



When Can America Reopen From Its Coronavirus Shutdown?

The answer depends how you weigh human health against the economy.



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India Must Reconsider Nationwide Coronavirus Lockdown Lest Economy Falls Off The Cliff

A national lockdown with border closures is likely to be ineffective as it will aggravate the economic damage and reduce the population resilience for fighting the infection peak.

The Indian government's decision to impose a 21-day nationwide lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic reduces the overall severity of the disease by limiting the spread of the virus. However, the same decision exacerbates the economic slowdown by reducing the labour supply as well as consumption of goods and services. The government needs to address this dichotomy through adopting more efficient measures of containment of coronavirus and launching a series of financial relief packages. Each of these measures, if executed timely and aggressively, will generate spillover benefits on the other. Taking into consideration the global morbidity and mortality rates due to COVID-19, India is likely to tick upwards of 1.3 million cases by May. With an estimated 0.7 hospital beds per 1000 people and a 20% global average hospitalisation rate due to COVID-19 infection, approximately 0.26 million patients will need hospitalisation in India. Assuming 10% of the hospital beds are ICU beds and 50% of these beds have ventilators, we have a maximum of 40,000 ICU beds with ventilators. Considering 5-10% of all patients will require critical care in form of ventilator support, other things equal, we will put lives of at least 37,500 patients at serious risk. However, this is based on a worst-case scenario, relying heavily on global estimates that have a different risk and comorbidity profile. Given only 22% of the registered deaths in India are medically certified, the real mortality rate due to COVID-19 will be significantly less in India.

While it is possible to reduce the spread of infection through measures such as lockdown, infections would recur as soon as the lockdown ends. This is because, in this approach, the population never reaches the critical level of immunity to avoid a recurrence of the epidemic. In the absence of a vaccine and treatment, addressing this problem will involve a two-step approach: (1) aggressive testing of cases along with increasing the number of quarantine facilities; followed with, (2) a gradual relaxation of containment measures as the number of new cases begins to



decline so that the population approaches the critical immunity level. Other things equal, the only way out of this pandemic will be to have a substantial population to become infected and recover to acquire immunity.

Testing everyone with flu-like symptoms will ensure COVID-19 cases do not mix with the other hospitalised patients. In doing so, the use of rapid diagnostic tests should be preferred over RT-PCR to overcome the delay in testing. The Auxiliary nurse midwife network should be strengthened by infection control training to help provide effective and timely care to village communities. An immediate ban on over-the-counter selling of anti-malarial drugs should be implemented to maintain the stocks and ensure the medicine is available to those in need. Given the low levels of infection control in most urban hospitals and high risk of infections, the state governments should consider converting empty hotels into force majeure hospitals.

Although the government has promised Rs. 1.7 lakh crore relief package to mitigate the economic damage caused due to coronavirus, Care ratings estimate the cumulative economic cost of a 21-day lockdown at Rs. 6.3-7.2 lakh crore. Therefore, the current relief package is likely to be insufficient. This problem is

compounded with 90% of the total workforce engaged in informal economy and a vast majority of these constitute the daily wage earners. To make matters worse, the relief package largely misses out on any support promised to the urban poor. The lockdown has forced millions of migrant workers into joblessness and restrained them to the urban areas - leaving them with no choice of taking succour with their families.

While further economic measures are anticipated, the government has not yet clarified how the Rs 1.7 lakh crore relief package will be funded. There is an urgent need to identify additional resources and maximise its utility. The windfall gains from the falling crude oil prices can provide a much-needed additional pocket to the government for providing additional financial assistance. Although there is a fall in the domestic demand for oil, the loss in revenue will be outweighed by the gains through the recent increase in the excise duty on petrol and diesel. While it may be a little too late, the government can still benefit from implementing some of the measures taken by South Korea, who have flattened the curve of new infections without the economically damaging nationwide lockdown. For

instance, adopting measures such as use of thermal imaging, setting-up of standalone testing centres, and robust contact tracing.

The subsequent relief measures must target salaried employees. The government can provide wage support guarantee to ensure that businesses retains their employees while delaying hiring. Amongst other bold steps, the government must also give an executive order to all conglomerates to manufacture largescale and high-quality gloves, sanitizers, testing kits, and ventilators. The unprecedented disruption of economic activity also warrants the RBI to leverage its unique position to absorb the financial risk without worrying about the quality of its balance sheet. The RBI can effectively buy securitised tranches of loans from banks if the banks are wary of the current scenario in lending retail loans.

A national lockdown with border closures is likely to be ineffective as it will aggravate the economic damage and reduce the population resilience for fighting the infection peak. With an economy that was already sliding off the slope, India must reconsider its stance on the nationwide lockdown to ensure the economy does not fall off the cliff.

Pompeo dials Jaishankar, says 'our close cooperation is imperative to combat coronavirus'

“Good call today with Indian External Affairs Minister @DrSJaishankar on the #USIndia partnership,” Pompeo tweeted out.



(News Agencies) In a Pompeo spoke with telephonic conversation, External Affairs Minister S US Secretary of State Mike Jaishankar regarding the

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS)

Denounces terrorist attack on Kabul Gurudwara

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS) stands in solidarity with the victims of the Kabul Gurudwara terrorists attack. The horrendous act at the Kabul Gurudwara, Afghanistan, shocks all HSS members, as it does all people of faith. Our hearts go out to the families of the victims. We grieve and mourn with the Sikh community from Kabul and around the world. The inhumane acts of terrorism must be stopped. Protecting minorities should be actively considered as a critical step during the peace and nation-building process in Afghanistan. At the time of this grief, HSS US members are standing by their Sikh brothers and sisters for assistance and emotional support.



(By Jagdish Sehwhani, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh)

coordination of efforts to respond to the coronavirus crisis. “Good call today with Indian External Affairs Minister @DrSJaishankar on the #USIndia partnership. Our close cooperation is imperative to combat the #coronavirus, including strengthening global pharmaceutical and healthcare manufacturing and supply chains,” Pompeo tweeted out. Pompeo reiterated the United States’ unwavering commitment to working with India to advance peace, prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe, US State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said. Pompeo highlighted the importance of continued close cooperation between US, India and other close partners and allies to combat this international crisis, including strengthening global pharmaceutical, healthcare manufacturing and supply chains. The dialogue between the two diplomats comes at a time when the world is grappling with the coronavirus crisis. As per the World Health Organization, more than 800,000 people have been infected by Covid-19 across the world while nearly 40,000 have died.

H-1B workers seek 180 instead of 60-day stay in US amid layoffs

Economic experts fear massive layoffs in various sectors of the American economy due to the current economic distress that is only going to deteriorate in the coming months.

(News Agencies) Foreign IT professionals, a majority of them Indians with H-1B visas in the US, have urged the Trump administration to extend their permissible stay from 60 to 180 days after job loss, amidst the massive layoffs in America due to the coronavirus pandemic. The H-1B visa, most sought after among the Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows the US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The current federal rules require an H-1B visa holder to leave the US along with their family within 60 days of losing their job. Economic experts fear massive layoffs in various sectors of the American economy due to the current economic distress that is only going to deteriorate in the coming months. A record 3.3 million Americans have filed initial jobless claims for the week ending March 21. Even as the peak of coronavirus in the US is some two weeks away, millions of people in the country have lost their jobs. According to an estimate, some 47 million people could be rendered unemployed. Those on H-1B visas are neither eligible for unemployment benefits nor entitled to the social security benefits, even though there is deductions from their salary for this purpose. Initial reports suggest that a large number of H-1B employees are being laid off. In some cases, companies have already informed their H-1B employees that they are on top of the list of being fired. As such, the H-1B visa holders have started a petition campaign on the White House website to extend the timeline for their stay in the US after their job loss.

THE PRESIDENT’S CORONAVIRUS GUIDELINES FOR AMERICA

30 DAYS TO SLOW THE SPREAD

Listen to and follow the directions of your **STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**.

IF YOU FEEL SICK, stay home. Do not go to work. Contact your medical provider.

IF YOUR CHILDREN ARE SICK, keep them at home. Do not send them to school. Contact your medical provider.

IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD HAS TESTED POSITIVE for the coronavirus, keep the entire household at home. Do not go to work. Do not go to school. Contact your medical provider.

IF YOU ARE AN OLDER PERSON, stay home and away from other people.

IF YOU ARE A PERSON WITH A SERIOUS UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITION that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.



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The US-China coronavirus blame game is undermining diplomacy

Tensions are rising, but US and Chinese governments must work together to stem the tide of the pandemic



There will be time enough when this global emergency is over to figure out the ways in which the Chinese Communist party's (CCP) actions endangered the world by covering up the initial outbreak. But we are where we are, and China, the United States, and the rest of the world must focus on fighting the pandemic.

Unfortunately, neither the US nor CCP leadership seems willing to resist throwing mud at one another. Donald Trump, the House minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, and other elected officials have called Covid-19 the "Chinese virus" and one White House official reportedly called it the "Kung Flu". The Republican senator Tom Cotton hinted (without evidence) that the virus could be a bioweapon created by the CCP. In China, a spokesman for the PRC ministry of foreign affairs lied in suggesting that the US military could be to blame for the virus. Chinese government officials have echoed that sentiment while the CCP's propaganda machine is busy promoting these conspiracy theories.

This blame game is undermining diplomacy between the countries. Instead of calling his counterpart to coordinate responses to the global pandemic, the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, called China's senior foreign policy official, Yang Jiechi, instead to object to "PRC efforts to shift blame for Covid-19 to the United States". And the Trump administration has reportedly attempted to stop the UN security council and the G7 from taking action against the pandemic unless the groups singled out China

for blame. It's important to get the facts right. The virus started in China. In the early days, doctors tried to sound the alarm, but were not allowed to do their jobs. As the virus spread, the CCP censored many of those attempting to raise alarm bells. The CCP's botched initial response to the virus probably made this pandemic far worse.

