrahmanyam.

The NEP was discussed at a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister Friday "to deliberate on the issues and reforms required in education sector". A tweet by the Prime Minister on Friday night said that the meeting focused on "working towards educational reforms that would make India a global knowledge superpower".

The final policy document has also dropped the proposal to set up a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA) as suggested by the Kasturirangan Committee. The RSA was to be headed by the

Prime Minister and was intended to replace the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).

Following objections from the state governments to this proposal, the HRD Ministry first decided to make the HRD Minister the head of this Commission. However, now the proposal has been scrapped altogether. The policy circulated among ministries instead speaks of strengthening CABE and giving it a greater mandate.

The final draft of the NEP has also dropped the recommendation on setting up a "permanent Indian Education Service (IES) cadre comprising a specialist cadre of the bureaucracy". This proposal was there in the December draft of the NEP prepared by the HRD Ministry in December last year.

## Month after testing positive for corona, Lokpal member dies

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

SERVING LOKPAL member Justice Ajay Kumar Tripathi, who had tested positive for COVID-19 a month ago, died on Saturday in the national capital after he suffered a cardiac arrest, AIIMS officials confirmed.

Justice Tripathi, 62, was one of three judicial members of Lokpal, the anti-corruption ombudsman, and was admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre last month after testing positive for coronavirus.

"It is a personal loss to me. He was a very positive man and always guided me. I have lost a friend," Lokpal chairperson, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose,

told *The Indian Express*. "My prayers are with the family. It is a loss to our whole Lokpal family." Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad tweeted, "Deeply condole the sad demise of Justice A K Tripathi. He was a distinguished judge of Patna High Court and Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh HC. We had practiced together in Patna HC. Sincere condolences to his wife Alka Tripathi & entire family."

Justice Tripathi was one of the first COVID-19 patients to be admitted at AIIMS Trauma Centre on April 4. He was on ventilator support for more than a fortnight, sources said. The hospital had put him off ventilator a few weeks ago after he showed some recovery, but he was again put on ventilator support, it is learnt.

"He was still positive for COVID-19 and at around 9 pm suffered a cardiac arrest," Dr Amil Lathwal, medical superintendent of AIIMS Trauma Centre, said.

Justice Tripathi was appointed a judicial member of Lokpal in March 2019. He also served as the Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh High Court from July 7, 2018 till March 26, 2019. Justice Tripathi, who had earlier served as the Additional Advocate General for Bihar, was elected Additional Judge of Patna High Court in October 2006.

The Supreme Court collegium elevated Justice Tripathi as the permanent judge in November 2011. Justice Tripathi, before his elevation to higher judiciary, served as the standing counsel to the Union of India and the I-T Department, among others.

## Explain rationale behind latest lockdown extension: Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A DAY after the Central government extended the nationwide lockdown by two more weeks the Congress on Saturday asked the government to explain the rationale behind the second extension, while the CPM hit out at the government over reports that migrant workers were being forced to pay for tickets to travel on special trains and buses deployed to send them home.

Addressing a press conference, Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala asked when the lockdown will finally end.

He said the Government extended the lockdown by merely issuing an order.

"What is the aim of lockdown 3.0? What is the purpose, the objective and the strategy? Will there be a lockdown 4.0 and lockdown 5.0? When will it end completely? What is the goalpost to deal with coronavirus and the economic pandemic by May 17? What are the achievable goals by May 17 to deal with the infection and to address livelihood challenges and the huge economic crisis?" he asked.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said it was "intriguing that the Prime Minister stayed away from the announcement on national TV and left it to a notification issued by the Home Secretary."

The CPI(M) said in a statement, "Migrant workers boarding trains from various places are being forced to pay for their own tickets and also for food. Those who have been asked to board buses are being forced to pay exorbitant rates for travel. It is sheer cruelty to expect workers who have absolutely no earnings for the last two months because of the lockdown to pay for their own train tickets. Nor can the state governments bear this financial expenditure..."

# 7 SUNDAY STORY



## A BREAD & BUTTER STORY

Baking powder to cornflakes, vegetables to chips, bread to eggs, milk to oil. ANAND MOHAN J follows the delivery chains running night and day across Mayur Vihar, East Delhi, which saw the Capital's first coronavirus case, to see how items in your kitchen are reaching you through a lockdown

### Shampoo sales down, running out of Maggi

AT THE 'Home Needs Supermarket' in Delhi's Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Arunima, a government school teacher, has been browsing through shelves. She is looking for cocoa powder to bake a cake. "We have run out of cocoa powder," Rashid, the cashier at the store, informs her, and offers the 34-year-old a bottle of Nutella instead.

In the past two weeks, since a second lockdown was enforced across the country to check the spread of COVID-19, says owner Sumit Kumar, many of his customers have had to leave disappointed. "There has been a surge in demand for baking products such as vanilla essence, cocoa powder and baking soda, as well as ingredients for making pizzas. But we ran out of most of these items two weeks ago," says Kumar.

Established five years ago, the store's stock of items such as Maggi and chips — also in high demand in lockdown — have dried up too. "We don't have tissues and toilet paper either. We will run out of sanitary pads in a week," says Kumar. "With salons shut though, the sale of razors and trimmers has picked up."

On March 2, a 45-year-old businessman in Mayur Vihar, East Delhi, became the Capital's first COVID-19 case. Since then, there have been 201 cases in East Delhi, and 10 of its areas are containment zones — upsetting the area's food supply network.

Despite essential industries being allowed to continue operations under the lockdown, grocery stores such as Kumar's, and several vendors linked to the supply chain, have been facing disruptions in procurement, distribution, and even demand.

While the sale of non-perishable items such as wheat, rice, dal and sugar have increased by 20%, says Kumar, "they have become expensive for us to procure".

"Earlier, distributors gave us a 2% discount on grocery items, and we would pass on the benefits to customers. Now, there has been a 3% hike in prices. Fortunately, the sale of these products has increased, and people are buying in bulk. Price of cornflakes has increased by Rs 15, but there has been a surge in its demand too," says Kumar.

However, he says, the demand for otherwise fast-selling daily use products such as shampoo, face cream and deodorant has dropped, and the store has decided not to purchase new stock. "We get more customers now than earlier, but they are only buying a few items. Hand-sanitisers are our fastest-selling product," he says. Nearly 300 customers visit his store now, compared to 100-200 earlier.

### Costs up, sales down for farmers, vegetable vendors

THREE KILOMETRES away, in Mayur Vihar's Yamuna Khadar area, a hailstorm has delayed farmer Chenpal Mandal's trip to Ghazipur wholesale market. Around 1 am, when it ends, the 42-year-old finds that his coriander and spinach crops spread over five bighas have been destroyed. Left with just a quintal of cucumber now, he packs the produce in a sack, loads it on to a tempo that he

has hired for Rs 500, and arrives at Ghazipur market around 2 am.

Most of the vegetables and fruits supplied to grocers in Mayur Vihar are sourced from the 300 shops in Ghazipur market. While the vegetables come here from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Haryana, a considerable portion is also supplied by farms in Delhi — the Yamuna floodplains, Burari and Najafgarh areas.

The Ghazipur mandi opens for business at 10 pm, with trucks, tempos and wooden carts lining up outside through the day. When Mandal arrives at the market, about 50-60 farmers and buyers — without masks or gloves — are already queued up outside each shop, run by a 'commission agent'. The agents have extra staff to ensure social distancing but their pleas go unheard. Mandal joins the queue, a gamcha around his face.

To avoid overcrowding, the market has replicated the Azadpur mandi system, where three people tested positive for COVID-19 and a 57-year-old trader died. Only 1,000 vehicles are allowed inside at a time, between 6 am and 10 pm, with each batch getting four hours. The wholesalers are allowed between 10 pm and 6 am.

It takes Mandal two hours to sell his cucumber. "Usually, we get Rs 1,000 for a quintal of cucumber. Today, I was paid only Rs 300. Now my family will have to wait another month, when we will harvest spinach," says Mandal. Along with 15 members of his family, the 42-year-old cultivates onion, spinach, coriander, cucumber, brinjal, radish and cabbage on 16 bighas of land in the Yamuna floodplains.

"Nuksaan ka koi hisab nahin (There is no limit to our losses)," he adds, about the lockdown. "I buy seeds from a seeds market in Laxmi Nagar (in East Delhi). This time, the cabbage seeds alone cost me Rs 60,000. To maintain a bigha, I have to spend Rs 10,000 over three months, and Rs 600 for operating a tractor. I already owe Rs 65,000 to commission agents and farmers," he says.

In shop after shop at the market, large piles of vegetables lie unsold. At one stall, with tomatoes from UP, Haryana and Bengaluru, the commission agent is selling a kilogram for Rs 5 — down from Rs 12 earlier. Another commission agent nearby is complaining about his unsold bottle gourd. Earlier, a 30 kg sack was sold for Rs 400. He is now willing to give it away for Rs 150.

"The farmers usually hand over their produce to commission agents, who sell it to the highest bidder. Now, if police do not allow people to visit the market, prices will drop. Vegetables start rotting and so are eventually sold at throwaway prices," says Rajender Sharma, former chairman of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee, Azadpur.

As Mandal begins the 6-km walk back home, with only Rs 300 in his pocket, he worries, "Police peet rahi hai, corona peet raha hai (Both police and coronavirus are hitting us). Who cares for farmers?"

At Bhagyawan Society in Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Inder Dev Sah is among the handful of vendors who has set up his cart on a Tuesday morning. "I have been selling vegetables to the 95 families in this apartment for five years. Today, I woke up at 5 am to go to Ghazipur mandi. It took me two hours to buy vegetables worth Rs 4,000. I crossed three police checkpoints," he says.



(Top) Though footfall has gone up, Home Needs Supermarket has had to face disruptions in procurement and distribution; vegetable vendors like Inder Dev Sah spend hours at mandis to stock up. Gajendra Yadav/Praveen Khanna

### HOME NEEDS SUPERMARKET, MAYUR VIHAR PHASE-1

#### WHAT'S SELLING (TOP 5 ITEMS, DAILY SALES)

	DAL	OIL	RICE	ATTA	CORNFLAKES
PRE-LOCKDOWN	30-40 kg	30-40 litres	40 kg	10-15 packets	10 packets
POST-LOCKDOWN	120 kg	120 litres	120-130 kg	45 packets	20 packets

#### HIGH DEMAND, LOW SUPPLY

<b>COCOA POWDER</b> A can for ₹140 (rates unchanged, out of stock)	<b>NUTELLA</b> Earlier ₹360 for 400gm, now Rs 390 (stock left for 2 days)	<b>PIZZA BASE</b> ₹35 for a pack of 2 (rates unchanged, out of stock)	<b>CHIPS</b> ₹10-20 per packet (rates unchanged, fresh stock supplied recently)	<b>RAZOR BLADES</b> ₹20 per blade (rates unchanged, out of stock)
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#### ON DELHI'S FOOD SHELVES

##### SUPPLIES THAT MAY TAKE A HIT AFTER MAY 3

- Coffee, diapers, dry fruits, oil and cereals as these are import-dependent items
- Packaging material for essential items
- Medicines as factories are operating at less than half their capacities

##### ALREADY IN SHORT SUPPLY

- FMCG items such as Lays chips, Haldiram Namkeen, shampoos, moisturisers, biscuits, known cereals, sanitisers

Source: Delhi government panel on supply of essential items

For the next three hours, he does not get any customers. Finally, around 11 am, a retired government officer stops by to purchase peas for Rs 15. Before the lockdown he would make Rs 400-500 every day. "Now it's Rs 100-150."

Sah has been asked to leave the spot on several occasions by police. "But I return every day," he smiles. "My son has a medical condition because of which he can't walk. I have to work to pay for his medicines."

### Problems in the breadline: manufacturer to godown, shop

SOME distance from his shop, outside the 'park wala market' in Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Jitender Dwivedi is shouting into his phone: "Ten crates of brown bread, five crates of milk bread... need it now."

The 42-year-old delivers bread to shops in the area. "At 5 am, I take my tempo truck to a local godown in Trilokpuri and pick up 50 crates of bread. The godown owner pays me Rs 300 for a day's work," he says.

The bread godown, a kilometre away, operates from a 6x6 ft ground-floor room. Maina Devi (56), the owner, has been in the business for over 30 years, earning around Rs 1,200 a day selling 150 crates to shops in Trilokpuri and Mayur Vihar. "I have two rickshaws, a scooter and a tempo truck for delivery... While our bread supply has not been affected, I am concerned about my delivery boys. They go into areas which may have COVID-19 patients," says Devi.

She, in turn, sources her bread from a middleman, Mujahid, who buys it from a manufacturing unit in Samaypur Badli. "Earlier, I used to buy around 3,000 loaves. Now, since the demand is down, I buy 1,500 loaves, paying Rs 7 a loaf. At 8 every night I queue up outside the manufacturing unit and sometimes wait till 2 am. I then deliver the bread to around 15 small godowns in Trilokpuri area," says Mujahid, 22.

While both Devi and Mujahid deny any disruption in bread supply, Dwivedi warns of a shortage.

Industry sources say that with most bread manufacturing units functioning with

skeletal crews, and sourcing of raw material becoming tough, production is a challenge. "It takes eight hours to make a packet of bread. It's a labour-intensive job which involves heating, cooling, moulding, and quality-testing. Furthermore, the raw materials come from millers based in Haryana and UP, and ensuring drivers for transportation has been challenging," says an official from Big Basket.

Another official, who looks after bread supply at the online grocery portal, says the disruption is due to many factors. "For example, packaging. The plastic covers, which are manufactured in Bengaluru, are in short supply. We are even running low on the stock of ink used to print manufacturing dates. How can we send out bread packets without a manufacturing date?" he says.

### Hotels shut, poultries see egg sales plunge

BETWEEN 6 am and 8 am, 70-year-old Ramjilal delivers 100 crates of eggs to grocery stores in Mayur Vihar Phase-1. "I can earn up to Rs 300 a day. In the past weeks, the supply of eggs has reduced considerably. I also keep getting batches of bad eggs. There are days I don't make even Rs 100," he says.

Three km away, in New Ashok Nagar, Ramjilal's supplier Sitaram lies on a bed with crates of eggs stacked around him. In a corner, a worker shifts rotten eggs to a crate, while a cashier gives salary to two drivers. These drivers bring Sitaram's stock of eggs from Haryana's Panipat every day, which may now be a problem due to the state sealing the border with Delhi.

"I get 1,800 trays of eggs, each with 30 eggs. A tray costs Rs 102. My drivers leave for Panipat at 4.30 am and return around noon. The eggs are then supplied to areas in East Delhi," says Sitaram. However, he too complains of rotten eggs, "sometimes more than 100 trays".

