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The lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted supply chains. One crucial chain is delivery of information and insight – news and analysis that is fair and accurate and reliably reported from across a nation in quarantine.

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LPG, DRUGS, RLY FREIGHT

included in expanded exemption category

CENTRE, STATES SCRAMBLE

to come to the rescue of poor, daily wagers

NPR, CENSUS PHASE-I

processes postponed in view of outbreak

# Day 1: Cracking the supply chain

Govt steps in after  
retailers and e-com  
players stopped



Minister Javadekar briefs on the Cabinet meeting. Anil Sharma

PRANAV MUKUL,  
PRABHA RAGHAVAN,  
SANDEEP SINGH,  
DEEPTIMAN TIWARY,  
AVISHEK GDASTIDAR

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

ASTHE 21-day nationwide lockdown kicked in Wednesday, confusion prevailed among local authorities and police over exemptions, causing major disruptions in last-mile supply of food and grocery items, which are part of essential goods and services and exempted from prohibitory orders.

While some authorities

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Supply trucks stuck in Ghaziabad, near UP's border with Delhi, Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey REPORTS, PAGE 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9

No transport and no  
money, migrants  
take long road home



With public transport stopped, migrants start walking home from Ahmedabad Wednesday. Reuters

ANANYA TIWARI,  
VAIBHAV JHA,  
AISHWARYA MOHANTY  
& DEEP MUKHERJEE

NEW DELHI, AHMEDABAD,  
VADODARA, JAIPUR, MARCH 25

CORONA COUNT  
606 10  
CASES DEATHS  
43 RECOVERED

22,928 samples from  
22,038 individuals tested

In Ahmedabad, a majority of the estimated 2,000-plus migrant labourers left Tuesday evening, around the time Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his speech announcing the lockdown. Headed for villages in Rajasthan, they had reached Bichhawara tehsil, 125 km away from Ahmedabad, by Wednesday afternoon, walking and hitch-hiking.

"Scores of people can be seen

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Amid panic buying,  
Maharashtra ramps up its  
home delivery system

Wednesday.

To quell panic buying and discourage people from stepping out of their homes, Transport Minister Anil Parab issued strict directives to regional transport offices, asking them to register shops that carry out home delivery services, and make sure that their movement was not hampered.

Later in the evening, the government issued another official communication reiterating that "essential services like food items, vegetable, groceries and bakery items are exempted from lockdown restrictions".

Measures for MSMEs, cash transfers for daily wage workers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## On table: Cash transfers for unorganised workers, 7 kg subsidised grain per person

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

THE GOVERNMENT is finalising an economic package, the broad contours of which are likely to include targeted monetary transfers to unorganised sector workers, especially daily wage workers, sops for small and medium enterprises and relaxations in banking sector prudential norms to help companies tide over the countrywide lockdown that is causing significant disruption across the economy.

While the government may use money available with certain labour welfare funds, a limited fiscal space would be its biggest constraint. The Centre may borrow more to fund the relief package, which is expected to be announced later this week, said senior officials.

Measures for MSMEs, cash transfers for daily wage workers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL  
By UNNY



and liquidity infusion are the key focus areas for the planned economic package," a Finance Ministry official said.

According to sources, the plan, being finalised in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, also involves relaxing the non-performing asset classification

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Money transfer, food aid: States announce schemes for daily wagers, vendors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

FROM FREE ration to cash in bank accounts, UP, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are among a number of states that have stepped up to help the unorganised labour sector — construction workers to street vendors — get through weeks without work under the coronavirus lockdown.

In most of these states, the workers will get Rs 1,000-1,500 as one-time relief through direct cash transfers, apart from ration assistance.

India's unorganised workers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED  
E Reducing  
economic  
disruption

These targeted measures for the poor and daily wage workers, along with a series of other steps for companies and the banking sector, are being finalised to ease the extraordinary disruption in economy, which is forcing the Centre to let fiscal deficit expand and borrow more.

## Work dries up under NREGA, govt mulls measures for rural labourers

KAVITHA IYER  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

WHILE work sites under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) functioned only intermittently across Maharashtra, as lockdown measures began to be implemented last week, work for rural labourers has almost completely dried up since the Janata Curfew on Sunday.

Amid rising concerns about landless labourers and others whose subsistence depends entirely on daily wages, the state

INSIDE



MAHABHARAT WAS  
WON IN 18 DAYS, WE  
NEED TO WIN THIS  
WAR IN 21, SAYS PM  
PAGE 6

government has advised district administrations to provide individual work wherever there is a demand.

"We have issued instructions regarding allotting individual works to any person demanding work, so as to prevent crowding," state EGS Commissioner A S R Naik said on Tuesday. He added that people have a right to demand work, and no advisory has been issued by the government regarding stopping of works unlike some states.

But with the complete lockdown now ruling out operation

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

POOJA PILLAI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

RESTAURATEUR AND Indian-origin chef Floyd Cardoz, the man who introduced the world to Indian food beyond curry and chicken tikka, passed away in New York on Wednesday after testing positive for coronavirus a week ago.

In a statement issued late on Wednesday, a spokesperson for Hunger Inc. Hospitality, the company Cardoz founded in Mumbai in 2015 and which runs the popular The Bombay Canteen (TBC)



Tested positive on March 18,  
10 days after he left India

and O Pedro restaurants, said, "Floyd tested positive for COVID-19, in USA, on March 18 and was being treated for the same at Mountainside Medical Center, New Jersey, USA." He was 59.

Earlier this month, Cardoz was in Mumbai to celebrate the fifth anniversary of his TBC and to launch The Bombay Sweet Shop, a modern take on Indian mithai, before leaving for New York on March 8. On March 17, Cardoz posted on Instagram that he had checked himself into the Mountainside Medical Center after testing positive for COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



The Awatis were discharged  
on Wednesday morning;  
daughter in evening.

cases, a 70-year-old and his 69-year-old wife, who tested positive on March 11 and were discharged from Kasturba Hospital on Tuesday. The couple had travelled along with the Awatis last month.

When the two reached their building in Andheri, four neighbours carried the 69-year-old in a plastic chair into the lift, and later to her second-floor apartment. Said the husband. "She was not able to walk, she has a stomach infection." Society members also had dinner ready for the two.

A domestic help who had

tested positive for coronavirus was among those cleared Tuesday night in Mumbai. The 68-year-old, whose family was staying in a slum had faced much harassment following the case, said, "I hope people will now realise that this disease can be cured."

She said one of her employers, who tested positive after returning from the US on March 17 and who is believed to have infected her, came to visit her in hospital. "He said he was sorry. But I told him he did not do it deliberately." The 68-year-old said the hospital took good care, and answered all her doubts. "From

day one that I was admitted, there was not much change in my health," she said.

The Pune family and Mumbai couple were part of a group of 40 people who went to Dubai last month, of whom 15 tested positive. The Awatis had gone to mark their 25th anniversary.

The group returned on March 1, and the Awatis got themselves tested at the municipal corporation-run Naidu Hospital after Jivandhar developed symptoms. Apart from the family, a fellow passenger from Yavatmal and a driver of a taxi hired by them tested positive on

March 10. Now all are negative and have been discharged.

Once news came of the Pune family being positive, the aged Mumbai couple, who had no symptoms, decided to get themselves admitted in Kasturba Hospital's isolation ward along with four others from their tour

group. Incidentally, the Andheri couple's two children are also under home quarantine — son in Singapore and daughter in the US, where they stay. A medical officer in Andheri West, Dr Gulzar Khan, said her staff visited

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PAGE 1  
ANCHOR

## Recovered, Mumbai, Pune cases return home to cheers by neighbours

ANURADHA  
MASCENHAS,  
TABASSUM  
BARNAGARWALA  
& LAXMAN SINGH  
PUNE, MUMBAI, MARCH 25

AMIDST REPORTS of coronavirus suspects facing harassment in several parts of the country, neighbours in Pune and Mumbai joined hands to welcome home Maharashtra's first COVID-19 patients.

Jivandhar, 51, and Prashanti Awati, 44, spent a sleepless night Tuesday at Pune's Naidu

Hospital waiting for an all-clear. The state's first positive cases, they finally got the second result confirming them negative and ending their 14-day isolation, at 5.30 am Wednesday. They had tested positive on March 10. On Wednesday evening, their daughter Ankita too was discharged.

Delighted to be back home on the day of Gudi Padwa, an emotional Prashanti, 44, said, "Can you imagine the sense of relief? Since Tuesday evening, our bags were packed."

As the couple stepped out, people from chawls around

Naidu Hospital lined up along the road to wave at the ambulance that took them home, escorted by a police van. "It was heartwarming," said Jivandhar, a senior manager with a Pune firm.

When they reached their society on Sinhagad Road, another surprise awaited them. Said Jivandhar, "The society has 350 flats across seven buildings. Several came to their balconies, clapping and cheering." Added Prashanti, "Some brought groceries, others offered to get food packets."

In Mumbai, a similar reception awaited the city's first two



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daughter in evening.

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Virat Kohli reclaims top position in ICC Test Batting Rankings

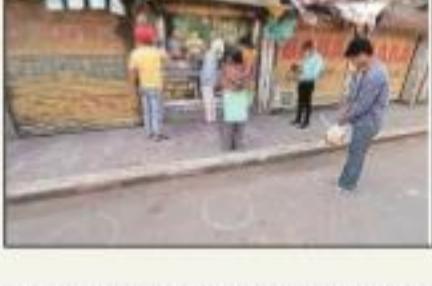
Indian skipper pipped Australia's Steve Smith once again to return to the No. 1 position in the ICC Test Batting Rankings



## VIRUS LOCKDOWN: HOW MODI, TRUMP HAVE RESPONDED TO THE PANDEMIC

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced a 21-day lockdown in India, US President Donald Trump says he "would love to have the country opened up" by Easter. Both have been criticised on the speed at which they took action to tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

## VIDEO OF THE DAY



## SOCIAL DISTANCING ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Social distancing seen at provision stores and cabinet meetings

## TECH



## COLD, FLU OR COVID-19?

This AI tool can help you differentiate between the three

## EXPRESS AUDIO

## Will food supply in India be hit by the lockdown restrictions?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

As a 21-day lockdown begins, we detail why the supply chain of essential food items has been hit and why services like BigBasket and Zomato are having trouble

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Cash transfers

norms — by another 30-60 days from the current 90 days. This will give firms the space to tide over the cash flow problems caused by the disruption in business.

Javadekar said governments, at all levels, are doing what they can to help people. "States and central governments are not separate. And several states have led from the front with initiatives." He assured that "the poor will get the essential items and services".

He said the Centre will provide 80 crore people with 7 kg ration per person. He said wheat, that costs Rs 27 per kg, will be provided at Rs 2 per kg; and rice, that costs Rs 37 per kg, at Rs 3 per kg. He said the Centre will provide the states three months of supplies in advance.

On migrant labourers trying to head back home, Javadekar said their advice "is to stay wherever you are for 21 days, because if you go back what will happen" in the villages can also be an issue.

## Daily wagers

make up 82.7% of the estimated employed persons, according to last NSSO Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2011-12.

## Uttar Pradesh

Rs 235 CRORE BY MARCH 31

**BENEFIT:** Rs 1,000 per month for daily wagers, rickshaw pullers and street vendors, etc., under the Shramik Bharan Poshan Yojna for about 35 lakh beneficiaries — the scheme was launched Tuesday.

**PROCESS:** The money will be transferred to bank accounts of beneficiaries. About 5.97 lakh labourers, of the 20.37 lakh registered with the state, do not have bank accounts and officials have been instructed to help them.

The Urban Development Department has been asked to prepare a database of an estimated 15,000 vendors and rickshaw pullers to be included in the scheme for which Rs 235 crore will be utilised within March 31.

## Kerala

Rs 1,000 FOR FAMILIES OUTSIDE PENSION UMBRELLA

**BENEFIT:** Free ration to all families — 35 kg rice for BPL families, 15 kg for others. Rs 1,000 for BPL families not covered under social security pension. Two instalments of social security pensions this month.

**PROCESS:** The beneficiaries, who are already in the state's database, may receive the cash component through DBT.

## Andhra Pradesh

Rs 1,000 FOR DAILY WAGERS, AUTO &amp; CAB DRIVERS

**BENEFIT:** Rs 1,000 per family during lockdown for BPL holders, daily wagers, autorickshaw and cab drivers, weavers, cobblers, workers, labourers, and others in the unorganised sector. Rs 1,500 crore has been set aside.

**PROCESS:** Beneficiaries in these segments had been identified for schemes announced earlier. The benefit will be delivered in cash on doorsteps, along with ration rice, 1-kg dal, oil and salt.

## Gujarat

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## Govt steps in

With reports like these pouring in from many cities, the MHA asked all states and union territories to draft standard operating protocols, set up helplines and appoint nodal officers to coordinate delivery. "We got reports that labourers and truckers were man-handled in some states when they tried to tell police they were connected with railway freight," a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

On Day 1 of the lockdown, freight movement for the Railways slowed down by almost a third due to unavailability of labour for loading and unloading at different locations, even though food grains, milk "specials" etc were run.

To address the labour issue in Railways, the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday specifically added "railway freight" to its exempted category list. It also excluded veterinary hospitals, manufacturing units of essential goods including drugs and food packaging material, LPG and petroleum products, shops for seeds and pesticides, resident commissioners of states, forest offices and social welfare departments, coal mines and railway and sea ports operations, apart from certain officers of the RBI, Controller General of Accounts and IT vendors for banks.

**BENEFIT:** Free ration, including foodgrains, for daily wagers — about 60 lakh families consisting of 3.25 crore people. Each person will get 3.5 kg of wheat and 1.5 kg of rice, and every family 1 kg each of sugar, dal and salt.

**PROCESS:** Rations will be distributed through PDS. The distribution will be carried out in a phased manner.

## Telangana

Rs 1,500 PER FAMILY

**BENEFIT:** Rs 1,500 per family for white ration-card holders, BPL families, unorganised sector workers, etc. They will also get 12 kg of free rice instead of 6 kg for April. Telangana has set aside Rs 2,417 crore — Rs 1,103 crore for 3.36 lakh tonnes of rice and Rs 1,314 crore for the compensation.

**PROCESS:** Based on white ration cards, and a 'Comprehensive Household Survey' conducted in 2014. The money will be credited directly in bank accounts of beneficiaries from March 30.

## Rajasthan

Rs 1,000 FOR LABOURERS, VENDORS

**BENEFIT:** Rs 1,000 each to 25 lakh construction workers and registered street vendors not covered under the social security pension scheme. The relief will be extended to 36.51 lakh BPL, state BPL and Antyodaya beneficiaries.

**PROCESS:** Beneficiaries will be identified by district administrations and Social Justice Department, and payments done through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to bank accounts linked to Jan Aadhaar numbers.

## Jammu &amp; Kashmir

Rs 1,000 FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

**BENEFIT:** Rs 1,000 each for 3.5 lakh people registered with the Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board for purchase of ration during the lockdown. All 2.26 lakh workers in the unorganised sector registered under the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme will get relief, including wages.

**PROCESS:** The beneficiaries will be identified by the Labour & Employment Department.

## Uttarakhand

During the day, many online grocers like BigBasket announced suspension of operations. Micro-delivery service MilkBasket had to dump 15,000 litres of milk and over 10,000 kg of fruits and vegetables on Monday. The company has suspended deliveries for Gurugram, Noida, Hyderabad.

Flipkart too suspended deliveries across the board, following reports of police hauling up delivery agents in many cities. "We are prioritising the safety of our delivery executives and seeking the support of the local governments & police authorities," a spokesperson said.

Later in the evening, Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy said following assurances of safe and smooth passage, the company was "resuming" its grocery and essential services.

Another online daily delivery company SuprDaily suspended services to Mumbai, Pune, Delhi-NCR and Hyderabad for Thursday. "The safety of our delivery staff is at stake and we're very disheartened by it," said Puneet Kumar, founder & CEO of SuprDaily.

Following meetings with local authorities, online grocer BigBasket said it had resumed operations in several cities. However, the company said it was not operational in Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Ludhiana, Pune and

Visakhapatnam. "In each of these cities, our operations are completely shut due to severe restrictions imposed on our staff and movement of vehicles," the company said in a statement. Similarly, Grofers, which had suspended operations, resumed services in Delhi and started taking customer orders for essential grocery items.

For offline retailers doing home deliveries, the situation was no different, across big centres including Delhi, Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh or Tamil Nadu. "Our store employees across the country are facing difficulty reaching the stores, they have been beaten by police, their bikes or keys confiscated," said a senior executive at Future Retail, which operates the Big Bazaar chain of hypermarkets.

"Our store strength at different places has been hit by around 50 per cent. It is surprising to see the police behaviour is same across," an executive with another offline retailer, who did not wish to be named, said.

Major retailers and trade associations Wednesday met top officials of the Central government to apprise them about the situation.

"Officials cautioned that steps will be taken in a manner which will not dilute the impact of the lockdown," said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of Confederation of All India Traders.

Outside the city limits,

truckers continued to face challenges. Manoj Kumar Pandey of Pandey Transport Agency in Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, said while the district magistrate issued letters for transport of essential items, "My drivers are facing big challenge while returning with the empty trucks."

In the midst of the nationwide lockdown, chemists also pointed to panic buying of essential medicines like anti-diabetic drugs and even paracetamol in the course of a week. This, coupled with unresolved disruptions in their supply, hasn't helped matters for patients.

"If the situation continues, and the government doesn't pay attention to this, there will be serious shortages," said Kailash Gupta, president of All India Chemists and Distributors Federation (AICDF). "We can easily think of at least 50-odd medicines, some of them essential like insulin, that we are unable to supply to customers because of the lockdown," he said.

Separately to protect doctors and paramedics for harassment at the hands of landlords, the MHA issued a directive asking local authorities to "take strict penal action against such landlords/house-owners under the relevant provisions of law and submit an Action Taken Report on a daily basis to the ministry".

shutting," he said, adding that between him and three others, they had Rs 500. "We will walk and rest when we can. Since there is no food available and no bus, there is nothing we can do."

Some men said they had borrowed money before leaving.

Mrityunjay Kumar, the media adviser to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, said they had made arrangements for the migrants headed to the state. "Instructions have been given to district magistrates to provide assistance in terms of travel and food. Hence, DMs have been given the right to start buses."

In Ahmedabad, labourers from Madhya Pradesh were stuck in Ondhwa area. On Wednesday, police arranged 15 vehicles for over 500, to take them to Godhra and Dahod. "From there they can cross the border," said RG Jadeja, in charge, Ondhwa police station.

In Vadodara, Hariabhai Dhami (34), a contractual labourer, wondered how he would get home to Dahod, almost 150 km away, with his wife, ailing mother and three children. "We have been out of work for five days and there are 20 days more to go. We are surviving on our savings now," Dhami said.

Dashrath Yadav (32), a labourer from Banswara, said he had walked four hours from Ahmedabad before finding any transport. In a group of around a dozen, he said, "We were stopped at a police naaka, and told to hop onto a truck. The truck had at least 100 people and crawled all night due to police checking... We had no food or water, and after we reached Shamalaji in Aravalli, we again walked for two hours to reach Bichhawara bus station."

Rajasthan officials confirmed that over 2,000 people from Ahmedabad had reached the bus station by Wednesday morning, and lined up at ticket counters, despite the lockdown. "We arranged three Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation buses and 15-20 private mini buses and vehicles. They are being transported ensuring social distancing," said Bichhawara tehsildar Amrit Patel.

Antresh, who is going from Delhi to Moradabad, said, "We would earn Rs 200-250 daily, now we have no income. Yet the landlord kept asking for rent." With shops shut, they were finding it difficult to get even food, he said.

Aram Singh set off from Preet Vihar in East Delhi, his few possessions bundled in a bag. Back in the village, the 25-year-old said, they would at least have food. "We will sleep wherever we find space, eat and drink whatever we find, but we have to get home," Aram said, grateful that police had been cooperative.

Umesh Kumar, 28, was headed with a couple of friends to Ghaziabad's Lal Kuan, 55 km away. Living alone in Delhi, he said the loneliness got to him after the curfew. "All the places to eat are shut," he said.

Also headed to Lal Kuan was Virender Singh Yadav, 23, who said he was lucky to find a dhaba in an inside lane in Laxmi Nagar in East Delhi. "Now everything is

ride for them. "Most of the money we had been spent on paying for the lifts we took and the biscuits we bought to eat," he said.

He said that at several places, policemen hit them and forced them off the road. "We told them take us to jail. At least we will get food and a place to rest there."

— WITH ENDS LUCKNOW

## Floyd Cardoz

Cardoz is widely credited with bringing the diversity of Indian cuisine to the world's notice. It was at the city's Indian Institute of Hotel Management, Dadar, that he discovered his talent for cooking. He later went to Les Roches School of Hotel Management in Switzerland. In the late '80s he moved to New York, the city where he would evolve his trademark 'New Indian Cuisine'.

He was the first flag-bearer of New Indian Cuisine in America, bringing dishes apart from *chicken tikka masala*, *chaat* and the regular curry. He introduced other snacks and South Indian and Goan curries, said chef Manish Mehrotra of Indian Accent.

Indian Accent

# THE OUTBREAK MUMBAI



## THE MORNING AFTER

A departmental store, which has almost run out of stock, at Navi Mumbai on Wednesday. Amit Chakravarty

# Scramble to restock pantries continues but things ease off later in the day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

MUMBAIKARS' SCRAMBLE to restock their pantries in response to the national lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued for the second day on Wednesday but eased off in the evening after repeated assurances by the state that it had ample supplies to see the city through this crisis.

Wednesday morning saw massive crowds at Dadar and Byculla vegetable markets as people gathered to stock up on vegetables and fruits. The panic buying meant that most of the produce got sold quickly and those who arrived late had to pay a premium.

Saira Shaikh, a resident of Andheri, rushed to Byculla market at 7 am to get vegetables but was shocked to find that the otherwise bustling market had hardly any vegetables while those available were being sold at nearly double the rates. "People had to jostle their way to get these vegetables. Lady finger that until two days ago was being sold at Rs 40 a kg, cost Rs 120 a kg. Basic vegetables such as tomato and potato were also being sold double the rate," Shaikh said.