But the priority for every nation right now must be the pandemic, and tensions between the world's two biggest economies cannot get in the way. Toning down aspects of the US-China competition temporarily in no way means that the United States should ignore the CCP's dangerous initial response to the virus, nor does it mean that the United

States should stop blunting dangerous Chinese behavior elsewhere. What it means is taking concrete steps to ensure that the competition does not inhibit the fight against the pandemic.

First, the United States must stop scapegoating China. Leaders need to stop referring to Covid-19 as the "Chinese virus", trying to blame China for the outbreak and feeding conspiracy theories about China launching the disease on purpose. Halting this kind of rhetoric can help reduce some of the discrimination against Asian Americans that has been sparked by racist comments surrounding the virus. And while China will continue trying to spin this crisis to its advantage to win headlines, at the very least the United States can play the role of responsible leader rather than infantile finger-pointer. Second, the United States must ensure that no policy that is intended to blunt nefarious Chinese behavior will negatively affect the fight against the pandemic. In order to address genuine

concerns, the United States has increasingly scrutinized Chinese investment and private sector cooperation in education, scientific collaborations and the technology sector. Sometimes, those actions can have unintended consequences: for instance, ProPublica reported that one scientist – who had lived in the United States for decades and left the country after being investigated for ties to China – is now developing a rapid coronavirus test in China. Whether it's scientists sharing research to find a vaccine or companies partnering to produce necessary equipment, we must ensure all the doors to cooperation on the pandemic are open right now. The Trump administration's move to lift tariffs on Chinese medical products like masks and sanitization products is a good step.

Third, the US and Chinese governments must work together to stem the tide of the pandemic. As tensions have risen in recent years there are

fewer and fewer areas on which the two countries have pursued robust cooperation.

But combating the pandemic is exactly the kind of challenge that requires the two nations to come together, from sharing lessons learned in their respective responses to searching for medical treatments to working together in multilateral organizations like the World Health Organization and the G20. And it means being open to support from one another: while China initially refused US help, reports now suggest the United States is declining China's offers of sending personal protective equipment.

Fourth, don't worry for the moment about China's attempts to win public relations victories by sending aid to US allies. The United States must focus on actually helping US allies – such as coordinating travel restrictions to avoid the disaster when the Europe travel ban was announced – and being supportive of allies getting desperately needed help from

anywhere it can, whether the United States, China or anyone else. Even if the United States has relatively little to offer and China is sending small amounts of aid as a public relations move, responding by trying to remind everyone that China is the cause of the outbreak will only make America look petty (and some countries are already finding out on their own that part of China's aid is faulty). If the United States and China are successful in fighting this pandemic – and doing so together – perhaps, at the end of all of this, the two countries just might end up building bridges that could be useful in tempering the more dangerous aspects of their competition. The world grapples with the human and economic devastation being wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, not even the relationship between the United States and China is being spared. However, the US and China cannot allow their global competition and rising tensions to impede efforts to fight the pandemic.

Policing under coronavirus: the real test is yet to come

At the end of *The Long Goodbye*, Raymond Chandler's detective Philip Marlowe bids farewell to his readers and to the characters in the novel. "I never saw any of them again – except the cops," muses Marlowe. "No way has yet been invented to say goodbye to them." Chandler was expressing a wider truth. In the words of the British criminologist Robert Reiner: "Welcome or unwelcome, protectors, pigs or pariahs, the police are an inevitable fact of modern life."

Especially, we are again learning, in a national emergency. The Coronavirus Act 2020 has given a ratchet to three of the most persistently controversial themes in British policing history: police powers, police discretion and police coordination. All three are back in the spotlight in the Covid-19 lockdown. But this week's arguments, prompted in part by the former supreme court judge Jonathan Sumption's warnings about the growth of a police state, are only the start. The real test for the policing of the pandemic

is yet to come. Ever since the creation of London's Metropolitan police in 1829, issues like these have been recurrent in the often volatile evolution of relations between politics, the police and the people. When the state took wide new powers last month they again became a source of argument. Police chiefs have not always appeared in control of events at a time when government is itself struggling to coordinate public discipline over travel, exercise and shopping.

The Coronavirus Act is in some ways a recognisable descendent of the draconian emergency legislation that Britain adopted at the start of the world wars of the 20th century. But in some ways it is different. By and large, the wartime emergency legislation granted wide new powers to central government, which was then free to make regulations to apply them. But the 2020 act also gives many powers to the devolved authorities and confers other powers directly on public health, immigration and police officers at local level. As a

result, a degree of potential inconsistency between nations, localities and even individual services was baked into the legislation at the start. Devolvers will approve. Centralisers will not. Much remains in need of sensible clarification. The different approaches so far are often arbitrary. Derbyshire police have used drones to highlight people walking in the Peak District and dye to deter swimmers from a quarry pool near Buxton. This attracted the wrath of Lord Sumption, who called the policing disgraceful. But other forces are also doing things that, in other circumstances, would be highly controversial too. North Yorkshire are using soldiers to conduct roadblocks. Cumbria issued a unilateral decree that the Lake District was "closed". Devon and Cornwall police asked the public to report "illegal gatherings". The Metropolitan police are challenging users of the London Underground to justify their journeys. Some of these acts can reasonably be justified,

but others are plainly excessive.

The headlines, the analysis, the debate - sent direct to you

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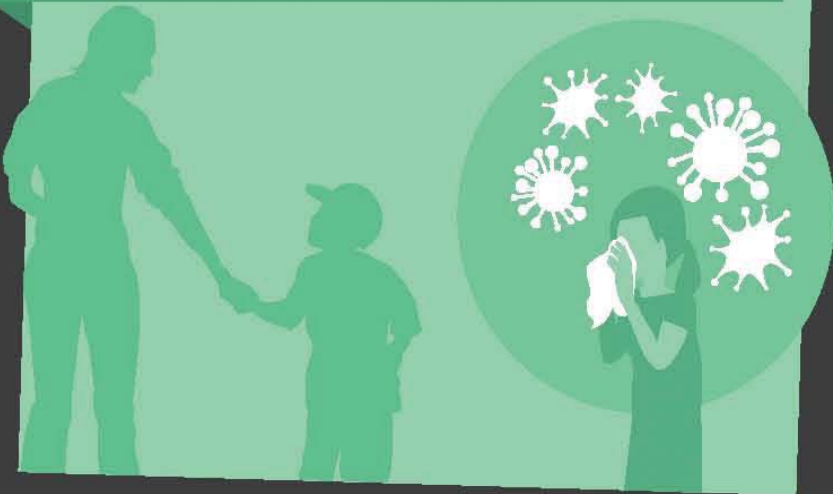
Some of these interventions echo wartime restrictions. At some stage in the current outbreak there may well be a protest picket somewhere against, perhaps, a supermarket over food prices or a bank for not lending to small businesses or the self employed. The picket may comply with all the physical distancing guidance and be dignified and orderly. But it would probably elicit the same response as a protest reported by the civil rights campaigner Ronald Kidd in his wartime book, *British Liberty in Danger*. In June 1940, police tried to ban a meeting in south London against high food prices because, the police said, "it was undesirable that 'ill-feeling should be stirred up at a time of crisis'". That meeting eventually took place. A protest today might run up against the same response and be banned.

(Contd on page 20)

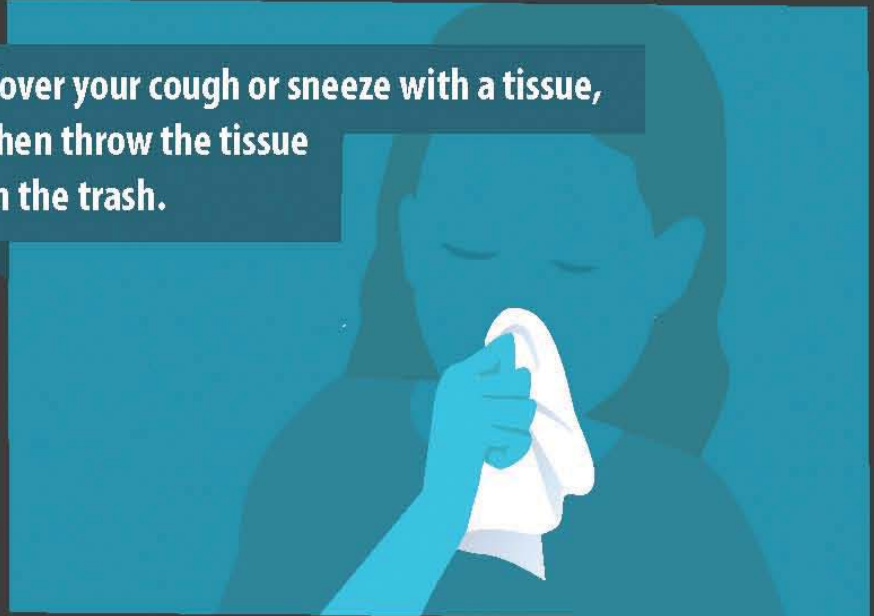
STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

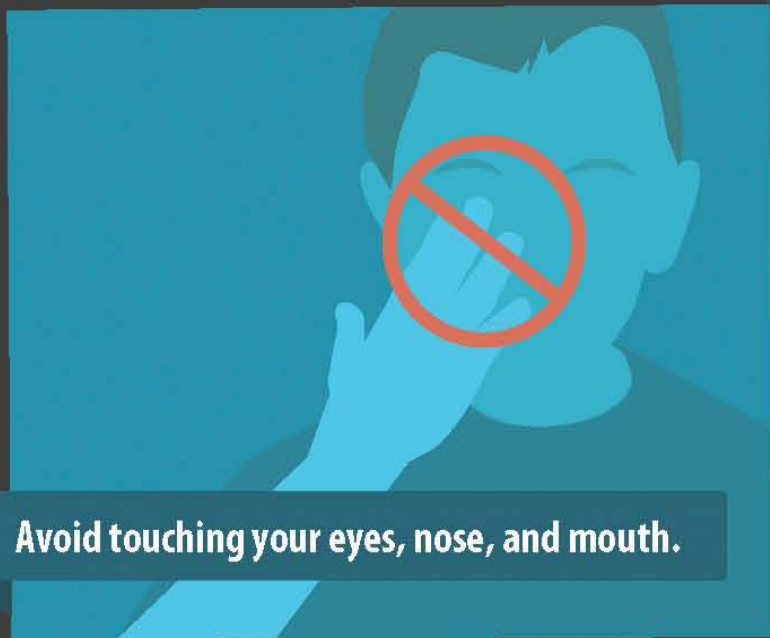
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



cdc.gov/COVID19

Corona Lockdown Signs Of Endgame Were There, For Those Who Knew How To Read Them

It is a mild spring day, unseasonably rainy, and time is standing still. The ceiling fans are timidly waking up from winter. And we ourselves are housebound, craning our ears for the sound of the other shoe if and when it drops. I have been imagining this scenario for ages, this time-outside-of-time, with all of us hunkered down at home “for our own good”, the great turnaround moment when our species, racing faster and faster towards a stop light, suddenly jams on the brakes. The day we call a halt to the madness, and give the planet a break.