At the Panipat poultry farm, owner Raj Kumar is anxious about his debt of Rs 5 lakh. "I have been a poultry farmer for 40 years and own about one lakh chickens. I send out about 80,000 eggs daily. Now I am getting Re 1 for an egg, from Rs 4 earlier... No wholesaler comes. The hotels are shut and the demand is very low," says Raj Kumar.

Surinder Bhutani, general secretary of the Central Haryana Poultry Farmers' Association, says transportation hurdles have hit the industry. "There are 2,000 poultry farms in Haryana. Our main customers are in South India. It has become difficult to transport eggs. Even if we get the eggs to the street vendors, their business is shut. In the last one year, the cost of chicken feed has also increased. Then, there is the cost of medicines for them, labour, trays. All poultry farmers have sustained heavy losses."

### Mother Dairy at helm, milk flows smoothly

APART FROM the grocery stores that stock milk, most residents of Mayur Vihar depend on the neighbourhood's 22 Mother Dairy outlets. At one such outlet, Anmol, 27, is making a list of the inventory. Her father has been running the milk booth since 2005. It is 12.30 pm, and the outlet has run out of its high-selling double-toned milk.

"The fresh batch will come only in the evening," she says, adding that while they had never seen anything like the lockdown, "the supply of milk has remained steady".

This is a fact attested to by most stores and milk booths, unlike in the case of other essential grocery items. "In the early days of the lockdown, there were some issues, but they were sorted out on a daily basis. One main concern was of drivers going hungry

while covering longer routes. We have now ensured adequate ration on their journeys," said a Mother Dairy spokesperson.

The milk at Anmol's booth is procured from a processing plant in the Patparganj industrial area. The plant gets its supply from 10 states, including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. "The milk is procured through a network of pooling points in villages, where strict quality control is maintained, right from the milking of animals to the processing plants. The milk collected is chilled to below 4 degrees Celsius in our bulk coolers/milk chilling centres to ensure good quality of raw milk during transportation to Delhi," the spokesperson added.

When it arrives in Delhi, the raw milk undergoes a series of tests at various stages of processing. As per Mother Dairy records, 50-55,000 litres of milk is delivered to the 22 Mother Dairy booths and nine milk distributors in Mayur Vihar every day.

Trucks carrying token milk and pouch milk make 24 trips to the neighbourhood every day, and each truck carries between 1,500 and 8,000 litres of milk.

Milk and cheese products at Sumit Kumar's grocery store are sourced from a distributor based in Patparganj.

In Mayur Vihar, about 90 people, including booth operators, distributors, salesmen and drivers are part of the Mother Dairy supply chain.

### At grocery store, now a daily trip to stock up on supplies

BACK AT the Home Needs Supermarket, Sumit Kumar and his cashier Rashid are waiting for the day's supply of cold drinks and pulses. Earlier, explains Kumar, distributors would take their order over the phone and deliver the stock to the store. But since the lockdown, with the supply chain disrupted, the burden of transportation has fallen on them.

Amit Kumar, a distributor based in Patparganj, supplies to Kumar's store Maggi, ketchup, cheese and milk products for infants, procuring the stock from wholesalers in Ludhiana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. "There has been a 50% fall in my stock procurement. Many of my orders from other states have not arrived. Some of the trucks were turned away by police, while some orders could not be delivered due to staff shortage. Last week, I shut down my warehouse following an order by the district magistrate. I was unable to ensure social distancing among my staff. We are trying to deal with these issues to kickstart the supply again," says Amit Kumar.

So, for now, cashier Rashid heads out on his scooter to distributor godowns in Kondli to get items such as cocoa powder, Maggi, chips, soft drinks and toiletries for the shop, but most of them, he says, have run out of supplies. "I have to go every day, whereas earlier, the stocks sent by distributors would last over 15 days," he adds.

To avoid a bumout, Kumar recently hired a rickshaw-puller to deliver the supplies in the afternoon. Around 4 pm, the rickshaw-puller arrives, bringing with him 50 bottles of cold drinks and two sacks of dal. Paid Rs 30 for the delivery, he requests a helper at the store for an additional Rs 10.

"Nahin. Abhi naukri hai, isi mein khush raho (No. You should be happy that you at least have a job)," the helper shoots back, going back into the store.

Across THE AISLE



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In a country where malnutrition is entrenched, especially among children, there is the danger of hunger becoming widespread too. Hunger and malnutrition will lead to starvation. TV, print and social media are full of anecdotal evidence that many families are going hungry and some are starving. We will never know how many people died of starvation, because no state government will admit to starvation or count the number of starvation deaths

THE WAR against COVID-19 and its social and economic consequences is being led by the Central and state governments and we the people are mere followers. But as followers, we can imagine many things.

First, imagine that the virus can be defeated without a vaccine. That will lead us to imagine that a lockdown is a cure and, until the cure is complete, a lockdown will stop the spread of the virus. The reality is that a lockdown is not a cure, nor does it stop the spread of the virus. A lockdown is a pause, it may slow the spread of the virus, and it will buy us valuable time to build our medical and health infrastructure, spread awareness and be prepared to deal with the peak number of infected persons who will require hospitalisation. Those who had demanded a lockdown had understood the reality. On May 3, the governments would have got 40 days time to do those things; the question is, do governments need more time?

Second, imagine that the migrant workers who were prevented from going back to their homes are happy to be in their shelter homes, quarantines or camps, are content with the living conditions, and are satisfied with the food. The reality is what the Delhi Police found after inspecting the shelter homes as re-

# Imagination is everything

ported in *The Indian Express* (April 28). "Fans not working, and no power backup; sanitisation of toilets rarely done; most migrants want to leave as their families cannot survive; rude behaviour of civil defence staff; food quality not good; no hand wash and sanitizers; foul smell in toilets; water supply in the toilets only between 7 am and 11 am; one soap for bathing and no detergent for washing clothes; mosquito bites." If those are the conditions of shelter homes (where the stay is voluntary), don't imagine what they will be in quarantines and camps (where the stay is involuntary).

Third, imagine that the migrant worker (e.g. in Mumbai or Surat) is happy to remain in his one-room tenement with six-10 others, without a job or work, without money, and without making any remittance to support his family. The reality is that the vast majority of such workers got no assistance from the governments — no cash transfer, no rations. Their only desire is to go home. Uttar Pradesh and some other states took an enlightened approach and sent buses to ferry them to their home states, Bihar refused, and the Central government was non-committal until April 29. Now, Bihar has joined others to demand non-stop trains!

Fourth, imagine that there are no job losses, and that the jobs will continue to

be there until the workers are able to return to their workplaces. The reality is what CMIE reported on April 27: that the unemployment rate stood at 21.1% even while labour force participation had fallen to 35.4%. The reality is that once an MSME is shut down, it is not easy to restart it. The few workers — two to 10 — in the unit may have found other ways to earn a wage or migrated and, even if they are willing to come back, there will be arrears of wages. The unit would have bills to be collected and bills to be paid, and neither is easy after a prolonged shutdown. The unit would have run out of working capital and no bank or NBFC will lend without a credit guarantee. The supply chain would have been interrupted: what is the use of re-opening a dealership if the manufacturer has not resumed production? No one who has never invested his own money to start a business will understand the problems of running a business or the pain of closing it down.

Fifth, imagine that the Central government will keep its promise, made on March 25, that it will soon come out with Financial Action Plan II to help businesses, especially the MSMEs. The reality is that nothing has been done until the time of this writing. We don't know if the Financial Task Force has made any recommendation. A new committee (if

you believe the buzz) to think 'Big and Bold' is still thinking. The reality is that banks are flush with funds but they prefer to park them with the RBI than lend to NBFCs or SMEs. NBFCs are fast becoming illiquid and cannot on-lend.

Sixth, imagine that big industries will somehow survive and flourish as before. The reality is that big industries have realised that the old normal is out forever and are in search of a new normal. They are looking for conserving cash, curtailing capital expenditure, optimising capacity utilisation, downsizing their workforce, becoming debt-free, and expanding work-from-home. Big industries will also consolidate, which will result in less competition (e.g. telecom).

Seventh, imagine that the economy will bounce back smartly after the lockdown is lifted and we will see the V-curve. The reality is that the Indian economy did not recover after the demonetisation blunder, it did not recover after the botched-up GST, and will not recover easily after the lockdown is lifted. Even a tick-shaped (✓) recovery will require hard work, plans, meticulous implementation, money, open markets, smart alliances and international co-operation.

**Recall Lewis Carroll: "Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality."**

Fifth COLUMN

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# Stories not told of the pandemic

THE REAL stories of this pandemic have not been told. There are hundreds of thousands of heartbreaking stories. Every man, woman and child who has been desperate enough to try and walk home even when home was hundreds of kilometres away has his own untold story. If these stories have not been told it is because we in the media have not told them, with the honourable exception of a handful of journalists. Among them Barkha Dutta stands tallest because it was she who told the first stories and brought us the first pictures. This shamed some TV channels to send out their reporters. Too few did.

In lockdown, I have found myself dwelling on this and searching for reasons why. I am from that generation of journalists who first noticed in the daily press releases from the Delhi Police that there seemed to be an extraordinary number of girls dying from gas cylinders exploding. The stories were so routine that they usually made no more than a paragraph on the inside pages of newspapers. Often not even the names of the girls were mentioned. This was a time when there were very few women reporters in national newspapers, but we began to investigate the stories of the dead girls. We interviewed their families and the families of their husbands. It was from these reports that the laws to control dowry deaths came.

This was also a time when the rape of little girls and women made no more than a paragraph in the national press. I am proud to count myself among those who travelled into remote, rural villages to find out why women were unable to register rape cases in police stations and why some were raped again by the policemen they went to for help. Personally, I became obsessed with these stories and made it a point to investigate every time some woman was 'paraded naked' through some village. It was because reporters took the trouble to do real reporting that rape laws became more stringent.

With this pandemic, the converse is sadly true. Since no more than a handful of reporters have told the stories of the desperate people penned up in makeshift shelters or punished for trying to walk home, the silence from our political class has been deafening. Where are our elected representatives hiding? Why have they not come forward to help their most vulnerable constituents? When the next election comes around, with what face will they ask for votes from the people they have so shamefully betrayed?

There is no question that their behaviour has been disgraceful. But, there is also no question that we in the media should admit to behaving disgracefully ourselves. It is the primary duty of journalists to speak for those who have no voice. That, in my personal view, is what it means to speak truth to power in the real sense of that old cliché. We have failed to do this. And, there have been some among us who have the loudest megaphones of all who have actually dared to declare that the problems of migrant workers are no more than 'hype' designed to damage the shining image of our dear Prime Minister. From the safety of TV studios in Delhi and Mumbai, they lecture us daily on the virtues of social distancing and urge us to 'stay at home'.

Have they noticed how ludicrous this must sound to those who have no homes and for whom social distancing is impossible? Probably. But, judging from the response to some of my tweets, what becomes clear is that to the mighty Indian middle-class the horrors inflicted on our working class by this lockdown seems not to matter. It is as if they do not see them as human but as some sub-species of humanity that deserves its horrible lot in life. Some have gone so far as to suggest that these people must be stopped from going home because stopping the pandemic is more important.

If they fail to feel even a modicum of compassion for the frail children walking distances that no child should ever need to walk, it is because we in the media have failed to tell their stories. We have reported on this pandemic as if it was a fever chart near some hospital bed in which is recorded the rise and fall of some patient's temperature. Yes, the statistics are necessary, but so are the stories. If the stories of people afflicted by this virus are told daily on CNN and BBC it is because the victims are seen as human beings and not as numbers. In all the years that I have been a journalist, I have rarely felt more ashamed of my profession. When all this is over, it really is important that the big bosses of Indian journalism urge a season of introspection. When I got my first job as a reporter in 1975 the media was just a handful of badly printed newspapers. Today it is a vast, powerful machine that should have no problem at all in speaking truth to power.

# Sedition, UAPA denial of basic freedoms

Dalitality

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TO BE a nationalist in India, especially the Right-wing variety, enjoins blaming the colonial regime for all the wrongs in the country. In this politics, the Left wing too puts the imperial government under deleterious scanner. The British regime of 200-odd years is a subject of numerous studies, conversations, celebrations and commemorations. Academia has devoted an entire gamut of 'postcolonial studies' to study those years. Two generations later, this concept continues to peripherally entertain the social sciences discipline. However, the progenies of post-colonialism, under the garb of liberal nationalists, stand up against the powers-that-be only when their control through zamindari and the capitalist class is threatened.

The imperial State had utilised its resources to target organisations and individuals who resisted its oppressive rule. Sedition and preventive detention were legal methods deployed to eliminate dissent. The State demanded complete submission to its authority.

Similar modus operandi have continued in post-Independent India. Governments under the Congress or the BJP have emulated their white predecessors in controlling any form of discontent by the poor and oppressed groups.

If the legacy of sedition and draconian laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, Public Safety Act and National Security Act exist, it means the government doesn't honour the immense sacrifices of our country's freedom fighters. It is because of them that we are supposedly enjoying freedoms in our country, though those freedoms are denied to anyone whom the ruling castes are at odds with.

It is not an accident that Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims remain disproportionately the prime target of these atrocious laws, along with anyone who dares defend civil liberties. In fact, many of the activists and scholars who have written against legislation like the UAPA find themselves incarcerated under them now.

The premise on which these laws exist in the first place is that there are internal threats to the Indian State — i.e., that there exist citizens who challenge its authority. Any mature, democratic State would try to address the reasons behind

this, instead of a concerted kneejerk approach. The State also attacks Dalits via anti-Left rhetoric, as directly attacking them would cost it heavily.

It is in this context that one needs to ask what good is the Indian State offering Dalits — aside from the breadcrumbs of reservations, which are still not implemented in totality. Mind you, the Supreme Court's attitude towards reservations is clear, in stating that states are not bound to give reservations in jobs and promotions. What steps does the State then plan to ensure the safety of its Constitutionally protected communities?

Dalit and Adivasi social and political movements need to consider waging a struggle against the draconian laws primarily aimed at penalising them, though the attempts by citizens to constitutionally organise against a mighty State might be considered by it as an assault on its so-called integrity. In a 2018 joint study by Common Cause and Lokniti, 27% of Adivasis said they feared being framed for anti-State Maoist activities, while 35% Dalits for petty crimes and 47% Muslims for terrorism-related charges.

These draconian laws have their DNA in British-era brutality. The victims of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre were people who had come together to protest against the Rowlatt Act, that led to incarceration without trial and judicial review. To continue with such draconian legislation is to continue with the legacy of British oppression.