A vegetable vendor on MG Road at Kandivali (West), Shankar Mandal, said all vegetables were being sold at Rs 20 to Rs 30 extra due to low supply. Wholesale vegetable vendors blamed the high cost on the short supply of produce and claimed that at many places, police were not allowing produce and workers to reach the markets. "We are getting 50 per cent less supply due to the lockdown. At some places, police stopped our vehicles that were supposed to reach the city," said Bablu Patil, a wholesale supplier in Dadar.

There are a total of 4,331 vegetable, fruits and grocery vendors in the 55 municipal markets of the city. BMC officials said all the markets remained functional. To tide over the crisis, the BMC has made temporary arrangements for 95 vendors to set up fruits and vegetable stalls at Topiwala market.

In Goregaon (West), long queues were seen outside stores that were open. Shopkeepers said basic items such as flour and oil were available in limited quantities.

Kishore Patel, who works at Shivam Super Shoppy in Kandivali (West), said the stock should suffice for only two or three days. "Transport is shut since three days and we don't know when things will resume," he added. Shopkeepers also complained that they feared for the safety of their workers. "I am concerned about the safety of my staff. None of the

## Violating lockdown orders, endangering human life can land you in jail for 6 months with Rs 1,000 fine

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

WHILE OVER 100 people in Mumbai have been booked for flouting prohibitory lockdown orders issued by the BMC, the state and the central government in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, they can face legal action under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, which prescribes punishment as per Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860.

The police, which have booked people for flouting home quarantine orders, roaming outside and for overcrowding in public places, have also found hotels operating and booked several hawkers and shopkeepers for selling non-essential goods. Section 188 of IPC provides punishment for "disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant" and prescribes action against "whoever, knowing that, by an order promulgated by a public servant, is directed to abstain from certain act, or to take certain order with certain property in his possession or under his management disobeys such direction."

As per Section 188, there are two offences. Firstly, if such violation to the lockdown order causes obstruction, annoyance, injury or risk of the same to any person lawfully employed (such as police or persons appointed by authorities), the accused is liable for punishment with simple imprisonment up to one month or with fine up to Rs 200 or both. Secondly, if such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, riot or affray shall be punished with imprisonment up to six months or with fine up to Rs 1,000 or both.

However, it is not necessary that the of-



Police apprehend a two-wheeler rider during lockdown in Mumbai on Wednesday.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU VIOLATE LOCKDOWN ORDERS?

UNDER SECTION 188, there two offences:

■ DISOBEDIENCE TO an order lawfully promulgated by a public servant, if such disobedience causes obstruction, annoyance or injury to persons lawfully employed.

PUNISHMENT: Simple imprisonment for 1 month or fine of Rs 200 or both

■ IF SUCH disobedience causes danger to human life, health or safety, etc.

PUNISHMENT: Simple imprisonment for 6 months or fine of Rs 1,000 or both

fender should intend to produce harm or contemplate his disobedience as likely to produce harm, but it is sufficient for authorities to take action on the premise that the offender knows about the order that he disobeys and such violation is likely to produce harm. As per first schedule of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, both the offences are bailable, cognizable and can be tried by any magistrate.

### 66 more booked

Police registered 66 more cases of people violating curfew orders between Tuesday and Wednesday, taking the total to 178 since March 20. The top offenders were stores supplying non-essential items. The police also booked 28 hawkers and registered a further 28 cases against people driving on roads despite being ordered to stay indoors, said Mumbai Police spokesperson Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) Pranaya Ashok. Two more were booked in the last 24 hours for violating home quarantine orders and venturing outside their homes.

Link Road, however, there was not much crowd. A provision store owner said their worry was how long their stocks would last.

In some shops, like Maharashtra Trading Co in Juhu, circles were drawn on the road with chalk at some distance from each other. The customers had to stand in these circles while waiting in line.

There was also a rush to get LPG cylinders. Shekhar Bhalerao from Byculla had to first book an LPG cylinder on his cellphone. After

getting a confirmation message, he had to rush to the gas agency to get a slip and then show the same at a third location to get one. While there was panic buying till afternoon, things seemed to stabilise later in the evening, as crowds around shops reduced.

"The announcement of a lockdown had set off panic. Many people, however, seem to have realised that shops will remain open and the crowds reduced in the evening," a Reliance Mart employee in Kharharghar said.

**Battling the new normal with some old: In this society, children take turns to play outside**



At the entrance gate of Parijat Cooperative Housing Society in Bandra (West).

### LOCKDOWN LOG

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

RESIDENTS OF the 93 flats in the Parijat Cooperative Housing Society in Bandra (West) have made some changes to their lifestyle, as the 21-day lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicked-in on Wednesday. While social distancing is the new normal, they have tried to make some room to retain, at least partially, the old normal.

For children must play and the elderly must stay active, inside the society premises, in a manner that was not designed by its members, the children are taking turns to play.

Vidya Vaidya, a resident of the housing society near the Lilavati Hospital said that there are some things that they still need to find a way out of like the supply of fresh groceries, a tiffin service for the security staff but over the next few days, they are sure to work it out.

"It wasn't like that by design but at any time, there are not more than two or three children playing. We have a lot of space and the children and their parents are also being careful," said Vaidya.

The decision to send domestic helps on paid leave was taken by society members unanimously. The security guards, attached to a private agency, are staying on the premises until the lockdown.

"Everyday, one member sends them meals. I was trying to locate a tiffin delivery service for the security guards. I found one in Powai but they cannot deliver to Bandra. I am still looking for one anywhere in Khar-Bandra," said Vaidya.

She added that all the members in the three buildings in the society were connected on WhatsApp.

"We are all connected and we talk to each other. Nobody is alone as such," she said.

Mukul Ghatne, a veterinary doctor and a managing committee member of the housing society, said the society had issued some mandatory directions and some recommendations to all its members. Those that need to be followed mandatorily include a ban on the entry of food deliveries, the man who irons clothes and no sitting on benches.

"There are some drivers of doctors who reside in the society. They may be allowed to sit on the benches but they cannot spit at all. We will impose a fine if anyone is found spitting," said Ghatne.

His 88-year-old mother Vannala Ghatne,

**The decision to send all domestic help on paid leave was taken by society members unanimously. The security guards, attached to a private agency, are staying on the premises until the lockdown**

who underwent a hip replacement surgery in 2014, would regularly take a walk in the mornings but she has had to make some alterations to her routine.

"She now walks slowly in the staircase from the seventh floor to the fifth floor or we take her to the terrace for a walk. We live on the top floor and usually, it is just us on the terrace," he said.

Ghatne said that the society, doing its part to stay vigilant, also sought to follow up with any members who may have returned from abroad after March 1. The circular issued on March 22 asked such members to report to the managing committee "without fail".

Priti Janjire's outdoorsy nine-year-olds Shon and Som train to play tennis at a competitive level thrice a week, they are also a part of their school football team. In the face of the lockdown, however, they are spending unusually long hours at home.

Janjire, an art director, is now keeping them busy but not completely grounding them.

"The first thing we did when the lockdown was announced was go to Crossword and buy new books. We are doing a lot of household activities together like peeling vegetables, trimming our plants and playing chess too. Children will naturally want to go out and play with other children but we, as parents, are monitoring them and ensuring that the do not play in groups," said Janjire. She said her twins are allowed to cycle early in the morning before too many children gather.

At Parijat Cooperative Housing Society, package deliveries are now accepted at the gate. Delivery persons are now allowed inside. With at least 20 more days of the lockdown ahead of them, society members say that issues that remain will be worked out. Among them, is the supply of fresh vegetables.

Vaidya said, "We will have to see how to get fresh vegetables. Our MLA Ashish Shelar had a delivery van running around Bandra but by the time it reached the Reclamation area, it had run out."

Ghatne said that he has known his local vegetable vendor for decades. "He had a young boy who would make home deliveries but in these circumstances, I don't know if they can deliver vegetables home."

## QUIET BUT SPECIAL'

# Chef Floyd Cardoz, a Bandra favourite

BENITA FERNANDO  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

ACTOR DENZIL Smith's favourite memory of Floyd Cardoz is of lovely evenings spent hanging out in the balconies of St Andrew's High School and "just shooting the breeze". They were bench-mates from the seventh standard to the tenth standard in the 1970s, a time that Smith described as "the age of innocence".

"We were a gang of four, along with Roy Venkataraman, who later played with The Wailers, and Subhira Roy. We hardly studied together and were up to the usual nonsense, but we never let our grades suffer," Smith said. The friends would spend time at Cardoz's place in Virendra Colony, near St Andrew's Church in Bandra, where his mother was known to be an excellent cook.

From parish musicals to hanging out with the boys, the late chef was an active participant of the childhood neighbourhood that he grew up in

whipping up some of the best Goan hallmarks, from cafreal to vindaloo.

Cardoz, who succumbed to COVID-19 on March 25 in New York City, was very much a Bandra boy and a participant in its vibrant cultural life. Pianist and composer Merlin D'Souza, who is close friends with Cardoz's family, spoke of music as a great part of his life. As a teenager 38 years ago, D'Souza was the music director of parish plays and musicals at St Peter's Church, and Cardoz featured at least a couple of times in them - once as an angel singing Neil Diamond's *Holly Holly* and another time as St Joseph.

Floyd belonged to the St Andrew's

parish, but he would come to St Peter's for mass. During practice for the musicals, he would often bring along snacks that he had made," said D'Souza, who had formed a band called Fame with Cardoz's brother, Kim, back then. She described her late friend's presence as "quiet but special", soft-spoken, with a great smile. "He had a lot of determination, whether it was about love or cooking," she added.

Meldon D'Cunha, the owner of one of

Bandra's most popular joints, Soul Fry,

worked with Cardoz at The Oberoi in the late 1980s. He remembers Cardoz as efficient and hardworking, but as "one of those rare peo-

ple who took up Indian cuisine after graduating from catering college".

Cardoz graduated from Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) in Dadar in 1983, after a short-lived stint with biochemistry at St Xavier's College. His professor who taught him food service management at IHM shared the same opinion as D'Cunha. Former professor Pushparaj Shetty, who owns Dynasty restaurant in Santa Cruz, said, "He was a conscientious student who was more comfortable with French cuisine. So I was quite surprised that he took to cooking, that too Indian cooking."

Smith said he had lost touch with his boyhood friend for a long while and managed to reconnect with him some years ago through a school WhatsApp group. He said, "Floyd was devoted to everything he did. He would have excelled in whatever career he had chosen."



Chef Floyd Cardoz succumbed to COVID-19 on March 25 in New York City. The Bombay Canteen/Instagram

# Social distancing: Uddhav, health minister walk the talk

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

ON TUESDAY morning, a message went out on reporters' WhatsApp groups about a press conference by Maharashtra's Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, who was in the Mumbai to review the imposition of the curfew. Within minutes the minister's PRO was flooded with calls from reporters asking to cancel the press conference as it was becoming difficult for the media to practise social distancing while covering press briefings of the government. The reporters were assured that no press conference would be conducted. The home minister's visit to the Bandra police station which had seized masks was then filmed and put up on Twitter by the Mumbai police.

The realisation that live media conferences could end up being a potential hazard, gained

momentum after a picture of a press briefing by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on the steps of Sahyadri, the state guest house, clicked by a television journalist went viral on March 17. Authorities, police officials, cameramen and reporters were seen jostling ironically on a day the Chief Minister first spoke of social distancing. The CMO promptly after consultation with reporters, decided to take briefings online. Since then Thackeray has only addressed the state via live streaming. In-person media briefings by Public Health Minister, Rajesh Tope, however, continued till Monday, although very few reporters turned up daily at his bungalow. But now even he has started live streaming addresses, suspending live media conferences. "The state government has launched the Meech Maaja Rakshak ('I'm my own saviour') campaign to advocate social distancing, and I wish to set my own

example by practicing it vehemently," said Tope, on Monday.

The Raj Bhawan, too, has cancelled all its programmes except the new Chief Justice's swearing in last week, where chairs were kept at safe distances in a bid to enforce social distancing.

Government officials and ministers had already been instructed to not conduct meetings unless imperative, via a GR. But a senior minister faced flak for flouting the rule, the very next day. For unavoidable meetings, the CMO has instructed officials to place chairs at one meter distance. A guardian minister of a Vidarbha district had invited the Chief Minister's wrath for travelling from Mumbai to the district for an official meeting, despite strict instructions that such meetings could be undertaken via video conferencing. With the Mantralaya staff down to a bare minimum of 5% and visitors' entry restricted, the premises wore an abandoned look on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, Tope made another emotional appeal to citizens to observe social distancing norms and stay indoors to combat the virus.

# Railways to transform train coaches into quarantine facilities

IRAM SIDDIQUE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

INDIAN RAILWAYS is gearing up to transform its coaches into quarantine facilities to help state governments in containing the spread of novel coronavirus, officials said. They are looking at turning existing coaches into wards where patients who need to be quarantined can be placed with food and medical facilities being provided within the coach.

Under the plan that is being contemplated, entire trains would be converted to act as holding centres for patients as well as paramedical staff who will be treating them. While the exact design is yet to be finalised, officials have been asked to take necessary measures to identify locations in their respective divisions where coaches can be parked and make sure that adequate arrangements are made to ensure electricity supply to these coaches for

a longer duration.

A senior official from Western Railway (WR) said, "We have identified all locations in the division where a coach can be charged to ensure uninterrupted source of power." Apart from this, a stock of all pantry cars available with the railway is also being done to convert them into a mobile kitchen for providing food to those who will be quarantined. According to officials, while trains placed at stations such as Mumbai Central and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) will have access to a base kitchen, coaches will be placed at other odd locations, which will require pantry facilities. "We are also speaking to health experts to understand what all is required, and are weighing the pros and cons. We are checking the stock of our pantry car to ensure that if someone has to be kept in quarantine or isolation, they are provided with a meal... We want to assist the government in all possible ways and are working towards it," said Chairman of Railway Board, VK Yadav.

In one of the designs proposed, a Link Hoffman Bush (LHB) coach, which has about nine lobbies, with each lobby having six berths, can be used as one unit to place one person.

Similarly, there will be at least nine such compartments created in one coach to place a person under quarantine who can be provided with regular food and medical supplies.

Earlier, an idea was floated for converting coaches into isolation units with two people in one coach having access to one toilet each on either ends. This would lead to creating at least 10,000 isolation wards using 20,000 coaches with the railways. To facilitate this, railways have also started movement of its rakes that were stuck in other zones when the passenger train operations were stalled from midnight of March 22. A total of 637 rakes across Indian from various zones were stuck in 17 different zones are now being returned to their home zones for enhanced maintenance.

The WR, which owns about a total of 52 rakes, had 42 of these rakes in different zones across India. Similarly, Central Railway (CR), which has 175 rakes, had about 56 which were in different zones. These trains have begun movement to reach back to parent coaches. Once these coaches are back, they will be disinfected and kept ready for being used as quarantine facilities. "We are not looking at any physical modification to the coaches as of now," said another official from CR.

# IRCTC to provide meals to homeless stuck due to lockdown

IRAM SIDDIQUE  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

INDIAN RAILWAYS Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is gearing up to provide 'distress meals' to thousands of homeless and destitute who will be left to fend for themselves as the lockdown continues amidst the outbreak of COVID-19.

All zonal headquarters of IRCTC were asked to make provisions to make basic meals available in bulk across various areas of their respective zones. These distress meals are likely to include simple foods such as dal khichdi with pickle, while certain other areas are working towards providing Swaminarayan khichdi. Officials are working on providing bulk meals to close to 3,000 to 5,000 people in one go through various base stations.

According to Brijesh Arya, convenor of Collective for Homeless, while the census of 2011 puts the number of homeless people in Mumbai to 57,416 and nearly one

lakh in Maharashtra, the actual numbers are much higher, with Mumbai having approximately two lakh. "Our own movement is restricted, but we would like to work with the government to help them identify where these homeless people live and provide for them," Arya said.

"Our biggest challenge is mobilising of manpower, as under this strict curfew, our staff is not recognised as essential services, and their movement is not possible," an official of IRCTC said.

IRCTC works with its own staff, as well as several other contractual workers, that are currently experiencing difficulty in movement. With train services suspended, several daily wage workers have been left to fend for themselves, with no jobs available. Many gathered outside temples and other religious places, as well as restaurants, for food, as they have alternate means to get basic meals. Arya said the city has homeless people who live along and those with families, both of which have been massively hit.

# In times of COVID-19, teachers find creative ways to engage students online

ABHA GORADIA  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

WITH SCHOOLS shut due to the COVID-19, teachers of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation Schools are exploring creative ways to keep students engaged in academic activities online. The activities are being designed in a way that they are easily accessible over android phones, which parents of most children have, as well as through commonly used apps. Last week, on Saturday, BMC education officer Mahesh Palkar used Zoom, a platform for video and audio conferencing to tell teachers to use technology to ensure regular communication with students and encourage learning, even though final exams for Class I to VIII have been cancelled.

Since then, a slew of ideas have been implemented by some teachers, and the department has upped its use of existing digital platforms.

"In the meeting, we discussed a range of platforms that can be used to connect with students," said professor and technical assistant Madhukar Bhosle. "The department has been training teachers in the use of technology for some time now, and at this point, it has come to the rescue. Many teachers have learnt to create videos. Even if each of them create a few, we can prepare a repository of such resources."

The department has been using Telegram, a chat platform where circulars, directions, suggestions and links to various educational resources are shared with the teachers. Vrushali Khadye, a class V teacher in BMC's Pachpali School, Powai, got her students to make a video on coronavirus by giving them verified information, which was then uploaded to a YouTube channel. Khadye also assigns daily homework on the WhatsApp group, which is then photographed by students and shared. "Through photo editing tools, I then mark the answers and give them feedback," she said. Out of total 34 students in her class, she has managed to get responses of over 12 students to the tests prepared by her on Google forms, and everyday more students join. "50 per cent students have the facility to use WhatsApp, and I connect with the rest through calls, or by connecting through neighbours. Parents send me video of them studying, and doing the assigned activities," she said.

A class VI teacher at a corporation school in Govandi, Mohammad Zeeshan runs two YouTube channels for his students, and his blog, My Digital Classroom, features material like flashcards on different objects, posts on topics such as how to make PowerPoint presentations, obtaining medical cards, using Digilockers, among other things.

"Kaun Banega Cyapati" is a series of question papers that Zeeshan has uploaded on his blog as well. "The multiple choice question paper gives four options for each question. After they submit all answers, it gives them the right ones so they can see how much they have scored. It also has the option to re-appear for the test. So far, the tests have been attempted 85 times. Studying through links to informative E-balbharti lessons are encouraged by many teachers.

Pooja Sankhe, a teacher in BMC's Bandra East school, who got a Best Teacher award last year, ensures her students continue speaking to Amazon Alexa. Sankhe had received acclaim for her project in which she installed the entertainment gadget inside a mannequin, along with speakers to make a robot.

Students continue to call her in order to speak to Alexa, and when they do, they are assigned individual based art activities. "I share with them designs that can be made into colourful drawings and music for meditation purposes. Since most of the children live in tiny shanties in slums, they are habituated to venture outside homes. But we need to identify how they can be kept occupied at home," she said, adding that many students have responded positively to her activity called Tell Your Mom, where students are encouraged to describe their day was in English.

Nearly 32 students out of 41 in class IV of BMC's Dahisar East school have taken online tests for all subjects. General knowledge tests on Google forms have also been created, apart from assigning learning based activities, said teacher Madhavi Parulkar.

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1. Description of Tender

1.1 Supply and delivery of 1.22 lakh Nos. of Rain Coat (Unisex) for the School Students studying in Hilly Areas in Tamil Nadu on annual rate contract basis for the year 2020-21.

1.2 Sale period of Tender Document

1.3 Last Date and Time for Submission of Tender

1.4 Pre-Bid meeting date, time & place

1.5 Tender opening date, time & place

1.6 Details of websites address from which Tender Documents can be downloaded free of cost

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Rc.No. 992/PUR-1/2020 Date : 24.03.2020

1. Description of Tender

1.1 Supply and delivery of 29.15 lakh pairs of Shoes separately for Boys & Girls for school children in Tamil Nadu on an Annual Rate Contract Basis for the year 2020-21.

1.2 Sale period of Tender Document

1.3 Last Date and Time for Submission of Tender

1.4 Pre-Bid meeting date, time & place

1.5 Tender opening date, time & place

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E-mail: adpr.tntbesc@tn.gov.in, jdtntbesc@outlook.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Rc.No. 992/PUR-1/2020 Date : 24.03.2020

1. Name of the work

1.1 Supply and delivery of 15.66 lakh Wooden Colour Pencil (Bi-colour) for School students in Tamil Nadu on an Annual Rate Contract Basis for the year 2020-21.

1.2 Sale period of Tender Document

1.3 Last Date and Time for Submission of Tender

1.4 Pre-Bid meeting date, time & place

1.5 Tender opening date & time

1.6 Details of websites address from which Tender Documents can be downloaded free of cost

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### OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PUBLIC WORK DEPARTMENT, BILASPUR CIRCLE

BILASPUR, CHHATTISGARH

AMENDMENT NOTICE

Amendment are made in N.I.T. No 254, 255, 256/G dated 05.03.2020:-

Existing Description To be read

Bid submission due date (Online)

26/03/20 17.30

End date for Physical submission (EMD, and affidavit in Envelope A)

# THE OUTBREAK

MAHARASHTRA

## 122 TOTAL POSITIVE CASES IN MAHARASHTRA

Number of deaths	3*
Total number of people discharged	10
Number of patients critical	—
Number of people tested	2,653
Total number quarantined in hospitals today	932
Number of new cases	15
(7 in Mumbai, 5 in Sangli, 1 in Panvel, 1 in Kalyan-Dombivali and 1 in Navi Mumbai)	
* One more death remains unconfirmed, a COVID-19 infected Philippines national died after testing negative	



## CORONA WATCH

### Follow lockdown: RSS chief to workers

**Nagpur:** RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has called upon swayamsevaks to continue doing their work by following the three-week lockdown implemented by the government. In a special message aired Wednesday, Bhagwat said, "The RSS has a way of functioning. It can be altered as per the needs of the times. We can still come together in small numbers, if need be, within our families, to pray. After all, coming together and praying is what the RSS (shakhas) is all about."

He added, "The swayamsevaks are studied in observing discipline for national cause. So, they can rise to this occasion effortlessly. They must follow the discipline that the lockdown mandates to spread the message across the country."