The signs of endgame were there, for those who knew how to read them, with teenage activists cropping up all over the world to show us, if we were too blinkered or unconcerned to believe the climate scientists. We had ample warning that we had to slow down and switch to a new way of living that did not destroy the planet while it made a few unspeakably rich. But we were on a roll, in a deadly game of ‘chicken’, aiming our headlights straight at the oncoming car and flooring the accelerator. The other guy would give up first, we thought, and we would win.

The only thing that could bring the needed flip was a microbe, something that brought a dreaded disease in the blink of an eye. Because, left to ourselves, humans suffer from inertia, which stops us from getting up and doing what plainly needs to be done. And when we wait too long, Nature comes out to bat during overtime, and she sorts us out quickly and ruthlessly, without too much concern for who is who, though it is usually the poor who get the raw end of the deal. But who knew, this time around? All of a sudden the big-time consumers, the frequent flyers, were the ones in the crosshairs. This new virus had started in the industrial hub of the global system, and spread out first to the places in daily contact with Wuhan. David Quammen, in his book *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*, published in 2012, saw it coming. He was certain we would soon have to deal with a virus, and that it would most probably come from a bat whose habitat we had invaded. But the virus itself has been all but eclipsed by the panic that has come with it. China and now Italy and Iran have been badly hit, with huge numbers of deaths reported, and that has sent people worldwide into retreat. An instant result has been that the polluted skies over China have cleared as no amount of human will could get them to do up to now, almost as if climate change were temporarily put on hold. Designer and forecaster Li Edelkoort has called this period a “quarantine of consumption”, which she thinks will lead to “a global recession of a magnitude that has not

been experienced before”, which will allow humanity to “reset” its values. Maybe. But what we see right now is two sides with sharply different agenda faced off: the big players, armed and monied, who see a chance to dig themselves in even deeper, and the little people—unarmed, unorganised—who want a better world.

As I write this, the other shoe is yet to drop. We are weeks into the pandemic, but India has not seen the descent into disaster that the Chinese, Italians and Iranians have been living through. Our hospitals are not reporting the surge in patients that is being predicted each day with an almost ghoulish excitement. Maybe we will be lucky and it will give us a miss. But until we know this for sure, we will be bracing for a tsunami that is taking its time in coming, one that might even have changed its mind.

For all we know, we might have been living with this virus for a long time already. India has never been out of touch with China, Italy or any of the other virus hot spots in Europe. Many of us had to take to our beds in January and February because of a ghastly 10-day ‘flu’, the worst of our lives, which sent some of our old relatives to hospital ICUs with pneumonia, and looked too close to the Wuhan virus for comfort. Have many of us had this disease already, but as it didn’t announce itself, we thought it was just another bug, though a particularly nasty one? Every day, in ‘normal’ times, 25,000 people out of India’s population of 1.3 billion die—and more than 1,000 people (4,00,000 in 2018) die of tuberculosis, for which we do have a cure, but have not eradicated because it only afflicts the poor. A thousand Indians, mostly children, die every day of other respiratory ailments, and 500 die of malaria. But almost all of us will recover from viruses as bad as COVID-19, and live to chalk up the experience as a major milestone in our lives. So why the unprecedented panic? Why the scenes of police with lathis frog-marching hapless migrant workers, making them hop like schoolchildren being punished for breaking bounds? Of men, women and children having to walk on the highways to get back to their villages, because the government is only concerned about providing transport for Indians stranded abroad? On the news one night was the heartbreaking sight of a whole neighbourhood looking into the camera and pleading for food. And the next day, in chilling contrast, came news of an MLA asking police to ‘shoot at sight’ anyone found violating the curfew, and promising them a cash reward if they at least break these people’s legs.

Coronavirus – We can only fight this enemy together. That's why duty is crucial

Navy SEALs live by a series of mantras. “The only easy day was yesterday,” “Attention to detail,” and “Duty,” being among them. We know that every mission matters, even the small ones. Every big mission we did was a result of a multitude of smaller missions, accomplished by individuals who did their duty.

In every smaller cog in the machine, it would have been easy to dismiss the small mission as unimportant to the larger cause. But no one did, because a sense of duty was so deeply imbued into every man in the platoon. On one of our more complex missions in Iraq in 2010, we had intelligence from our Iraqi partners that insurgents were using the rural region in central Iraq to plan attacks in the city centers.

We wanted to investigate these remote locations along with Iraqi police. Our plan was to drive our LTATVs (light tactical all-terrain vehicles—not much different from your commercial side-by-side ATV) throughout the rugged terrain, talk to the locals, and cautiously check out some of the locations of interest.

Not two hours into that particular mission, around 0300 hours, we ran into trouble. While moving forward in our unarmored LTATVs, we started taking machine-gun fire. The only option was to return fire and maneuver.

We hit back with more firepower than they were probably expecting, including forty-millimeter grenade rounds. They were outgunned and quite surprised to see us on their home turf, so they split. As this chaotic situation unfolded, one thing stuck out to me. We were prepared for it. Why? Because everyone did

their job. They did their duty.

The communications lead was ready to immediately communicate with air support. My squad leaders were ready to make the right calls. No one’s guns jammed from lack of maintenance.

A thousand things could have gone wrong, but none did. A sense of duty must be fundamental to our daily lives. It is a sense that there are virtues and values in this life that should be pursued for the sake of virtue itself.

We know deep down what those virtues are.

We know we have a duty to clean our room, be patient, be polite, follow the law, get good grades, respect our parents, and so on. We know that.

We don’t always adhere to them, but we know them. And hopefully, we feel a degree of shame when we don’t adhere to them. Shame and duty are closely linked. You must feel shame so that you act on your sense of duty. Duty is a positive result from the negative emotion of shame.

As our nation’s leaders have stated on many occasions, we will fight this pandemic through a combination of healthcare innovation, American resourcefulness, and sacrifice.

Our social lives and our economy are suffering as we persevere. In order to prevent a worst-case scenario, we must recall a sense of duty and unity that we have not experienced since the attacks of September 11th.

We must get the small things right, like washing our hands. And not in a careless way but in a thoughtful and thorough way, like a SEAL prepping for battle, knowing that each small act can save a life.



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India must urgently consider long-term infection containment measures: Study



The finding comes amid a debate on whether the hard lockdown should be extended with the government clarifying on Monday that it had no immediate plans to impose further curbs beyond April 15.

India needs to urgently think of long-term infection containment measures because the ongoing 21-day national lockdown is unlikely to be enough to reverse the rapid rise in Covid-19 cases and rate of transmission, a new study has suggested.

The paper, based on mathematical modelling of disease and demographic data by two researchers at the University of Cambridge, also concludes that old people in India are at particular risk of contracting the infection at home – more than global hotspots such

as China and Italy – because of the high number of three-generational households. The finding comes amid a debate on whether the hard lockdown should be extended with the government clarifying on Monday that it had no immediate plans to impose further curbs beyond April 15.

But that may be a mistake, the study also suggested.

In their analysis, the researchers found that while a 21-day lockdown led to an immediate decrease in the number of

infected people, the number rose sharply after the curbs were lifted. A second scenario in which a 28-day lockdown was imposed after five days of easing also showed that the number of infected people rose once the second lockdown was lifted. But in two scenarios, the rate of new infections decreased. The first was a protocol of three consecutive lockdowns of 21 days, 28 days and 18 days spaced by five days of suspension. If a single lockdown had to achieve the same impact, it would have to last 49 days, the modelling showed.

“While these numbers are hypothetical, it underlines the need to think of different strategies of containment after 21

days of lockdown. It also shows that the rate of rise of infection is steeper than the rate of decrease and it takes less time for infections to double and more time for it to halve,” said Ronojoy Adhikari, one of the authors of the paper.

“This essentially means that for every day of non-lockdown, we need more than one day of lockdown,” he added. The paper, slated to be published in the Physical Review Research Journal, noted two big differences between India and other global hotspots such as China and Italy: the big numbers of three-generational families residing in the same homes and the large number of young people. Secondly, the

model also showed that unlike Italy and China, the above-60 population and the below-30 population were in close contact at homes. Because the former demographic is high-risk for Covid-19, it made the home very important for anti-infection policy. “This indicated that social distancing and isolation protocols are not just for workplaces and public spaces, but also for homes. Because of India’s huge youth population, they are at greater probability of contracting the disease, and then bringing them into homes and transmitting it to older people, who have high fatality risk,” said Adhikari. The authors

suggested three long-term responses: Social distancing and isolation to be practised in homes, especially by older people; a close watch on schools and colleges to check for young people catching the disease; and extensive testing to find out the extent of the outbreak. “We suggest that even when the national lockdown is over, we need to look at keeping schools and colleges shut for some time. Or look at local lockdowns in hotspots, determined by extensive testing,” Adhikari added.