Under the UAPA, a person can be detained for 180 days without charges, giving ludicrous rights to the State. This way the government can conveniently put activists it considers a threat to national security behind bars. The State's use of the UAPA shows it doesn't differentiate between dissent of political nature and criminal activity. One can also be sure that if the government is using draconian laws against Left-wing Dalit and Adivasi activists, the same will be repeated against people now enjoying profligacies of power.

A firm believer in parliamentary democracy, Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed the importance of organising, agitating and opposition. We need an opposition to keep the powers in check.

In the country of Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, adjusting on the lines of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, one cannot have such an inhuman response to the State's failures. If we do not counter these laws, in soon even Ambedkarism might be deemed a terrorist ideology, because it seeks justice and equality.

Surajyengde, author of Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column

She SAID

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# What do we tell that girl in a shiny frock



On the border with Ghaziabad, one such group of migrants start long walk home from the Capital at night. Gajendra Yadav

I WANT to go looking for a girl. The girl I saw in the middle of one night, walking down Delhi's Ring Road, past one of its glitziest markets, dressed in a frock whose sequins glittered in passing cars' headlights, in what was perhaps the best dress she owned, sweating, stumbling, struggling to keep pace with her parents, only one face in a group. They carried a bag each, the entirety of their worlds now in those small bundles.

Where did she go to escape coronavirus, a disease that has meant that while our children have been sequestered in homes, she has been left out on the streets?

In the sad quiet of the neighbourhood park the other day, I recalled her again. I was talking to a friend whom I had connected with after years on Facebook — the social media website that best exemplifies a life that has to be, at all times, full of things. Ironically, it was she who put in words feelings I had been trying to grasp about these coronavirus times. Earlier, it seemed 24 hours were not enough for all we had to do, she said. Now, nothing seems particularly important.

It's amazing how much one can get used to — face masks and hand sanitisers next to open drains; hungry people standing in startlingly round circles to collect food (a discipline that is damning in its incongruity); a classroom on Zoom for toddlers, who can barely comprehend a keyboard. And how much we can learn to overlook — the paranoia, the inhumanity, the cold-heartedness, the middle-class smugness, the smothered childhoods of a

world struck still, and that girl in that frock.

This Tuesday, my daughter had a Zoom Kathak class; on Friday, a Zoom school assembly. The 14-year-old has had a "Zoom sleeper", and her brother — his first year in college cut short by the lockdown — a "Zoom party". It could be that they are "coping". But do we take heart from the fact, or isn't that the most disheartening part — how easily they have receded from the world outside?

But that world too is deceptive. The Gulmohar is in full bloom, birds I have seldom seen have come to nest in the balcony, sky is bluer, air cleaner, and at night, we can see stars. It's easy to forget the cost at which this has been achieved, the hundreds who smuggled their way out, as that girl in that frock, as our universe shut its doors on them. If we do remember them, while cooking, cleaning or washing, we push the memory aside, Instagramming the products of our labour.

We are okay couching this as a necessity; that "we" don't know what "they" might be bringing with "them" to "our" homes. Social distancing now has medical legitimacy.

As does a concept alien to our very beings — of keeping loved ones at arm's length. Against all we have learnt to hold dear, all that has meant for us to be human, that is the new normal: people succumbing in the clinical cold of hospital wards without families being allowed last visits.

When it's all over — and it will be, like every doomsday scenario, except when the sun blows out (a scientific certitude)

— how will we look back at this time? In terms of lives saved, or a life irrevocably lost? What will we tell that girl in that frock we sent away into the heart of darkness? That a mask, a hand sanitiser and a coronavirus-free tag means she can go back to living next to waste dumps, and to be thankful while at it? That the rivers of disinfectant sprayed on her and her parents, and in the areas they live only on the margins of, have saved them from diseases that don't even register as contagions? That there is nothing incongruous about men entering bare-handed into drains to clean them — and, not so long ago, to recover bodies from, in the national capital — while reams of news pages are spent on discussing PPEs? That the faith in tomorrow that they must hold on to, so as to simply keep going, is after all a fallacy?

What will we even tell our children? How long before they can take the Metro, hug a friend, slide next to a classmate, eat racing around the playground, and wipe their hands down their uniforms (*kyunki, daag aache hain*)? Who will make that call? Which parent? Which school?

Surely, school is as much about realising we can live with some germs as learning that viruses have been around as long as — or longer than — humanity.

And how long before one of those children, in one of these schools, on one of those Metros, is that girl in that frock?

National Editor Shalini Langer curates the 'She Said' column

Out of MY MIND

MEGHNAD DESAI



AS AND when it is over and we are out of the lockdown, the first desire everywhere will be to return to what we had, the Old Normal, regardless of its many problems. Everyone will need to feel that the dreaded epidemic has been eliminated and they can live again as they used to.

This is Repair. It involves helping many groups of people whose lives have been severely disrupted. All the people laid off due to the economy being shut down will need help with resuming their old life. Governments at the state level cannot help as they have been hit by loss of rev-

# Need to renew industrial growth

venue due to the shutting down of alcohol shops and the drop in petrol sales, two sturdy sources of revenue. Only the Centre can help here.

The Old Normal was a phase of growth recession. The Budget had already acknowledged the need for a fiscal stimulus. Now, as all other economies are doing, a massive reflation will be necessary to accomplish the tasks of repair, restoration and renewal. Restoration will be the urgent step which will take the economy back to a growth path.

The most needy group is the urban workers in the informal sector, especially the migrants. These migrants have returned to their native areas lately with

help from their 'original' states. Now to bring them back should be the Centre's task as far as financing is concerned. Ideally, the Centre should compensate the states which have paid to bring 'their' migrants back home.

The next task is to build a welfare state suitable to Indian conditions. Modi 1.0 began the task of providing health care, financial inclusion, digital access. MUDRA provided financial help for businesses run by women, Dalits, tribals. The need now is to address the biggest gap left by 70 years of economic policy — the large pool of the unemployed. The need is for a temporary unemployment benefit scheme for up to 100 days a year similar to the MN-

REGS so that urban workers do not suffer during short periods of unemployment. This will establish parity between rural and urban poor.

Modi 1.0 also provided for rural housing on a large scale. The plight of migrant workers points to the need for urban housing. A massive programme of urban housing at affordable rents for eligible working families is needed across the large and small cities. Dharavi has been much romanticised in books and films. It should be a blot on Mumbai and India. The advantage of housing as a public infrastructure investment is its capacity for job creation as well as tackling homelessness. Given the large unfulfilled demand, this will have

to be a multi-year investment project.

This housing programme will help resume growth and sustain it over a long period. But there is a need to renew industrial growth. Over the last 70-plus years, India has frittered chances to become a centre of manufacturing on the scale of other Asian countries. This was due to labour laws which protected the small formal sector. This has led to the overhang of unemployment. The disruption of global supply chains during the pandemic creates tremendous opportunities to re-entrepreneurialise India. No previous government has been equal to this challenge. Modi 1.0 launched Make in India. Now is the chance for renewal.



BORIS NAMES SON AFTER DOCTORS

Boris Johnson and his fiancée Carrie Symonds have named their newborn son Wilfred Lawrie Nicholas, partly as a tribute to two of the intensive care doctors who they said had saved the British leader's life as he battled COVID-19 complications

## PANDEMIC WATCH



Nawaz Sharif

UNITED KINGDOM  
Sharif surgery postponed due to pandemic

Lahore: Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's heart surgery at a London hospital has been postponed due to the pandemic as he is a "high-risk" patient, his daughter said. Sharif, 70, has been in the UK since November last after Lahore High Court granted him bail for four weeks on medical grounds and allowed him to travel abroad for treatment. He is now undergoing treatment in London for coronary artery disease. "The surgery of PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif has been postponed. Doctors say Sharif is a high-risk patient and all precautions have to be observed..." his daughter Maryam Nawaz tweeted.

MALAYSIA  
Govt defends easing curbs as cases spike

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian authorities on Saturday defended plans to ease coronavirus lockdown measures next week even as the number of new infections jumped to a two-week high. Most businesses will reopen on Monday after a six-week shutdown ordered to fight the COVID-19 outbreak, though schools, cinemas and nightclubs will remain closed. Security minister Ismail Sabri said Malaysia was not being hasty in relaxing the curbs, stressing that businesses reopening will have to implement hygiene and social distancing measures.

RUSSIA  
Moscow warns of clampdown as cases spike

Moscow: Russia reported 9,623 new cases Saturday, its highest daily rise, bringing the total to 124,054, mostly in Moscow, where the mayor threatened to cut the number of travel permits. The death toll nationwide rose to 1,222 after 57 people died in the last 24 hours, Russia's crisis response centre said. Russia has been in partial lockdown since the end of March. In Moscow, people who have not obtained a special permit for free movement, are only able to leave their homes to shop, walk their dogs and dispose of garbage.

## Trump changes toll prediction: Below 1 lakh

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, MAY 2

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump says he's hoping that the total number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States will be below 100,000.

Even that, he acknowledged on Friday, is a "horrible number." Trump's predictions of the expected US death toll have changed over time, and he repeatedly has used high estimates to make the case that his administration's actions, especially his decision to restrict travel from China, have saved lives.

His actions have been challenged by state, local and public health officials who have complained about shortages of testing supplies and safety gear for doctors and nurses.

On March 29, Dr Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force, revealed models projecting the deaths of 100,000 to 240,000 Americans, assuming social distancing efforts were ongoing.

At the same time, she said epidemiology models initially had predicted a worst-case scenario of 1.5 million to 2.2 million US deaths without mitigation efforts such as social distancing, hand washing and staying home as much as possible.

Soon after, Trump began speculating that the 100,000 figure was an outer limit. Later, he leaned more toward a projection of 60,000, but that now has been eclipsed by the current death toll of more than 64,000.

On Monday, he was thinking 60,000 or 70,000.

## OVER \$775 MN TO HELP OTHER COUNTRIES: U.S.

THE US said it has committed over \$775 million in health, humanitarian and economic assistance that will help over 120 nations

INDIA HAS received \$5.9 mn in health assistance by providing care for the affected, disseminating essential messages and strengthen case-finding and surveillance, it said

IN SOUTH Asia, Afghanistan (\$18 mn), Pakistan (\$15 mn) and Bangladesh (\$12.3 mn), have received more in health assistance from the US, it said.

At a White House event on Friday, Trump said "maybe millions of lives" have been saved by shutting down the economy.

The US government was slow to understand how much coronavirus was spreading from Europe, which helped drive the acceleration of outbreaks across the nation, a top health official said Friday.

Limited testing and delayed travel alerts for areas outside China contributed to the jump in US cases starting in late February, said Dr Anne Schuchat, the No 2 official at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



People urging the 'reopening' of businesses demonstrate without face masks in Los Angeles. AP

## FDA nod for drug shown to help recovery

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, MAY 1

US REGULATORS on Friday allowed emergency use of the first drug that appears to help some patients recover faster, a milestone in the global search for effective therapies against the coronavirus. The Food and Drug Administration cleared Gilead Science's intravenous drug for hospitalised patients with "severe disease," such as those ex-

31%

■ Preliminary results from a study showed that remdesivir shortened time to recovery by 31%, or about four days on average. Those given the drug were able to leave hospital in 11 days on average. The drug may also help avert deaths, but that effect is not yet large enough to know for sure

periencing breathing problems requiring supplemental oxygen or ventilators.

President Donald Trump announced the news alongside Gilead CEO Daniel O'Day and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn. "This was lightning speed in terms of getting something approved" said Hahn, calling the drug "an important clinical advance."

Dr Sameer Khanijo, a critical care specialist, said he wants to see additional studies to clarify

the drug's benefit.

"I don't think this is a cure yet, but I think it's starting to point us in the right direction," said Khanijo of North Shore University Hospital in New York. "As a society it's nice to have something that will help stem the tide of this disease."

The FDA said preliminary results warranted Friday's decision, though regulators acknowledged "there is limited information known about the safety and effectiveness of using remdesivir."

## Afghan hospital needs to be quarantined, but works in country at war

MUJIB MASHAL & NAJIM RAHIM  
KABUL, MAY 2

EVEN WHEN their city was repeatedly overrun by the Taliban and fighting reached their doorsteps, the doctors and nurses in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz kept working. They dressed wounds and saved lives at the main government hospital even as a nearby trauma centre was bombed, killing more than 40 people.

Now, about 70 doctors and nurses out of a staff of 361 at Kunduz Regional Hospital — the main health facility for several restive provinces in northeastern Afghanistan — are either infected with the coronavirus or in quarantine on suspicion of infection.

Yet there is no choice but to keep the doors open, said Dr Naem Mangal, the hospital director. The doctors cannot reject

the dozens of war wounded who continue to arrive each day, as fighting rages every night within earshot of the hospital.

"The hospital needs to be quarantined, but what alternative do we have?" Dr Mangal said. "It has made us so concerned that we are all scared of each other at the hospital because we don't know who is infected and who isn't."

Fighting rages every night within two to three miles of the Kunduz city centre, and the hospital cannot refuse those wounded. For other patients, the hospital is turning away roughly half. Between 100 to 150 new patients are still being treated each day, with about half of them hurt by violence, Dr Mangal said.

A major factor limiting the country's response to the virus is the raging war.

The Taliban have refused a call for a cease-fire on humanitarian grounds. NYT



Temperature checks in Kabul. NYT

## Iran reports lowest case count since March 10

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN, MAY 2

IRAN SAID on Saturday there was a "clear drop" in the number of new coronavirus infections as it reported 802 fresh cases, the lowest daily count since March 10.

The new cases brought to 96,448 the number recorded in Iran since it announced its first cases in mid-February. "This shows a clear drop in the number of new infections compared to recent weeks, despite our active testing," health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on state television.

He added that 77,350 of those hospitalised have since been discharged, claiming it is a "one of the highest recovery percentages in the world."

New deaths from COVID-19 rose slightly to 65 in the past 24 hours, reaching a total of 6,156, Jahanpour said.

Doubts have been cast over Iran's coronavirus figures by experts and officials both at home and abroad.

Iran's deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi warned that the fall in the number of infections could quickly reverse. "I emphasise that this steady decline is fragile," said Harirchi, who has himself recovered from COVID-19.

"Carelessness in gatherings, reopening (businesses) and observing health protocols can make the country face serious problems again."



## PRISON BREAK

Inmates at a prison are seen on the roof with a prison worker as a hostage during a riot following an outbreak of the coronavirus in Manaus, Brazil, on Saturday. Reuters

## Countries must ease curbs slowly, be ready for coronavirus to jump back, warns WHO

STEPHANIE NEBEHAY & KATE KELLAND  
GENEVA/LONDON, MAY 2

COUNTRIES MUST lift lockdowns gradually, while still being "on the look-out" and be ready to restore restrictions if the virus jumps back, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday.