"Swayamsevaks have already started doing relief work at some places. They can now take it to the entire country but by following the discipline it demands," he said. **ENS**

### Asked to stop, biker out on joyride 'knocks down' constable

**Mumbai:** A 31-year-old constable was allegedly knocked down by a speeding bike in Vasai after he tried to intercept the two-wheeler during the lockdown. Around 10 am on Wednesday, the police had called for a bandobast, during which they were intercepting motorists out on a joyride and turning them away back home. According to police, during one such instance, a biker, identified as Sahid Rajbhar (22), who was out on a joyride increased the speed of his bike and knocked over a constable after he was asked to stop. The constable, Sanil Patil, sustained injuries on his head, hip and hands, and was rushed to a hospital in Vasai. **ENS**



Maharashtra observed a quiet indoors Gudi Padwa on Wednesday with traditional celebrations, including processions and bands, prohibited due to the lockdown. *Nirmal Harindran*

## 15 new cases, state count reaches 122

**TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA & SADAF MODAK**

MUMBAI, MARCH 25

**MAHARASHTRA** ON Wednesday reported 15 new COVID-19 cases, taking the count of coronavirus patients to 122. Of the 15 new cases, 11 are close contacts of infected patients with five from the same family in Sangli.

In Sangli's Islampur, after four members of a family had been infected after visiting Saudi Arabia, another five tested positive on Wednesday. "Seven close contacts in the family were tested. Of them, two have tested negative," said Dr Ravindra Tate from Sangli Municipal Corporation.

The nine members of the family are admitted at Miraj Government Medical College's isolation ward. Tate said health officials have started visiting nearby houses to check for symptomatic cases.

A 57-year-old man in Navi Mumbai, who had come in contact with a group of nine Philippines nationals at a mosque over 10

days ago, tested positive.

The man was first taken to Kasturba Hospital on Sunday but was asked to return home after being classified as a "low-risk asymptomatic contact" of an infected patient and the hospital deciding that a COVID-19 diagnostic test was not necessary for him. The hospital had asked him to remain in home quarantine till March 26.

On Monday, the health officials of Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) again approached the man and took him to the hospital. He was made to undergo the test this time and was found positive on Tuesday. The man had come in contact with Filipino group between March 10-12.

On March 13, a 68-year-old from the group had tested positive, followed by two others, aged 47 and 44. On Monday morning, the 68-year-old man died due to renal failure and acute respiratory distress after testing negative for COVID-19 in follow-up tests.

Dr Ujwala Oturkar, medical officer in NMMC, said three family members of the 57-year-old have been admitted for testing. "We have surveyed about 4,000 houses near the

mosque to look for symptomatic patients," she added.

She further said that the 57-year-old did not provide a proper history of contact with the Filipino group when he first visited Kasturba Hospital on his own.

An official said that the man is learnt to have had lunch with the group. "We sent a man with him the second time with a referral letter so that doctors would admit him for testing in Kasturba hospital," she said.

In Mumbai, a 27-year-old man who had come from the US tested positive and another 39-year-old who had visited UAE tested positive. A 38-year-old Kamothe resident also tested positive after returning from Trinidad. Also, six persons who were close contacts of infected patients tested positive.

On Wednesday, 182 remained admitted in various hospitals of Mumbai. Kasturba Hospital on Wednesday conducted 372 tests in 24 hours, the highest so far till now in Mumbai. Across Maharashtra, 2,988 people with suspected coronavirus symptoms have been admitted in hospitals. So far, 2,531 samples have tested negative.



Social distancing at a chemist shop in Pune. *Arul Horizon*

## Construction of over 4.5 lakh homes will be delayed: Survey

**NEERAJ TIWARI**

MUMBAI, MARCH 25

THE CORONAVIRUS outbreak is set to cause a serious setback to Mumbai's real estate market with nearly 4.5 lakh residential units, which are at present under construction, likely to be delayed.

A survey report by property consultant

firm Anarock has stated that in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), 4.65 lakh homes that are under construction will be delayed. This number increases to 15 lakh if Pune, Kolkata, NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai are considered.

"Out of these 15.62 lakh units under construction, nearly 57 per cent or nearly 8.90 lakh units are in MMR and NCR. Both these regions already have a backlog of lakhs of de-

layed and stalled units. With construction activity coming to a standstill, homebuyers will have to brace themselves for another wave of delayed deliveries," the report stated.

While developers tend to schedule project launches during the festivals of Gudi Padwa, Akshaya Tritiya, Navratri and Ugadi, the complete lockdown across the country will impact housing sales during these upcoming festivals.

"There is a lot at stake for the residential real estate market as cities go into a complete lockdown mode to battle the spread of COVID-19," Prashant Thakur, Director & Head (Research), Anarock Property Consultants, said. Recently, developers in the state have requested the Maharashtra Real Estate Regulatory Authority for extension of a few months to complete projects stuck due to the lockdown.

### What impact will COVID-19 have on demand for housing?

Let us keep things in perspective. At present, the top most priority is survival. Human lives are at stake, once we overcome the pandemic, we will look at immediate economic measures that need to be taken. Getting back on the feet from an economic perspective will definitely be the next challenge once we overcome the pandemic. Once that is achieved, basic needs like housing will be back on the priority list.

### What cascading effect is it going to have on steel and cement industry?

For one, it will bring into sharp focus the need for the 'Make in India' initiative and reduce dependence on imports. Tata Steel was mentioned in media reports as looking at Turkey and Brazil as alternatives to China as a source of imports. Other steel makers have spoken about creating production facilities and also ramping up production facilities. It is a similar situation when it comes to cement. The Indian economy will see a reboot, and many of the troublesome aspects may end up being history. I have positive expectations...

### What about EMIs people have to pay for their houses?

The suggestion made by ASSOCHAM and similar industry bodies is that EMIs and such loan repayments should be deferred for a period from six months to a year. The hope is that this will be given due priority by the authorities.

### What effect it will have on the ground level, for instance on unemployment?

As of now, the scenario is beyond challenging. Some say, it looks bleak. Having said that, no figures or guesstimates are in order as of now, simply because updated data is not available and hardly no analyst or research agency has the exact details. Job losses will happen after a time period, as initial few weeks, the positive response to the crisis will see many business organisations keep on paying their staff. Beyond that, if the economic stimulus and related measures from the government cushion the shocks, fine. Else, unemployment and also losses will hit the economy in a major way. Hopefully, if fiscal measures are implemented in time, the situation might not get as bleak.

## INTERVIEW

**'EMIs and loan repayments should be deferred for six months to a year'**



Niranjan Hiranandani

**Niranjan Hiranandani**, NAREDCO national president ASSOCHAM president speaks to **Neeraj Tiwari** about the short and long-term impact of COVID-19 and how it will affect the sluggish real estate sector and economy.

### What is the impact of coronavirus on India?

We are going through a challenging time. The COVID-19 pandemic has effectively ramped up the difficulty quotient. Existing inventory levels will help out initially, then the difficulty quotient will grow even more, challenges will multiply. Unfortunately for India, this has come at a time when the country's credit environment was already fragile and the economy was slowing down, so in effect it is a double whammy.

### How will the real estate sector be affected?

All segments of real estate will witness a slowdown, in terms of new demand as also completion of ongoing projects. Post COVID-19 pandemic, things will totally change. Real estate is going through the worst time in history. At construction sites, work is at a standstill, as regulatory norms and advisories are implemented. The real estate sector will be hit badly in future if steps not taken towards its rescue.

### How many projects has been affected in Mumbai and Maharashtra?

There are more than 25,000 projects registered under MahaRERA Act. While some are in the planning stages, some are in mid-section stages. If we talk about figures across the country, more than lakhs of real estate projects are at halt due to the outbreak.

### How many construction workers have been laid off?

The situation is very fluid and keeps changing every day. The lockdown has translated into work stopping at all sites. Given this, I doubt if it will make sense to share any of the statistical data available at present.

### What impact will COVID-19 have on demand for housing?

Let us keep things in perspective. At present, the top most priority is survival. Human lives are at stake, once we overcome the pandemic, we will look at immediate economic measures that need to be taken. Getting back on the feet from an economic perspective will definitely be the next challenge once we overcome the pandemic. Once that is achieved, basic needs like housing will be back on the priority list.

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For one, it will bring into sharp focus the need for the 'Make in India' initiative and reduce dependence on imports. Tata Steel was mentioned in media reports as looking at Turkey and Brazil as alternatives to China as a source of imports. Other steel makers have spoken about creating production facilities and also ramping up production facilities. It is a similar situation when it comes to cement. The Indian economy will see a reboot, and many of the troublesome aspects may end up being history. I have positive expectations...

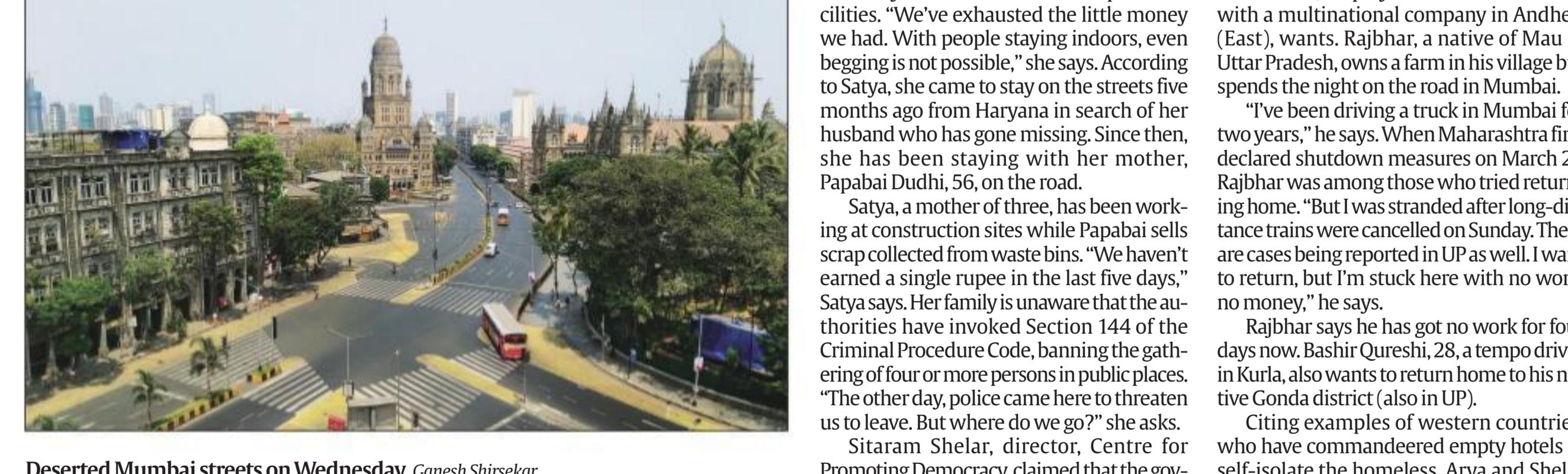
### What about EMIs people have to pay for their houses?

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### What effect it will have on the ground level, for instance on unemployment?

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## The grim outdoors for Mumbai's homeless: 'They say stay indoors but what if you have nowhere to go'



Deserted Mumbai streets on Wednesday. *Ganesh Shirshek*

outfit representing organisations working for the homeless and rough sleepers in the city.

"(The government) first announced a day's curfew on Sunday. And has now shuttered public facilities for 21 days. Where do we go? What do we do?" asks Sana. Her 15-year-old elder son, Mohammed Salim Shaikh, who studies in a nearby municipal school, had his final examination postponed owing to the outbreak. Sana says her employers — she works at two apartments in the locality — have asked her not to come to

work till April 1.

"I don't know if they will give me my full salary," she adds. While authorities are advocating social distancing measures, the homeless on Sayani Road, where Sana stays with her children, live in close quarters and hygiene is almost non-existent.

To make matters worse, many public facilities the homeless rely on have been shuttered. Sana's neighbour, Satya Malla, 30, says her family of seven went without food on Tuesday. They have gone without bathing for

three days due to mass closure of public facilities. "We've exhausted the little money we had. With people staying indoors, even begging is not possible," she says. According to Satya, she came to stay on the streets five months ago from Haryana in search of her husband who has gone missing. Since then, she has been staying with her mother, Papabai Dudhi, 56, on the road.

Satya, a mother of three, has been working at construction sites while Papabai sells scrap collected from waste bins. "We haven't earned a single rupee in the last five days," Satya says. Her family is unaware that the authorities have invoked Section 144 of the

Criminal Procedure Code, banning the gathering of four or more persons in public places.

"The other day, police came here to threaten us to leave. But where do we go?" she asks.

Sitaram Shellar, director, Centre for Promoting Democracy, claimed that the government was "not recognising the needs of the homeless".

"We have been receiving panic calls from certain places about police driving the homeless away. Where will they go?" he asks. Arya recommended that the government must secure food, water and milk supplies for the homeless, and give them 24-hour access to public toilets. Shellar added, "There is a misconception that most homeless are beggars. Many working communities, who cannot afford to buy or rent a house or a hutment in this city, stay on the streets."

Going home is what Raju Rajbhar, 38, a

truck driver, employed on contractual basis with a multinational company in Andheri (East), wants. Rajbhar, a native of Mau in Uttar Pradesh, owns a farm in his village but spends the night on the road in Mumbai.

"I've been driving a truck in Mumbai for two years," he says. When Maharashtra first declared shutdown measures on March 21, Rajbhar was among those who tried returning home. "But I was stranded after long-distance trains were cancelled on Sunday. There are cases being reported in UP as well. I want to return, but I'm stuck here with no work, no money," he says.

Rajbhar says he has got no work for four days now. Bashir Qureshi, 28, a tempo driver in Kurla, also wants to return home to his native Gonda district (also in UP).

Citing examples of western countries, who have commandeered empty hotels to self-isolate the homeless, Arya and Shellar sought temporary shelters for homeless, saying the community was a "high-risk" group.

Mukta Shirke, 60, an asthma patient, who begs outside a Jogeeshwari temple for a living, says the closure of temples has made even access to daily medicines difficult.

"This is real-life drama. For us homeless, who are already fragile, the virus scare is like a double penalty," says Ram Singh, 74, who begs outside the Prabhadevi temple near Dadar. Singh, who identifies himself as a Vyjayanthimala fan, fled from Bihar and came to Mumbai in 1973, pulled by his love for Bollywood.

**SANDEEP ASHAR**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

LESS THAN an hour after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown, Sana Shaikh, 34, mother of two, who stays on a street in Parel said, "Yeh sab bol rahi hain ghar ke andar jao. Aap batao hum log jiska ghar nahin hai, woh kya karein" (They are asking people to stay indoors, but what about those who have nowhere to go?)

As India grapples with an unprecedented shutdown prompted by the coronavirus outbreak, mass closures have left Mumbai's homeless at a vulnerable position: they have nowhere to go, but they cannot stay in public places.

Mumbai, with the most coronavirus cases in India, has an estimated homeless population of two lakh, and while everyone has been told to practise social distancing and to frequently wash their hands, the homeless are living just as they did before the



Mumbai residents celebrate the Marathi New Year. PTI

## Youths held for attacking constables

**Bengaluru:** Two men on Wednesday attacked some constables after being stopped at a checkpost for defying the lockdown, police said. Both were arrested. The incident took place early in the day under Sanjay Nagar police station limits in the city, they said. A video, showing a group of young men arguing with the constables, and then a couple of them attacking and pushing the cops on to the street, has surfaced on social media. PTI

## Cleric, others booked for namaaz

**Dehradun:** A cleric and at least 20 other unidentified people were booked for violating prohibitory orders by gathering at a mosque in Dehradun to offer namaaz. The police said that they reached the mosque in Sattawali Ghati area after finding out about the gathering during a patrol. Most of the people there ran away after seeing them. After this, the cleric, Abdul Samad, was asked to issue an appeal to people to offer namaaz at their homes. More than 330 people were arrested and 51 cases were lodged for violation of lockdown across the state. ENS

## Stranded UK nationals flown out of Goa

**Panaji:** As many as 249 British nationals stranded in Goa were flown out of the country in a special early morning flight arranged by the Airports Authority of India on Wednesday. The fully sold-out flight to Manchester was operated by TUI airways. The Goa government is now making arrangements to fly out many Germans who are stranded in the state—the next flight is expected on Thursday. According to Goa Hotel Association, there are still many who are waiting to fly back to Europe but are waiting to see the situation improve. ENS

## INCREASED LOAD ON BANDWIDTH

## Companies, governments prepare for Internet spike

KARISHMA MEHROTRA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

WITH ALL forms of transportation shut, the country's Internet bandwidth is being tested in the nationwide lockdown. From government data center operations to Silicon Valley companies, measures are in place to adjust to the changing landscape.

As a "digital industry", stakeholders met on March 24 to "ensure the robustness of the cellular network" by either degrading mobile videos to stan-

## THE OUTBREAK LOCKDOWN

## Mahabharat was won in 18 days, we need to win this in 21, says PM

DIPANKAR GHOSE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

A DAY after he announced a countrywide lockdown for 21 days as health authorities battle to check transmission of the coronavirus, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday reiterated the importance of social distancing and said strict action will be taken against those discriminating against doctors, medical staff and others who are "risking their lives to keep ours safe".

In an online interaction with residents of Varanasi, his parliamentary constituency, Modi compared the "war" against the coronavirus to the Mahabharat. "The Mahabharat war was won in 18 days. Today, the war against corona which is being fought by the entire country will take 21 days. It is our effort that we should win this in 21 days. During the war in Mahabharat, Bhagwan Shri Krishna was the saviour.

Today on the shoulders of 130 crore saviours, we have to win this fight against corona."

He urged people to refrain from self-medication, and to only trust the word of doctors.

## Delhi HC directs MEA to ensure well-being of Indians stranded in Kazakhstan

PRITAM PAL SINGH

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

THE DELHI High Court on Wednesday directed the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to ensure the well-being of Indian students stranded at the airport in Almaty, Kazakhstan in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Directing the Central government to "promptly appoint a nodal officer from the Indian Embassy in Kazakhstan", a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Talwanti Singh ordered the government "to expeditiously facilitate, secure and provide the students with all basic amenities and humanitarian assistance in terms of medical care, boarding (food), lodging and transportation, as may be necessary or warranted".

The bench, in a special hearing held through video conferencing, directed the authorities that the "details and other necessary particulars of the Nodal Officer, so appointed, including his name and telephone number, be communicated to the Indian students stranded at the Almaty Airport, Kazakhstan".

The court's urgent direction were issued on a plea by Shehla Saira who said: "Indian nationals in sizeable numbers, who are enrolled for higher studies, including MBBS, as regular students, at the Semey Medical University in Kazakhstan, are stated to be stranded including at the Almaty Airport, Kazakhstan without food, water, transportation and medical aid since the last two-three days".

Central government Standing Counsel Jasmeet Singh, after accepting the notice on behalf of the MEA, sought time to file a reply. The bench directed them to do so on March 27.



PM talking to residents of Varanasi via video call. PTI

"We have a habit of taking medicines for fevers and colds without consulting our doctors... We have to be aware that till now there is no medicine or vaccine against corona that has been made anywhere in the world... our scientists, in our country and in the world, are working fast. So if someone suggests a medicine, please speak to your doctor first. You must have seen that people are putting their lives in danger by medicating themselves."

The biggest thing that has come out from this virus is that it does not discriminate against anyone. It attacks developed

countries and poor households as well... If people socially distance themselves, then the chance that the virus will affect them is much lower. It is important that over one lakh corona-affected people across the world have also recovered," he said.

Modi announced the creation of a Corona Helpdesk, created in collaboration with WhatsApp with the number 9013151515. "You can WhatsApp this number and be connected with it. If you write Namaste on this number, you will be connected."

To a question about doctors, nurses and other staff being discriminated against, Modi said, "Your pain is correct, and I have the same pain too. Yesterday I spoke to nurses, doctors, and lab technicians on these issues at length." He said that the country had set an example not only through Sunday's Janata Curfew, but also via the five-minute tribute at 5 pm.

"Those people that conducted rescue operations in Wuhan, I wrote a letter. That was not just any other letter, but made me emotional. I shared the photographs of the all-women

Air India crew that rescued people in Italy. From some places, I have received information of these actions that bring pain to the heart. I appeal to citizens that if you see any such act, if you see people that are in the business of saving us, doctors, nurses, medical staff, sanitation staff, if bad behaviour happens with them, go to the people of your area and tell them what they are doing is wrong. You cannot do this. Whoever is serving us, we must help them."

"There may be stray incidents... I have asked the Home Department and DGPs of the states to act very strictly. If someone acts like this against doctors, nurses etc, then the costs for them will be very high. Right now, doctors and nurses, dressed in white in hospitals, are our gods. They are risking their lives to save ours," he said.

Responding to a question on the problems being faced by the poor because of the lockdown, Modi asked people to pledge to help nine families, if they have the resources. "A second powerful way to fight the coronavirus is Karuna. We can take one step to beat corona by showing com-

passion towards the poor and the needy. If we, for the next 21 days, for those who have the ability to do this, as Navratri has started, everyday pledge to help 9 families. I believe that if we do this, then what else can be a bigger prayer to our mother. This will be a true and powerful Navratri. We also have to care for the animals around us. Because of the lockdown, a crisis has come for animals as well," he said.

"It is possible that in some places, there are problems. That someone has been careless. But to concentrate only on these problems, to search for them, to focus only on them, to discourage, at a point like this, does not benefit. I will request that we understand that to spread negativity, there might be a hundred reasons, but life only goes on from hope and confidence.

However much we support the law and the administration, the results will be that much better... The doctors, the officials, the police, the media, have they come from outside? They are our people. If such a heavy burden has come on them, may be we should share it too. We must increase their resolve."

Sarma said the state government was prepared for a week-long lockdown but a 21-day lockdown would raise challenges for all Northeastern states. Before the Prime Minister's announcement, Assam had been placed under a lockdown till March 31 midnight to curb the spread of coronavirus.

"No one has stocks or preparations for 21 days. Prices, too, are going up. It will be difficult for us to manage. I am a little worried about how people will react after a week," said Sarma, also the convener of North East Democratic Alliance, a BJP-led coalition in the Northeast.

Assam has not reported any COVID-19 case so far. Among Northeastern states, Manipur and Mizoram have reported one case each.

Sarma said the worst sufferers of the lockdown would be the poor. "Challenges will emerge in three-four days. You don't know how prepared they are. They will need assistance. We will have to provide them some financial assistance," he said.