The study has made two important assumptions: that all cases of Covid-19 are symptomatic, and that the impact of the lockdown is instantaneous without any lag in implementation.

Covid-19: Centre and states must work together

Coordinate on finance, procurement and supply chains. Activate inter-state coordination systems



As the crisis faced by India’s migrant workers has shown, the Union government’s centralised, command-and-control approach of managing the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) will not work. Recent steps, from the poorly-planned lockdown to the decision to shut down borders and use brute force against those wanting to go home, reflect an approach focused on controlling people, rather than developing systems, to control the spread of the virus.

Once it became evident that migrants were leaving inhospitable cities and going home, crossing multiple state

borders, we needed rapid coordination to enable movement, communication, and design processes to ensure safe passage, including building a contact database for testing and tracing. Coordination is the role that the Centre should have played. Instead, it chose to use the Disaster Management Act, command border closures without warning, and police those who didn’t comply. The inhumanity of these actions have been devastating.

India needs to move away from command-and-control to coordination and genuine

Centre-state collaboration. States are at the frontlines. Many have also been quick to respond and innovate. But, as the handling of migrant movement shows, states will also face collective action problems, for which central intervention will be essential.

Cooperative federalism is imperative in this coronavirus war. States must be taken into confidence before major decisions, and responsive mechanisms for cooperation must be put in place. Going forward, three specific areas of cooperation are critical: Finance, procurement and supply chains.

First, finance. While states have been quick to devise substantial relief packages, they lack financial resources. The Centre’s response was to link finances to its own specific schemes for states to implement rather than buttressing state efforts. However, implementation capacity varies widely across states and schemes. And the relief needs of states will differ. Thus the Centre ought to use its fiscal powers to ease their fiscal constraints. The states have

already asked for the Centre to ease fiscal deficit targets. But more must be done. In particular, the Centre’s relief package (the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna) ought to be redesigned and enhanced as a block grant to states. The grant should have two windows: One for health care system preparedness, linked to the National Health Mission formula, which prioritises funds for poorer states with weak health capacity. The second should be for relief measures. This can be financed by bundling all central schemes for social protection into a untied emergency fund, which states can draw on to top-up their own relief programmes. The cost-sharing formula should be abandoned for the next three months, with the Centre providing 100% funding, freeing up state funds to be used for health-related activities. This must be adopted for the National Health Mission as well, where states are expected to contribute 40% to the budget. Second, financial management and procurement. One of the

biggest inefficiencies in the administrative system is the inability to move funds, procure goods and make payments, at speed. The public finance management system relies on a labyrinth of paperwork and enforcement of audit queries that can be paralysing and leaves little discretion at the state and local level. Given the scale of infrastructure needed — personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, isolation wards — smoothing procurement and financial transfers is essential. This, as former Indian Administrative Service officer Santhosh Mathew argues, needs the Centre and states to work in tandem. The Centre can take charge of discretionary functions where leakages are high — standard-setting, price determination and supplier identification. But to procure fast, States must have full control over the actual transaction, including placing orders directly with vendors, quality checks at the point of receipt, and making direct payments.

Don't communalise the battle against Covid-19

All religious leaders must direct followers to abide by social distancing norms



The Tablighi Jamaat this newspaper has argued, gathering in Nizamuddin was, as gravely irresponsible and most

likely criminal. It should not have been held when social distancing norms were in force, and the government had issued clear directives against large congregations. It has singularly led to a spike in cases, with efforts to trace everyone present in the complex continuing across states. Action must be taken against the Jamaat leadership.

At the same time, it is important not to communalise the issue. There has been an unfortunate, disturbing trend of using this episode to blame the

entire Muslim community, and perpetuate stereotypes about them. This must be resisted. Not only is it wrong, India cannot afford the deepening of the Hindu-Muslim divide at a time when every citizen — irrespective of religion, caste, class, gender and age — is confronting a common enemy.

In fact, the Nizamuddin gathering, where the leader of the sect seems to have made light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and also advised against social distancing, is a reminder that every religious leader, every sect,

every religious institution, must come together with a common message at this time. This message must focus on science, the need to obey government orders, help the poor and the more marginalised segments given the economic disruption to their livelihoods, and co-operate with frontline workers — particularly the medical fraternity. Religions offer faith, solace and hope; they help people tide over difficult moments. This is one such moment. Use religion to unite, not divide.

Can India be an outlier in the spread of Covid-19?

Indians may have genetic advantages, but these need more studies. Meanwhile, fully enforce the lockdown

The coronavirus disease 19 cases (until now). First, (Covid-19) first appeared in the Wuhan district of Hubei province of China in early December 2019. The first case was reported by China on January 7, 2020, and this aroused variable interest worldwide, with most countries initially ignoring the novel infection. Fortunately, Indian health authorities sensed the danger, largely because the country has always been alert to new infections. The scientific think-tank at the Indian council of Medical Research (ICMR) became active immediately and the first laboratory confirmed case was identified at ICMR's National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, sometime towards the end of January.

For example, the three main killers of Tuberculosis, HIV and Malaria have plagued India, Africa and several countries in the Southern hemisphere much more than the European and North American nations. In the context of CoV-2 coronavirus, the beneficial role of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine has been much talked about and debated, while there has already been an extensive usage of this drug at the community level in India -- this too may ultimately prove beneficial.

A look at the world Covid meter shows that there is striking variation in mortality rates across countries, ranging from 0.2% to 15% depending on age, the smoking habit and pre-existing co-morbidities. It may be too early to tell, but in general, countries in the Northern hemisphere have faced the maximum brunt, and those in the Southern hemisphere (and those located proximate to the Equator) have so far escaped high infection numbers.

Three factors seem to be playing a role in the observed lower numbers in India with almost zero occurrence of severe Covid-

Second, epigenetic factors that include environment and food habits may also play a beneficial role for countries such as India; much literature is already available in Ayurveda and other Indian systems of medicine on the definitive beneficial effects of Indian spices in augmenting immunity.

Third, and most important, is the possible role of immune response

genes in the Indian population. These genes are collectively referred to as comprising the human leucocyte antigen system or simply, the HLA genes. Their main biological function is to present invading foreign antigens to the immune systems, since T-cells, which act as the body's soldiers come into play only when pathogens are presented to them in a more formal manner in association with HLA genes. In other words, the pathogen must first attach to compounds created by HLA genes before T-Cells attack it. If no such compounds are produced by the body, then the T-Cells are ineffective. As a consequence of the microbial load, the Indian population possesses a high genetic diversity of



HLA, much more extensive than Caucasian populations. Indeed, studies by the author at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, over several decades revealed the presence of several novel HLA genes and their alleles in the Indian population, most of which do not occur in other ethnic groups. Such genetic diversity of HLA could affect viral fitness. The question then is: Why should genetic variation in HLA genes play a role in the Covid-19 progression? One hint comes from earlier studies in related viral diseases: Certain genetic variants of the HLA system provide protection against such viruses, while others increase genetic

susceptibility to them. Another source of indirect evidence comes from recent clinical Covid-19 studies which showed that rapid T-cell response appears to be crucial for recovery from Covid-19, and reduced functional diversity of T cells in peripheral blood could predict progression of Covid-19. The big question is: Does this give Indians a better chance at fighting the virus effectively? From the epidemiological data so far, it seems so (although much more extensive research is required). However, it is important for us to keep viral loads in check and below the threshold levels. In this context, the complete lockdown

announced by the government is highly timely and most desirable. It is imperative that the virus replication cycle gets disrupted as early as possible before it gains numbers that may become difficult for us to counter.

To this end, the images of crowds gathering in several places whether for panic buying or interstate movements are disturbing. They could jeopardise all efforts and mitigate whatever natural advantages we enjoy. The State must act fast to enforce the lockdown, even forcibly if necessary. India may be the outlier in fighting the coronavirus infection and succeed in keeping the overall numbers lower than the rest of the world with minimal deaths.

Covid-19 could fundamentally change India's political economy

It remains to be seen whether political parties in India decide to use the Covid-19 pandemic to demand a redrawing of political economy alignments in favour of the poor

India has announced a 21-day national lockdown, beginning March 25, to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. Barring essential services such as food supplies, healthcare, banking, and law enforcement, everything is shut down during this period. This also means that a very large share of India's 400 million-plus workforce will not be able to access the labour market and make earnings. This unforeseen calamity has the potential to fundamentally change India's political economy landscape.



Even though India has fared badly in terms of generating "good jobs" for a vast majority of its workforce, its informal markets have kept a large section of workers in a low level equilibrium trap of sorts. At no point in time has India imposed restrictions on rural-urban or inter-state mobility of labour, which is not very uncommon in countries in east and south-east Asia. Even unskilled workers travel thousands of kilometres to find employment in India. Working in the informal sector has also limited collective "class action" in favour of a common set of demands, despite having to live with inequality in almost every aspect of life, including the ability to live through illnesses. This is why conventional trade unions have been struggling to have any significant impact on policy or politics for a long time.

All of this might change once this crisis is over as, for the first time, this foot-loose and completely unprotected labour has faced a direct hit, inflicted by the state, on the ability to sell its labour power. Even when this crisis is over - and let us hope it's over sooner rather than later - the memories of this shock, and the economic pain associated with it, will remain entrenched.