Even if the virus is coming under control, communities must know to still follow physical distancing and hygiene measures, and testing of suspect cases must continue, he said. Vulnerable people in institu-

tions, including those in long-term care facilities, prisons and migrant dormitories, must be protected, its top emergencies expert Dr Mike Ryan said.

The virus has spread in facilities for the elderly in Europe and North America, he said, adding: "Because a spark in a situation like that turns into a fire very very quickly."

The WHO recognises the difficulty for governments to maintain lockdowns, Ryan said. "So we are very anxious to a situation where the disease can kept under control with less severe measures," he said. REUTERS

EXPLAINED  
Different trends

PART OF the WHO's concern is because of the outbreak following different trends in different countries. While some countries have begun to ease lockdowns, others such as Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and African nations are facing an upward trend, with some yet to pass the peak.

## Relief for HIB holders, green card applicants

LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON, MAY 2

IN A major relief for professionals and immigrants from countries like India, the US government has given a grace period of 60 days to H-1B visa holders and Green Card applicants, who have been served notices for submission of various documents, taking into account the coronavirus outbreak in America.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on Friday said the 60-day grace period for responding to its requests will include requests for evidence; continuations to request evidence (N-14); notices of intent to deny; notices of intent to revoke; notices of intent to rescind and notices of intent to terminate regional investment centers; and filing date requirements for Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion.

"USCIS will consider a response to the above requests and notices received within 60 calendar days after the response due date set in the request or notice before taking action," it said in a statement. Under the existing law, the US can issue a maximum of 1,40,000 employment-based green cards every year with a per country cap of seven per cent. PTI

## China's missing 'bat woman' with secrets of Covid-19 origin denies defecting

K J M VARMA  
BEIJING, MAY 2

A LEADING Chinese virologist from Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), whose mysterious disappearance sparked speculation about the coronavirus emanating from the laboratory, has denied reports of her defection to West with secrets about COVID-19.

Shi Zhengli, known as the "Bat Woman" for her passionate research about bats and the viruses associated with them, refuted rumours of her defection on her Chinese social media WeChat account, the state-run media here reported Saturday.

Denying "rumours" of "defecting to the West", Shi on her WeChat account wrote, "Everything is alright for my family and me, dear friends!" She also posted nine photos of her recent life, the *Global Times* reported.

In the post, Shi, reported to be the Director of the WIV, said, "No matter how difficult, it (defecting) shall never happen. We've done nothing wrong. With strong belief in science, we will see the day when the clouds disperse and the sun shines."

"Shi has been troubled by rumours for quite a long time. The recent rumour which has been circulating on overseas social media platforms said that 'Shi Zhengli director at #Wuhan Institute of Virology has defected with a treasure trove of intelligence to the US embassy in Paris,' the report said. PTI

## OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

## PAKISTAN

## Pearl's parents challenge freeing of convicted killers

ASIF SHAHZAD  
ISLAMABAD, MAY 2

SLAIN US journalist Daniel Pearl's parents have petitioned to the Pakistani Supreme Court seeking to overturn a ruling that freed four men who had been convicted in 2002 of involvement in his killing, their lawyer said on Saturday.

"We're standing up for justice, not only for our son, but for all our dear friends in Pakistan so they can live in a society free of violence and terrorism,"

Pearl's father Judea said in an emotional video message posted on Twitter.

Their lawyer Faisal Siddiqi told Reuters he had filed the petition on their behalf. A court official said it had yet to be admitted for further proceedings.

"A bare perusal of the entire record would reveal that there was a plethora of incriminating evidence, both forensic as well as oral, which proved that murder was committed and that all the accused persons aided and abetted the murder," the appeal petition said, REUTERS

CHOE SANG-HUN  
SEOUL, MAY 2

NORTH KOREA'S leader, Kim Jong-un, resurfaced in public view on Friday, the North's state news media reported Saturday, countering three weeks of rumours and unconfirmed news reports that he was in grave danger after undergoing heart surgery.

He appeared at a ceremony at a factory in Suncheon, the North's state news agency said, later releasing photos from the event. The report could not immediately be independently



Kim Jong Un at a factory near Pyongyang on May 1. AP

confirmed.

Kim, 36, had last appeared publicly on April 11. Speculation

about his health — and about who would take over the hermetic, nuclear-armed country should he become incapacitated or die — began swirling after Kim missed the state celebrations of his country's biggest holiday on April 15. On that day, the North marks the birthday of his grandfather Kim Il-sung, the country's founder.

Rumours subsequently went into overdrive, claiming that Kim was "in grave danger," in a "vegetative state" after botched heart-valve surgery, or in quarantine after contracting COVID-19. Other reports said that China

had sent doctors to Pyongyang to save him.

The North Korean news agency released photos showing a smiling Kim applauding, cutting a ribbon at a new fertiliser factory. No outside media was apparently allowed to witness the ceremony.

It was not the first time Kim had disappeared from public view for weeks at a time or been the subject of intense speculation about his health. And the information vacuum surrounding the doings of North Korean leaders leaves fertile ground for misinformation to spread. NYT

## Missing Pak journalist found dead in Sweden

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
STOCKHOLM, MAY 2

SWEDISH POLICE said they have identified a body found late last month in a river as that of missing Pakistani journalist Sajid Hussain.

Police in Uppsala said Friday that they had initially launched a murder investigation, but suspicions of foul play have weakened following an autopsy. "But we're still waiting for a few more answers," police spokesman Jonas Eronen said.

Hussain, 39, went missing on March 2 and his body was found on April 23 in the Fyris river.

A native of Pakistan's Balochistan province, Hussain was the editor and publisher of the online magazine Balochistan Times that he founded in 2015.

He fled Pakistan in 2012 after his reporting on corruption, forced disappearances and human rights violations in the region resulted in the police raiding his house and his receiving death threats.

Hussain had lived in Sweden since 2017 and was granted political asylum in the country a year later. Swedish public broadcaster SVT said he had been registered since January at the Uppsala University.

# 10 ECONOMY

**NON-FOOD CREDIT HAS FALLEN BY ₹33,872 CRORE TO ₹102.8 LAKH CRORE**

## RBI Governor takes up credit flow issue with public, private bank chiefs

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MAY 2

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) on Saturday took up the issue of improving credit flow to various sectors of the economy, including non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the chiefs of major private and public sector banks. However, banks said they were looking for a credit guarantee support from the government, while extending loans to NBFCs and also proposed that a decision on extending the three-month moratorium on loan repayments can be taken at the end of May.

The RBI review, called by Governor Shaktikanta Das, has come at a time when non-food credit has plummeted by Rs 33,872 crore to Rs 102.8 lakh crore during the fortnight ended April 10 and the government extended the lockdown by another two weeks to May 17.

The meeting reviewed the cur-

### Bank deposits rise on outflows from debt mutual fund segment

Mumbai: While banks witnessed a contraction in credit outstandings, deposits increased during the fortnight ended April 10. Deposits rose by Rs 1,47,435 crore to Rs 137.1 lakh crore, largely due to the

outflows from the debt mutual fund segment. However demand deposits (savings accounts) saw an outflow of Rs 135 lakh crore, while time deposits (FDs) surged by Rs 2.82 lakh crore. **ENS**

rent economic situation and credit flows to different sectors of the economy, including liquidity to NBFCs, micro finance institutions, housing finance companies and mutual funds, the RBI said. The meeting, conducted through video conference, also took up post-lockdown credit flows including provision of working capital, with special focus on credit flows to MSMEs and implementation of three months' moratorium on repayment of loan instalments announced by the RBI.

While banks had extended the loan moratorium to their customers, they have not extended

the same facility to NBFCs and MFIs, which borrow from banks. On extending government guarantees to loans to MSMEs and NBFCs, the CEO of a nationalised bank said, "In many countries, the government stepped in and they are giving guarantees particularly for the loans or the incremental credit even to the MSME sector." This means the liability will be contingent in the books of the government and banks can leverage those guarantees. Banks say it can be a good model to help out borrowers, particularly MSMEs, it's not clear whether the government is keen on such a proposal.

### EXPLAINED Banks want govt guarantee

WITH MANY sectors in the doldrums due to the lockdown, banks are expecting bad loans to rise after June when the moratorium period ends. The extension of moratorium and a government guarantee scheme will give more comfort to the banks which have turned risk averse now.

On the poor credit flow to various sectors, a bank official said, "Unless the economic activity picks up, the demand for credit isn't likely to pick up and the lack of credit growth is not in my view

currently because of any risk aversion." Though many PSU banks have come out with COVID-19 loan schemes for MSMEs, credit flow has not picked up to the desired levels. The RBI has conducted long-term repo operations (LTRO) for banks at the repo rate of 4.40 per cent, but banks are preferring better rated corporates while ignoring the claims of small units and NBFCs. On extending the moratorium beyond May 31, he said, "Let's wait till May 31 and then see that what is the demand or what is the situation and depending upon the situation on the ground, I think these are the things which the RBI can take a view and take a calibrated approach. I think the next view probably will be taken after May 31."

As per the RBI, the Governor "appreciated the efforts of banks in ensuring normal to near normal" operations during the lockdown... Monitoring of overseas branches of banks in view of the slowdown in economies across the globe and stability of the financial sector were discussed.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday held a series of meetings with key cabinet ministers and officials of economic ministries to firm up the second stimulus package to lift the economy reeling under the impact of coronavirus-induced lockdown.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, representatives of economic ministries and senior officials, including those from the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Secretariat, were present at the meetings.

The Prime Minister also had discussions with key economic ministries such as Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and MSME.

MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari, earlier in the day, said that his ministry has suggested a relief package to the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister for the medium, small and micro sector and exuded confidence that an announce-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi met key ministers and officials of economy-facing ministries on Saturday. @narendramodi

ment would be made soon.

"Chaired a meeting on strengthening our MSME sector, which plays a pivotal role in economic development. There were extensive discussions on ways to make this sector more vibrant, attractive and ready to embrace new opportunities," the prime minister said in a tweet after the meeting.

The Finance Ministry also made a detailed presentation to the PM on the state of economy and several initiatives that it plans

to undertake to stimulate Indian economy.

During the deliberations, each ministry made recommendations and possible steps to be taken in the short run to prop up the sector administered by them.

After a detailed review of each and every sector, a relief and stimulus package will be worked out, sources said.

The prime minister already had meetings with different ministries including civil aviation, labour and power on Friday.

### BRIEFLY

#### ICICI Lombard Q4 net rises 24% to ₹282 cr

New Delhi: ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company on Saturday reported a 23.8 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 282 crore for the March quarter.

#### Mahindra Logistics to raise ₹250 cr

New Delhi: Mahindra Logistics on Saturday said its board has approved raising up to Rs 250 crore through various means, including loans and debt issuances. The borrowing will be done in one or more tranches, the company said.

#### APSEZ promoters release pledged shares

New Delhi: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Saturday said its promoters Gautam S Adani and Rajesh Adani on behalf of SB Adani Family Trust have released pledge on 5.66 crore equity shares, comprising its 2.78 per cent holding.

#### New Fellows of Royal Society in the UK

London: Ralf Speth, CEO of Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover, and Professor Vikram Deshpande from Cambridge University have been elected new Fellows of the Royal Society in the UK. **PTI**

### 'Virus to shave off hotel industry's revenue by ₹90,000 crore in 2020'

India's hotel industry is estimated to face a business loss of Rs 90,000 crore during this calendar year, as all hotels are closed due to nationwide lockdown to control coronavirus disease, according to a report by HVS and Anarock

**OCCUPANCIES** across hotels in key cities witnessed a sharp decline, as travel restrictions intensified and India went into lockdown towards the end of March 2020

#### MARCH MAYHEM:

The occupancy in hotels across top 13 markets dropped by 53 per cent compared to the same month last year

For the full year, the report expects a decline of 48 per cent

Average daily rate fell 7 per cent in March to Rs 5,690 compared with the corresponding period of the previous year

Earlier estimates of the overall revenue loss revised due to the evolving nature of the pandemic. Source: HVS, Anarock/PTI

57% erosion in overall revenue — approximately ₹90,000 cr in 2020

₹40,000 CR loss, of the total Rs 90,000 cr, for organised hotel operators

HVS is a leading global consultant for the hospitality sector and helps companies in financing, developing, owning, or operating a hospitality property.



## Social media use surges; average time spent on Facebook and Instagram up over 60%

DEVIKA SINGH  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

EVEN WHEN we were not forced by a lockdown and a deadly virus to remain physically distant from friends and family, social media was a popular way to remain in touch. Now, it is the only way, barring phone calls.

Data also points likewise. A recent report by data intelligence firm KalaGato shows that the average time spent on Facebook and Instagram went up by 62 per cent, while TikTok saw a 44 per cent surge, LinkedIn a rise of 27 per cent and the time spent on Twitter increased by 34 per cent between February 5 and March 29.

As per the report, before the lockdown, on February 5, the users on an average spent 41.4 minutes on Facebook, but after the lockdown on March 29, they were active for 66.9 minutes on the plat-

### TIME SPENT ON FB

66.9 mins

As per a KalaGato report, before the lockdown, on February 5, the users on an average spent 41.4 minutes on Facebook, but after the lockdown on March 29, they were active for 66.9 minutes on the platform.

form. The average time being spent on TikTok for the same dates went up from 39.5 minutes to 56.9 minutes and on Instagram, up from 21.8 minutes to 35.4 minutes.

However, while the time spent on social networking platforms has gone up substantially, advertising spends on these platforms have come down drastically, as several brands have

scaled down advertising.

"Advertising is a very basic function of sales and since most companies cannot sell at this point in time or there are no products to sell, spends have come down," says Shamsuddin Jasani, group MD, Isobar, south Asia.

The head of a digital agency shares that several of its clients have stopped advertising on social media for the next three months. As a result of the fall in advertising volumes on these social networking platforms, there is more ad inventory available, which has brought down ad rates severely.

Bikash Chowdhury, chief marketing officer of Glance, a lock screen content platform, says as the organic reach has gone up on social media, the available impressions on these platforms have also increased and, therefore, cost per mille or CPM on these platforms have come down. "We are running some of our campaigns at 30-40

per cent lower cost as compared to the pre-lockdown period," he adds.

CPM is the cost a brand pays for one thousand views or clicks of an advertisement on digital media.