He said he is confident that the Centre would provide the re-

## Himanta sees tough task ahead, Tripura says fully prepared

LIZ MATHEW &amp; ABHISHEK SAHA

NEW DELHI, GUWAHATI, MARCH 25

A DAY after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day lockdown, Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday that the state would have to announce a financial package for the unorganised sector and added that states would require the Centre's assistance.

However, the BJP government in Tripura said it is fully prepared for the lockdown.

Sarma told *The Indian Express*: "Many states like Assam do not have the financial resources to tackle the lockdown for three weeks. Today is the first day. The challenges will grow as we move forward."

Sarma said the state government was prepared for a week-long lockdown but a 21-day lockdown would raise challenges for all Northeastern states. Before the Prime Minister's announcement, Assam had been placed under a lockdown till March 31 midnight to curb the spread of coronavirus.

"No one has stocks or preparations for 21 days. Prices, too, are going up. It will be difficult for us to manage. I am a little worried about how people will react after a week," said Sarma, also the convener of North East Democratic Alliance, a BJP-led coalition in the Northeast.

Assam DGP B.J. Mahanta told the media that police will take all measures possible to ensure the lockdown and added that they might have to resort to harsh measures sometimes because people were not taking the lockdown seriously.



Himanta Biswa Sarma.

quired assistance. "We are depending on the Government of India," he said.

Sarma said that if COVID-19 strikes the region in a big way, the states would face a crisis as health facilities there are not up to the mark. The minister, however, said there may be fewer transmissions of COVID-19 in the Northeast.

Tripura Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb said the state government is fully prepared. "A task force has been formed to tackle the situation," Deb told *The Indian Express*.

He said the government has decided to provide 15 days of free ration to 5.86 lakh families. The state government will also give two months' pension in advance to 3.25 lakh pensioners, among other measures, he said.

"We have decided to distribute cooked food among the homeless and daily wagers. Food packets will be served two times daily," he said. He said the Centre has assured total support during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, multiple videos purportedly showing policemen thrashing people in Assam for stepping out during the lockdown have emerged.

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Firefighters spray disinfectants on a road in Amritsar. PTI

**Mizoram  
pastor tests  
positive**

*Guwahati:* A 50-year-old pastor in Mizoram, who had returned recently from Amsterdam, tested positive for COVID-19 late on Tuesday night, becoming the second person to contract the virus in the Northeast. Authorities in Mizoram and Assam said that the patient had returned to Delhi flying via Doha on March 15. The next day, he flew to Guwahati and changed flights to reach Aizawl. On March 18, he had fever and isolated himself at home. The pastor, along with his family members, has been shifted to isolation ward.

ENS

**Fifth case of  
coronavirus in  
Uttarakhand**

*Dehradun:* A 25-year-old man back from Spain tested positive for the coronavirus in Uttarakhand's Kotdwara on Wednesday. This is the fifth positive case in the state. The patient was on a trip to Spain from February 20 to March 13. He stayed at a hotel in Delhi after returning. Later, he travelled home via train and bus. Meanwhile, a trainee forest officer, who tested positive for the virus earlier, tested negative on Wednesday.

ENS

**Two test  
positive in  
Chhattisgarh**

*Raipur:* Two asymptomatic 24-year-olds, a man who had returned from Thailand and a woman back from the UK, tested positive for COVID-19 in Chhattisgarh on Wednesday, health officials said. The man is a resident of Rajnandgaon while the woman is from Raipur. The total number of positive cases in the state is now three. Both were tested after the state extended the testing criterion to "asymptomatic foreign returned persons", the state health minister TS Singh Deo said in a tweet. "We need to expand the testing criteria."

ENS

**Daughter of MP  
among 10 new  
Karnataka cases**

*Bengaluru:* The daughter of a former Union minister and an incumbent BJP MP from Karnataka and two girls aged nine and seven were among 10 people who were reported positive with coronavirus in the state on Wednesday.

While the 37-year-old daughter of the MP had returned to Bengaluru on March 20 after travelling to Guyana, the two young girls who have tested positive are daughters of patient number 17, who had tested positive several days ago after returning from Amsterdam, according to officials.

This is the highest number of confirmed cases reported in a day since the first case was detected in the state over two weeks ago, taking the total of confirmed cases across Karnataka to 51.

ENS

**THE OUTBREAK****NATION****States get going: Dedicated hospitals, new isolation wards, more doctors**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

WITH KERALA and Maharashtra recording more than 100 cases of the coronavirus, and a national lockdown in place, other states and union territories are ramping up their facilities for testing, isolation and treatment to contain the outbreak.

From Tamil Nadu to Jammu and Kashmir, they have increased isolation facilities, set up designated hospitals, fast-tracked appointment of new doctors, called in retired professionals and reached out to the private sector.

West Bengal, which recorded its first death Monday, has designated Calcutta Medical College (CMC) hospital as the state's first dedicated super-specialty facility to face the challenge.

Health Department sources told *The Indian Express* that CMC will start a 700-bed isolation bay within a week, which will be expanded to accommodate 3,000 people.

The 11-storey CMC facility will include a dedicated ICU zone on the ninth and tenth floors, they said. The state already has two quarantine centres, and earmarked 310 beds at three other hospitals in Kolkata.

In UP, 2,800 isolation beds are in place, while work is on to make 11,000 more available at 51 public and private medical colleges. Testing is currently being done at six labs — KGMU (Aligarh), BHU Institute of Medical Sciences (Varanasi), SGPGI (Lucknow), Medical College (Meerut) and Command Hospital (Lucknow).

The state has also created a revolving fund of Rs 100 crore for key departments, and given the green signal for testing at private labs in at least four locations and



Calcutta Medical College has been designated as West Bengal's first dedicated super speciality facility to face the challenge. Express

Tamil Nadu is readying a 350-bed isolation ward — with over 20 critical care facilities and 700 toilets — at the multi-super speciality government hospital on Mount Road in Chennai. City-based Apollo Hospitals, which has received approval for a testing lab, has offered to treat patients at its 100-bed facility.

Haryana is pressing more personnel into action. The government has decided to immediately issue appointment letters to 447 doctors who were recently selected for service but are yet to undergo the character verification and medical examination process.

The state has also created a revolving fund of Rs 100 crore for key departments, and given the green signal for testing at private labs in at least four locations and

designating four hospitals.

The Andhra government is increasing the capacity of testing labs at seven medical colleges to cover 1,000 samples per day — Rs 5 lakh will be given to each lab to purchase key equipment, and function round the clock.

The state has also deputed research scientists and assistants, and lab technicians, on a temporary basis to labs in Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Vijayawada, Guntur, Anantapur and YSR Kadapa districts.

Rajasthan has started earmarking quarantine facilities for 1 lakh people, ranging from 1,500 beds in smaller districts such as Dungarpur to 10,000 beds in Jaipur.

Gujarat has 134 quarantine facilities with a capacity of 6,700

beds in place. Officials said facilities in Ahmedabad will be increased to a dozen quarantine centres with 5,000 beds.

In Yelahanka, near Bengaluru, the BSF is ready with three 100-bed barracks to extend quarantine facility for 300 people, while the IAF has established a 20-bed isolation ward at Command Hospital. Private hospitals have assured that 1,200 beds will be dedicated for patients.

In Jammu, the 1,070-bed Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital has been designated as a COVID-19 facility, with the administration deciding to hire retired doctors on contract for a year for "under-served areas".

Authorities in Kashmir have decided to convert SKIMS Medical College, C D Hospital, JLN

**Govt looks for volunteer doctors**

*New Delhi:* The government is looking for volunteer doctors to fight the COVID-19 outbreak. In a statement posted on Niti Aayog's website on Wednesday, the government appealed to retired government, Armed Forces Medical Services, public sector undertaking or a private doctor to come forward and join the efforts of the government. Those who wish to contribute to this and be a part of this noble mission to serve the country may register themselves on a link provided on the Niti Aayog's website.

PTI

Hospital and the Police Hospital in Srinagar into isolation facilities.

And in Uttarakhand, the government has tagged four medical colleges, in Dehradun, Almora, Haldwai and Srinagar. It has directed private hospitals and medical colleges with a minimum of 100 beds to reserve at least 25 per cent for isolation.

Some states are yet to catch up with the rest. For instance, the Goa Medical College remains the state's lone testing facility, prompting a team of doctors to approach the government for a separate hospital.

**(ENS INPUTS FROM WEST BENGAL, UP, TN, HARYANA, ANDHRA PRADESH, RAJASTHAN, KARNATAKA, J&K, GOA, GUJARAT AND UTTARAKHAND)**

**Drug movement disrupted, patients left in the lurch**

PRABHA RAGHAVAN

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

*PATNA:* RESIDENT Sanjay Kumar Sinha was supposed to arrive in Gurgaon Wednesday for cancer treatment at a hospital that stocks the immunotherapy drug he needs every 15 days. But, following the announcement of a 21-day lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, he knew he wouldn't be able to.

Sinha, who is in the final stage of a tongue cancer that has spread to his lungs, contacted the distributor of the drug, nivolumab, in Gurgaon, but it was of no use.

"Even if one state has given clearance, they are stopped as soon as they cross the border," said the executive of an Indian pharmaceutical company.

"If the situation continues and the government doesn't pay attention, there will be serious shortage," said Kailash Gupta, president of All India Chemists and Distributors Federation.

"Nobody expected the lockdown would be for 21 days... When such drastic measures are taken, some disruptions are bound to happen," said Mankind Pharma chairman Ramesh C Juneja. However, pharma associations are working with states and central ministries to resolve this and he expects a solution in the next three days, Juneja said. "Our factories are working... Maybe the number of employees is short, but work is going on," he said. "The only problem is transportation..."

As of now, the government's inability to effectively pass on the message that pharma operations is an essential service has led to "utter chaos", said the executive cited above. "Manufacturers are not able to supply. Transporters and stockists are getting beaten up. You hear one story of one person going through this and the system stops," the executive said.

**STUDY IN LANCET JOURNAL ON WUHAN CLOSURES**

**School, work closures reduced cases in virus epicentre: study**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, PUNE, MARCH 25

NEW

MODELLING

research, published in *The Lancet Public Health Journal*, suggests that school and workplace closures in Wuhan, China, have reduced the number of coronavirus cases and substantially delayed the epidemic peak

— giving the health system the time and opportunity to expand and respond.

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Trade unions ask PM to help transfer money to workers amid lockdown

LIZ MATHEW & MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

WITH THE country under a 21-day lockdown, trade unions, irrespective of party allegiance, have sought a financial assistance for the unorganised sector.

Both the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), affiliated to the RSS, and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), linked with the CPI(M), have asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to see that Rs 5,000 is transferred to every worker as wage relief in this lockdown period.

In a letter to Modi, the BMS made a list of demands, including sufficient budget allocation as a relief for those who do not get their wages or (small traders) who have shut down their units due to crisis, distribution of essential commodities through PDS, and making available essential medicines at affordable prices to everyone.

"The government should urgently transfer RS 5,000 as income support/wage relief to every worker in the unorganised sector as well as other unpaid workers through DBT (direct benefit transfer) by depositing directly to their bank accounts for subsistence for one month. Such money will sustain the purchasing power of people and if spent, will activate the market and economic activities without getting paralysed," the union wrote, according to BMS national president Saji Narayanan.

In his letter to Modi, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen asked the government to ensure transfer of Rs 5,000 for workers in the unorganised and informal sector aged up to 25 years, and Rs 10,000 to those above 25 on a monthly basis through their Jan Dhan bank accounts.

Both BMS and CITU leaders also pointed out that the worst hit in the coronavirus crisis would be the daily wage workers in the unorganised sector.

FULL REPORT ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

## Classifieds

### PERSONAL

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to bring to the notice of the general public that our client, Ms. Rekha Anand, daughter of Mr. D.R. Bahl, resident of 174, Vivian Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6RP, United Kingdom has died on 02.04.1981 executed by erstwhile landowners Mr. Dharmender Singh and Mr. Narendra Singh in favour of Ms. Rekha Anand for land comprised in Killa No. 21/20/2/1 (0-13) situated in Village Jhadsa, Gurgaon.

If any person has any claim or is holding the aforesaid document, he may contact the undersigned within 7 (Seven) days from the date of this notice with documentary evidence, failing which it shall be presumed that there are no claims.

ZEUS LAW ASSOCIATES  
2 Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar  
New Delhi - 110057

Telephone No: +91 911 41733090

Email: zeus@zeus.firm.in

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is hereby issued notice in the interest of Public on the direction of my client, Sh. Ram Chand Sharma S/o Late Sh. Ram Chand Sharma R/o N.I.N. A-1, A-2 Block, Chhatriwala Extension, Noida, New Delhi - 110043, has disown his son named Kapil Sharma S/o Sh. Ram Chand Sharma and his daughter-in-law named Khushi w/o Sh. Kapil Sharma due to their unscrupulous conduct and their illegal rights, money and immovable properties with effect from today. It is further issued in public interest that my client is not in any kind of relation with son and daughter-in-law of my client, my client shall be held responsible for any kind of damage caused.

Bhalendra Mishra Advocate  
Ct-454, Lawyer's Chamber,  
Dwarka Courts, N. Delhi-110075

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Chamber No. 279, Civil Side,  
Tis Hazari Court, New Delhi-54

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## CORONA WATCH



A police officer makes coronavirus-related announcements in Kolkata. *Partha Paul*

## Pan Masala, gutkha banned in UP

**Lucknow:** The state government on Wednesday banned the manufacture, supply, and sale of pan masala and gutkha during the 21-day nationwide lockdown. The step was announced by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Avanish Awasthi. Meanwhile, the government said about 10,000 gram pradhan had been called from the 1076 helpline, which was set up by the Chief Minister, to gather information about people from outside the state. *ENS*

## Two test positive in Amaravati

**Amaravati:** A 52-year-old man and a 22-year-old tested positive for coronavirus in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday night, taking the total number of cases to 10 in the state, the state health department said. While the 22-year-old youth had returned from the US to Vijayawada, the 52-year-old returned to his native town Guntur after attending a religious congregation in Nizamuddin Mosque in New Delhi, the department said in a bulletin. The youth was admitted to a local government hospital in Delhi on March 21 upon his arrival from Washington and discharged the next day. *PTI*

## Gujarat's fishing industry grinds to a halt

**GOPAL KATESHIYA & VAIBHAV JHA**  
RAJKOT, AHMEDABAD, MARCH 25

**LABOUR** shortage, transportation problems and confusion that fish is not part of essential commodities has brought the multi-billion dollar industry to a temporary halt.

"Fish has been included in the list of daily essentials whose movement and sale has been exempted from restrictions. It has to be treated at par with vegetables. But somehow, a message has spread or people have assumed that movement of fish is also prohibited. Therefore, traders and processors have stopped buying fish from fishermen and seafood processing units are suspending their operations," Velji Masani president of Akhil Bharatiya Fishermen Association told *The Indian Express* on Wednesday.

The last set of 22 fishing trawlers landed with their catch at Jakhau fishing harbor in Kutch on Tuesday. "Police are checking intensively all trucks transporting goods therefore traders are not taking risk..." said Usmangani Sherasiya, Secretary, National Fish-workers' Forum (NFF).

According to Masani, Veraval GIDC, the hub of seafood processing industry in the state, is deserted. Gujarat, which has a 1,650-km long coastline, exports Rs 7,000 crore worth seafood a year. The industry provides livelihood to 3.5 lakh fishermen and their families.

**FULL REPORT** [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## THE OUTBREAK NATION

## Kerala plans public kitchens, says no one should starve

**SHAJU PHILIP**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 25

**TO ENSURE** that the 21-day lockdown does not leave anyone starving in Kerala, the state government on Wednesday announced community kitchens run by local bodies. People can dial for food, which would be served by volunteers at their doorstep. Local bodies will also provide food to those under home quarantine.

The government has also entrusted local bodies and the revenue department to ensure food and accommodation for migrant workers still in Kerala.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "The prevailing situation would push people into starvation. But, nobody should be left starving in Kerala during the lockdown. Local self-governing bodies should take up the responsibility to supply food to those who cannot prepare food."

He said, "Everyone's problems cannot be solved from a single centre. So, an elaborate decentralised system would be in place to address the issue. The

**FOOD FOR STUDENTS, ELDERLY IN DEHRADUN**

**Dehradun:** Students with no cooking arrangements and senior citizens will be provided daily meals in Dehradun, according to officials. Dehradun has a large number of students who reside in hostels and rented homes. "Administration will tie-up with restaurants to cook and deliver meals to needy students," said Sonia Pant, deputy municipal commissioner.

ward-level volunteer system would be applied."

Vijayan said local self-governing bodies – village panchayats to municipal bodies – should establish community kitchens. Every local body should make an assessment on the people who will require food, he said.

"Some persons with false pride may not directly demand food. But, if a phone number is given, they would. Such persons should not be avoided on the ground that they did not seek any

help," he said. He said local bodies would have to find cooks and volunteers for distributing food. Families in isolated areas should not be left unattended, he added.

The state government has also decided to take care of migrant workers in Kerala, mainly from North and Northeastern states. The Pathanamthitta district administration on Wednesday entrusted tehsildars with finding lodgings for migrant workers.

In Ernakulam, secretaries of village panchayat have been asked to ensure accommodation and food for the migrant workers.

The Cabinet also decided to recommend to the Governor the promulgation of Kerala Epidemic Diseases Ordinance 2020. The proposed law would

give more powers to the state government to control programs held by individuals and groups. Accordingly, the state can seal its borders and restrict private as well as public transport. It also has provisions through which the government can restrict or ban crowds at public places and religious institutions and control functioning of government and private institutions.

## Tripura to set up community kitchen for free food to urban poor

**DEBRAJ DEB**  
AGARTALA, MARCH 25

**AMID** THE lockdown, Tripura has asked self-help groups (SHG) and urban local bodies to provide cooked food packets and set up community kitchens for the poor.

Urban Development Director Dr Shailesh Kumar Yadav asked top executives of 20 urban local bodies of the state to set up community kitchens at a single location in every urban body.

"Any good Area Level Federation of SHG under DAY-National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) may be deployed for cooking and making food packets. Distribution of food packets to be urban poor twice daily may be done by using one or more dedicated vehicles by the respective urban local bodies", the official wrote in his order.

He said the distribution staff would be provided with gloves and hand sanitizers.

The state's Food and Civil Supplies Department was asked to arrange rice and pulses for all district authorities to ensure emergency food supply.

Meanwhile, the state government has set up control rooms in all eight districts for coordinating information pertaining to the coronavirus. An emergency number-102 was activated to manage queries about emergency ambulance services. Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched 50 such ambulances on Wednesday.

Over 948 persons who had recent travel history to affected countries or showed preliminary symptoms are under home quarantine in Tripura. Nobody has tested positive with COVID-19.

## First COVID-19 death reported in Tamil Nadu

**ARUN JANARDHANAN**  
CHENNAI, MARCH 25

**THE STATE** reported its first COVID-19 death on Wednesday after a 54-year-old building contractor in Madurai succumbed to the infection. The same day, the total number of coronavirus cases reached 23 after five more people tested positive.

State health minister, C Vijaya Baskar, said the five positive cases include four Indonesian nationals and their Chennai-based guide. All of them had been in quarantine since March 22. They are now being treated at the Government Medical College in Salem.

The Indonesian nationals had



mitted to a government isolation ward in the state as they were in the high-risk category, while nearly 150 people who visited the two mosques in the area have been instructed to stay in home quarantine.

Last week, a 49-year-old Thai national, who had accompanied the group and travelled to Erode, died in Coimbatore Medical College. The team reached Delhi on March 6 and left for Erode on March 10 onboard the Millennium Express after visiting several places in the capital. However, the cause of death of the Thai national was officially recorded as complications from diabetic nephropathy, sepsis and pulmonary oedema.

Following the rise in cases, the state administration officials on Tuesday began tracing about 80,000 people, who have landed in India since March 1. Until Tuesday night, the total number of people in home quarantine across the state was 15,492 against neighbouring Kerala's 71,994. While the former has so far tested 890 samples (757 were negative), the latter tested 4,516 samples (3,331 were negative).

Health secretary Rajesh said a team of officials are assessing data from the Centre. "About 80,000 Indian passport holders from Tamil Nadu are to be traced... This includes those who have already been quarantined and those who live outside Tamil Nadu... We will complete the segregation and verification and revenue officials will be tracing them..." she said.

## 85-yr-old woman second COVID-19 victim in Gujarat

**AHMEDABAD:** An 85-year-old woman from Ahmedabad, who had recently travelled back from Saudi Arabia, died due to a COVID-19 infection at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital on Wednesday.

This is the second death in the state. So far, the total number of positive cases in Gujarat on Wednesday was 40 with new cases reported from Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot.

The deceased woman was suffering from co-morbid conditions, according to deputy municipal commissioner Om Prakash Machra.

He added that 28 others who had come in close contact with her had been institutionally quarantined at Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) facilities since the past 3-4 days. So far, a total of 717 samples have been tested in the state, according to principal health secretary Jayanti Ravi. *ENS*

## Modi to join G-20 session on COVID-19 chaired by Saudi king

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

**PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi will on Thursday join a virtual summit of G-20 leaders, organised to discuss the coronavirus pandemic, which will be chaired by Saudi King Salman.

Modi tweeted on Wednesday, "#G20 has an important global role to play in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. I look forward to productive discussions tomorrow at the #G20VirtualSummit, being coor-

dinated by the Saudi G20 Presidency."

Saudi Arabia's King Salman will chair the virtual summit on March 26 to advance the global coordinated response to the pandemic. Apart from the leaders of G-20, the heads of state of Jordan, Spain, Singapore and Switzerland are also scheduled to participate. The UAE will also take part in its capacity as sitting president of the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

In a separate video conference earlier this week, G-20 finance ministers and central bankers agreed to develop an action plan

to respond to the outbreak, which the IMF expects will trigger a global recession.

A video conference of senior health professionals of SAARC countries to share their experiences of combating the spread of COVID-19 is also proposed to be held on March 26. The major topics of discussion will be "practical joint action on online training capsules for emergency response teams, setting up of an Integrated Disease Surveillance Portal, creation of a Common Research Platform and coordination of research..."

Meanwhile, the state government has set up control rooms in all eight districts for coordinating information pertaining to the coronavirus. An emergency number-102 was activated to manage queries about emergency ambulance services. Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched 50 such ambulances on Wednesday.

Over 948 persons who had recent travel history to affected countries or showed preliminary symptoms are under home quarantine in Tripura. Nobody has tested positive with COVID-19.