The Indian economy has changed in many significant ways, especially in the last three "post-reform" decades. Among the most important facets of this transformation has been the movement away from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors. In terms of share in GDP, agriculture now accounts for less

than 15% of the total economic output. This figure was 27% in 1990. Agriculture still accounts for a significant share of the workforce though. According to the 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), more than 40% of the workers were employed directly or indirectly in farming. To be sure, these headline numbers on income-employment shares could be misleading. Even in villages and among households employed in agriculture, non-farm incomes are actually a significant and increasing share of overall earnings.

This is borne out by household level income data and other methods such as village-based studies. One such example is the one-of-its-kind five-decade-long study of Palanpur village in the Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh. In their book *How Lives Change: Palanpur, India and Development Economics*, Himanshu, Peter Lanjouw, and Nicholas Stern use the village level data to show that share of cultivation in total household incomes went down from over 60% in the 1970s to just one-third by 2008-09. The share of non-farm incomes, on the other hand, went up from around 10% to almost 50% during this period.

The importance of non-farm work cannot be explained just by its share in total incomes. The ability to migrate and seek non-farm work outside villages has also allowed workers to escape the stigma associated with certain kinds of manual

work within one's own village. For example, upper caste Thakur workers in Palanpur were willing to unload railway wagons in a neighboring town for a living, the kind of work which they would never do in Palanpur, lest it degrade their upper caste social standing. The short point is non-farm work-related migration has not only augmented incomes; it has also opened up new avenues of work for a large number of workers. The closure of this market therefore is a double whammy for the daily wage workers.

It needs to be remembered, even with all the migration and informal work, the vast majority of Indians can barely make ends meet. Almost half the total consumption expenditure of average Indians was spent on food items in 2011-12. This share is significantly higher for the bottom half of the population.

Because the government did not release the findings of the 2017-18 Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) by the National Statistical Office (NSO), we do not know what these numbers are today.

Such a high share of consumption expenditure on food also means that a large number of workers lead a hand-to-mouth existence in the country, and will find it very difficult to even get two square meals a day if their daily work is disrupted. While India does have a food security program, which is expected to cover two-thirds of the population, making the entitlements portable is still work in progress. This means that short-term migrant

workers are not very likely to have access to its benefits. Also, for a migrant worker living outside his home, food is not the only necessary expense. Managing things such as rent payments is an equally big issue in the absence of regular flow of work. Millions of workers must be having a very difficult time at this moment. Anecdotal reports of thousands of workers walking on foot to their homes hundreds, even thousands of kilometers away confirm this.

To be sure, it can always be argued that the current economic pain due to the lockdown is not unjustified. After all, if the pandemic starts infecting people at a widespread rate in a country like India, the consequences can be catastrophic. However, what is also true is that there is a fundamental asymmetry in this entire trade off. While the benefits of a lockdown preventing the infection from spreading would equally accrue to everyone, the costs will be disproportionately higher for the poor, who, unlike the better off, have neither the luxury of working from home nor enough of a savings pool to exhaust while not earning. In this case, it could even be said that the disease has been brought home by the rich, as it originated in a foreign country, and the poor had absolutely no role to play in its spread.

It also needs to be reiterated that under normal circumstances, the poor are

actually more vulnerable to deaths from being ill, as they can neither avail treatment nor afford adequate diets to recover from their ailments. A 2015 story published in the *Hindustan Times* had quoted research at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi to show that 50% of patients with severe head injuries died due to extreme poverty as their families did not have the economic means to ensure adequate diets or nursing facilities. The AIIMS study is not a one-off case. Research based on the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data shows that the poorest Indians are almost twice as likely to die compared to the richest even when they are healthy. This triples when an illness is involved. There is another way to look at these statistics. For a person belonging to the poorest 20% of the population, the chances of dying increase by a multiple of 1.9 if they are ill, whereas this increases only 1.2 times when the person belongs to the richest 20% of the population.

The numbers cited above, which represent the associated probability of dying with and without morbidity, capture the macabre reality of the Indian economy. A very large section of our population has been living a hand-to-mouth existence while hoping they either don't fall ill or just live through their illnesses when they do.

Why have the people accepted living in such harsh conditions? There are two possible reasons. One, never has this crisis manifested itself at the macro level. So there has not been a macro anger or response to it. To give a crude example, one could take the cases of hundreds of poor children dying due to various forms of encephalitis within days in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The deaths in such episodes have often reached significantly higher numbers than the number of deaths due to the current pandemic in many countries. However, such instances have not led to macro level agitations demanding better health services at affordable rates for the poor.

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Trump's alarming message portends tragic days ahead

President Donald Trump finally leveled with America about the desperate reality of the coronavirus pandemic, warning of cruel weeks to come in one of the most chilling White House moments in modern history.

Even with blanket nationwide adoption of stringent mitigation efforts, between 100,000 and 240,000 Americans could face death in the coming weeks in a cascading nationwide ordeal, according to modeling explained by senior members of the President's emergency task force Tuesday.

It is in the nature of the presidency, that the commander-in-chief sometimes has to deliver grave news to the nation.

George W. Bush had to narrate the horror of the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Ronald Reagan movingly eulogized shuttle astronauts after a 1986 disaster. And John Kennedy kept his nerve to address the nation during a showdown with the Soviet Union over Cuba that threatened to erupt in nuclear

war. But no president for many decades has had to level with his country over such a sudden impending loss of American life in a medical emergency as Trump is now being forced to do -- after apparently coming to terms about the extent of the crisis himself. It was not the first time that administration experts modeled the staggering possible death toll. But the combination of the President's unusually serious demeanor and the ominous curve charts of his top public health officials struck a note of alarm missing from Trump's previous knockabout briefings.

The stark spectacle of a president, especially one who spent weeks dismissing the virus, warning of the imminent demise of so many Americans encapsulated the scale of the crisis.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead. We're going to go through a very tough two weeks," the President said in the White House briefing room.

Trump's briefing mostly lacked the elements of self-congratulation and false hope that have characterized his heavily criticized leadership in the crisis.

To begin with, during his marathon two-hour briefing, he mostly ceded the stage to his credible lieutenants Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx, who convinced him of the seriousness of the situation over the weekend.

There have been many false dawns when Trump has failed to match the gravity of a moment during his tenure. Past behavior suggests he may struggle to maintain his unifying tone at a moment of unique national peril.

And the harrowing potential scale of the looming tragedy already have some, like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, saying lives might have been saved had Trump not spent weeks denying the severity of the approaching pandemic and adopted more aggressive actions to prepare.

A multi-front battle intensifies Trump's appearance came on a day of grave developments that underscored the multi-front

nature of the fight against Covid-19. Field hospitals sprang up in New York's Central Park to alleviate overcrowding in the city's hospitals. State governors pleaded with the federal government for more ventilators, and doctors prepared to make grim decisions about who will live and die amid a shortage of the machines.

Fauci and Birx arrived armed with slides showing the rocketing rise of Covid-19 cases in New York and New Jersey in recent weeks, and more shallow curves for other states.

Their most hopeful moments involved referring to Italy's belated turn to a downward curve in infections after weeks of agony, reflecting the wrenching substance of their message. But in order to keep deaths to the lower end of their estimates, they warned that maximum mitigation efforts -- including physical distancing and staying at home -- were imperative.

Even with such a regime in place across the country -- and some states and cities are not

yet taking the advice seriously - there are likely to be between 100,000 and 240,000 deaths.

Fauci vowed, however, not to accept those figures and to strive to keep the mortality curve below expectations.

He said there were some early signs that mitigation efforts taken by states and the White House's distancing guidelines, which have been extended until April 30, are working.

"Whenever you're having an effect, it's not time to take your foot off the accelerator," Fauci said.

"And that's what I hope. And I know that we can that do over the next 30 days."

Birx called on the entire nation to unite, and, in a comment that appeared to jar with Trump's earlier rhetoric on the crisis, added: "There's no magic vaccine or therapy. It's just behaviors."

"Each of our behaviors translating into something that changes the course of this viral pandemic over the next 30 days," Birx said.

What Africa can teach the world about beating the coronavirus

As the spread of the novel coronavirus accelerates around the world, sub-Saharan Africa has largely been spared -- until now.

Recent days saw more African countries reporting cases and deaths from the virus, including in Nigeria and Zimbabwe. And the head of the World Health Organization has issued a stark warning: "Africa should wake up." The rise of Covid-19 comes as an outbreak of another deadly virus, Ebola, appears to be ending in Central Africa's Democratic Republic of Congo. Those of us who have been responding to Ebola are now turning our attention, resources and expertise to Covid-19.

Our experience dealing with multiple outbreaks of Ebola offers some lessons that could be helpful in addressing Covid-19. Some of these are more specific to the African context, but most apply anywhere.

Protect health care workers. This is emerging as a major priority, as the coronavirus begins to overwhelm the health care system in the United

States. Unfortunately, we saw too many cases of heroic doctors, nurses and others become infected with Ebola from the patients whose lives they were trying to save. Health care workers were 21 to 32 times more likely to contract Ebola than the general population during the West Africa Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. With this novel coronavirus, health care workers will face similar risks at work, and will likely be required in many cases to continue treating patients even without the most rudimentary protective measures. Many sub-Saharan African health systems are already severely constrained because there are not enough doctors and nurses to meet basic health care needs of the population.

We must protect this workforce in order to keep health systems from collapse. Health care facilities need to be equipped and supplied, and the health workers must be trained in how to prevent the spread of infection within facilities, both

from patient to patient and from patient to health care worker.

Aggressively push back against rumor and disinformation with frequent, fact-based communication. In responding to Ebola, bad information spread quickly and was a major hindrance to getting communities to cooperate with efforts to detect and slow the spread of the disease. For example, in the DRC outbreak, rumors led to violence against health care workers and attacks that destroyed clinics.

Home care will be an important part of this response and providing good information to families and communities on how to care for the sick -- and when to seek care -- will be an important component of this response. We need to quickly disseminate as much information as possible to the public about the nature of the virus and the response.