The nature of advertisers on these mediums has also changed during the lockdown. Most companies from retail, automotive, e-commerce and consumer durables have stopped advertising in the weeks following lockdown. Meanwhile, brands that have more essential products or a massive digital presence are pushing their ads on social media. "Insurance companies, online gaming apps and online learning apps are some examples," a circular of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated. India has been under lockdown since March 25 to curb the spread of coronavirus. All commercial passenger flights have been suspended for this

## TVS Motor, HMSI sell zero units in Apr due to lockdown

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
CHENNAI, MAY 2

FOLLOWING CAR manufacturers, two-wheeler companies such as TVS Motor and Honda Motorcycles too have reported nil sales in April 2020 as all their plants have been shut due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

However, these companies begun exports in a small way post resumption of ports across the country.

In a statement on Saturday, TVS Motor said, "Since March 23, 2020, the company's plants have been closed in compliance with the government guidelines. During April 2020, TVS Motor had

zero sales in the domestic market. Following resumption of operations at Chennai Port, 8,134 units of two-wheelers and 1,506 three-wheelers were shipped utilising the stocks from March 2020 while ensuring utmost safety.

"TVS Motor is gearing up to restart operations as per state guidelines and is undertaking strong measures to safeguard the health of the employees. We are optimistic about the potential demand for personal mobility once things normalise," the release added.

Similarly, Eicher Motors announced that Royal Enfield suspended operations and production across its factories, technology centres in India and UK as well as all the company of-

ices and dealerships in the country starting March 23, 2020. For April, Royal Enfield's manufacturing facilities across Tiruvottiyur, Oragadam and Vallam Vadagal near Chennai and the entire supply chain including the company's dealerships across India remained closed in compliance with the government directives. Due to this complete halt in operations, Royal Enfield has reported sales of 91 units for April 2020.

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India too said that it has exported 2,630 two-wheelers in April 2020. However, its domestic sale was zero due to the lockdown. The company suspended its operations across India since March 22. **FE**

## Commercial passenger flights to remain suspended till May 17 midnight: DGCA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A DAY after the Modi government announced extension of the coronavirus-induced lockdown till May 17, the DGCA on Saturday said all commercial passenger flights will remain suspended till midnight of May 17.

"It is reiterated that foreign and domestic airlines shall be suitably informed about the opening of their operations whether international to/from India or domestic, respectively, in due course," a circular of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated.

India has been under lockdown since March 25 to curb the spread of coronavirus. All commercial passenger flights have been suspended for this

### Cargo flights, medical evacuation flights and special flights permitted by the DGCA are allowed to operate

period.

However, cargo flights, medical evacuation flights and special flights permitted by the DGCA are allowed to operate.

Coronavirus has infected over 37,000 people and killed more than 1,200 people in India till now.

The first phase of lockdown in India was from March 25 to April 14. The second phase started on April 15 and would end on May 3.

The third phase would be from May 4 to 17.

## RBI cancels licence of Mumbai-based CKP Co-op Bank

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MAY 2

THE RESERVE Bank of India has cancelled the licence of Mumbai-based CKP Co-operative Bank to carry on banking business in the wake of its unsustainable financial position. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Maharashtra, has also been requested to issue an order for winding up the affairs of the bank and appoint a liquidator, the RBI said.

On liquidation, every depositor is entitled to repayment of his/her deposits up to a monetary ceiling of Rs 5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation. The bank has a deposit base of Rs 486 crore.

According to the RBI, it cancelled the licence of the bank as the financial position of the bank is highly adverse and unsustainable. "There is no concrete revival plan or proposal for merger with another bank. Credible commitment towards revival from the management is not visible," the RBI said.

"The bank is not satisfying the requirement of minimum capital and reserves, capital adequacy and earning prospects and also stipulated minimum regulatory capital requirement of 9 per cent," it said. The bank is not in a position to pay its present and future depositors.

"The affairs of the bank were and are being conducted in a manner detrimental to the public interest and interest of the depositors and that the general character of the management of the bank is prejudicial to the interest of depositors as also public interest," the RBI said. The bank's efforts for revival have been far from adequate though the bank has been given ample time and opportunity and dispensations.

"No merger proposal has been received in respect of the bank. Thus, in all likelihood, public interest would be adversely affected if the bank were allowed to carry on its business any further," it said.

## 2nd instalment of ₹500 to women Jan Dhan accounts from Monday: FinMin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

WOMEN JAN Dhan bank account holders will start getting the second instalment of Rs 500 from Monday in line with the announcement made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in March. To help the poor tide over the COVID-19 crisis, the government had on March 26 said ex-gratia payment of Rs 500 would be credited to women Jan Dhan account holders for the next three months, starting from April.

"Instalment of Rs.500 for the month of May has been sent to the bank A/c's of PMJDY women beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package.

"Beneficiaries are requested to follow the schedule shared below

to visit banks & CSFs. Money can also be withdrawn via ATMs & BCs." Financial Services Secretary Debashish Panda said in a tweet on Saturday.

The transfer has been staggered over a period of five days to avoid rush at the bank branches. This will help in ensuring social distancing and avoid overcrowding in banks, he said.

As per the schedule, women account holders under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) having account number with last digit as 0 and 1 will get the money in their account on May 4, while accounts ending with 2 or 3 can approach the bank on May 5. On May 6, beneficiaries with account numbers ending with 4 or 5 can collect their money, while accounts ending with 6 or 7 may withdraw on May 8.

## US Fed officials worry about lasting economic damages from pandemic

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON, MAY 2

AFTER ROLLING out trillions of dollars in support for the US economy during the coronavirus pandemic, Federal Reserve officials have begun warning of potentially lasting scars to the workforce and productivity if the recovery is not handled well. In separate comments on Friday, the heads of three Fed regional banks said the aggressive efforts already taken to keep companies and firms afloat are only the start of what will be required to get the economy back to normal, with worker retraining, retooled social safety nets, and other steps needed once the health crisis eases.

"We need to be working on the economy's recovery rate" after the crisis, said Richmond Fed President Thomas Barkin, noting



The Federal Reserve in Washington. Reuters file

that companies may be operating less efficiently under social distancing rules, business investment may be hampered by eroded confidence, and workers may pull back from the labour market as they rethink how to care for children and aging parents in an era

when day care facilities and nursing homes pose higher risks.

Barkin spoke amid a patchwork end to the coronavirus-spurred lockdowns that has seen some states throw open their economies already and others maintain restrictions, while companies and their employees struggle to find the right balance. Workers that remain on the job face risks - meat processing plants have been forced offline due to outbreaks among workers - while companies that do reopen likely face higher costs and fewer customers.

"We will return to somewhat normal operations - at a gradual pace," Barkin told the Maryland Chamber of Commerce in a webinar. But "I worry about the landing spot - how strong the economy will be at the end of this."

## Berkshire posts nearly \$50-bn loss on COVID

REUTERS  
NEW YORK, MAY 2

WARREN BUFFETT'S Berkshire Hathaway Inc on Saturday posted a record net loss of nearly \$50 billion as the coronavirus pandemic pummeled its common stock investments, but operating profit rose even as COVID-19 hurt its businesses.

Berkshire's first-quarter net loss totaled \$49.75 billion, or \$30,653 per Class A share, reflecting \$54.52 billion of losses from investments, mainly common stocks. A year earlier, net earnings totaled \$21.66 billion, or \$13,209 per share.

Quarterly operating profit, which Buffett considers a better performance measure, rose 6 per cent to \$5.87 billion, or about \$3,624 per Class A share \$5.56 bil-



Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett. File

lion, or about \$3,388 per share. Berkshire has loaded up on stocks in part because of Buffett's inability to find large companies to buy outright, a drought that has lasted more than four years and left Berkshire with about \$137.3 billion of cash.

## eye

## LIGHT FANTASTIC

He was conditioned by life and it gave him empathy and a rare earthiness. And when he faced the camera, you knew that Irrfan would catch you by surprise every single time

BY NASEERUDDIN SHAH

IT IS DIFFICULT to put it in words what Irrfan's loss means to me. I was not very close to him or his family but Irrfan is an actor I envied. Not everybody is aware of how long and arduous a struggle he had. He played umpteen walk-on parts and small roles in television serials and movies before he gained any kind of recognition. What was truly inspiring is that all those years of rejections did not embitter him or make him lose faith in himself.

When I meet actors who move to Mumbai and say, "I'm going to try for two years and if it does not work out, I'll go home", I tell them they should go back and not waste these two years. In two years, nothing is going to happen. Irrfan didn't give himself any such deadline. He knew that this was his life's vocation. He decided to do whatever it took to stay afloat. He barely stayed afloat for many years until films like *The Warrior* (2001) came along.

Death, I have always believed, is the most unimportant part of life. It doesn't matter how and when you die. What matters is what you have done with your life. Irrfan did a great deal with his life. But I had to re-examine my earlier belief. In Irrfan's case, the timing and nature of his death mattered. He had tonnes more to give. We had hardly witnessed the tip of the iceberg of the immense talent and commitment that was Irrfan. We are unfortunate to have missed out on the rest. But what does one do when confronted with a situation like this, except to look upon Irrfan as an example — not only as the actor par excellence but also in the way he devoted himself to his family, the way he looked at life and his sense of gratitude for having had these years? He was a private person, like his wife Sutapa (Sikdar). There was not a trace of self-pity in him. He never mentioned the agony he went through. All he did say was that "it is astounding that such a frail body can house so much pain". This, he said, without implying that he was suffering.

The way with which he fought the dreaded disease, the optimism he always had and the objectivity with which he approached it startled me. When the illness struck him, I didn't know whether he would appreciate getting disturbed. So, I didn't get in touch with him. But Irrfan sent me a message, "Knock knock... Naseer bhai". So, I called him and we spoke several times when he was in London undergoing treatment. He knew the inevitable was coming, yet he would say, "How many

people have the chance to observe death coming at them? I'm lucky that I can see this thing approaching me and I can greet it." It shook me up when he said this. I realised that this is the only way one can approach death.

Everyone knows about Irrfan's work and it will survive forever. Without a doubt, he'll be remembered as one of the finest actors of this country. When you watched him act, you felt as if you could read his mind. But he never made an effort to reach you. This is a strange paradox about Irrfan as an actor. An actor always makes efforts to reach out to his audience. Irrfan knew the audience would reach out to him. People who have known him only through his work have felt a personal connection with him. That's the most precious thing an actor can do for an audience. Irrfan had the ability to enter into your veins and make you feel he is yours. That's why this outpouring of grief over a person many people didn't know, but who they realised is a gem. It shows an extreme mastery

of his craft and a confidence in his abilities. The intelligence that shone through in his acting is a rare quality. It gave a peculiar charisma to his performances. He reminded me of those Buddhist monks who draw intricate patterns out of coloured powder over days. It requires absolute concentration. Once the mandala is complete, they simply wipe them clean. It does not matter if people see their work or not. What's of consequence is that they give their best to create them. Watching Irrfan act reminded me of them. He never spoke of his own performances or boasted about his work. He just quietly did it. The fact that he was deprived of a chance to do more makes me very angry at life. I am grateful that I lived at the same time as he did and I could see an actor who is head and shoulders above other actors.

I met him first when he was doing a telefilm titled *Jazeera* (1991), directed by Govind Nihalani, with Ratna (Pathak Shah) and Mita Vashisht. It was based on Henrik Ibsen's play *Little Eyolf* (1894), which I found to be abstruse when I tried reading it. Irrfan would often come over (to our home) to rehearse. That's the first time I registered this lanky man, who was all eyes. I used to teach at the National School of Drama, Delhi, but I never had the opportunity to work with his class. Later, I acted in a film called *Private Detective: Two Plus Two Plus One*

He knew the inevitable was coming, yet he would say, 'How many people have the chance to observe death coming at them? I'm lucky that I can see this thing approaching me and I can greet it.' It shook me up when he said this



**STARBURST** (Clockwise from above) Irrfan in *The Warrior* (2001); with Tabu in *Maqbool* (2003); Irrfan never let disappointments hold him back; in *Life of Pi* (2012); and *Yun Hota Toh Kya Hota* (2006)

(1997). He had a tiny part in it but he stood out even without making any attempt to do so. When I watched *The Warrior*, I was in England. Not many had seen the film in India at that time. I was so moved, I got hold of his number and called him. He was very happy.

I got to know him better during Vishal Bhardwaj's *Maqbool* (2003). The film went through various permutations of casting. Then inspiration struck Vishal and he decided on Irrfan in the titular role. For Irrfan, *Maqbool* was the beginning of his recognition in India. He was in his early 30s then, acting alongside Om Puri, Pankaj Kapur and me but he held his own. When I used to watch him act, I used to think of Mozart and (Antonio) Salieri. Salieri used to tell God, "Why am I the patron saint of mediocrity? Is this fellow's random scribbling superior to my hours and hours of labour in composing music?" I must say that when I watched Irrfan, that's how I used to feel. I wished that when I was his age, I had been that good. I admired him in an unqualified manner and that was not just because of his acting. He was also a gentle, affectionate and generous man. I treasure the moments I shared with him.

A great teacher of acting once said there is no such thing as talent but there is such a thing as lack of talent. Lack of talent occurs when you are not in your right place. Irrfan was at his right place from the beginning and he recognised this fact. That's why he didn't give in to disappointment and disillusionment. That was his special quality, one that came from empathy, from an understanding of life and from a tremendous amount of compassion. It's easy to say Irrfan was a natural. There is no such thing as that. Even Michelangelo had to work at his painting to master his craft. I'm certain Irrfan put in an immense amount of labour into his craft. There is a great amount of preparation,



a lot of self-doubt that you don't let on and a great deal of heartburn involved in becoming a good actor. Thankfully, he was conditioned by life, not by Hindi cinema. I have not seen an Irrfan performance when he looked out of place, with the possible exception of some scenes in *Life of Pi* (2012), where he attempted an American-Canadian accent. He confessed as much when I told him that it didn't work. "Main try kar raha tha (I was trying something), Naseer bhai," he said.

This reminds me of an incident from the *Maqbool* shoot. There is a scene in the film between Maqbool and Kaka, played by Piyush Mishra. It's the famous Shakespearean scene where Macbeth is confronted by Banquo's ghost at the banquet. In *Maqbool*, when Kaka's body is brought to the pyre, Irrfan kneels down in a show of grief and the dead body opens its eyes. When we were rehearsing the scene, Irrfan sat down near the pyre on which Piyush was lying; I was standing behind him. I didn't realise that the rehearsal had begun. After a while, Irrfan toppled over backwards. I reached out to support him, assuming he'd lost his balance. Those *morpankhi aankhein* (peacock-feather-shaped eyes), as Ismat Chughtai describes Saadat Hasan Manto's eyes, turned towards me and said: "Naseer bhai, I am trying to act. Why are you helping me?" I don't think this has ever happened to me that I watched an actor perform and took it to be real.