## MP reports first death; journalist tests positive

**MILIND GHATWAI**  
BHOPAL, MARCH 25

**MADHYA PRADESH** reported its first COVID-19 death after a 65-year-old woman, who was under treatment in Indore, passed away Wednesday.

A resident of Ujjain, the woman was admitted in Indore's M Y Hospital. Neither the woman nor any of her close relatives had travelled abroad. Principal Secretary (Public Health and Family Welfare) Pallavi Jain Govil told *The Indian Express* that it COULD BE a case of "community spread" and all precautions are being taken by the administration.

The locality in Ujjain where the deceased lived has been sealed and her relatives have been isolated. The state has so far reported a total of 15 cases.

A journalist who attended the press conference addressed by former Madhya Pradesh Chief

On Wednesday, curfew was imposed in Indore and Ujjain after five positive cases – four from Indore and one from Ujjain – were reported. Curfew has also been imposed in Gwalior, Shivpuri, Bhopal and Jabalpur from where the remaining nine cases have been reported in the last few days.

## SUSPECTED TO HAVE PASSED ON INFECTION

## J&amp;K lens on man who came via Delhi, UP and tested positive

**ADIL AKHZER**  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 25

**A SENIOR** member of the Tableeghi Jamaat, a non-political Islamic outfit, who has tested positive for coronavirus may turn out to be Kashmir's "super-spreader" – like South Korea's "Patient 31", who is reported to have caused a rapid rise in cases in that country.

A day after the member, a resident of Srinagar, was found positive for COVID-19, Health Department officials said four people, also members of the same outfit, who come from Hajin in Bandipore district, were tested positive on Wednesday, making it eight confirmed cases in Kashmir.

While they are still not sure where the 65-year-old contracted the virus, officials said he travelled to several places in February and March, and health officials are now trying to trace all those he may have come in contact with.

The MGREGA also has a provision for an unemployment allowance or dole, though this was unfortunately never notified and therefore, never paid or even considered. It is a dole to be paid when the system fails to provide work. And while governments could not concede until now that work was not available, it may be possible to do so now," said a senior IAS99 official.

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Security forces at a blockade in Srinagar. *Shuaib Masoodi*

A doctor privy to the case told *The Indian Express* that the patient had developed symptoms while he was in Deoband. "After arriving in Srinagar, he got himself checked by a physician in Sopore. The doctor is under quarantine," he said.

Sources said seven doctors who have come in contact with the patient are being tested.

According to officials, the 65-year-old first approached Jhelum Valley Hospital in Srinagar on March 21 with serious symptoms of flu. He was treated and sent home. On March 22, he visited Srinagar's SMHS Hospital and was diagnosed as a suspected coronavirus patient. He was then referred to Chest Disease Hospital.

He is currently admitted there and doctors said his condition has improved.

Sources said he entered

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Work dries up under NREGA

ers all have Aadhaar-based bank accounts. The Centre should should deposit some financial assistance directly into these accounts. That along with the home-based rations will help over 80 per cent of the rural poor," he said.

In a letter sent to the central and state governments, over 50 experts and activists have sought that works admissions under MGREGA be expanded to include specific personal kinds of work and new manufacturing requirements thrown up by the pandemic also be added asmissible works, such as making masks and hand sanitizers.

"Given that a large number of migrant workers have returned to their native villages, forest works and

in light of lockdowns in 80 cities, many more rural residents will need access to work under MGREGA over the next nine to 12 months. MGREGA will serve as a critical source of social security over the coming financial year. In such extraordinary circumstances, the number of days of work per rural household should not be limited to 100 days per year," the letter stated.

It suggested, among other measures, private works that require less labour and less monitoring such as field bunding, recharge structures, goat sheds, poultry sheds, etc, to avoid close proximity of communities while working, as well as more horticulture works, forest works and

other home-based works. Various activists have also recommended that full wages be paid to registered workers during the lockdown period.

However, senior bureaucrats said this would require careful consideration of the statute, on whether wages may be paid without creation of muster roll.

"The MGREGA also has a provision for an unemployment allowance or dole, though this was unfortunately never notified and therefore, never paid or even considered. It is a dole to be paid when the system fails to provide work. And while governments could not concede until now that work was not available, it may be possible to do so now," said a senior IAS99 official.

The official said the 65-year-old travelled to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kochi (Kerala) and Hyderabad. "He has spent time with several people from Malaysia and Indonesia during religious congregations, and was also in Delhi..." the official said.

Tableeghi Jamaat (group for Spreading Faith) focuses on urging Muslims to return to practising religion as it was practised during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, with focus on rituals, dress, and personal behaviour.

**FULL REPORT** [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## EASE THE FLOW

Amid lockdown, hurdles for free movement and trade in agricultural produce must be cleared immediately

**T**HE GREAT BENGAL Famine of 1943, as Amartya Sen famously documented, wasn't brought about by a decline in food availability. Instead, it was a result of people not having access to food due to a collapse of "exchange entitlements". The situation today, arising from the nationwide lockdown to combat the novel coronavirus, is far from a replay of that horror story. Forget any production shortfalls, the Food Corporation of India's current wheat and rice stocks are over 3.5 times the required normative buffer reserve. Government godowns are also overflowing with surplus stocks of pulses. This, even as farmers are set to harvest a bumper crop of wheat, chana, mustard, onion and other rabi season produce. Not only are supplies plentiful, the shutting down of hotels, restaurants and catering businesses has led to demand destruction from institutional buyers. With abundant availability and demand now largely restricted to direct household consumption, there should be no scope for panic buying, hoarding and people going without food, as was the case during the Bengal Famine and many other natural calamities.

What India is at present facing is not a "supply", but a "supply chain" problem. Thanks to inter-state movement restrictions and arbitrary actions by local authorities to enforce the lockdown — including closing down produce collection centres and warehouses of organised retailers — the links in the chain connecting farmers to consumers have broken down, in turn opening up arbitrage opportunities for unscrupulous speculators. The only way to prevent this is to ensure seamless flow of produce and trucks not being held up at state borders. The lockdown guidelines have clearly defined food among the essential goods whose transport and supply are not to be subjected to any hindrances. That message, also articulated by the prime minister himself, has somehow not percolated to the ground.

The danger from inter-state movement restrictions on farm commodities — and also labour and other inputs used in their processing, packaging and distribution — is not to consumers in metros and large urban centres. The state food and civil supplies departments will ultimately ensure that the wholesale markets in these cities receive enough produce to feed their consumers. It is the people living in small towns and far-flung places, whose voices are less likely to be heard, who are going to bear the brunt of lockdown. Even in the Bengal Famine, Sen showed that the maintenance of essential food supplies to Calcutta was accorded very high priority by the authorities; the three million who died then were mostly the rural masses or those who did not survive after trekking from the districts to the city. That lesson from history should not be forgotten. If anything, this is the moment to free movement and trade in all agricultural produce. Well-functioning markets are the best guarantee against any collapse of exchange entitlements in the ongoing battle against COVID-19.

## A DOUBLE ATROCITY

Government must urgently release remaining prisoners in Kashmir and restore high speed internet in these anxious times

**O**NE MORE HIGH-PROFILE detainee under the Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act has been released. Once again, the government at the Centre has given no reason why former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had to be detained eight months ago, and later booked under a law deployed against dangerous criminals, or why it has decided to release him now. Nor will it say why only he and his father, Lok Sabha MP Farooq Abdullah, have been released, and not the others detained under this law, among them another former chief minister, Mehbooba Mufti.

The apparent brazenness with which the government arrested the entire political leadership of J&K under preventive sections on August 5 last year, and then used the PSA, with its draconian provisions, to extend their detention, does not bode well in a constitutional democracy. Some senior leaders in the BJP have offered the facetious explanation that the people of J&K were happy that their political leaders had been jailed. Others justified the arrests in the name of the "security situation". Even though it is clear that such authoritarian actions can pave the way for a greater erosion of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, by and large, these justifications have not been challenged adequately or vigorously. It is even more egregious that the courts became mere onlookers to these decisions.

At this time when India is battling a dangerous infectious disease and faces a situation like no other in its 73-year history, Kashmir has the misfortune of being doubly anxious. The disease has not spared J&K. There have been 11 confirmed cases so far. Meanwhile, hundreds of Kashmiris detained last year, on the day the government stripped the state of its special status and divided it into two Union Territories, remain imprisoned in J&K and in jails in other states. For the government to continue their detention during this terrible time is a double atrocity on them and their families. Further, while the rest of the country can freely access information on COVID-19 from across the world, J&K still does not have full-fledged access to the internet to enable people to understand this disease from a multiplicity of sources. Its doctors are struggling with low speed access to the net. The government must immediately release the remaining prisoners, wherever they are jailed, and restore full speed internet without delay.

## HISTORY WITH ASTERIX

Albert Uderzo, co-creator of the iconic comic books, will continue to show children that authority doesn't have to be grim

**J**OJO RABBIT, THE Oscar-winning film that portrayed Nazism and Hitler through a child's eyes, was criticised in many quarters for looking at the system of repression and murder through humour, and for humanising Hitler by making him the imaginary friend of the 10-year-old protagonist. Albert Uderzo, the co-creator of the Asterix comic strip along with René Goscinny, never faced such criticism. But the most successful Franco-English export after wine, cheese and existentialism, was also a kind of re-telling of one of history's most gruesome wars, with brilliance, artistry, humour and innocence.

Uderzo, who died at 92 this week, created a kind of detail in his panels, especially of large battle scenes, that remains remarkable to this day. But more than mere technical finesse, what the Asterix universe did — through untold translations, a dozen or so films and even an amusement park a la Disneyland — was take the brutality out of history. Julius Caesar's occupation of Gaul (which comprised large parts of modern France, along with Belgium and Switzerland), was a violent evisceration of a people. But in the world created by Uderzo and Goscinny, the brilliant Asterix, strong and bumbling Obelix and faithful canine companion Dogmatix, managed to resist the might of empire with cunning, superpowers and hijinks.

Uderzo lived through the Nazi occupation of France. As much as anyone of his generation, he knew how grim war and occupation could be, how cruel the human stories behind the news and speeches. And, perhaps, his creation provides an antidote to that harsh reality. Generations of children have been introduced to the cast and characters of the ancient world — from Caesar and Cleopatra to the gods and myths of ancient Rome and Greece — through the series Uderzo created, learning to laugh at those who claim to be great, wishing for a magic potion themselves. There is, of course, no potion. But the ability to laugh at authority is a lesson Uderzo will continue to provide to every child who opens up one of his books.



VIKRAM PATEL

A 25-YEAR-OLD MAN ended his life on March 18 by jumping from the seventh floor of a government hospital in New Delhi, where he had come to be tested for COVID-19. He ended his life before the test result was available. A senior doctor in the hospital was quoted as saying that the man complained of "a headache, breathlessness, and was scared". In my reckoning, he was probably experiencing a panic attack, often mistaken for an acute medical emergency by both the patient and health care providers. With all attention focused on the dreaded virus, no one bothered to care for this man's mental health.

This tragedy was waiting to happen, as an increasingly febrile atmosphere about the threats posed by this new virus reaches suffocating levels, fuelled by hysterical predictions of the apocalyptic toll which will engulf India, sensationalist reportage ghoulishly documenting the death toll each day, and an avalanche of fake news spreading on social media. This has prompted terrified governments to impose an ever-growing range of restrictions on personal freedoms and public life, culminating in the nationwide lock-down on Tuesday.

We know from previous experience that these policies will have a profound effect on the well-being, social worlds and livelihoods of over a billion people; for instance, suicide rates in older Hong Kong residents showed a 31 per cent increase during the peak of the SARS epidemic, fuelled mostly by fear of contracting the disease and fears of disconnection.

This is not to deny that the virus threatens an existential humanitarian crisis. But the one lesson every infectious disease epidemic has taught us is that context matters. Simply put, bugs do not spread the same way everywhere. I vividly recall the hyped pandemic of HIV/AIDS which was predicted to overwhelm India in the late 1990s. These predictions were based on models which failed to recognise that sexual behaviour patterns in India were fundamentally different from those in southern Africa. One can argue that it was sensible to be prepared, but the fact remains that unless data are appropriately applied to the context, the risks are sensitively communicated and the societal response is proportionate, it can lead to a range of unintended bad effects. The HIV/AIDS predictions precipitated fear and panic, con-

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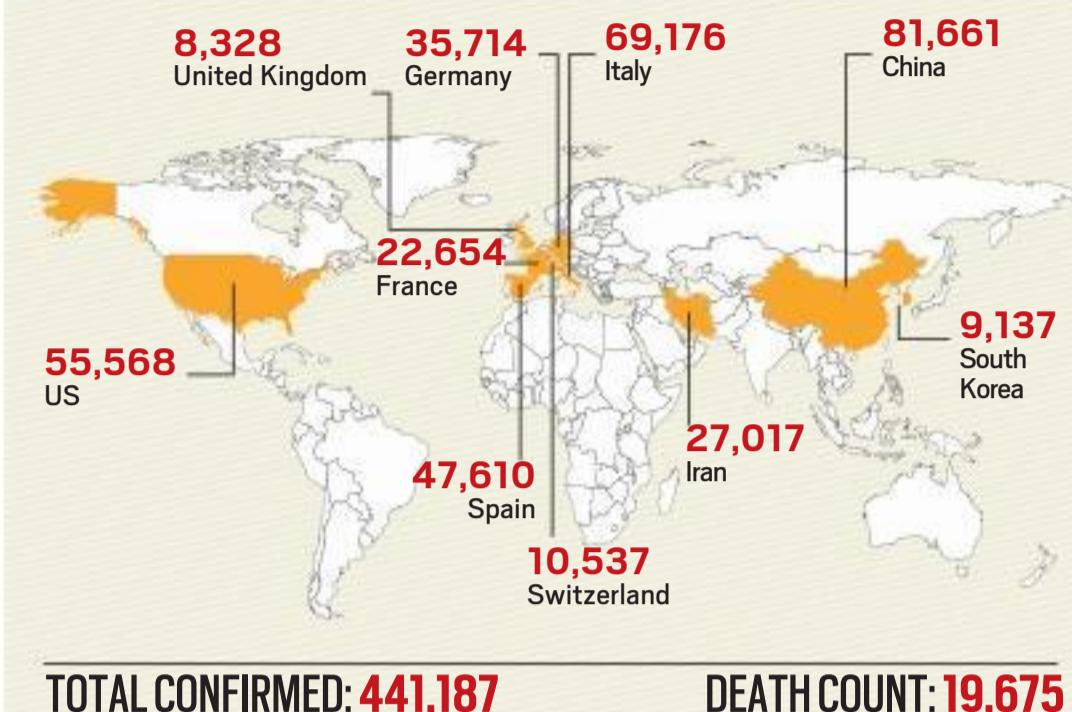
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## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

DAILY COUNT OF DEATHS, INFECTIONS



TOTAL CONFIRMED: 441,187

DEATH COUNT: 19,675

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at midnight on March 25

## Are smokers at greater risk during the COVID-19 outbreak?

DIVYA GOYAL

LUDHIANA, MARCH 25

ARE SMOKERS at a higher risk from the novel coronavirus? Yes, according to health experts. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says in its FAQs on the outbreak that smoking is one of the things that people should not do during the outbreak.

Since the lungs and respiratory tract in smokers are already compromised to various extents, they are more prone to be severely infected by SARS-CoV-2, which primarily attacks the respiratory system in human beings, and in severe cases leads to symptoms such as difficulty in breathing.

"A new infection attacking the already compromised respiratory system is dangerous," said Dr Harminder Singh Pannu, director, Internal Medicine, Fortis Hospital, Ludhiana. He suggested that now might be the best time

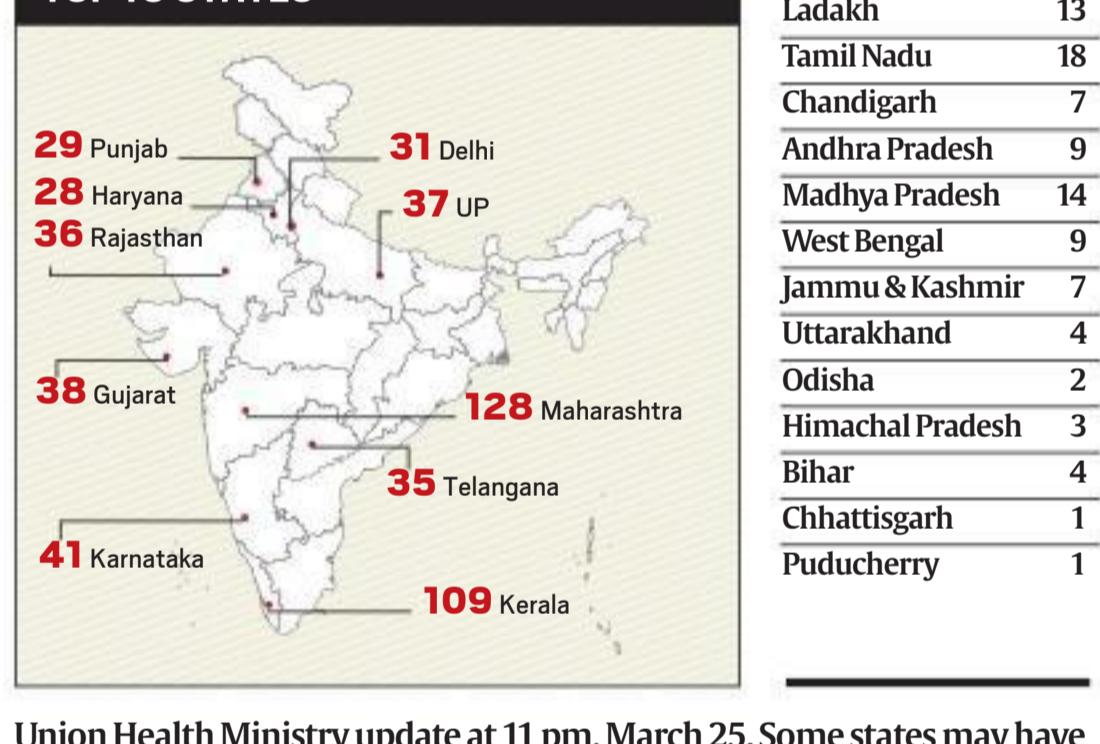
for smokers to quit all together. "Occasional smokers cannot get away by saying that I smoke just one or two cigarettes a day... The fact remains that you are exposing your respiratory system to something that is damaging it. Regular or heavy smokers are anyway psychologically dependent on smoking and consume one cigarette after the other. But the COVID-19 risk stands equally for both the heavy and the occasional smokers."

Smokers, Dr Pannu said, are at a higher risk than those who chew tobacco. "Tobacco causes more damage to oral health whereas cigarettes damage your lungs," he said.

"Quit," a programme run by Cancer Council Victoria in Australia with support from the Victorian Department of Health, says, "... If you previously smoked and have now quit, it's likely you'll have a lower risk of severe complications (if you were infected) than you would have if you were still smoking."

## INDIA COUNT:

606 (10 DEATHS)



Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm, March 25. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above.

43 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 11 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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

## ● FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

## Bangladesh to Pak to Sri Lanka, how India's neighbours are coping

NEHA BANNA

KOLKATA, MARCH 25

EARLIER THIS month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed the creation of a SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund, to which all countries except Pakistan have made contributions. How has the outbreak affected India's neighbours?

BHUTAN

ITS FIRST case was a 76-year-old US citizen who had travelled via India and was hospitalised after showing symptoms on March 5. Some 90 people in the country may have come in contact with him. The patient's wife, their driver and guide were placed under quarantine, as were eight Indian nationals who were on the flight with him from India. The US citizen's wife too tested positive later. On March 22, the King of Bhutan said land borders would be sealed. Schools have been shut down in various parts of the country.



PM Lotay Tshering attended SAARC meeting. AP



People rushed home as trains stopped. Reuters

## BANGLADESH

THE FIRST confirmed cases were two Bangladeshi nationals who tested positive on March 7 after returning from Italy. As of Wednesday evening, Bangladesh had seen 39 confirmed cases and five deaths. The country recorded its first death on March 18; the patient had pre-existing medical conditions. Testing remains low, according to media reports, which raises the possibility of there being many 'hidden' cases.

The government has closed all educational institutions until the end of the month and postponed school exams. *The Daily Star* said that the government had ordered the closure of all public and private offices from March 26 to April 4, barring emergency services, hospitals, and police stations. Public transport and banking services are limited, though markets are open. According to a Reuters report, the government has also ordered the closure of one of the world's largest brothels in Daulatdia.

## NEPAL

NEPAL HAS had three confirmed cases of infection, and no deaths. The first was a student who returned from Wuhan in January, and who has now been discharged, according to *The Kathmandu Post*. The second case was that of a returned from France via Qatar on March 17.

By mid-February, Nepal had evacuated all its citizens from China, and placed them in quarantine for 14 days.

Nepal has suspended visa-on-arrival facilities for all foreigners, with the exception of official and diplomatic visas. Land borders have been sealed, and Mount Everest has been closed to expeditions. Schools and universities have been shut, and all examinations have been postponed. All public spaces have been closed. Nepal's domestic markets, which are heavily reliant on supplies from abroad, have been hit badly.



Many markets are depleted in Nepal. Reuters



Trains were stopped on Wednesday. Reuters

## PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN'S FIRST two COVID-19 cases had a travel history from Iran. Initially, Pakistan suspended all flights to and from Iran, and put screening measures in place at land borders with Iran. But as the numbers spiked—over 1,000 cases and eight deaths as of March 25 evening—Pakistan introduced screening of domestic fliers too, limited international flights to Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore airports, closed borders with Afghanistan and Iran for 15 days, shut schools and universities for students, and cancelled gatherings including the Pakistan Day parade on March 23.

The first death in Pakistan was of a 77-year-old with no recent traceable history of foreign travel. The next death was that of a doctor who had been treating COVID-19 patients in Gilgit-Baltistan; this triggered a government lockdown in the region. In an address to the nation on March 22, Prime Minister Imran Khan ruled out a full lockdown in the country in order to protect its most vulnerable sections.

## SRI LANKA

SRI LANKA HAS had over 100 cases until March 25. The first was a Chinese tourist from Hubei. On February 1, 33 Sri Lankan students were evacuated from Wuhan and kept in quarantine for 14 days; no cases of COVID-19 infections were found in this group.