Engage the local community. Some of our best and most effective outreach during the Ebola outbreak in

the DRC was done through trusted members of the community. By training and equipping them to keep their neighbors informed and reassured, community cooperation will increase and will facilitate efforts to detect the virus and encourage individual and family responses that will slow its spread. Use faith-based networks. Faith leaders are often among the most trusted members of a community and enlisting them in providing accurate information and encouraging cooperation among members of their congregations is extremely effective. In chronically under-resourced African nations, faith-based institutions provide services, including health care, where governments sometimes can't reach.

For example, the organizations I represent, Lutheran World Relief and IMA World Health, are working in partnership with Christian health associations in several countries to provide information on the virus, technical assistance and equipment and

supplies to implement infection prevention and control in health facilities.

In the recent Ebola outbreak in the DRC, we worked with church networks to provide technical assistance, equipment and supplies to help prevent the spread of infections, as well as to help the global health community track where cases of the virus were spreading. Test, test, test. As we are finding in the United States, you can't treat it if you can't see it. When Covid-19 was first detected outside of Asia, only two laboratories in all of sub-Saharan Africa were equipped to process tests. That capacity has since ramped up considerably, but it is still short of the mark, as shortages of testing kits and laboratory supplies are common. We must expand the capacity to test to every national and regional reference lab on the continent as soon as possible and provide the supplies needed to test in accordance with WHO guidelines.

Race & Ethnicity



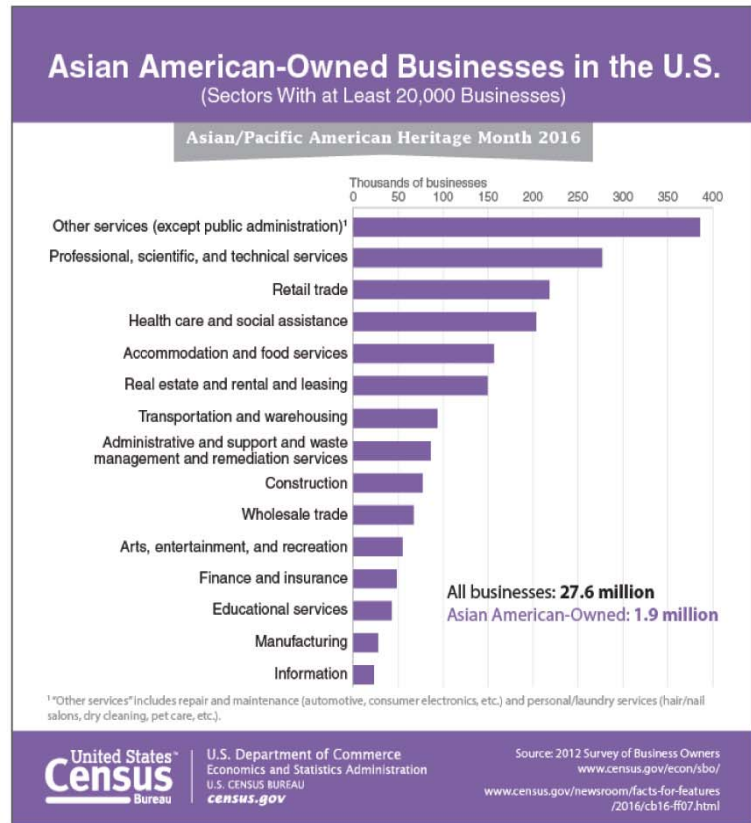
The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts.

What is race?

The Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race. Survey respondents may report multiple races.

What is ethnicity?

Ethnicity determines whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not. For this reason, ethnicity is broken out in two categories, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics may report as any race.



Can the information be used to enforce immigration laws on me or my family?

No. The Census Bureau adheres to strict confidentiality laws that prohibit sharing of respondent information. We do not share respondent answers with immigration, law enforcement, tax collection agencies or any other organization.

What region of origin does Census consider for each race category?

White	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Europe	Africa	North America	Far East	Hawaii
Middle East		South America	Southeast Asia	Guam
North Africa		Central America	Indian	Samoa
				Pacific Islands

Inspired by Singapore, Delhi to track mobile phones to enforce quarantine

Kejriwal said the government had already handed over 25,000 phone numbers to the police to trace.



(News Agencies) The Delhi Police has been ordered to track mobile phones of people in home-quarantine to find out if they stepped out or came in contact with others, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Wednesday.

Wednesday. Kejriwal said the government had already handed over 25,000 phone numbers to the police to trace. The chief minister, who insisted that there had been no instance yet to indicate that coronavirus disease was in a community transmission stage in the national government, said the mobile phone tracing would establish quarantine violation but also identify their possible contacts. "We had given 11,000 phone numbers to Delhi Police for tracking yesterday. Today, 14,000 more numbers were sent," he said. The decision to use smartphones was taken at his meeting with Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal. It was inspired, the chief minister said, by countries such as Singapore that are using technology to enforce quarantines. The use of smartphone locations to locate a person in quarantine started in China, was quickly adopted in Singapore and China, and has been adapted by countries in Europe. Last week, the UK's data and privacy authority confirmed that it wasn't a violation of an individual's privacy. Ensuring that people who are ordered to stay in isolation do not move out has been a challenge for states across the country. Health departments and the police had initially started pasting notices outside homes of people under self-quarantine and encouraged neighbours to report violations. But it was often not enough. So Karnataka came up with a mobile application that requires people to send geotagged selfies every hour, a system that is being adopted in Telangana as well.

Govt distilleries in Rajasthan now producing sanitisers to fight Covid-19

Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills (RSGSM) plants had been shut for three days following the 21-day lockdown. But from March 25, five out of its 19 plants began producing sanitisers.



(News Agencies) The distillery and liquor division of the Rajasthan State Ganganagar Sugar Mills (RSGSM) that normally produces 2.4 million bottles of country liquor every day is now producing sanitisers as part of the government's efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus. RSGSM plants had been shut for three days following the 21-day lockdown. But from March 25, five out of its 19 plants began producing sanitisers. The plants have produced about 1.4 million bottles of sanitisers until March 31 and supplied free of cost to government departments in the front line of the Covid-19 fight. "The approximate cost producing these sanitisers is Rs 3.5 crore. We consider it as our contribution to the state's efforts to fight the pandemic," said Kesar Lal Meena, RSGSM general manager. The government organization has also donated Rs 5 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund Covid-19 Mitigation Fund. The plant in Jaipur operates in two shifts – 6 am to 1.30 pm and 2 pm to 9 pm – and the plants in Mandore (Jodhpur), Hanumangarh, Ranpur (Kota) and Udaipur operate in one shift – from 8am to 5pm – to produce sanitisers in plastic bottles of 180ml each. Meena said two chains are operating in Jaipur and one chain each in the other plants. "There's a shortage of labour so we cannot operate more chains. On a normal working day, we

have 160 labourers in Jaipur plant alone. Currently, the plant is operating with 40," he said. Excise commissioner Bishnu Charan Mallick said the sanitisers have been given to district administrations for free distributions to frontline workers in police, medical and health departments. Meena said production of sanitisers began on March 25 on a small scale. "Large-scale production began the next day when all five plants got operational," he said. The RSGSM GM said the sanitisers will be available across 40 depots of Rajasthan State Beverages Corporation Limited, which normally handle supply of Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL), from Wednesday for Rs 37.50 each bottle.

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Sonia Gandhi writes to PM Modi, seeks advance wages for MGNREGA workers hit by Covid-19 lockdown

Sonia Gandhi asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take immediate action and extend support to nearly eight crore rural workers in the country hit by the lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus.

(News Agencies) Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking advance payment of 21 days' wages to MGNREGA workers to compensate them



season. "Devoid of an alternative source of income, an increasingly large number of the rural poor are expected to demand work under MGNREGA. However, social distancing norms have rendered all works unfeasible during the lockdown," the Congress chief said and requested Modi to take immediate action and extend support to nearly eight crore rural workers in the country.

Last week, the Union finance ministry had announced a relief package worth Rs 1.70 lakh crore under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana to help the poor tide over the crisis. The lockdown which will be in force till April 14, has

short-circuited the labour market in the country and has thrown thousands of migrant workers in the country jobless. It had also triggered a rush by migrant workers to head home to their villages. In their rush to get back to their villages thousands of migrant workers had gathered at the Delhi-UP border in Anand Vihar to take buses to several destinations in Uttar Pradesh. The throng of crowds and packed buses also raised fears of further spread of coronavirus that the lockdown had intended to check.

for loss of income during the 21-day lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus. "Given the urgency of providing income support to the rural poor, due to lost wages, the government may consider immediate advance payment of wages for 21 days to registers and active MGNREGA. The advance wages may be adjusted against the work to be done by the workers, once MGNREGA sites are opened up," Gandhi wrote. She said lakhs of agricultural workers have been left unemployed during the harvesting

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The Office of Inspector General recognizes that we are facing unprecedented times and is alerting the public about potential fraud schemes related to economic stimulus programs offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration in response to the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), the largest financial assistance bill to date, includes provisions to help small businesses. Fraudsters have already begun targeting small business owners during these economically difficult times. Be on the lookout for grant fraud, loan fraud, and phishing.



Grants

- SBA **does not** initiate contact on either 7a or Disaster loans or grants. If you are proactively contacted by someone claiming to be from the SBA, suspect fraud.



Loans

- If you are contacted by someone promising to get approval of an SBA loan, but requires any payment up front or offers a high interest bridge loan in the interim, suspect fraud.
- SBA limits the fees a broker can charge a borrower to 3% for loans \$50,000 or less and 2% for loans \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 with an additional ¼% on amounts over \$1,000,000. Any attempt to charge more than these fees is inappropriate.
- If you have a question about getting a SBA disaster loan, call 800-659-2955 or send an email to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov.
- If you have questions about other SBA lending products, call SBA's Answer Desk at 800-827-5722 or send an email to answerdesk@sba.gov.