I have never watched him on stage though I tried very hard to get him back on it. He would come and watch my work but he wouldn't take part. I realised that it was probably because like Robert De Niro or Daniel Day-Lewis, Irrfan invested heavily in his performances. It is impossible to invest emotionally to that extent on stage every night. It is my assumption that that's why Irrfan quit theatre. That's why actors like Day-Lewis and Marlon Brando quit the stage — not because of the success they got but because the stage made an impossible demand on them.

I'm thoroughly embarrassed by *Yun Hota Toh Kya Hota* (2006), a movie I directed. Irrfan's part in it got mercilessly chopped for various reasons until practically nothing was left of it. Not once did he complain or make me feel that I had given him a raw deal. He only spoke about it with affection. He agreed to do the movie at my bidding without talking money or asking what his role was. I regret that I never got a chance to make it up to him. Maybe, when we meet in the big studio up there, I will be able to make it up to him.

I can only quote Faiz Ahmad Faiz to describe his time with us: *Un aseeron ke naam/ Jinke seeron mein faradaa ke shabtaab gouhar/ Jail-khanon ki shoreeda raaton ki sarsar mein/ Jal jal ke anjum-numa ho gaye hain* (To those prisoners/ in whose hearts the firefly hope of a bejewelled dawn/ burns like starlight — frenetic and tumultuous/ in long nights of incarceration; from Mustansir Dalvi's translation)

Irrfan's legacy is like a constellation of stars. It is there for every actor to draw upon and take inspiration from. He is truly the actor's actor. (AS TOLD TO ALAKA SAHANI)

ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

## SPEAKEASY



Pratik Kanjilal

Pratik Kanjilal lectures a surprisingly tolerant public on far too many issues

## Facts of the Matter

Change will be the only constant in a post-COVID-19 world

**A**FTER CORONAVIRUS, many eternal verities are expected to change. The most unexpected news concerns the drug trade in the US. Washington waged a war on it. Hollywood made popular movies and streamed a series of glamourising its unstoppable energy. And, now, the business is power-diving faster than oil futures. Not because no one is selling, but because no one has the guts to buy from a street pusher with no obvious concern for health or hygiene. Imagine a nation the size of America going cold turkey from coast to coast. It's breathtaking.

Other verities are also failing to live up to expectations. Globalisation, which has steered geopolitics from the colonial era and came to be regarded as a force of nature in the industrial age, no longer looks either natural or reliable. Instead, socialist self-reliance is beginning to look like a virtue, and world leaders are being scolded for allowing outsourcing to undermine sovereignty. If China has access to a disproportionate share of the world's rare earths, for instance, it will obviously determine the future of microprocessors. Speaking of China, a geopolitical reversal had been expected for years, as Trump's Washington furling the flag of the Pax Americana and the superior financial muscle of Beijing began to tell. That process can only be accelerated by the pandemic.

Media could see a balancing of powers, too, as initiatives in Australia and France suggest. Digital platforms, which have been making money for jam by freeloading on original content produced by the local media, may now have to pay for it. The death of the press had seemed to be imminent, with Mark Zuckerberg travelling across America with a view to buying out small newspapers. That time may be over.

But, perhaps, the most fundamental change will be in perceptions of technology and technological competence. The positive stories about how technology has made house arrest tolerable because of Netflix, and working from home a breeze because of WhatsApp and Zoom, are a smokescreen obscuring the awful truth — nations with considerable technological prowess, which



PTI

## HOME THOUGHTS

Migrant workers gather outside Bandra West Railway Station on April 14, hoping for the lockdown to be lifted

have sent people to the moon or have realistic aspirations of doing so, do not have the installed capacity to protect their people from a medieval plague.

That's the big canvas. At the micro level, where exactly are the drones and 3D printers which were touted as solutions for everything? Pizza delivery was the original proof of concept for civilian drones, but no Margheritas are being delivered to hungry migrants by contactless drones. Last year, some Americans were delighted and others alarmed because the state of the art in 3D printing was nearing the point where a gun and the ammunition for it could be downloaded off the internet and printed in your study. But drone delivery of drugs and medical equipment is still in the pilot stage, and very few coronavirus test kits are being 3D-printed at the point of use. It's too slow, too expensive and very plastic. It's the last resort only for a nation which has outsourced its swab-making machinery to another continent.

Of course, drones are being used to monitor crowds that could become super-foci of infection, like the near-stampede that occurred outside Bandra West station in Mumbai. In America, drones fitted with thermal sensors are scanning crowds for potentially sick people, instead of taking their temperature one by one. But aesthetically, it's not the same as a drone hovering sleekly in your balcony, waiting to be unloaded of a bucket of biryani. Despite years of PR push, that is still science fiction.

In education, the reliability of technology has varied. Lots of adults are picking up new skills on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to keep from going stir crazy. Beats making candles and soap as a diversion, like jail inmates do. But in formal school and university education, success depends on how deeply invested the system already was in internet-mediated pedagogy.

In British and North American campuses, even dissertations are being successfully defended online. But in India, an elementary Sanskrit class is black comedy that the well-named emperor Harsha would have appreciated. The *vidvan* and his class watch helplessly, only able to squeak in weak protest, as a rogue student who has logged into their Zoom session with a fake identity silently doodles in rainbow colours all over the whiteboard, obscuring the first declension of *lata* and *nara*. Technology is only as good as the person controlling it, and like so many CEOs, presidents, prime ministers, chief ministers, thought leaders, influencers and interventionists who are struggling to get the coronavirus plot, the *vidvan* has flaked out. "If this carries on, I shall end the class," he threatens, and being a fatalist, he carries out the threat by logging out. The children stay on, sharing congratulations in chat mode. Class dismissed!

## Are Our Children Safe with Us?

The pandemic will stay on in our children's memory banks forever. The question to all the parents is, 'What deposits are we making?'



## IMAGINE

BY SHELJA SEN

**A** 12-YEAR-OLD recently shared with me that she felt very scared at home. "My parents are very stressed and they end up taking it out on me." The father has recently lost his job due to COVID-19, which has left the family financially insecure. A few months ago, the girl had lost her grandmother whom she was very close to. "They think it is not affecting me, but I am terrified most of the time. Stress is like polluted air, we are all breathing it in."

This conversation stayed with me (as most discussions with children do), and I kept thinking of how we were polluting the air for our kids at home. Like a dripping tap draining the water tank, this nagging voice of stress had sapped us of our energy, leaving us feeling exhausted and frazzled. Unwittingly, we are passing it on to our children as they become more vulnerable to triple jeopardy. One, like sponges they are soaking our emotions up but not being able to label them; two, we parents are so caught up in our anxieties that we are not able to pick up cues; three, as a society, we are trained to not prioritise children's emotional needs. We conveniently dump our stress on them just because we can. Across the world, there is a rise in the number of calls to domestic-violence and child-abuse helplines.

Our children are paying for the mistakes of their adults and though they might be protected from COVID-19, they are most vulnerable to the fallout of it. So, what can we do?

■ **Keep our eyes and hearts open.** Is there a change in their behaviour? It could be anything from becoming crankier, fearful, clingy, crying a lot to not eating well, getting repeated nightmares. We might see our young adults shutting themselves in their rooms, disturbed sleep patterns, constantly on their phones, snapping at us or refusing to engage. Rather than reacting with anger, let's find a way to talk to them about it — using play, art and stories with little ones and a gentle, respectful, non-blaming presence with the older ones. Be empathetic and see what their world is like right now. They don't need us to fix it for them; they need us to listen to them with our whole heart.

■ **Ask and not tell.** Children are not passive recipients or strangers to adversity. They might have interesting and innovative ideas of their own, too. Ask them rather than advis-



GETTY IMAGES

## TOGETHER, WE CAN

As adults, we have to learn how to listen to our children

ing or lecturing about everything. "What is troubling you?" "How can we help?" "What do you think will help you get better sleep?" Take out a notebook or a whiteboard — make a mind map and brainstorm with them.

■ **Give them choices and space.** Most of us are feeling crowded in our homes. It is as if all our identities and roles have been collapsed in small spaces where we have to work, parent, do household chores and stay reasonably calm and optimistic. Children and youth (this loss of freedom and autonomy can be especially hard for them) might be feeling the same as they have been robbed of so many of their spaces — schools, colleges, parks, cafes, friends' homes, etc. So it might be a good idea to work out areas in the house — maybe drawing a map and allocating time for each family member. They also need a sense of agency rather than being dictated to all the time. I learned a cool and collaborative 10-fingers exercise from a colleague, where one hand is for the child to choose five things she would like to do and the other for five things parents would like the child to do in the day.

■ **Let's make our children's safety our top priority.** There will be times when we will mess up — snap at them, push our agenda, criticise or be unfair — we need to apologise immediately and be mindful of the

inequity of power in this relationship. Especially when they do not have anybody else to turn to or seek help from. If we realise that we are at the risk of abusing our child, then we need to seek help immediately. We need to take this step for the safety of our child, otherwise, she might carry the scars for the rest of her life and we will lug the guilt and shame of it. The memories of the pandemic will stay in our children's memory banks forever. The question to all the parents is, "What deposits are we making?"

■ **Let it be.** We are all surviving a pandemic, so please let the perfectionism go and choose your battles. A messy house, your child skipping homework or a bath is not going to make so much of a difference. You might have seen that experiment where a class is given many big stones and sand to fit in a jar. If we start by filling the jar (your life right now) with sand (what does not matter) first then there will be no space for rocks (what really matters). Make space for the rocks first and sand will just find its way between the crevices.

■ **"You-me-we".** When there are struggles and conflicts (those are inevitable, too), this simple communication approach can work wonders. "You": I listen to you from my heart (and not just waiting for you to finish speaking) even though I might not agree

with you; "Me": I share my perspective with you and it is alright if you do not agree with me; "We": we will work at something together that works for both of us. For example, the college student who is feeling "low" might take to sleeping through the day as "there is nothing much to do." Your perspective might be "I get what you are saying but I would really like to spend some time with you through the day". Together, the decision might be for the young person to get up by noon and you cook a meal together before you get back to work.

■ **Acts of kindness.** Encouraging children and youth to get involved in projects that make our world a better place is going to be the best healing for them. It is only when we rise above our day-to-day concerns and contribute to humanity that we learn to find peace. If history has taught us anything, it is this that through times, whether humanity faced wars, the Partition, disasters, what has helped us heal is kindness, heaps and heaps of it, directed in words, action, acts of service, donations, whatever it takes to heal the world.

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## A Table for One

Away from home, in one of the worst COVID-19-affected regions in Italy, learning to look at food and the art of cooking afresh



PHOTOS: DAMINI RALLEIGH

Damini Ralleigh

**E**VER SINCE the coronavirus cleared the streets, hosing us up in our homes, social media feeds have been flooded with workout videos, recipe ideas and online courses. Many of us who have the privilege of turning mundane tasks into enjoyment while self-quarantined have turned to cooking. Food experts and chefs have been dishing out tips and tricks for what has come to be known as "quarantine cooking", and popular food publications such as the *The New York Times* Cooking section, *Bon Appétit* or *Eater*, among a host of others, have curated lists of recipes that can be rustled up in these extraordinary times.

Half the joy of cooking a meal is in the sharing of it. Last year — my first away from home — had me stirring up recipes I'd grown up eating more than ever before. Back in Delhi, getting into the kitchen meant attempting a dish that wasn't a part of the family's culinary reper-

toire. In Italy — where I am currently locked down — I found myself hankering for the familiarity of ordinary, everyday *khana*. Here, even a simple dal scaled new epicurean heights. Not that I do an extraordinary job of it but because it cloaks my apartment in a smell that reminds me of "home". My parents' house in Delhi always thronged with our friends, some of whom stayed with us for weeks, if not months. I carried forth the tradition in Italy, hosting dinners at least once a week. Most of these Indian dinners were devoured by a hunger-stricken pack of friends, who came from different parts of the world. As a result, my shopping accommodated their appetites as much as mine.

But now that sharing a meal with friends is difficult and partaking in one with family a distant dream, I realised that "quarantine cooking" isn't just about getting creative in the kitchen but also about learning to cook when you only have yourself to feed. It is an act of

self-soothing. COVID-19 has claimed over 27,967 lives in Italy, of which 3,066 are from the Piedmont (as of May 1), the region where I live. Though no one was on the streets, the days following the lockdown were terribly chaotic — more so in the mind. In times of such seething uncertainty, there is immense comfort to be found in an old hobby that reminds you, every day, of the better times you've lived and harbours the quiet promise of their return.

Cooking in quarantine, like everything else, demands an alteration in approach. For me, it started with changing the way I shopped for food. I realised that most foods are packaged for two, if not for a neat little family of four. Most of the recipes shared online cater to people looking to stretch their culinary skills or quench boredom. Even though they began to feel alienating, I was determined to give them a go.

The first step to downsizing portions is to figure out what to do with leftover produce. For those of us who hanker after texture, freezing food, especially when raw, has never been appealing. But it is the best way to ensure that you get the most mileage out of your vegetables and nothing goes to waste. But surely, treating the freezer like a second pantry needn't imply ignoring the intricacies that make a meal worthwhile? So, instead of piling onions, carrots and celery on top of each other in the freezer, it makes better sense to turn it into a *mirepoix* — a flavour base made with vegetables — before leaving it to chill. The same goes with the basic onion-tomato masala which forms a reliable base to build several dishes on.

The ingredients that can't be turned into bases, can be used for stews or soups. One of the first meals I prepared when the country came to standstill was a fennel and apple soup, which I froze for a few days to make it last longer. The anise-scented fennel against the sweet crispness of the apples revealed more than their earthy, fresh and utterly comforting notes. I realised I had to learn to make the most of each ingredient to avoid making frequent trips to the market.

As the virus continues to stunt supply chains and food producers struggle to get the rewards of their labour to consumers, or

sometimes even meet the surge in demand, it's essential to maximise what is already available. Other than the obvious benefits of affordability and allowing one to rustle up a meal in no time, it also offers the chance to better acquaint oneself with ingredients and find unlikely partners for them in the pantry. Often, that, too, is determined by what's lying around. I had some Gorgonzola to finish

up and beers I'd bought remembering all the health benefits that were read out to me when I would refuse to eat them as a child. With a couple of other key flavour players from my kitchen, they came together to form a delicious, wholesome meal.

The pleasure of cooking changes when one has only oneself to feed. To cook alone, when no one is watching, doesn't merely dilute the pressure of pleasing others with your culinary skills, it also makes you confront the choices you make in the kitchen. So much of what I took for granted — an overflowing pantry, elaborate recipes, people to share food with it — has been substituted with a deep appreciation for the sounds of ingredients sputtering in the pan, simple meals that reveal the pleasures of self-dependency.