But more cases were recorded subsequently, including among those who had been in contact with the first case, and among Sri Lankan nationals returning from abroad. Sri Lanka ordered quarantine for passengers from Italy, South Korea and Iran, and then on March 22, banned the arrival of all passenger flights and ships. The government advised the public to work from home between March 20 to 27, for a period of one week.

The country later shut schools and educational institutions until April 20, closed public spaces like cinema theatres and zoos until further notice, and postponed sports events indefinitely.

(Longer version on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com))



There is near total lockdown in Sri Lanka. Reuters



The Ruby Princess in Sydney. Reuters/File

## AUSTRALIA

## Thousands stuck on cruise ships off coast

Perth: Thousands of passengers on three cruise ships were stranded off Australia's west coast Wednesday as officials refused to let them land to avoid repeating the "utter disaster" of a previous cruise-related case surge. The Artania and Magnifica were anchored off the port of Fremantle with a third, the Vasco de Gama, on its way. "There are no circumstances we will allow passengers or crew to wander the streets in our state," West Australian Premier Mark McGowan told media Wednesday. A string of virus cases have been connected with cruise ship arrivals.

## WEST AFRICA

## Mali declares its first two virus cases

Bamako: Mali announced its first two cases of coronavirus on Wednesday, to fears that the war-torn West African state will struggle to handle an outbreak. Two Malian nationals who arrived from France in mid-March tested positive for the virus, the government said in a statement on Wednesday, and are receiving medical treatment. The statement added people should "remain calm and strictly respect the recommended preventive measures". There are fears that Mali is at particular risk in the event of an outbreak, however.

## LIBYA

## First COVID-19 cases reported

Tripoli: Libya has reported its first case of the novel coronavirus, a particular source of concern in the North African country where civil war has badly degraded the public healthcare system. Libya has been mired in chaos since the 2011 overthrow of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi. The health minister of the UN-recognised GNA late Tuesday reported "a first contamination with the coronavirus in Libya," without giving details of the case. "The necessary measures have been taken to treat" the patient, the minister, Ahmed Ben Omar, said in a brief online statement.

## Global toll 20,000, 3 bn told to stay home

Italy fatalities rise by 683 to 7,503; total cases 73,386

AGENCIES  
MARCH 25

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic has killed more than 20,000 people worldwide, most of them in Europe, according to an AFP tally Wednesday using official figures.

A total of 20,334 deaths were reported, of which 13,581 were in Europe.

With 7,503 deaths, Italy is the most affected country ahead of Spain with 3,434 and China with 3,281, the country where the initial outbreak occurred.

This comes even as more than three billion people have been asked to stay home in almost 70 countries and territories as governments battle the pandemic.

Most of the countries concerned, including Argentina, Britain, France, India and Italy as well as many US states, have imposed mandatory lockdown measures. Others have introduced curfews, quarantines and other social distancing recommendations.

The death toll from an outbreak of coronavirus in Italy has grown by 683 to 7,503, the Civil Protection Agency said on Wednesday, a decline in the daily tally of fatalities following a day before.

On Tuesday 743 people died. That followed 602 deaths on Monday, 650 on Sunday and a record of 793 on Saturday – the highest daily figure since February 21. The total number of confirmed cases in Italy rose to 74,386 from a previous 69,176, the Civil Protection Agency said.

SPAIN'S CORONAVIRUS death toll overtook that of China on Wednesday, rising to 3,434 after 738 people died over the past 24 hours, the government said.

Across the world, only Italy now has a higher death toll than that of Spain. In China, where the virus emerged late last year, 3,281 people have died.

The spiralling number of deaths came as Spain entered the 11th day of an unprecedented lockdown to try and rein



A row of military trucks wait to take away coffins that have been piling up in a church in Italy on Wednesday. Reuters

## Spain death toll crosses China's

AGENCIES  
MADRID, MARCH 25

in the COVID-19 epidemic that has now infected 47,610 people, the health ministry said.

As the authorities stepped up testing, the number of cases showed a 20 per cent increase on the figures for Tuesday, while the death toll showed a 27 per cent rise over the same period.

Despite the national lockdown imposed on March 14, which is to be extended until April 11, both deaths and infections have continued to mount, with officials warning this week that would be particularly bad.

"We are approaching the peak," the ministry's emergency

coordinator Fernando Simon said in announcing the figures. Health authorities are hoping it will soon become clear whether the lockdown is having the desired effect.

Madrid has suffered the brunt with 14,597 infections – just under a third of the total – and 1,825 deaths, or 53 per cent of the national figure.

Troops have set up a massive field hospital in Madrid's vast IFEMA exhibition centre which currently has 1,500 beds but which could be expanded to take in up to 5,500 people – making it the largest hospital in Spain.

EXPLAINED  
E.  
War of attrition

IN MANY parts of Europe, the ranks of health workers have been thinning in a war of attrition. In Spain, 14% of cases are medical professionals. As per experts, this situation is damaging as it adds to the toll while cutting down the number of responders. This draws renewed attention to need to equip such workers properly.

## Iran to ban intercity travel as virus death toll tops 2,000

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TEHRAN, MARCH 25

IRAN WILL ban intercity travel within days as it finally gets tough with the coronavirus that has killed more than 2,000 people in one of the world's deadliest outbreaks, officials said Wednesday.

The strict new measures come after weeks of cajoling largely failed to prevent hundreds of thousands of Iranians taking to the roads to visit family for the two-week Persian New Year holiday.

"New journeys will be banned, leaving towns and cities will be banned," government spokesman Ali Rabii announced, hours after President Hassan Rouhani revealed the government was poised to introduce "difficult" new measures against the outbreak.

"People should return to



Hassan Rouhani

their home towns as quickly as possible," Rabii said.

He said the government would issue a statutory instrument setting out fines for violations. "Of course, the security forces are going to stop it," he said, referring to travel on Iran's major highways.

Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli told official news agency IRNA Wednesday that

the ban would enter force "tomorrow or the day after".

Iran on Wednesday announced 143 new deaths from the coronavirus, raising the official death toll to 2,077.

Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour added that "our colleagues have registered 2,206 new cases of COVID-19 infection" in the past 24 hours, bringing total infections to 27,017.

Iran had long resisted imposing any lockdown, choosing instead to rely on verbal appeals for people to stay home.

"There has been a long debate within the National Committee for Fighting the Coronavirus about how to strengthen the measures we have taken," Rouhani said.

"It may create problems for people's travel plans and require that people return home early," the president said.

## US lawmakers reach deal for \$2-trillion financial aid package

NEW YORK TIMES  
NEW YORK, MARCH 25

THE WHITE House and Congress struck a deal in the predawn hours to deliver \$2 trillion in government relief to a nation increasingly under lockdown, watching nervously as the twin threats of disease and economic ruin grow more dire.

Reached after midnight, the stimulus deal was the product of a marathon set of negotiations among Senate Republicans, Democrats and the White House that had stalled as Democrats insisted on stronger worker protections and oversight of a \$500 billion fund to bail out distressed businesses.

Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, announced the deal on the Senate floor well after midnight. "At last, we have a deal," he said. "In effect, this is a wartime level of investment into our nation."

The sheer size and scope of the stimulus package would have been unthinkable only a couple of weeks ago. Administration officials said they hoped that its effect on a battered economy would be exponentially greater than its \$2 trillion cost, generating as much as \$4 trillion in economic activity.

"This is not a moment of celebration, but one of necessity," the minority leader, Senator Chuck Schumer, said as he took careful note of the changes his

## TESTING KITS

■ US President Donald Trump has requested test kits from South Korea, his counterpart Moon Jae-in said on Wednesday

■ Over 367,000 people in have been tested in South Korea, once the worst-hit country outside China

■ "If there is a domestic surplus, I will support as much as possible," Moon told Trump

party had secured in the legislation. "To all Americans I say, 'Help is on the way.'"

The Democratic-led House is unlikely to take up the package until at least Thursday, when Speaker Nancy Pelosi hopes to approve it by unanimous consent, a practice usually reserved for minor, uncontroversial measures. In this case, it would ensure House members, who are scattered across the country, do not have to travel back to Washington.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump pressed to reopen the country for business by Easter, on April 12.

When asked how he came up with April 12 as a target date, Trump did not cite any scientific evidence. "I just thought it was a beautiful time," he said.



A COVID-19 drive-thru test site in Chicago. AP

## Citing virus, Putin delays vote on changes to extend his rule

ANDREW OSBORN & TOM BALMFORTH  
MOSCOW, MARCH 25

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin on Wednesday postponed a nationwide vote on constitutional changes that would allow him to extend his rule, saying the health and safety of citizens was his top priority as the global coronavirus pandemic worsens.

His postponement followed calls from critics to delay the vote, which had been planned for April 22. One opposition activist, Andrei Pivovarov, likened the idea to proceeding amid coronavirus to "holding a party during the plague".

"We see how severely the coronavirus epidemic is developing in the world. In many

countries the number of cases is continuing to grow, the whole world economy is under threat," Putin said in a televised address.

"The absolute priority for us is the health, life and safety of people. Therefore I believe that the vote should be postponed until a later date."

Putin spoke on the day Russia recorded its biggest one day rise in cases, though at 658, the official tally remains much lower than in many European countries.

The mayor of Moscow told Putin on Tuesday however that the real scale of the problem far exceeded official figures, and Reuters reported earlier this month that a reported increase in pneumonia cases in Moscow was fuelling fears about the accuracy of official data. REUTERS

## UK issues visa extensions for those hit by travel ban

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, MARCH 25



Priti Patel

BRITAIN'S INDIAN-ORIGIN Home Secretary Priti Patel has issued an over two-month extension on visas to foreign nationals who were stranded in the UK due to COVID-19 related travel bans imposed by several countries, including India.

The announcement, made on Tuesday, came as a relief for Indian nationals, including tourists, professionals and students, who were inundating the social media channels of the Indian High Commission in London with queries about their expired or soon to be expiring visas.

Like many foreign nationals, the Indian citizens also found themselves unable to return home amid the coronavirus pandemic due to flight cancellations

MICHAEL HOLDEN & GUY FAULCONBRIDGE  
LONDON, MARCH 25

PRINCE CHARLES, the 71-year-old heir to the British throne, has tested positive for coronavirus but is in good health and is now self isolating in Scotland with mild symptoms.

Charles, eldest son of Queen Elizabeth, is displaying what Clarence House said were mild symptoms. His wife, Camilla, 72, tested negative.

Charles, eldest son of Queen Elizabeth, is displaying what Clarence House said were mild symptoms. His wife, Camilla, 72, tested negative.



Prince Charles

"The Prince of Wales has tested positive for coronavirus," Clarence House said. "He has been displaying mild symptoms but otherwise remains in good health and has been working from home throughout the last few days as usual."

"The Duchess of Cornwall has also been tested but does not have the virus," Clarence House said.

Queen Elizabeth who is currently at Windsor Castle is in good health, Buckingham Palace said.

A royal source said the Prince of Wales, who was tested on Monday and got the results on Tuesday, was advised the condition was unlikely to escalate into a more serious case. REUTERS

Management Authority has said that so far 7 people have died due to the novel coronavirus and 18 recovered. In the wake of the outbreak, the country has halted its domestic flights operations.

Abdul Sattar Khokhar, the spokesman of Aviation Division, said that the decision was part of ongoing efforts to contain the deadly coronavirus. The ban will be effective from Thursday, Khokhar said.

According to a statement on the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority's website on Tuesday, the government has "decided to suspend all types of domestic scheduled/non-scheduled, chartered and private aircraft passenger flight operations..." PTI

that we have is overcrowding inside these camps," Mohamed Omid, an asylum seeker from Afghanistan posted on Facebook Tuesday from inside Moria.

There have been 20 recorded deaths and 743 officially announced infections from the coronavirus in Greece, which has a population of 11 million. Three of the cases have been reported among Lesbos islanders.

There are nearly 38,000 people crammed into overstuffed refugee centres on the islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos. Moria alone has over 19,000.

The European parliament's

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called for urgent measures to relieve pressure on the camps.

civil liberties, justice and home affairs committee this week

"Many of those in the camps are already in precarious health situations due to the bad conditions in which they have lived for a long time," said Juan Fernando Lopez Aguirar, a Spanish socialist MEP who chairs the committee.

"There is no chance of isolation or social distancing, nor is it possible to ensure appropriate hygienic conditions," he said, adding that there are only six intensive care beds available on Lesbos.

"Moria is divided into two groups. Around 20 percent are scared and hiding in their tents, and 80 percent are still walking around as if nothing is happening," said Haidari.

"Moria is divided into two groups. Around 20 percent are scared and hiding in their tents, and 80 percent are still walking around as if nothing is happening," said Haidari.

## Pak suspends domestic flights as cases top 1,000

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, MARCH 25

PAKISTAN HAS suspended all domestic flight operations until April 2 to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus after the country reported over 1,000 cases and seven deaths from the COVID-19 infection, authorities said on Wednesday.

The nationwide tally of COVID-19 patients touched 1,037 with 413 cases in Sindh; 115 in Balochistan; 296 in Punjab; 117 in K-P; 80 in Gilgit-Baltistan; 15 in Islamabad; and one in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The Express Tribune reported.

The National Disaster

THERE IS NO CHANCE OF ISOLATION OR SOCIAL DISTANCING'

## 'Corona time' for refugees in Europe's main migrant camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PAZIANOU LESBOS ISLAND (GREECE

SENSEX: 28,535.78 ▲ 1861.75 NIFTY: 8,317.85 ▲ 516.80 NIKKEI: 19,546.63 ▲ 1,454.28 HANG SENG: 23,527.19 ▲ 863.70 FTSE: 5,459.82 ▲ 13.81 DAX: 9,535.03 ▲ 165.54



GOLD

₹41,705



RUPEE

₹75.94



OIL

\$26.15



SILVER

₹38,100

Note: Spot gold markets shut due to lockdown in major states. Indian basket as on March 19, 2020

International market data till 1900 IST

COVID-19 EFFECT  
AVIATION SECTOR HIT

SpiceJet returns some wet-leased aircraft; carriers fast losing cash reserves

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

IN WHAT is being pegged as the first real impact of curtailed operations on Indian airlines, low-cost carrier SpiceJet has returned five of its wet-leased Boeing 737 aircraft to Turkey's Corendon Airlines. While sources indicated that SpiceJet returned the aircraft on account of a cash crunch, a company spokesperson denied the financial situation as a factor and said the carrier did not need the aircraft due to the trimmed operations.

Meanwhile, aviation consultancy firm CAPA India in a research note on Wednesday said the impact of COVID-19 will be "so severe that even the stronger carriers may not be immune". "In the event of a three-month shutdown, the two listed carriers alone — IndiGo and SpiceJet — could report combined losses of \$1.25-1.50 billion across 4QFY2020 and 1QFY2021. IndiGo's hitherto enviable free cash reserves may almost be wiped out. Smaller carriers may exit," CAPA noted.

Responding to queries by The Indian Express, a SpiceJet spokesperson said: "The suspension of international operations and the weakening of domestic demand due to COVID-19 outbreak earlier this month provided an opportunity to SpiceJet to cut high-cost expenses and focus our resources on running a lean and profitable operation. As part of the cost cutting exercise, wide-ranging measures have been taken including returning some wet-lease aircraft".

"Lease payments are made in advance for these aircraft and the lessors have some payables to SpiceJet... some aircraft were returned due to weakening demand and closure of international operations due to COVID-19. Had this not happened, we would have been operating these planes," the person said.

SpiceJet's rival GoAir, too, in an effort to cut costs, has extended salary cuts to all its employees for March. "We will ensure that the lowest pay grades suffer the least... when the tide turns once again, and it will, GoAir will find a way to compensate all of you for the sacrifice you are being asked to make at this juncture," its CEO Vinay Dube said in a communication to employees.

Even as airlines suffer the pain of severely subdued demand, airports are also in the

Moody's placed GMG Hyderabad International Airport Ba1 Corporate Family Rating on review for possible downgrade, and downgraded DIAL's CFR and senior secured ratings to Ba3 from Ba2

line of fire, and are expected to see a considerable fall in passenger throughput. "Given the fall in airline operations, airports are likely to operate at less than 20% capacity for the month of April and less than 50% till June. Decline anywhere between 8% to 15% is expected for passengers handled (domestic and international) by airports," CARE Ratings said in a report.

On account of the sharp decline in passenger and aircraft traffic at Delhi Airport, Moody's Investors Service has placed GMG Hyderabad International Airport Limited's Ba1 Corporate Family Rating on review for possible downgrade, even as it downgraded Delhi International Airport Limited's (DIAL) CFR and senior secured ratings to Ba3 from Ba2.

Spencer Ng, vice president and senior analyst, Moody's, said, "The downgrade to Ba3 reflects our expectation of a sharp decline in passenger and aircraft traffic at Delhi airport in the coming months and the uncertainty over the timing and extent of a recovery, which coincides with increased debt issuance as the airport enters the peak stage of its Rs 98 billion expansion project."

Even as the current scenario was full of uncertainty, Moody's expects a recovery in airport traffic to commence in the second half of the year. However, it expects Delhi airport's traffic levels for the next two-three years to be lower as a result of the coronavirus, which will reduce DIAL's available cash flow for its Rs 9,800 crore expansion project and increase its reliance on debt funding. "The rating action reflects the expectation of a sharp decline in passenger and aircraft traffic at Hyderabad airport in the coming months and the uncertainty over the timing and extent of a recovery, which coincides with increased debt issuance as the airport enters the peak stage of its Rs 5,500 crore expansion project," Ng said.

## GLOBAL MARKETS RISE

## 7% jump: Sensex logs best single-day gain in over 10 yrs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

STOCK MARKETS on Wednesday posted their best single-day rise in over 10 years in percentage terms aided by a strong rally in the global markets and expectations of a stimulus package by the government to revive the economy hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

The BSE Sensex skyrocketed 1,861.75 points, or 6.98 per cent, to settle at 28,535.78 and the Nifty 50 zoomed 516.80 points, or 6.62 per cent, to end at 8,317.85.

Despite the nationwide lockdown, markets rallied on strong buying support, mainly driven by banks and financials. "Global markets have been trading in the

EXPLAINED

## Markets pin hopes on stimulus announcement

THE LIKELY clearing of the \$2 trillion stimulus by leaders in the US has turned sentiments positive globally. Markets in India, meanwhile, are keenly awaiting the stimulus package being planned by the government to bail out the economy.

green, driven by expectations of stimulus measures to support the respective economies... A more stable rally can happen only after any news regarding virus containment comes in," said an analyst.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Tuesday said the Centre will soon announce a fis-

cal package to help the economy come out of the virus shock. Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul rallied up to 8 per cent.

Deepak Jasani, head—retail research, HDFC Securities, said Asian and European markets surged after the White House and the Senate reached an

agreement over a stimulus to shore up the US economy against coronavirus. The deal aims to buttress the teetering economy by giving roughly \$2 trillion to health facilities, businesses and ordinary Americans buckling under the strain of the pandemic.

"While there is a lot of momentum in the risk-on rally, volatility remains on overdrive and 2-3 consecutive days of gains are still awaited across the globe even as news on virus front does not moderate in terms of its worst outcomes," he said.

S Ranganathan, head of research at LKP Securities, said, "Markets today mirrored the buoyancy displayed by Dow on expectations of a stimulus package. All sectoral indices on the BSE ended in the green."

● **WHAT HAS HAPPENED TILL NOW?** The highly contagious coronavirus has caused entire regions to be placed on lockdown, halting services and production and breaking supply chains

confidence, where only 33% thought the country could cope

■ Italy, which has so far seen over 6,800 deaths, had the highest number of respondents saying they were "very concerned" about the health of their local community

■ France is the nation with least

## '70% of G7 households expect virus to make them poorer'

Seventy per cent of households in Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US expect to lose income due to the coronavirus outbreak, according to a Kantar survey



**Britain:** Just 28% of people said they had started working from home more often and only a little over half said they were avoiding visits to elderly and vulnerable relatives and friends where possible

**Japan:** Had the highest number of people who said they had started wearing a mask (65%) but the lowest number of people doing all other measures listed in the survey, such as social distancing and washing hands more

Source: Reuters

## PSBs unveil emergency credit lines to customers hit by coronavirus

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MARCH 25

AFTER SBI'S COVID-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL), public sector banks (PSBs) Bank of Baroda (BoB), Indian Bank, Union Bank of India and Bank of India (BoI) have unveiled similar emergency credit lines at concessional terms to borrowers whose operations are hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Banking sources said more PSBs are likely to come with similar schemes in the coming days to bail out borrowers and needy customers, in the wake of the overall decline in the business.

BoB has rolled out Baroda COVID-19 Emergency Credit Line (BCECL) to provide emergency credit line in the nature of short-term loan or demand loan to existing MSME and corporate borrowers affected by the coronavirus. The bank has decided to make maximum 10 per cent of the existing fund based working capital limits (FBWC) subject to maximum of Rs 200 crore.

BoB said the interest rate for corporate borrowers would be one-year MCLR of 8.15 per cent without the standard premium and for MSMEs, the interest rate would be repo-linked lending rate of 8 per cent. "We hope the additional liquidity facility CECL will offer the requisite support to our customers to smoothly tide over the financial distress," said Vikramaditya Singh Khichi, Executive Director, BoB.

BoI has proposed a loan product COVID Emergency Support Scheme (CESS 2020)

and a personal loan product COVID-19 Personal Loan, valid up to June 30. Corporates will be eligible for an additional 20 per cent of their existing current working capital limit under CESS 2020.

In the case of personal loans, additional loans of up to three times last drawn salary will be made available for those with accounts in BoI, up to a maximum limit of Rs 5 lakh.

Indian Bank has come out with emergency loans for various categories of customers — corporates, MSMEs, retail bor-

rowers, pensioners and self-help groups (SHGs). Large corporates will get additional funding of up to 10 per cent of the working capital limits with a maximum limit of Rs 100 crore. Salaried employees will get an amount equal to 20 times the latest monthly gross salary subject to a maximum of Rs 2 lakh to meet urgent medical and other expenditures. For SHGs, each member can avail of a soft loan of Rs 5,000 — Rs 1 lakh per SHG — for 36 months with six months moratorium.

Union Bank of India has launched COVID-19 Emergency Line of Credit (CELC) for existing customers.

Maximum 10 per cent of the existing working capital limit will be provided under CELC, with repayment period of 36 months including maximum moratorium of 12 months at a fixed interest rate of 8 per cent.