Phishing

- Look out for phishing attacks/scams utilizing the SBA logo. These may be attempts to obtain your personally identifiable information (PII), to obtain personal banking access, or to install ransomware/malware on your computer.
- If you are in the process of applying for an SBA loan and receive email correspondence asking for PII, ensure that the referenced application number is consistent with the actual application number.
- Any email communication from SBA will come from accounts ending with sba.gov.
- The presence of an SBA logo on a webpage **does not** guaranty the information is accurate or endorsed by SBA. Please cross-reference any information you receive with information available at www.sba.gov.

Report any suspected fraud to OIG's Hotline at 800-767-0385 or online at, <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/oversight-advocacy/office-inspector-general/office-inspector-general-hotline>.





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India coronavirus cases rise amid fears true figure much higher

Doubt has been cast over India's claim that it has no community transmission of coronavirus after the country reported its biggest daily rise in number of cases so far, connected to a religious gathering held in Delhi two weeks ago.

India reported a record increase of 386 cases in the past 24 hours, pushing the total number to 1,637, according to the country's health ministry. The death toll is now 38. In another worrying development, the first coronavirus case was also confirmed in Mumbai's Dharavi slum, which is India's largest and is home to almost one million people living in close, unsanitary quarters. The 56-year-old man was taken to Sion hospital and eight of his family members placed into quarantine. Yet for a densely populated country of 1.3 billion people, the number of cases is still relatively low compared with Europe and the US, and believed to be linked to both low levels of testing and poor access to an already overstretched healthcare system with people not reporting their symptoms. India spends only about 1.3% of its GDP on public health, among the lowest in the world. Only 47,951 tests have been done so far and there are just 51 government-approved testing centres across the country. The jump in number of cases was linked to an annual two-day convention of the Muslim sect Tablighi Jamaat on 13 March, for which about 3,500 people

gathered from all over the country and abroad in the south Delhi neighbourhood of Nizamuddin. Almost 2,000 stayed in the area for days afterwards, and the area has become the coronavirus hotspot of India. The outbreak from the Nizamuddin mosque gathering also inflamed religious tensions in a city still reeling from communal riots last month that took 50 lives, with Hindu mobs rampaging through the streets attacking Muslims in their homes. Across Indian media and social networks, Muslims were blamed for spreading the virus while "Corona Jihad" began to trend on Twitter. The gathering also appeared to trigger a spread of the virus across numerous states from Kashmir to West Bengal by those who returned home afterwards. So far, 10 people who attended the event have died while 1,800 people have been sent to nine hospitals and quarantine centres across the country. However, despite the jump in number of cases this week, the Indian government insists there is still no community transmission and that cases have been either from those who travelled abroad or in localised incidents. Lav Agarwal, the joint secretary in the health ministry, told reporters: "Nowhere have we said that there is a community transmission. We are still in a local transmission in this country." Raman R Gangakhedkar, the head of epidemiology

and communicable diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), also insisted there was "no reason to panic at the moment". Nonetheless, the ICMR conceded last month that community transmission was "inevitable" in India. "Until we see a significant number of cases to indicate community transmission, let us not over interpret things," said Gangakhedkar.

Doctors in hospitals across India said the lack of proper protective equipment available for medical staff, including basic masks, meant that patients presenting with coronavirus symptoms were being turned away. Doctors in Kolkata described how they were made to wear plastic raincoats to examine possible coronavirus patients, while a doctor in a Delhi hospital resorted to wearing a motorcycle helmet to cover his face.

One junior doctor working in a Kolkata hospital where coronavirus patients are being treated, described how "for over a week, we came in close contact with suspected corona patients without proper protective gear ... We all are left at the mercy of God." The doctor also cast aspersions on the claim that the disease was not already spreading within impoverished communities. "Every day thousands of people gather here, seeking treatment for many infectious diseases. Last week, I noticed, hundreds of people, with many coughing, having fever and breathing

problems stood on queue waiting for their turn to be examined by us," he said.

"They stood in the queue for hours and many of them were coughing and sneezing. I have every reason to believe many were carriers of Covid-19 who spread the infection to people in that same line, who in turn are now spreading it in the community ... hundred or thousand times more people should be tested for the infection. Otherwise, the coronavirus situation will turn unmanageable."

A recent report, jointly published by three American universities and the Delhi School of Economics, claimed that India could have as many as 1.3 million coronavirus infections by mid-May. Testing capacity may about to increase. Last week, Mylab Discovery, a company based in the city of Pune, became the first Indian firm to get full approval to make and sell testing kits, which have already shipped to labs in Pune, Mumbai, Delhi, Goa and Bangalore. Each Mylab kit can test 100 samples and costs 1,200 rupees. Private company Practo also announced it has been authorised by the government to conduct private coronavirus tests, which can be booked directly. The facility is available only for Mumbai residents but they say it will soon be widened out to the whole country.

One-third of migrant workers could be infected with Covid-19: Centre tells SC

The court also asked the central government to set up within 24 hours a portal for dissemination of real-time information on the Covid-19 pandemic to counter panic and fake news.

The government told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that there is a possibility that three out of 10 people moving from cities to rural areas are carrying coronavirus disease Covid-19. The submission was made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre in the hearing on two public interest litigations (PILs). The hearing was held by video conferencing.

Referring to the last census, Mehta who addressed the court from his office chamber, said there were about 4.14 crore people had migrated for work, but backward migration is now happening due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The court directed the Centre to ensure that migrant workers kept in shelter homes are given food, medical aid, and also asked it to take assistance of trained counsellors and religious leaders of all faiths to help the migrants

overcome their panic as "panic will destroy more lives than the virus".

"We want to impress upon you that the panic will destroy more lives than the virus. You need counsellors," the bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justice L Nageswara Rao said, adding, "you can have 'Bhajan, Kirtan, Namaz' or whatever but you have

to give strength to the people." The court also asked the central government to set up within 24 hours a portal for dissemination of real-time information on the Covid-19 pandemic to counter the panic and fear being spread through fake news.

Mehta told the bench that no migrant worker, who had left for their

native places after being rendered jobless due to a 21-day nationwide lockdown, "is on the road now". He also said that authorities would mobilise religious leaders to counsel the migrants in shelters so that they could stay calm.

The PILs demanded direction from the court for the government to provide thousands of

migrant workers who are rendered homeless and jobless due to the lockdown with relief, including food, water, medicines and proper medical facilities. Mehta said that the migration of people cannot be allowed at this juncture as this would spread the virus in villages.

The bench adjourned the hearing on the PILs to

April 7 while refusing to restrain the high courts from taking up the issue of migrants, saying that they may monitor the issue more closely. According to the Union home ministry, there are over 21,000 relief camps set up across the country where more than 6.6 lakh destitute people and those stranded because of the Covid-19 lockdown are sheltered.

How to sustain a long lockdown

By now, we have all seen the heart-wrenching images of migrants in Delhi scrambling to board buses out of the city. If even a small number of them were infected with the coronavirus, and infected others in overcrowded transportation services or communities where they return, the positive impact of any lockdown on slowing the spread of the virus may have been subverted.

But let us not vilify the poorest and most vulnerable in our society, who were doing what they could to survive. Indeed, a lockdown was needed to arrest

the spread of coronavirus, lest our creaky health system gets overwhelmed. The problem lies not in the earnestness with which the government has acted to combat the crisis, but with the advice it is being given.

Popular perception about how to combat the virus stems from a set of epidemiological models, often built on spotty data and strong assumptions, predicting doomsday scenarios. This has led to, for instance, Johns Hopkins University clarifying that a widely-circulated study by some of its researchers that predicted up to 240 million Indians getting

infected was not its opinion. Even if these studies were not credible, the damage was done in terms of political pressure, as the focus shifted to aggressive "social distancing" measures.

The mathematics of this idea is straightforward and appealing. If people in a household have little to no contact with those outside, then the virus has little chance to spread. But what is lost in this simplistic idea, and the egregiously poor use of data, is the "sustainability" of any social distancing or lockdown measure.

We have to ask ourselves whether the manner in which

we've locked down in India (which may continue beyond three weeks, although the government has said there are no plans of doing this) is amenable to long-term implementation without serious suffering or non-compliance.

In a lockdown, we are asking individuals to sacrifice for the greater good. Indeed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi framed the lockdown in precisely these terms in his nationwide address. In the study of political economy, we refer to this as one type of "collective action problem".

Fake WhatsApp messages spurred migrants' exodus from Delhi to UP, say officials

The fake WhatsApp messages had numbers of Uttar Pradesh Bhawan control room in Delhi.



Fake messages widely circulated on social media could have played a key role in spurring the exodus of migrants from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh, said state government officials.

The arrival of thousands of migrants into the state threw the social distancing protocol to the winds and poses a big risk of community transmission of Covid-19 infections in rural areas.

One of such WhatsApp messages, circulated among

the migrants in Delhi, said the Uttar Pradesh government was operating buses from Delhi border to ferry its residents stranded in the national capital to their home.

"Important Information: If anyone of you is from UP and is trapped in Delhi, the UP government has made arrangements to take you back home. Buses will be available from the Anand Vihar bus terminal also. Contact these numbers (011-26110151 and 011-26110155)

to go back to Uttar Pradesh," the message written in Hindi said.

Interestingly, the numbers given in the message belonged to the Uttar Pradesh Bhawan in Delhi, where the government has set up a control room to help any UP resident in a coronavirus related emergency.

UP Bhawan manager Rajesh Chaube said, "The WhatsApp messages were fake and it added fuel to fire. The UP Bhawan's phone numbers mentioned in it are

of the control room that has been set up here, but it is not meant for enquiring about bus operations." Chaubey said hundreds of calls landed on these numbers for three days, all enquiring about buses.