## RECIPE

## INGREDIENTS:

- 3 beetroots — quartered
- 150 gm Gorgonzola or any blue cheese
- 5-6 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 3 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

## METHOD:

- In a large non-stick pan, heat the oil.
- Toss the beetroots for about 2 minutes.
- Add the balsamic and continue tossing till the beets are covered in the vinegar. Let the vinegar reduce.
- Transfer onto a plate. Sprinkle the toasted sesame seeds and crumble the gorgonzola over the beets.

*This recipe can be served cold as well. Chill the beetroots before coating them in the sesame seeds and adding the cheese.*

Damini Ralleigh is a food writer, just out of the University of Gastronomic Sciences, Pollenzo

# What Happens Next?

The unfolding outbreak is like a story full of enigmatic ambiguity, told in a language yet to be translated

Stephen Alter

EVERY DISEASE is a story. It has a beginning, middle and, hopefully, an end.

Some illnesses are little more than anecdotes or riddles. Others are parables and allegories. A few grow into epics, containing a multitude of episodic tales, one leading on to another.

The novel coronavirus, which is responsible for COVID-19, sounds like something out of science fiction. It is still in the process of being deciphered, a mystery told in a language that has yet to be translated. Nevertheless, it spreads among us with very real and immediate results. In early January, my wife, Ameeta, and I both got sick with pneumonia in Denver, Colorado. When we were tested for the flu, the results were negative. Our symptoms — fever, cough, shortness of breath, inability to taste food, etc. — seem to match everything I've read about COVID-19. The worst of it lasted two weeks and for half of that time, I needed supplemental oxygen to breathe. The doctors who treated us offered no diagnosis beyond pneumonia and prescribed drugs that had little or no effect.

All of this happened before the disease began killing people in large numbers around the world. Phrases like "social distancing" and "shelter in place" hadn't yet become a regular part of our vocabulary. Perhaps, one of these days, when medical

technology catches up with the pathogen, Ameeta and I will have an opportunity to get tested for antibodies and learn whether or not our pneumonia was a result of COVID-19. Until then, it is a story without a clear conclusion, full of enigmatic ambiguity, like something Milan Kundera might have written.

Of course, doctors can be storytellers too, as Abraham Verghese demonstrated in his powerful memoir of the AIDS epidemic, *My Own Country* (1994). Through the personal traumas and collective fears of his patients in the Smoky Mountains of rural Tennessee, Verghese recounts a terrifying yet compassionate tale of infection, treatment and death, as well as the constant hope for a cure. While the Human Immunodeficiency Virus may be the main character in Verghese's book, it is the stories of the people it attacks that allow us to understand the disease.

Over time, the many ways in which we tell our stories have changed. While oral traditions continue today, they have been replaced by succeeding generations of new narrative devices, including social media. The epic of Gilgamesh, one of the first stories ever told, was preserved on clay tablets impressed with a cuneiform script that was decoded by modern scholars four millennia after it was written. Much of Gilgamesh's story revolves around the hero's search for a healing herb that will bring his friend, Enkidu, back to life. Similarly, the plagues of ancient Egypt are chronicled in hieroglyphics on the walls of



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In early January, my wife and I both got sick with pneumonia in Denver, Colorado. Our symptoms seem to match everything I've read about COVID-19

their victim's tombs, as well as in Jewish and Christian scripture.

As a writer who works at home, I am fortunate that my daily routines have been largely unaffected by the many restrictions and anxieties that the contagion has produced. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the widespread fear, disruption, unemployment and hardship that the coronavirus has unleashed on the world. The death toll is tragic and seems to be rising in a merciless curve. Confusing, conflicting rumours spread through the internet, adding to a helpless feeling of being besieged by an invisible, insidious force that respects no borders and overwhelms its victims without warning.

Travel has been severely restricted. Most of us are quarantined, locked-down or sub-

jected to curfews in an effort to slow the progress of this disease. Whatever metaphors we use to describe these desperate conditions, they seem inadequate and trite. Even the constant talk of "waging war" against the virus, a favourite analogy employed by world leaders, doesn't adequately describe the kind of response that is required. As human beings, our adversarial nature demands an enemy and since the virus itself is faceless, we often transfer our hostilities to those we blame, telling and retelling stories that point fingers in various misconceived directions.

Up until the beginning of the 20th century, Tibetan authorities only opened Himalayan passes for the summer, after ensuring that there was no cholera or other epidemic on the other side. If any



MESSAGES FROM AN OLD COUNTRY

(Left) A Spanish 15th century woodcut, *Massacre of the Firstborn and Egyptian Darkness*, depicts a Biblical plague; and a tablet of the epic of Gilgamesh found in Mesopotamia, Iraq

news of a disease was reported, the passes were kept closed and no traders, shepherds or pilgrims were allowed to cross over into Tibet.

Travellers have always carried their maladies with them just as they transport and transmit stories. During the current global pandemic, our journeys have been curtailed and most borders have been sealed to try and contain the virus. At the same time, stories continue to circulate, whether we read them in books or find them online. For any storyteller, the fundamental question will always remain, "What happens next?" even if we don't know the answer.

Stephen Alter is the author of *Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth*

# Into the Great Alone

For five months in 2012, Abhilash Tomy sailed around the world on the *Mhadei*, utterly alone. Under lockdown, he looks back at how the mind emerged after being subject to such extreme solitude

WHEN THE nationwide lockdown was announced to contain the spread of COVID-19, I was aware that even if the logistics of providing for 1.3 billion people in their homes could be managed, there would still remain the problem of mental health — many were wading into unfamiliar territory. Not so for me, nor for my colleagues in the Indian Navy, who are regularly sequestered in metal ships and submarines for weeks. Perhaps, there are lessons to be learnt in how we deal with isolation.

In February 2010, I landed on an island of 20 sq km, with a population of two, no roads and a topography so ravaged by winds that trees refused to take root. A signboard announced its name in red — Bleaker Island — making me wonder if it had anything to do with the isolation suffered by its inhabitants. A year later, I was to spend 25 days in a sail boat, cloistered with another soul as we made our way from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town. I had a firsthand experience of the peculiar loneliness that one feels in the company of another, that comes from running out of things to talk about.

At Cape Town, I dropped off my crew, made a pilgrimage to Robbeneiland, where Nelson Mandela had been incarcerated for 18 years. As winter approached in the southern hemisphere, I set sail for Goa, alone in my little boat. An easterly breeze helped us at the outset but when the Cape of Good Hope was rounded, it freshened into a gale trying to push us back into the Atlantic. The air was made bleaker by its dampness, but what exacerbated my condition were the problems that beset us. The gale shredded a sail and a battered cut loose and made its way into the sea. The generator and autopilot, too, went on strike.

The days got bleaker and I struggled between my duties as lookout, cook, navigator, sail trimmer and a quartermaster rendered sleepless without a functional autopilot. It did not help either that I was afflicted with nausea, with my stomach trying to cope with the problem of seasickness by retching. Those four days broke me mentally and I wasn't sure if I could carry on for another 30 days and make it to India. Everything was going wrong and I was angry and desperate because a lot hinged on the outcome of this voyage.

Something had to be done. It was important that I set my own house in order first, so that I could perceive things as they were. I set about chanting dispassionate sounds over the next two days, till the mind slowed and stopped reacting to outside cues. I could decide what to feel, and I decided to feel peaceful. As if on cue, the storm outside stopped being stormy and despair was replaced by a stoic resolve that comes after a glimpse of the profound. It had become simpler to be where I was, which was the present, and continue to remain there until I reached where I had to be. This transition from loneliness to solitude was a seminal experience, that I built upon till it was time for the big voyage of 2012.

On November 1 that year, my life turned a chapter. The Indian Navy was about to help me realise my childhood dream of sailing around the world. I was casting off to be more alone than any other Indian had ever been and for even longer than one's imagination would permit. I was to be so alone that it was



akin to draining this country of all its people, land, roads, buildings, rivers, forests and everything conceivable and to stand in its geographic centre, dealing with a biweekly ration of cyclones. It would be bleaker than Bleaker, and even more remote. But unlike many alone under the lockdown today, I had not only volunteered but was also looking forward to it. I let go of the lines that tied my boat to the shore with profound relief and sailed out into a cyclone that waited outside the harbour. I was better prepared this time.

In the next five months, I sailed around the world alone on the *Mhadei*. The voyage was well documented in blogs and media. People noticed the equatorial heat, the certainty of trade winds and the magnificent Great Capes of the Southern Hemisphere. The vicious gales of the Southern Ocean reminded them of the age-old adage that there were no rules south of the forties, no laws south of the fifties and no gods south of the sixties. They saw how the boat and I were battered by storms and calmed by lulls, how we were chased by whales, dolphins and albatross, how in the tropics flying fish would kill themselves by flying into the boat, and how I survived on rain water after diesel mixed with my drinking water. What they did not see, though, was the mind that emerged after being subject to such solitude.

Pointers of what was to become of me at the end of the isolation emerged within a month. The first week was spent in forgetting land — both its trappings and the exhaustion one carries from having to ready a boat — as you realise that you have become

a little self-sustaining planet. I had also lost the sense of time because there no longer existed a need to synchronise mundane chores to the convenience of others. By the third week, I realised that I wasn't dressing to conform to an image, or to an occasion, but to what was necessitated by convenience and that made clothing optional. It took me four weeks to see the freedom that came from not having to form opinions, or having to worry about the opinions of others and of the constant necessity to impress someone else, or outthink and out-manoeuvre them. I was more alone than any man could be, so alone that even if I had to call for help it would take weeks for anyone to lend a helping hand. In contrast, the loneliness of this lockdown is a much watered-down version.

The storms began as soon as we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn. The first storm, which seemed like the gale at the Cape of Good Hope, shook me. Powerful winds heaped mountains of water but it was not the force of the storm that made me afraid but the memory of the previous one. I got used to this, because once you understand that fear is a projection of your mind, it can be controlled and experienced in the manner you want. Even without that understanding, it is the faculty of human mind that it can endure what it can't change.

The mind, in a world devoid of stimulations, where everything was the same every day, learnt that forgetfulness was a powerful and natural ally. I could no longer remember what yesterday was like, or the day before or any other day right until the first day of the voyage. Whatever memories I had were frag-

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mented without time stamps or had to be recalled from a written journal. I, for one, existed only at that moment. The mind that was unstimulated by the outside environment turned inwards and became reflective. Life's philosophical questions that need long periods of contemplation are best engaged in such uninterrupted solitude. In the absence of society, products of belief systems broke down. In the absence of transaction, money lost its meaning. In the absence of society, hierarchy broke down. There was no way of determining one's position in the order of things and, therefore, death, which in a way of speaking is a cessation of relationships, became non-existent. Without death, the conventional idea of god necessitated a replacement. When one hasn't spoken at all, one has stopped lying and, by extension, one becomes sinless in solitude because there hasn't been anyone to sin against. Without

sin there was no guilt, and without guilt and conversation, I started to see things as they were because my highest and only moral obligation was to be truthful to myself. In those five months, without the burden of memory or expectations, I was free.

We celebrated two New Year's Eves as we crossed the International Date Line, rounded Cape Horn on 26th of January 2013, crossed the Prime Meridian on Valentine's Day, rounded the Cape of Good Hope in a storm, dodged a cyclone off Madagascar, sailed past Mauritius, ran out of water before Seychelles, recrossed the Equator on the day of March equinox and were back in Mumbai on Easter Sunday. There was a tremendous reception at the Gateway of India as thousands gathered and the President of India flew down to mark the end of the voyage. It was interesting to be thrown among people. Was it a coincidence that I re-read *Moby Dick* about that time and my attention was drawn to these lines? "Here was a man some twenty thousand miles from home, by the way of Cape Horn, that is — which was the only way he could get there — thrown among people as strange to him as though he were in the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself. Surely his was a touch of fine philosophy; though no doubt he had never heard there was such a thing as that."

Cdr Tomy is a naval reconnaissance pilot and the first Indian to complete a single-handed, non-stop circumnavigation of the earth in 2012



There is going to be a lot of tours that will need to be made up. It's going to be a bit different to what we're used to. We're going to have to be ready coming out of this break to play heaps and heaps of cricket."

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE

## Police challenge bail granted to Chawla

PRITAM PAL SINGH  
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A DAY after a court granted bail to Sanjeev Chawla, key accused in the 2000 match-fixing scandal involving late South Africa captain Hansie Cronje, the police moved the Delhi High Court seeking a stay on the order.

Delhi Police's appeal against the trial court's April 30 order came up for hearing before Justice Asha Menon on Saturday, who after listening to arguments from both sides, reserved the order.

The trial court had ordered Chawla's release on furnishing a personal bond of Rs two lakh with two sureties.

Justice Menon, however, clarified that "in case the accused (Chawla) submits his bail bond and surety bonds, the Duty MM (Metropolitan Magistrate) will ensure that an undertaking is also simultaneously filed separately by the accused and sureties to the effect that they will be bound by the decision of this court."

Senior counsel Vikas Pahwa and advocate Jagjit Nandal told the court that the accused has been in judicial custody since February 12 and spent 76 days in jail.

Pahwa argued that in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is risk of the accused getting infected with coronavirus in jail.

The Investigative Officer (IO) in the case has admitted that among the other accused, Cronje is dead, three others are on bail while one - Manmohan Khattar - is absconding.

Police sought the cancellation of the bail order arguing that Chawla is a British national and it took 20 years to bring him to India and there was the risk of the accused fleeing from justice.

The police, in its plea filed through prosecutor Kewal Singh Ahuja, said that the guidelines with respect to COVID-19 and release of undertrial prisoners are not applicable to Chawla in light of his alleged role in match-fixing as he was the main conduit in the conspiracy.

Pahwa opposed the police's plea saying Chawla never applied for bail in 60 days



Police sought the cancellation of the bail order arguing that it took 20 years to bring Sanjeev Chawla to India. File

which showed he was cooperating with the prosecuting agency. He added that the trial has been pending for seven years but charges have not been framed and it will take considerable time to complete the trial.

The trial court in its April 30 bail order observed, "...in view of the fact that no cricket match was thrown/lost pursuant to alleged match-fixing, the applicant/accused Sanjeev Kumar Chawla is ordered to be released on bail..."

It, however, directed Chawla to give his voice sample and hand writing specimen to the IO. It also directed that the accused will not leave India without permission of the court.

As per the police, Chawla and Cronje were named by the Crime Branch in the chargesheet filed on July 23, 2013 for 'fixing matches played between India and South Africa from February 16, 2000 to March 20, 2000 in India'.