State Bank of India (SBI) last

week said it will make additional credit available under its CECL scheme to existing borrowers on an ad-hoc basis. This scheme will be in force up to June 30.

## Telecom tower cos still facing operational issues in states

AASHISH ARYAN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

DESPITE THE DoT having written to state chief secretaries and Union Territory administrators more than twice over the past week asking them to ensure that critical telecom infrastructure remains operational, several network operations and call centres as well as tower sites have been facing problems, sources across India told The Indian Express.

The problem is especially severe in Punjab, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, where telecom infrastructure firms are facing problems in getting curfew passes issued for their vehicles which ferry diesel for generator sets lighting up the tower, sources said. "All efforts are being made for smooth functioning of telecom services and operations in their respective states," TRDua, director general, Tower & Infrastructure Providers Association, said.

Companies such as Netflix,

## OTT, streaming players set to limit quality to SD

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

OVER-THE-TOP (OTT) and video streaming players across the board have decided to curtail the highest video quality by suspending high definition (HD) and ultra-high definition (ultra HD) content transmission on mobile networks for the 21-day lockdown duration.

Companies such as Netflix,

## Retailers getting adequate fuel supply, say OMCs

KARUNJIT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 25

PETROLAND diesel pumps across the country are receiving adequate supplies of fuel despite stray incidents of local authorities stopping fuel supply vehicles, according to sources within oil marketing companies (OMCs). Petrol pumps as well as LPG retailers are

among the categories exempt from having to remain closed under the 21-day national lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus.

"Our retailers are providing 24 hours service in areas where they are permitted to by the government, and for the maximum amount of time they are allowed to remain operational in other areas," said S Sundararajan, spokesperson, BPCL.

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## THE CORONAVIRUS

## Test acts

Developing and deploying tests for SARS-CoV-2 is crucial

"WE HAVE a simple message to all countries," So said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) at a news conference held in Geneva on March 16th. "Test, test, test. All countries should be able to test all suspected cases, they cannot fight this pandemic blindfolded." Without adequate testing for sars-cov-2, the novel coronavirus that is now sweeping rapidly around the world, he said, there can be no isolation of cases and the chain of infection will not be broken. As if to prove the point, a vigorous policy of testing seems to have slowed the virus's spread in South Korea quite dramatically. And in Vo, a town in Italy, thorough and repeated testing of all 3,300 inhabitants has stopped new infections entirely.

Two main types of test are used to identify viral infections: genetic and serological. The first genetic test for sars-cov-2 was created just a few days after the virus's genomic sequence was published, on January 12th, by a group of Chinese researchers. Others, developed subsequently by public health bodies around the world (and also a few companies) have their own tweaks, but their broad principle is the same.

## Amplification is his only employ

Each starts with a swab taken from the back of the nose or the throat of an individual suspected of being infected, in a search for rna—for sars-cov-2 stores its genes as rna, rather than the similar molecule, dna, which animals such as human beings employ for the purpose. Because of this quirk, the first step of genetic testing is to copy any rna collected into dna, using an enzyme called reverse transcriptase. That done, the dna is then amplified in quantity by a process called the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The now-amplified dna is sequenced and matched (or not) against the sequence that would be expected if the starting point was rna from the virus.

Executed properly, genetic tests of this sort are extremely accurate. But they have limitations. One is that if the virus is present only at low levels—at the start or end of an infection, for example—their sensitivity drops. Also, taking a throat swab is neither simple nor foolproof. If the sampling probe goes insufficiently deeply into the orifice concerned, or fails to gather enough cells, the test might not work. Virologists say that the best sort of throat swabbing almost inevitably makes a patient gag or cough. This means that whoever is doing the swabbing needs to be protected from infection.

All this assumes that the tests themselves are designed properly. The who published protocols for a sars-cov-2 test in January, and most places which have created their own tests have based them on these instructions. In America, however, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) designed its own protocols. Tests created using these American cdc protocols, which were distrib-



Medical staff in protective gear work at a drive-thru testing centre for COVID-19 in Yeungnam University Medical Center in Daegu, South Korea, March 3. Reuters

uted across the country to state-level public-health laboratories, turned out to be flawed. This no doubt contributed to America's slower response to the unfolding crisis.

The actual apparatus used to carry out pcr tests of this sort—regardless of the exact bug being tested for—is commonplace in hospitals in rich countries, for it is used routinely to identify viruses from influenza to hepatitis to hiv. But the process is thereby centralised, and can be slow. It may take as long as 48 hours after a sample is collected for the result to be returned to a patient. What is needed is a test which can be conducted immediately after sampling, a process known as "near-patient testing". This involves packing everything required for a test—both the instruments and the chemicals—into a reasonably portable machine, designed specifically to

look for sars-cov-2, that can be deployed

away from a big hospital laboratory. Several firms are working on such things. BioMérieux, a French biotechnology company, says it will have a test on offer by the end of March, and that it has an emergency-use authorisation for it from the Food and Drug Administration, which approves such devices for America. Cepheid, a Californian firm, will try to use a similar approval process to get its own coronavirus-specific test to market. This is a box, the size of a small laser printer, that ingests a sample, carries out an analysis and returns a result within a couple of hours.

## Think global. Act local

Machines like these could be particularly valuable in places where public-health laboratories are few and far between. John Nkengasong, head of Africa cdc (an arm of the African Union unrelated to the American or-

ganisation of the same name), wrote in the Lancet in February of his concern about the spread of coronavirus across his continent, given the strong links between many African countries and China, the place where the pandemic began. One of his worries was the continent's lack of testing capacity. At the start of 2020, only the Pasteur Institute in Senegal and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa were able to carry out full-scale genetic detection of sars-cov-2.

Subsequent training, led by the who, has now enabled scientists in around 40 African countries to diagnose infection with the virus—but this can still be done only in each country's central public-health laboratory. Near-patient testing would help a lot. And many health-care workers in Africa are already familiar with similar self-contained diagnostic machines, because they have been

used extensively to track the efficacy of anti-retroviral therapy for hiv.

Genetic tests identify active infections. But to understand properly how sars-cov-2 is spreading through a population it is also important to know who has been infected in the past and recovered. That is where serological tests come in. They look not for rna in swab samples, but for antibodies in blood samples. Antibodies usually hang around in a person's bloodstream well after an infection has cleared. They thus form a historical record of the pathogens people have been exposed to over the course of their lives.

Each antibody is tailored to latch onto a specific protein on the surface of a pathogen, thus disabling it. A serological test for sars-cov-2 therefore works by using such a protein—referred to as an antigen—to capture antibodies from a blood sample. Most tests

Executed properly, genetic tests of this sort are extremely accurate. But they have limitations. One is that if the virus is present only at low levels—at the start or end of an infection, for example—their sensitivity drops. Also, taking a throat swab is neither simple nor foolproof.

under development focus on spike, a protein which protrudes prominently, and in many places, from the surface of the otherwise-spherical sars-cov-2 virus particle. In a typical test, a blood sample would be placed into a test tube coated inside with the antigen. If relevant antibodies are present, they will stick to the antigen. Depending on the design of the test, a positive result could produce a colour change or emit light to indicate success. The whole thing is reasonably cheap and could give results in minutes.

BioMedomics, a firm in North Carolina, for example, has designed a serological test for sars-cov-2 that needs only a few drops of blood from a finger prick, and which gives results in 15 minutes. It includes a hand-held plastic stick which looks similar to that from a pregnancy-testing kit. And, similarly to those tests, it uses coloured lines to indicate the presence of particular antibodies. The company says the test has already been widely used by China's public-health authorities, but has not yet been reviewed for use by America's fda.

Designing a serological test, then, is straightforward. Checking that it gives accurate results takes time, though. A common problem with such tests is that antibodies may cross-react, meaning that a test for sars-cov-2 might also show a positive result when it comes across a different coronavirus—the original sars, perhaps, or one of the coronaviruses that cause colds. Testing the accuracy of these tests requires trials involving hundreds of people who are known to have had sars-cov-2 infections, and hundreds of others who are known not to have been infected.

Once validated, serological tests are fast and cheap to run at scale. They have already been deployed in China, Singapore and South Korea. Data on their efficacy, however, have not yet been publicly released or independently verified. America's cdc is evaluating two serological tests and Public Health England, the relevant government body in that country, is also working on a test. Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, said that the introduction of such a test would be a "game changer" in the quest to track and control the spread of sars-cov-2 across the population. It cannot come fast enough.

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## CORPORATE HR CHIEFS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## The importance of people people

In a pandemic, a chief people officer can make or break a company

WHEN THE financial crisis rocked the business world in 2007-09, boardrooms turned to corporate finance chiefs. A good CFO could save a company; a bad one might bury it. The covid-19 pandemic presents a different challenge—and highlights the role of another corporate function, often unfairly dismissed as soft. Never before have more firms needed a hard-headed HR boss.

The duties of chief people officers, as human-resources heads are sometimes called, look critical right now. They must keep employees healthy; maintain their morale; oversee a vast remote-working experiment; and, as firms retrench, consider whether, when and how to lay workers off. Their in-trays are bulging.

Once derided as "pay and parties" managers, by the early 1990s HR chiefs turned to compliance, keeping firms out of the courts (and papers). A subsequent string of corporate imbroglios elevated their status, notes Patrick Wright of the University of South Carolina. In the wake of executive-pay scandals at companies such as WorldCom and Tyco in the 2000s they became more involved in remuneration. A decade later bungled successions, for example at HP, a printer-maker which sacked two bosses in as many years, left them with a bigger say in filling top jobs. In the past few years they have dealt with companies'

often very public "me too" troubles.

As recruiting and retaining skilled workers became chief executives' big preoccupation—four-fifths now worry about skill shortages, up from half in 2012—HR heads' desks moved ever closer to the corner office. Today many reside right next to the boss. Shareholders are inviting more outside HR chiefs to boards. In America their salaries remain lower than CFOs' but have risen 20% faster since 2010 (see chart).

A higher profile entails new expectations. HR was once the domain of history gradu-

ates and masters in labour relations; nowadays plenty hold business degrees. Although most firms recruit them from HR jobs, more are choosing outsiders or unconventional candidates. According to Russell Reynolds Associates, an executive-search firm, HR heads appointed to Fortune 100 companies between 2016 and 2019 were around 50% likelier than earlier hires to have worked abroad, in general management or in finance.

Before covid-19, tight labour markets and empowered employees pressed employers to understand how to get the most out of their staff, says Dane Holmes, a former head of human-capital management at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank, who now runs an HR-analytics firm. Diane Gherson, who runs HR at IBM, overhauled the computing giant's performance management using big data. Algorithms now challenge IBM managers' instincts on pay and promotion, and alert Ms Gherson's team when staff are at risk of fleeing (often before they even realise it themselves).

The pandemic makes such "people analytics" more relevant. Beth Galetti, Ms Gherson's opposite number at Amazon, an engineer with no HR experience before joining the e-commerce titan, oversees 1,000 developers working exclusively on HR software. Amazon's pre-outbreak investment in digital induction for fresh hires is paying off. "We on-boarded 1,700 new corporate employees on



People walk out of an Amazon Go store in Seattle. Amazon, Facebook, Google and Microsoft all advised Seattle employees to work at home after workers at Facebook and Amazon were diagnosed with the virus. AP

[March 16th] alone," Ms Galetti reports.

Covid-19 may lead more HR chiefs to adopt such systems. In the short run many have more pressing problems. Mala Singh, chief people officer at EA, a maker of video games, represents the c-suite on the team tasked with pandemic response. This now occupies 60-70% of her (long) day. Her team has been getting staff desks, computers, even noise-cancelling headphones. A bigger concern was balancing work with child care. Ms Singh told the caregivers on EA staff to take as much time as they need to adapt without using up paid leave. She is digitally monitoring employee sentiment, particularly anxiety. In a creative business like EA's, "having

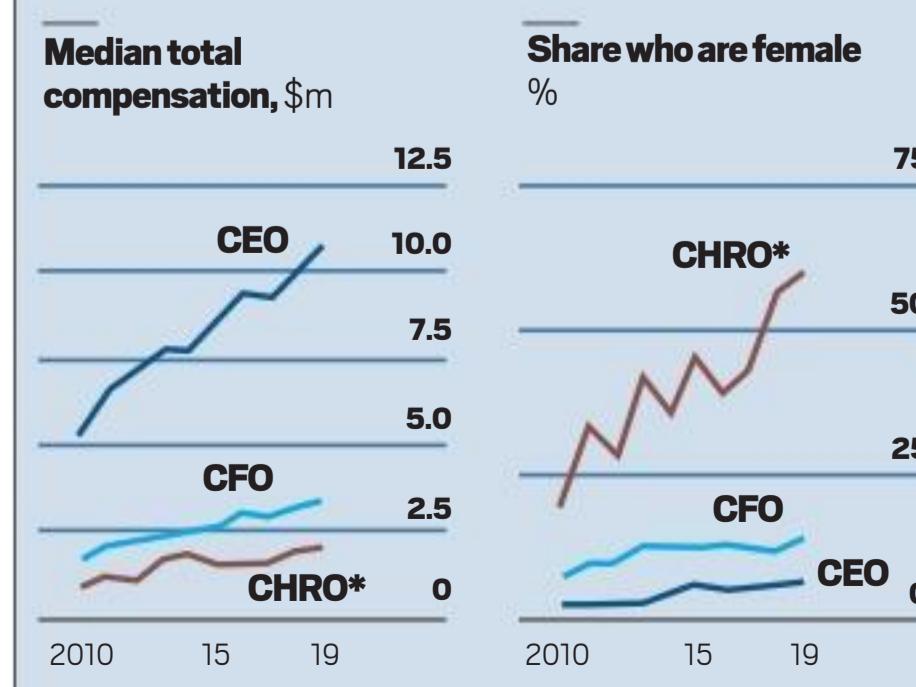
someone stressed about their family situation does not enable productive work", she explains.

Many companies, especially outside the knowledge economy, face tougher choices. HR leaders must strike a balance between a firm's professed purpose, which these days often involves treating staff decently, and the bottom line, observes Dan Kaplan of Korn Ferry, a consultancy. The instinct is to cut costs through mass redundancies, as some hotel chains, airlines and others have begun doing. Rather than slash payrolls indiscriminately, says Bill Schaninger of McKinsey, another consultancy, good HR heads can use the crisis to reconfigure company workflow:

what needs to be done by whom, what can be automated and what requires people to share the same space. Some workers who at first appear redundant may be redeployed or reskilled.

The most far-sighted HR-ers at the most resilient companies are already starting to look beyond the flattened curve. Although not quite recruiting—times are too uncertain—Ms Gherson has begun to court talent at rival firms. Now that everyone is working from home, she says, no one is listening in on their calls. For a savvy HR chief, "it's the perfect opportunity."

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Human capital  
United States, selected public companies

Source: Equilar





# Pulling the plug: The WHO and why behind the Games rescheduling

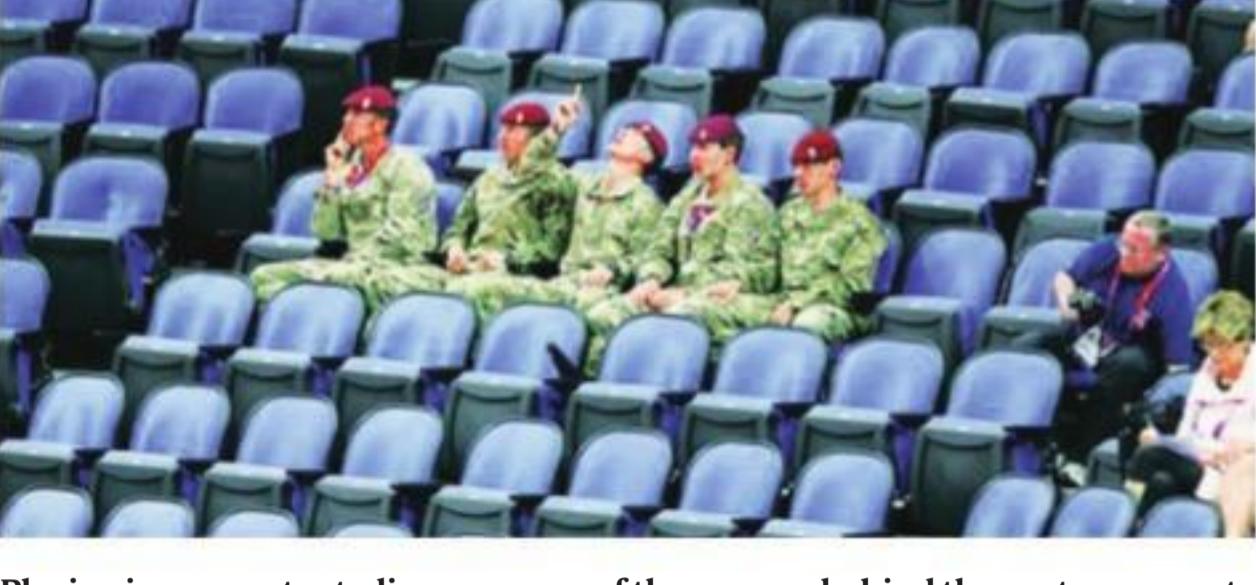
From insisting the Games will go on to setting a four-week deadline to decide fate before eventually delaying, the IOC has rapidly changed its stance on Tokyo 2020 following the outbreak of the pandemic. Here are the reasons that led to the postponement. MIHIR VASAVDA explains.

## WHO's 'alarming information'

IOC president Thomas Bach said government guidelines, imposing restrictions on daily life till April, and even USA president Donald Trump's target of lifting restrictions by 'middle of April' was among the reasons he waited to postpone the Tokyo Games. Amid mounting pressure, he then called an emergency meeting of the IOC executive board on Sunday, which agreed to open discussions with Japan over postponement and scheduled a call for Tuesday. In the hours after the IOC meeting, further "alarming information" emerged about the rapid global spread of the virus. This development, combined with Monday's WHO warning that the spread was "accelerating," meant the IOC opted to push for consensus to postpone the Games. The WHO's advice, Bach said, "was a crucial moment" in their decision making.

## Empty seats

The possibility of holding the Olympics behind closed doors was never seriously considered but there was an underlying concern of the stadiums not being filled to capacity during the Games. "Hide the empty seats" is a popular dictate in the TV sports industry, something executives remind producers and directors about all the time. It's based on the idea that if only so many fans turned up in the stands, why would a viewer bother to watch?" the Associated Press noted. The IOC, many believe, would have found it difficult to allay the safety concerns and there was a risk that several athletes, officials, spectators and even sponsors would have stayed away from the Olympics if it would have gone ahead as scheduled. A poorly attended event would have reflected badly on the hosts as well.



Playing in an empty stadium was one of the reasons behind the postponement.

## Qualification quagmire

With nearly every sport suspending play in the wake of the pandemic, more than two-thirds of the 11,000 potential Olympians from 200 countries had not yet qualified. With a majority of athletes unable

to train, and given that there is still no clarity as to when the situation will get normal for play to resume, there were suggestions that quotas would be distributed according to the latest world rankings or, in some cases, based on performances in the previous Olympics. That would have made the entire process arbitrary and created further complications. Many even argued that it would dilute the playing field. Postponing the Games by a year gives the respective sports federations enough time to work out strategies to finish their qualification process. More light on this is expected to be shed on Thursday, when the IOC holds a conference call with international federations.

## Abe's crowning glory

The Games, many commentators say, were expected to be the 'crowning glory' of

Shinzo Abe's nine-year period as Japan's Prime Minister. He is Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister in history and has actively promoted the Tokyo Olympics, even dressing up as Super Mario in the closing ceremony of the Rio Games. Like they used the 1964 Games to rightful place on the international stage following the ignominy of Second World War, Abe -- according to The Times -- 'had been banking on Tokyo 2020 to mark a similar moment of recovery from the tsunami and nuclear disaster in 2011'. Abe was faced with the choice of delaying the Games or cancelling, which would have caused a massive economic impact.

As per the rules of his political party, Abe is due to retire in September 2021. "Is this why he and Mr Bach agreed that the postponed Games will be held no later than the 'summer' of next year?" The Times wondered.

## Calendar congestion: The logistical nightmare that could be 2021



Lionel Messi will end up playing the COPA and WC qualifiers in 2021.

WITH THE sporting calendar for the 2020 season being disrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, several major events of this year have been shifted to the following season. Only, the 2021 calendar is already packed with major sporting events, some of which will have to be moved to make way for the postponed 2020 tournaments. **SHAHID JUDGE** looks into the window of June to August, where a majority of these events are set to take place.

## THE ADDITIONS

Three major events from the 2020 year have been postponed to the following year. The Copa America, South America's continental football championship, which was to be hosted in Argentina and Colombia this time, will take place from June 11 to July 11. On the same dates, what was to be the Euro 2020, or the European Championships, will take place in 12 different countries across Europe.

Meanwhile, the biggest spectacle of 2020, the Olympic Games in Tokyo, has also been shifted to the summer of 2021. Though the new dates for the Games have not yet been confirmed, it is assumed that it may take place in the same window that was prepared for it in 2020 – July 24 to August 9.

## COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Now that the Olympics will take place in 2021 (assuming between July 24 – August 9), four major events will be forced to reschedule. The World Aquatics Championships were originally scheduled for July 16 to August 1 in Fukuoka, Japan, and the World Athletics Championships were to be held in the United States from August 6 to August

15. Both these events, however, will have to be moved as all the big names in the two disciplines will be competing at the Olympics in Tokyo at the same time. Similarly, the Euro Hockey Nations, which was to take place in The Netherlands in August, will have to change its dates since the major hockey nations will be competing in Tokyo at the time.

From July 7 to August 1, England was to host the Women's 2021 European Championships, but now that the men's edition from 2020 will be held at the same time, and since women's senior teams will be competing at the Olympics, the women's Euros will have to be rescheduled.

## THE UNAFFECTED

Tennis Grand Slams French Open (May 23 to June 6), Wimbledon (June 28 to July 11) and the US Open (August 30 to September 12) will take place in the June to August window, without any hindrance from the shifted 2020 events. The United States will also host the 2021 CONCACAF Gold Cup (continental championships) from July 2 to July 25. In September, the European Basketball Championships, or EuroBasket, will take place from September 2 to 19 in Germany, Italy, Georgia and Czech Republic.