The next date of hearing is May 14. The scandal broke in April 2000 when Delhi Police intercepted a conversation between Chawla and Cronje, in which it was learnt that the latter had accepted money to lose matches. Chawla has also been accused of offering money to two England players in August 1999.

## Football vs virus

Corona cases at Cologne latest blow to restart plans as leagues opt for drastic measures to get the ball rolling

AFP/REUTERS  
MAY 2

GERMANY WAS convinced its football league had a head-start over others. Now, it seems to have hit a roadblock.

Days after they resumed training, Bundesliga side FC Cologne have said three people from the club have tested positive for coronavirus and are sent into a 14-day quarantine. Although the club said they will continue training, the development comes as a potential blow to hopes of restarting the football season with a senior German lawmaker raising safety concerns for players and officials as leagues across Europe push for a restart despite the virus still spreading and no medical cure found.

"Likely two players, one staffer infected," wrote Karl Lauterbach, a senior lawmaker with the Social Democrats - junior partners in Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition - on Twitter on Saturday. "The rest (of the squad) continues to train. Whoever trains with COVID-19 risks damages to lung, heart and kidneys. I am surprised that players are allowing this," added Lauterbach, a professor of health economics and epidemiology.

The Bundesliga, which was halted on March 13, had set a May 9 target to resume the season. That date has now been reset to May 15 after Merkel said any decision on if and when sports could resume would be taken on May 6.

Tim Meyer, who chairs the German Football League's task force on coronavirus, said the positive tests didn't undermine the league's approach. "We now see in everyday life that our concept recognises and reduces risks at an early stage," he said in a statement on Cologne's website. "We will always be in close contact with the responsible health authorities and medical experts. We are convinced that with our concept, we can enable players to practise their profession with the best possible protection against infection." Cologne said they had the entire team, coaching and backroom staff tested on Thursday for COVID-19. "Three people tested positive, all are symptom-free," the club said in a statement on its website. "After an assessment of the cases by the responsible health authorities, the three people who tested positive will go into a 14-day quarantine at home. Cologne will



THE GAME BEFORE THE GAMES

Wearing face masks during training, playing at neutral venues and biodegradable kit bags: with billions at stake, leagues across Europe are coming up with different solutions to restart the season.

**La Liga's phase-wise plan**  
IN SPAIN, first there will be testing of all players and officials, followed by individual training sessions.

According to the *Guardian*, it is being mulled that players use the same car always to arrive at training and in kit, taking away the following day's kit in a sealed, biodegradable bag. They won't be allowed to use dressing rooms. A maximum of six players will be allowed on the pitch and only two will be allowed in the gym at a time, with no interaction with coaching staff allowed. In phase 3, all players will be kept in isolation in individual rooms at the training ground or a hotel. The final phase would be to train together and restart matches. The whole process will take up to a month.

**England's 'Project Restart'**  
ACCORDING TO the Premier League's 'Project Restart', players will have to wear face masks at all times - including training - cannot park their cars any closer than three spaces apart from each other's and will be tested thoroughly at least three times a week.

The staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment will be in charge of disinfecting footballs, cones, corner flags and everything else on the training pitch. Spitting will be banned for players and staff, while only a group of five players can train together initially. The players will have to live alone in team hotels while matches will be played at neutral venues. Eight to 10 stadiums are being identified for this purpose.

not confirm any names out of respect for the privacy of those affected."

The club said it would continue to train in preparation for the campaign to resume, with further tests to be carried out as part of the

league's health and safety protocol. First and second division clubs in Germany returned to training at the start of April while adhering to social distancing guidelines. With large-scale public events banned in Germany until August

31, it was decided that games would be played behind closed doors when the league resumes.

Borussia Dortmund chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke warned last weekend that "the entire Bundesliga will go down" unless the league restarts. Germany's top clubs are desperate for the season to be completed by June 30 in order to claim an installment of television money worth \$325 million.

A return in May would make the Bundesliga the first top league in Europe to resume as Germany cautiously eases lockdown measures. Nevertheless, there is heated debate about whether the Bundesliga should resume amid the pandemic which has so far claimed the lives of more than 6,000 people in Germany.

### Elsewhere...

Paris Saint-Germain were declared Ligue 1 champions on Thursday after French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced sport could not resume in France before September. Meanwhile, English Premier League clubs reconfirmed their commitment to finish the season subject to coronavirus restrictions being lifted. There are still 92 games remaining. They will be played behind closed doors with neutral venues suggested. However, not all players are buying the idea. Manchester City's Argentine star Sergio Agüero said players will be fearful of resuming the season in the midst of the pandemic, potentially putting their families at risk in the rush to get back on the pitch.

The forward has said the thought of returning to training and playing matches frightens him and the feeling will be shared by a lot of players. "The majority of players are scared because they have family, they have children, they have babies," he told El Chiringuito TV. "When we go back, I imagine that we will be very tense, we will be very careful and the moment someone feels ill, you will think 'What's gone on there?' It does scare me."

In Italy, the 20 Serie A clubs also reiterated their unanimous desire to complete the season despite sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora this week saying the chances of restarting were "increasingly narrow". In Spain, La Liga is planning to start testing players for the coronavirus between Tuesday and Thursday next week, after which they would then be able to resume individual training programmes within 48 hours.

### BRIDGE

A double finesse is a better option than a single finesse. Dealer South, both vulnerable.

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A Q 5	♠ 6 4 3 2	♥ A J 10	♥ 4 3 2
♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ A K Q J	♣ 4 3 2	♣ A K

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass

West leads the CQ. You have eight top tricks. The spade finesse will give you a ninth trick if it succeeds. Is that the best way to proceed?

**THE WEST HAND:** ♠ J98 ♥ K76 ♦ 87 ♣ QJ965  
**THE EAST HAND:** ♠ K107 ♥ Q985 ♦ 1096 ♣ 1087

If you try the spade finesse and it fails, you are sunk. The heart suit is the only other source of extra tricks. Your best chance is that the HQ and HK are split between the opponents; hands or that West has both. Plan to finesse twice in hearts. But first play four rounds of diamonds and watch the opponents squirm when they have to make discards. That's always fun. Maybe someone will discard a heart.

Now lead a small heart towards dummy. If West plays the HK, take the HA and play the HJ to set up your ninth trick. If West plays low, insert the H10. Here East will win with the HQ and probably return a club, taking out your last stopper.

Win this and lead another small heart towards dummy, inserting the HJ if West plays low. This will win on the above lie of the cards and you will have your ninth trick.

This play will only fail if East has both heart honours, a 25% chance. So your chance of success is 75%, much better than the 50% with the spade finesse

Dealer South, both vulnerable.

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A1032	♠ K54	♥ Q87	♥ AK1032
♦ K8653	♦ J4	♣ 8	♣ KJ4

You, South, are declarer in 4H after opening 1H in second seat and bidding game after partner shows diamonds and heart support.

The opening lead is C2. RHO wins the ace and returns the D9 to West's ace. LHO plays back the DQ. What's your plan?

### JUMBLLED WORDS

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

...is a \_\_\_ like any other. - Storm Jameson (4, 6)

CPAEE	EGJULN
TORTS	GILTHP

SOLUTION: PEACE, TROTS, JUNGLE, PLUCHT

## SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2267

### QUICK CLUES

#### ACROSS

- Causing dread or awe; scary (8)
- Drive from behind (6)
- Creatures (7)
- Mythical creature (7)
- Welsh dog with foxlike mouth (5)
- Prospective (9)
- Business builder, in a way (12)
- Pertaining to a person's life (12)
- Rock group of "Unforgiven" fame? (9)
- Consumers (5)
- Shoulder ornament (7)
- Force your way in (7)
- First-born (6)
- Unequal (8)

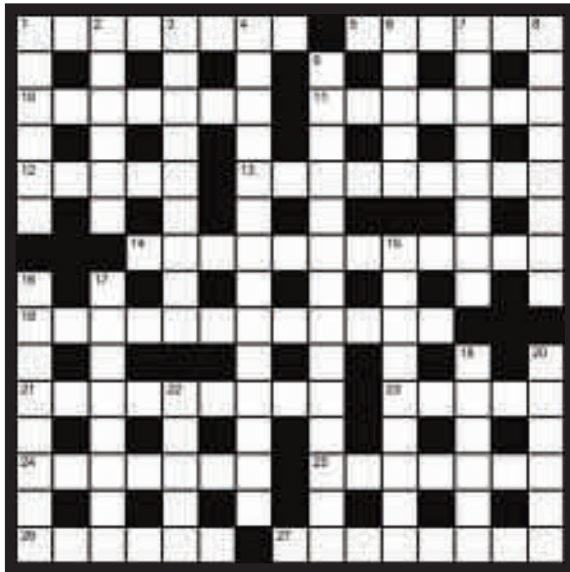
#### DOWN

- European super-power (6)
- Place for beehives (6)
- Writing-materials shop (9)
- To steal (14)
- Time on throne (5)
- Pledges (8)
- Tenant pays rent to him (8)
- Mathematical operation (14)
- Finds the worth or quality of by trying or testing (9)
- A unit of electric current (8)
- Variety of apple (8)
- Unilateral (6)
- Go up (6)
- Sings blithely (5)

### CRYPTIC CLUES

#### ACROSS

- Grace takes care of church dormitory inspection (3,5)
- Man with a broken hip on edge (6)
- Five year period of craving spirit (7)
- Authorise a backward middle east nation (7)
- Farewell from union leader after getting something straight (5)
- Crawler receives a congratulatory letter from the RAF (9)
- Escape to have a bath at a hotel? (3,5,4)
- Family ties for mother's boy (5,7)
- A large family, the Arrows (9)
- Roman landmark lost rivet (5)
- Involving one in recent outbreak of fever (7)



- Securing ocean fish (7)
- One associated with the hammer of the reds (6)
- To get back part of melody sirens sang initially, use knots a Greek hero deployed (8)
- Small dog or cat, perhaps - it has energy (6)
- Charles brings dynasty to America (6)
- Sign up some of those having a drunken rollicking time (5)

#### DOWN:

- Everything included in rotten song (6)
- Separate a large number from one lecture, nevertheless (6)
- Powerful nuclear process depending on helium (9)
- Arrive at a point where kissing is a possibility (4,2,4)
- Work to break strike? Buzz off! (3,2)
- Depressed countenances of those with uncultivated tastes (8)
- Graphically describes harbour lights? (8)
- Vanished when mother is around Muhammad? Indeed! (14)
- Birds gratifying after-work boozers (9)
- Stop, question Utes traveling to ritual feasts (8)
- A strict one made to show aesthetic taste (8)

### Solutions to 2266

**QUICK CLUES** Across: 1 Mised, 4 Acicular, 9 Spider, 10 Artistes, 12 Cold, 13 Magnifying, 15 Announcement, 18 Red-letter day, 21 Helikolty, 22 Aura, 24 Abettor, 25 Septet, 26 Treading, 27 Lapses, Down: 1 Garlands, 21 Immodest, 3 Eons, 5 Maiden voyage, 6 Aficionados, 7 Tugged, 8 El paso, 11 Boris karloff, 14 Resounding, 16 Minimus, 17 Own goals, 19 Espies, 20 Tipper, 23 Mega.

## If it's your Birthday

### Sunday May 3

You're going to have to stand on your own two feet. Think about all those positive little lessons you've learnt.

### Monday May 4

You seem to know what you're doing, and that should be enough to impress colleagues and silence your critics. Your greatest asset is your ability to charm almost anyone in any circumstances.

### Tuesday May 5

You will be taking an extra look at your financial situation. On the one hand you will be encouraged to work hard to increase your income but, your expenses will be growing.

### Wednesday May 6

You can afford to be helpful and to give partners the benefit of your wise advice. Pursue your goals in a down-to-earth and business-like manner, with maximum regard for long-term results.

### Thursday May 7

You may be motivated by fantasies rather than facts. The secret is not to expect too much. If letters go unanswered, people are late and decisions deferred, just take a deep breath and try again.

### Friday May 8

You'll be happy in company, but happiest when reading a book, watching TV or chatting on the phone.

### Saturday May 9

Be positive. Mars is about to adjust its position, sending you a series of much more lively messages than has been the case over recent weeks.

## YOUR WEEK AHEAD

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Any time from Monday to Wednesday finds you proclaiming your heart's desire. A sweet smile wins the day in every area of life and could even help you dodge a legal challenge, much to a rival's annoyance.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

The future has to be bright. With a leap and a bound you'll soon be free, leaving behind the burdens of work and everyday responsibility, and waving goodbye to a battle with authority. Don't take on too much, too soon, though, for you'll have a second chance after another few months.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Mercury is doing its best, and that is cause for rejoicing. For one thing, you'll have all the best ideas. For another, if you play your cards right, success will be served up while you hardly have to lift a finger.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The Moon will soon be in significant regions of your chart, but not just yet, and that means that you'll have to wait a few days for social satisfaction. Your new emotional cycle is increasingly secretive, so you'll be keeping your cards very close to your chest.

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You've certainly been getting your slice of the action, and now you are ready to reap your share of the rewards. From Thursday onwards, life will slow down, and you'll take the chance to reflect and weigh up the odds. Creative and artistic individuals are now experimenting with new activities at the moment right now.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You're going through a mildly bumpy patch currently, though nothing you can't handle. Family affairs seem to be moving along nicely, even if there have been one or two hold-ups. These, it must be said, have not been your fault. However, the final outcome in a romantic adventure will be very much to your liking.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Your romantic stars are mixed. Tuesday and Wednesday are excellent days for declaring your love, but you'll have to put up with partners who want it all their own way: if you can't beat them, you may as well join them. But then, you might not be in a mood to compromise.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

You're stuck in a sort of cosmic waiting room. One phase of life is over, another is waiting to begin, and in the meantime partners and lovers have it all their own way. Yet an increase in your earnings is now a definite possibility, and one which will transform your life.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

These are busy days and the more time you spend on all those dull but essential routine chores, the better off you'll be when your dreams come true, first, next month and then a couple of months later. In love, you may go for broke, insisting that a partner accept your desires without question.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Your planetary energy is at a peak, but that doesn't mean that everything will go with a swing. It's preferable to arrange your own schedule so that you get the right amount of exercise, rest and healthy food. You're about to take a long, hard look at your spending commitments.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You do love other people so much, but now you want a bit of the attention yourself. Plus, some people reckon that your guiding principle in relationships is 'don't do what I do, but do as I say'. However, as you may have found out, that's not always the best recipe for peace and harmony.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

A large cheque, or some other significant saving, might be on the way. Wednesday looks like your most profitable day, but any good fortune has nothing to do with luck. It's to do with making the most of opportunities while other people waste their time.

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