The latter nation, however, may opt out of hosting the event as the country is contemplating shutting its borders for two years as a precaution against the coronavirus. Meanwhile, no dates have been fixed yet for the men's boxing World Championship, which is to be held in New Delhi, but the event in the past has been held in the past between August and November.

## AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE TOKYO, MARCH 25

Japan set about the unprecedented task of re-organising the Tokyo 2020 Olympics Wednesday after making the tough decision to postpone the Games by a year as the coronavirus pandemic locks down one third of the planet. The dramatic step to shift the Olympics, never before seen in peacetime, upends every aspect of the organisation including venues, security, ticketing and accommodation.

It is not even clear exactly when the rescheduled Games will take place. International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach on Wednesday left the door open for them to be staged in the spring instead of the normal summer slot. "This is not restricted just to the summer months," Bach said in a conference call.

"All the options are on the table, before and including the summer of 2021." In a move symbolic of the difficulties, Olympic countdown clocks in Tokyo switched from displaying the number of days to go to simply show today's date and the time.

"It's like taking seven years to build the world's biggest jigsaw puzzle and, with just one piece to go, having to start again but now with less time to finish," tweeted Craig Spence, spokesman for the International Paralympic Committee.

Japan has framed Tokyo 2020 as the "Recovery Games" -- a chance to show the world it has bounced back from the "triple disaster" in 2011 when a massive earthquake sparked a tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear meltdown. The delayed event -- still to be called Tokyo 2020 -- will now be a "testament to mankind's defeat of the new virus," said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He repeated that message in a call with US President Donald Trump, in which the leaders agreed the Games would be "proof that humans have beaten the new coronavirus", Japanese government spokesman said. The Olympic flame "could become the light at the end of the tunnel in which the world finds itself at present," Japan and the IOC said in a joint statement.

## Way bigger than me: Bach

The quadrennial Olympics, which has weathered boycotts, terrorist attacks and protests, is the highest-profile event affected by the virus that has killed thousands and postponed or cancelled sports competitions worldwide. The IOC had come under fire for appearing out of touch by sticking to its schedule, but it eventually bowed to the in-



IOC chief Thomas Bach said that a task-force, named 'Here We Go', has been created to examine the scheduling woes. File

evitable, citing the need to protect the health of athletes. Bach said the postponement was "about protecting human life", with more than 11,000 athletes expected along with 90,000 volunteers, and hundreds of thousands of officials and spectators from all over the world.

He said that the postponed Tokyo Games would require "sacrifices and compromises" from all sides to make them work. "These postponed Olympic Games will need sacrifices, will need compromises by all of the stakeholders," Bach told reporters in a conference call the day after the IOC decided to delay the 2020 Games because of the coronavirus pandemic. The IOC's role, Bach said, was "to make the Olympic dreams of athletes come true".

## Spring of hope

The Olympic torch relay, due to begin from Fukushima Thursday, has also been postponed but the flame will stay in the area until it is safe to begin. Organisers have to wrestle with a host of unanswered questions: are the venues still available? What

to do with ticket-holders and volunteers? How to fit the Games into a crowded 2021 sporting schedule? The athlete's village was due to be renovated into more than 4,000 luxury apartments, hundreds of which have already been snapped up. Tens of thousands of hotel rooms will need to be cancelled and rebooked. "I cannot tell you what the situation is," Bach said when asked about how the postponement might affect the village.

"It's one of the many thousand of questions the taskforce has to address." Japan and the organising committee were spending \$12.6 billion on the Games and experts say they may need to spend around half that again to rearrange the event -- before hopefully recouping the losses when the Olympics are held.

Bach, who was part of West Germany's gold medal-winning foil fencing team at the 1976 Olympics, added: "Of course, I'd be very delighted if we could have the Olympic Village in the traditional form. Everybody who has once lived in an Olympic Village knows that this is the real Olympic experience, that

this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Living under one roof with the whole world, sharing your meals together, celebrating together, discussing together, and forming this unique Olympic unity." Bach concluded by saying: "We are at an unprecedented situation and have an unprecedented challenge. "We have to find the best possible situation under the circumstances that we are living in."

Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori, an 82-year former prime minister and cancer survivor, pointed to his own health battles as inspiration for the difficult times ahead. "We have no choice but to have hope. I myself suffered cancer... But I was saved by a new drug. I am here, allowed to live. Let us hope for these things."

A taskforce, named 'Here We Go', had been created to examine the issue, Bach added, saying the first port of call would be with the 33 international federations, likely starting with a conference call on Thursday. "The first step, we have to see with them, to see what the options are. We also have to take into account the sports calendar around the Olympic Games," Bach said.

# Pandit bids bye to Vidarbha, next stop MP

## DEVENDRA PANDEY MUMBAI, MARCH 25

CHANDRAKANT PANDIT, one of the most successful coaches in domestic cricket, will now coach Madhya Pradesh in the coming season after three years with Vidarbha. Under Pandit's tenure, Vidarbha won Ranji Trophy twice and also triumphed in the Irani Trophy. He has played for Madhya Pradesh as professional player in the 90s.

The former India wicketkeeper batsman Pandit had earlier coached Mumbai and Kerala. Pandit confirmed the news and talked about how the former India wicketkeeper Kiran More helped him in moving to the new role with MP. "I have decided to move on. I don't want to be in a place more than three years. My friend Kiran More knew that I won't be continuing for Vidarbha from this season onwards. He told MP about it and they offered a coach job which I accepted for two years," Pandit told The Indian Express.

Pandit known for his old-school-taskmaster coaching style has made it clear to MP that he will lead a restructuring of their team and the association has given him the free hand to execute his plans. "I have told them my expectations and how I want to go about it. MP is



Chandrakant Pandit was the pivotal force behind Vidarbha's Ranji double. File

similar to Vidarbha. When I took job of Vidarbha they too were trying to make a mark in domestic cricket. Twice we won Ranji Trophy though this season things didn't go as we expected. MP has a young team and it will be great motivation to work forward," Pandit added, who currently is in lockdown in his village in Ratnagiri due to the novel coronavirus.

"The boys are good and it's just following

Pandit has built a reputation for being a coach who is a taskmaster and ticks all the right boxes: strategy, discipline, old-school work ethic, unorthodox methods to get the best out of players. Those in the domestic circuit know that only potential downside of Pandit is that some players might not like his hard style initially and it might lead to a few disagreements. As long as the association and players are ready for such an approach, he usually leads them to success. Some of Pandit's methods are the same irrespective of the teams. Like he did with Mumbai, he also formed various player-led committees for Vidarbha to take care of entertainment, food, fitness, travel -- players were deputed to take ownership and it helped in the bonding process.

## More coaches seek switch

More state associations will be searching for new coaches. Vidarbha for starters has to find a replacement for Pandit. MCA will also be looking to move on from Vinayak Samant and hunt for a new coach. Sanath Kumar, a very successful domestic coach with good track record across teams, has informed the Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) last season that he won't be continuing due to health issues. Last season during Ranji Trophy game, Sanath had suffered a heart attack and rushed to hospital.

## Asian Games medal winning footballer Latif passes away at 73

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA, MARCH 25

FORMER INDIA midfielder Abdul Latif, who was also a key member of bronze medal winning team at the 1970 Bangkok Asian Games died in Guwahati on Monday. He is survived by a son and two daughters. He was 73.

"He was suffering from old age related problems and he breathed his last on Monday evening. His last rites were performed on Tuesday," a relative confirmed.

Latif was born in Mysore, Karnataka before making Guwahati his home. He was also represented India in Asia Cup Qualifier in 1968 in Myanmar and Merdeka Cup in 1969 in Kuala Lumpur. But his biggest glory was being part of the last national football team that had a podium finish at the continental games. Latif could play on both wings as well as central midfield as he represented Mohammedan Sporting from 1963-1967 and later took over as coach.

After retirement, Latif settled in Guwahati and began his career as a coach, under his tutelage Assam won the junior

and sub-junior national championships. He also coached Mohammedan Sporting Club from 1978 to 1980. Earlier, he played for State Bank of Hyderabad in the A-Division Rahim League here. Later, he moved to Bengaluru where he played for HAL before settling down in Guwahati. "It is sad to hear that Abdul Latif is no more. His contribution to Indian Football will never be forgotten. I share the grief," said All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel.

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Latif was a versatile midfielder and could play on the flanks as well.

# 'Mental health is so important right now...'

Phelps says some athletes 'may have trouble' coping with an unprecedented one-year postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK, MARCH 25

MICHAEL PHELPS has been open about his mental health struggles, even as he became the most decorated athlete in Olympic history. Now, with the Tokyo Games on hold because of the coronavirus, the retired swimming great worries that some athletes may have trouble coping with this unprecedented postponement.

"It's a total bamboozle," Phelps told *The Associated Press* on Tuesday.

"There's such a wave of emotions. I can't imagine what these athletes are going through right now."

In an telephone interview from his Arizona home, where he is largely hunkered down like so many others around the globe, Phelps gave reluctant praise to the International Olympic Committee for putting off the games until 2021 while the world deals with the pandemic.

"Honestly, my first thought was I was relieved," he said. "Now, there's more of a chance that we can beat this thing and do what we need to do to save as many lives as possible. I was happy to see them logically making a smart decision. It's just frustrating it took this long."

With the anticipated Olympic postponement now official, Phelps turned his attention to the world-class athletes who must deal with another jarring change to their preparations, even as they were still processing the cutbacks in training and lack of human contact stemming from worldwide efforts to curtail the virus.

Since his retirement in 2016, following an unprecedented Olympic career that produced 23 golds and 28 medals overall, Phelps has talked of suffering from depression and anxiety. He even had thoughts of suicide at his lowest points. He knows this is a challenging time for those who had their sights on the Olympics, which were scheduled to open on July 24 but now have been delayed by up to a year.

"As athletes, we're so regimented," Phelps said. "At this point, all the work is done. We're just fine-tuning the small things to get to this point. Now it's like, 'Oh ... we're not competing.' All these emotions start flaring up. I really think mental health is so important right now."

Phelps said the key to coping is keeping things as simple as possible. "Just control what you can control," he said.

"We're in such uncharted waters. We're getting all these big questions thrown at us: What if? What if? What if? It's so hard to understand. We're having a hard time just wrapping our head around it."

Thinking back to his own career, Phelps said he probably could have coped with a postponement just fine during the prime of his career because he had such steely focus on his goals.

But he probably would have struggled with a delay leading up to the 2012 London Games, when his motivation was lagging and he wasn't even sure he wanted to compete. "I was barely holding it together by the seams," Phelps recalled. "I don't know if I could've made it another year."

He retired after London, only to return to the pool less than two years later with a new-found passion that carried him to five more golds and a silver in Rio.

Phelps said he will gladly offer counseling and a shoulder to lean on to any athlete who is struggling over these next weeks and months.

"Some guys have already reached out, asking questions about what they can do," he said. "Anything I can do to support my



Michael Phelps gave reluctant praise to the International Olympic Committee for putting off the Games until 2021 while the world deals with the pandemic. AP

**At this point, all the work is done. We're just fine-tuning the small things to get to this point. Now it's like, 'Oh ... we're not competing.' All these emotions start flaring up. I really think mental health is so important right now."**

**MICHAEL PHELPS,  
OLYMPIC WINNER**

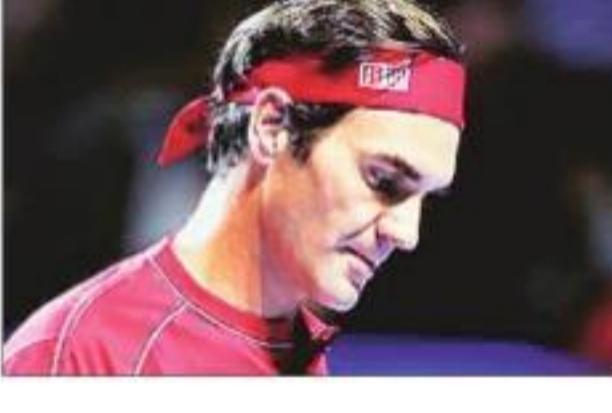
friends and others who want to try to accomplish their goals and dreams, I'll do it. This is such a big time for mental health. It's more important now than it ever was before. I hope everybody is taking care of themselves mentally and physically at this time. I'm always available and open at any hour to anybody who needs help."

Now 34, Phelps is happily married with three young sons. Though he has no plans for another comeback, he is still involved in the sport through a swimwear company and other business ventures.

He was looking forward to attending the Olympics as a spectator for the first time. He hasn't been to Japan since his breakthrough performance at the 2001 world championships.

"I'm somebody who truly loves and enjoys watching the sport at the highest level," Phelps said. "I obviously know what it takes to get there. I was truly looking forward to seeing how everybody was doing." He still plans to be at the Olympics. But, like everyone else, his plans are held.

## Federer steps in, donates \$1m to vulnerable Swiss



### 'NOBODY SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND'

Tennis great Roger Federer donated more than a million dollars to help support his "most vulnerable" Swiss compatriots through the coronavirus crisis. The 20-time Grand Slam champion and his wife donated one million Swiss francs (\$1.02 million), saying nobody should be left behind as Switzerland battles against the global pandemic. According to official figures reported to the WHO, Switzerland has the ninth-highest number of infections in the world, with more than 8,800 positive cases and 86 deaths as of Monday. "These are challenging times for everyone and nobody should be left behind. Mirka and I have personally decided to donate one million Swiss francs for the most vulnerable

families in Switzerland," world number four Federer, 38, said on Instagram. "Our contribution is just a start. We hope that others might join in supporting more families in need. Together we can overcome this crisis! Stay healthy!"

### FREE TICKETS FOR MEDICAL WORKERS

Premier League teams Brighton and Bournemouth have become the first clubs to sign up to a campaign to make 100,000 free tickets available to medical workers on the front line during the coronavirus outbreak. The initiative was conceived by executives at Brighton, which has committed to giving National Health Service workers 1,000 tickets for matches and has invited other clubs from the Premier League, English Football League, Scotland and Northern Ireland to join in. Bournemouth immediately followed suit, offering "a minimum of" 1,000 tickets.

### FIFA MONITORING THREAT IN INDIA

FIFA said it is monitoring the developments arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, which is scheduled to host the Women's U-17 World Cup in November. FIFA said it is also exploring "alternative

### SPANISH FEDERATION OFFERS LOANS FOR SMALLER CLUBS

The Spanish football federation has announced measures to help smaller clubs financially. The measures include a loan of \$4.3 million to help pay the salaries of players and coaches. The loan will be available to clubs from the third and fourth divisions, and futsal clubs. It can be paid back without interest over two seasons. The federation also says it will negotiate a credit line for teams in the first and second division. Federation president Luis Rubiales says the federation's doctors will be made available to help fight the coronavirus pandemic, and the national team's hotel can be used as a hospital if necessary.

solutions". "FIFA is currently monitoring developments regarding the coronavirus outbreak in India to decide the future of the U-17 Women's World Cup which is slated to be held in the country in November," the apex body said. "With public health and safety in mind, FIFA is also working with the Local Organising Committee to identify potential impact on preparations for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2020, and finding alternative solutions to upcoming events that were planned in the lead up to the tournament," it added.

**...but British stars relieved: 'What is another year?'**

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
LONDON, MARCH 25

BRITISH OLYMPIC gold medal hopefuls Katerina Johnson-Thompson, Adam Peaty and Dina Asher-Smith expressed their relief after Tokyo 2020 was delayed until next year on Tuesday due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All three world champions had expressed their frustration at the delay of a decision on the Games, while countries across the globe imposed stringent restrictions on movement and travel to control the spread of the virus.

"A lot of athletes can breathe," Olympic 100m breast stroke champion Peaty told BBC Sport. "We felt under pressure to train and compete. The decision from the IOC (International Olympic Committee) lifts that release that we don't have to be in shape over summer and we don't have to put unnecessary risk on others."

Johnson-Thompson is hoping to add to her world championship gold in the heptathlon last year with Olympic gold after missing out on the podium at Rio 2016. "Waited 8 years for this, what's another 1 in the grand scheme of things?" Johnson-Thompson posted on Twitter. "As an athlete, it's heartbreaking news about the olympics being postponed until 2021, but it's for all the right reasons and the safety of everyone! Hope everyone keeps safe."

Asher-Smith, Britain's world 200m champion, posted on Instagram: "#Tokyo2021, Same fire, new dates. Stay at home and stay safe everyone." Double Olympic triathlon champion Alistair Brownlee also welcomed the certainty of knowing the outcome after the IOC said as recently as Sunday a decision could take up to four weeks. "Evidently a very tough decision for the IOC and other stakeholders to make but in my opinion the right one," said Brownlee.

"Both, for the message it sends to people around the world battling with the virus and to give clarity to athletes attempting to prepare." Retired British track cyclist Callum Skinner, who fronts competitor-led movement Global Athlete, said the right decision had been made. "Tokyo 2021 presents an amazing opportunity to host a full Games celebrating the world (hopefully) entering the 'post-pandemic' phase," he tweeted. Skinner, who won gold and silver medals at the 2016 Olympics and is a member of the British Olympic Association's (BOA) athletes' commission questioned the IOC's approach.

"Questions have to be asked of Thomas Bach's full steam ahead policy. This saga has endangered athletes, public health and damaged the Olympic movement. What's more he wanted this limbo to continue for 4 weeks."

British Rowing welcomed the "certainty" over the Games. "We are now able to start planning how we best support our athletes, coaches and all our programme, both within British Rowing and as a wider group of Olympic and Paralympic sports in the UK," the organisation tweeted. British Paralympic discus thrower Dan Greaves tweeted: "Absolutely the right decision to postpone both the Olympics & Paralympics by a year. Health comes first & with that, athletes can now take care of there's to make sure they are able to make the hard work count!!"

## COVID-19 FALLOUT

# Amidst shutdown, Belarus footballers play on: 'Why not?' ask authorities

RORY SMITH  
MARCH 25

THERE WERE a handful of thermal-imaging cameras outside Dynamo Brest's stadium on Friday, intended to pluck out and turn away anyone showing signs of fever. Both Brest and its opponent, Smolevichi, had been given hygiene advice: wash your hands with soap, avoid hugging. The Ministry of Health had decreed that the stadium must be disinfected twice a day.

Other than that, though, the opening game of the Belarusian Premier League season would go ahead as planned. It would be followed by a full slate of games on Saturday and Sunday. There would be no restrictions on fans coming to watch. Unlike everyone else, almost everywhere else, Belarus had decided just to play on.

As far as the country's football authorities were concerned, there was no reason not to play. The ABFF — the governing body of the sport in Belarus — had seen the measures taken by other European leagues in light of the mounting coronavirus pandemic: first playing games behind closed doors, and then cancelling or postponing leagues and competitions entirely.

It had concluded the decisions had little or no effect on preventing fans from gather-

ing or the virus from spreading, and that the situation in Belarus did not warrant the cancellation of the new season.

"Is there a state of emergency declared in our country?" Vladimir Bazanov, the head of the ABFF, said in an interview with the sports website Tribuna. "There is no critical condition, so they decided that we are starting the championship in a timely manner."

That call has left Belarus as an outlier in European football. Every other league on the continent, and nearly all others around the world, have been placed on indefinite hiatus. As the scale and severity of the coronavirus pandemic has become clear, in fact, most sports in most countries across the world have done the same, shutting their doors until it is safe — for players and for fans — to reconvene.

The response in Belarus, on the other hand, has been skeptical. While much of Europe remains in lockdown — entire cities deserted, whole populations instructed to stay at home, often under threat of arrest — Belarus has yet to implement any severe measures. Officially, it has recorded 81 coronavirus cases, though the government has claimed 22 of those have recovered.

Though the country's president, Aleksandr Lukashenko — widely regarded as the last dictator in Europe — has advised citizens to observe social distancing protocols and not to visit anywhere that might be crowded, he has



In Belarus, where the country's president has called the coronavirus a "psychosis," some fans took more precautions than others. Reuters

also suggested the virus is a "psychosis." "It is yet another psychosis, which will benefit some people and harm others," he said last week. "I am absolutely convinced that panic can hurt us more than the virus itself. That's what concerns me the most." Lukashenko later suggested that coronavirus was "part of

a plan to turn everything upside down," and has variously named vodka, saunas and working on a farm as potential cures for it.

As he explained why Belarus chose to press ahead with its football season, Bazanov's rhetoric echoed his president's. "What is growing right now is some strange stuff

that affects people psychologically," he said. "It is a bloated psychological situation."

In public, the league's players have acquiesced to the decision. Sergey Kislyak, a midfielder for Brest, said that "everything is quiet" among his teammates. "My mother works at a school; classes continue, as before," he said. "Everything is fine."

His teammate, Artem Milevsky, admitted to Arena Radio that though it is "strange" to be the only league playing in Europe, and though he is trying to have "less contact" with other people, it was ultimately not a decision for the players to make.

"We are paid to play," he said. "The authorities are in control. Everything is open, everything works, you can eat everywhere."

In private, though, things may be different. A poll released by Tribuna, the sports website, found that the majority of athletes were in favor of shutting down the league. The commentator Konstantin Genich described the idea of playing as "desperate."

Aleksandr Hleb, once of Barcelona and Arsenal and likely Belarus' greatest player, called the lack of concern among both players and authorities "unbelievable," though in an Instagram post he later watered down his comments.

"Since the Presidential Administration does not see the real need to quarantine the country, the situation is under control," Hleb wrote.

"If there is a real threat to the health of the players, the health of the audience, I'm sure the matches will stop."

Hleb has taken his family into self-isolation as a precaution. Some fans, evidently, feel the same way. Attendances for the first weekend of the season were around half of what they were last year, though that still meant almost 4,000 people turning up to watch Brest, the defending champion, play its first game.

"The attitude toward coronavirus as a whole is still rather frivolous," said Maksim Berazinski, the chief executive of Tribuna in Belarus and Ukraine. "This is partly due to the fact that the official authorities have not yet closed borders, schools, universities, and are trying in every way possible to downplay the significance of the problem."

"Many people continue to go to soccer, and are very actively speaking out against the idea of closing the tournament. For our part, as the media, we insist that the necessary measure now is to suspend the championships. The risk to which we expose people is not justified at the moment."

There is, as yet, no sign of a change of policy. On Tuesday, an ABFF spokesman, Alexander Aleinik, confirmed that the next round of games would go ahead. As things stand, fans will still be allowed to attend. The rest of the world has stopped, for as long as is required. But Belarus, all alone, plays on. NYT