However, desperate to leave anyhow, most migrants did not even bother to dial the numbers given in the message and all started reaching the Anand Vihar bus station and other locations.

"On Friday, I received a WhatsApp message on my mobile, that said buses would be available at Anand Vihar to ferry us to our home in UP and when I informed many of my friends, they said that they, too, had received a similar message," said Anuj, a resident of a village in Kasganj district.

Anuj, who works and stays in a hotel in Delhi's Dariyaganj area, started packing up after receiving the message and set out on foot for the Anand Vihar bus station.

"Luckily, I got a city bus

that dropped me at Anand Vihar only to find out that there were no buses plying to UP," he said. He claimed thousands of people started leaving after they got the WhatsApp message that was also shared on Facebook.

An investigation, however, revealed that the circulated messages were fake because no such announcement was made by the UP State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) or the UP government.

"A mischief appears to have been played to misinform gullible migrants because we never issued such appeals through any social media platform," UPSRTC managing director, Ghaziabad, AK Singh said.

He said it was only after thousands of migrants swarmed Anand Vihar, Kaushambi and Lal Kuan bus stations in Delhi that the government asked UPSRTC on Friday to

evacuate all of them. Some also alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi not only operated city buses despite the lockdown but also offered migrants a free ride to UP borders.

Accusing the Delhi government of a conspiracy to get rid of UP's migrant workers by spreading rumours, Delhi BJP leader Kapil Mishra even released a video in which a vehicle is seen making an announcement in the night that buses were being operated from Delhi borders for UP, though AAP leaders, including Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, refuted all such charges through tweets. Sources said the central government's announcement of relief measures for three months also triggered fear that the lockdown might get extended beyond the current three weeks.

Supreme Court concerned over 'fake news' on Covid-19

Media should refer to and publish the official version about developments regarding coronavirus threat, the court said, while maintaining that it does not intend to interfere with the "free discussion" about the pandemic.

"We expect the media (print, electronic or social) to maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated. We do not intend to interfere with the free discussion about the pandemic, but direct the media refer to and publish the official version about the developments", the order passed by the court read.

The apex court was hearing two petitions, one by advocates Rashmi Bansal and Anuj Gupta and another by advocate Alakh

Alok Srivastava, that brought the issue of plight of migrant labourers to the notice of the court. The court, on Monday, asked the centre to submit a status report regarding the same. The government, pursuant to the court's order, filed a detailed affidavit on Tuesday explaining the steps taken by it to combat the Covid-19 threat.

In the affidavit by Home Secretary, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, the centre had also prayed that directions should be issued by the court to the print, electronic and social media to not publish anything without first ascertaining the factual position by way of a mechanism provided by the central government.

"Any deliberate or unintended fake or inaccurate reporting either

in electronic, print, or social media and particularly web portals has a serious and inevitable potential of causing panic amongst large sections of the society", the affidavit stated.

The bench of Chief Justice of India, SA Bobde and justice L Nageswara Rao underscored the need to prevent spread of incorrect information through social media platforms. It also noted that the migration of large number of labourers working in the cities was triggered by panic created by fake news that the lockdown would continue for more than three months.

"Such panic driven migration has caused untold suffering to those who believed and acted on such news. It is therefore not possible for us to overlook this menace of fake

news either by electronic, print or social media", the court said in its order.

In a bid to combat spread of fake news, the court directed the central government to publish a daily bulletin through all media avenues including social media platforms.

"Centre's prayer (to restrain media) is absolutely absurd. Controlling fake news is one thing while having pre-censorship is another thing. They are effectively saying that whatever the government says is the only version This prayer by centre is virtually a plea for pre-censorship of media and is unknown to any democracy", said Mahesh Menon who teaches law at Daksha Fellowship.

The Centre in its affidavit said that while action can be taken by authorities

against those crating panic under the Disaster Management Act, a direction from the court will go a long way in mitigating any potential damage resulting from a false alarm.

"Of course, a framework is currently in place under the Disaster Management Act but it is not in negation of Constitutional or fundamental rights. Article 19 (1)(a) which guarantees freedom of speech and expression is still very much in place. Part of the reason why things got out of control in China was there was no free media there and the state officially tried to suppress the information and facts", Menon added.

The court's order does specifically mention that it will not interfere in "free discussion of the pandemic" but it also asks

that the media "refer" to and "publish" the "official version about the developments."

It wasn't immediately clear what this would entail. For instance, almost all state governments put out official bulletins with the number of confirmed cases and deaths, but the dashboard of the ministry of health and family welfare updates this with a significant lag.

The Centre also informed the court that large-scale exodus of migrants, mostly daily wage labourers, was under control and that most of them have been taken to government shelters. According to the status report submitted by the centre, 666,291 persons have been provided shelters and 2,288,279 persons have been provided food.

When will you get your stimulus cash, and how?

Washington (CNN)The US government is preparing to send out direct payments to help individuals amid the coronavirus pandemic, but those who need the money most may be waiting the longest to see it.

The first payments are expected go out within three weeks to those for whom the Internal Revenue Service already has direct deposit information on file. Mnuchin said at a White House coronavirus briefing that payments would go out within two weeks to people whose direct deposit details are on file with the government, echoing comments he made after passage of the \$2.2 trillion stimulus bill that payments would not go out until mid-April.

He added that a web portal would be established for people to supply their details and that checks would be sent to anyone else, but did not specify a timeline.

“I am assuring the American public, they need the money now,” he said. It’s unclear how long it will take to get the money to everyone else — but it could take weeks or even months to send out checks.

Trump administration officials told lawmakers it could take up to 20 weeks for all of the stimulus payments to be distributed, according to a House Democratic memo obtained by CNN.

Previous stimulus payments in 2001 and 2008 have been delivered by both direct deposit and checks in the mail, but mobile payment services like Venmo want to play a role this time. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday that there will be a web-based app for those whose information is not on file to register their payment details. The IRS will use your 2019 tax return, if you’ve already filed it, or your 2018 return to calculate the amount of your payment. The payments would not be subject to tax, and those who owe back taxes will still get the payouts.

Individuals are due up to \$1,200 and couples will receive up to \$2,400 — plus \$500 per child. But

payments start phasing out for individuals with adjusted gross incomes of more than \$75,000. The amount will then be reduced by \$5 for every additional \$100 of adjusted gross income, and those making more than \$99,000 will not receive anything. The income thresholds would be doubled for couples.

Here’s what we know so far about how it will work:

Direct deposits will go out automatically

The IRS says that payments will go out automatically to those who authorized a direct deposit for their refunds on either their 2019 or 2018 tax return. The money will be deposited directly into the same banking account and the taxpayer doesn’t have to take any action to receive it. That should cover a lot of people. Last year, about 92 million people received refunds via direct deposit. That represents about 82% of people who received refunds and nearly 60% of all tax filers. “I think it’s reasonable to think those payments can be made in

three weeks,” said Nicole Kaeding, an economist with the National Taxpayers Union Foundation.

Who will have to take action?

For those who haven’t filed a return for either 2019 or 2018, the IRS urges them to do so quickly. Even those who don’t normally need to file a tax return may have to in order to receive their payment. That includes individuals who earned less than \$12,200 in 2019 and couples who earned less than \$24,400. Language on tax forms can be unclear, especially for someone who hasn’t filed a return in a while. Usually, the IRS has in-person taxpayer assistance centers located across the country — but they have all been shut down due to the pandemic. “An area of big concern is how much administrative burden we’re putting on individuals to get these payments. We should be limiting it as much as possible,” said Kyle Pomerleau, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where he studies

federal tax policy.

Social Security recipients will automatically receive stimulus pay

The Treasury Department, clearing up confusion, said Wednesday that Social Security recipients will not have to file a tax return in order to receive the economic stimulus payments the government is preparing to send out. It was unclear in earlier guidance whether Social Security recipients who don’t normally need to file taxes would have to in order to receive the money. But, those beneficiaries will automatically receive the money, and the IRS will use the information that the Social Security Administration has on file. Those who normally receive their Social Security benefits directly in their bank accounts will receive the stimulus money in the same way. Others will receive a check in the mail — though it will likely take longer to receive the payment than those who use direct deposit.

Will others get checks in the mail?

How things will work gets a little cloudy for those who have not authorized a direct deposit from the IRS either on their 2018 or 2019 return. The IRS expects to start issuing paper checks the week of May 4, according to the House Democratic memo. The paper checks will be issued at a rate of about 5 million per week, the memo says. Individuals with the lowest income, based on adjusted gross income, will receive their checks first. In the past, it has taken longer to send checks than make direct deposits. In 2008, when the government distributed similar stimulus money, deposits were made over a three-week period, while paper checks were sent through the mail over a 10-week period. According to the legislation, the IRS has until the end of 2020 to transfer the payments.

An online fix?

Now, the Treasury is planning to develop “in the coming weeks” a web-based portal that will allow people to provide their banking information to the IRS online so that they can receive their payments immediately. But

the government has said little about how this would work. “I think it will be difficult to create that portal in such a time frame but we will see if Treasury can pull it off,” Kaeding said. It could be helpful for those tax filers who don’t have up-to-date direct deposit or address information on record with the IRS.

Low-income earners could still miss out

An online portal won’t help the millions of people who don’t have access to the internet at home. It’s likely that the portal will involve an authentication process and that could be a roadblock for some people. For example, just 30% of people who try to register for an existing online account with the IRS are successful, said former IRS Taxpayer Advocate Nina Olson. The rest fail the authentication test, which requires an account number of a mortgage, loan or credit card, as well as a mobile phone that has the same address on the bill as your return. Not everyone can check all those boxes. Lowering the authentication standards could invite identity theft, Olson said.

Brooklyn man arrested for hoarding masks, coughing on FBI agents

The accused fraudster also directed another doctor to an Irvington, NJ, auto repair shop to pick up another order. There, the doctor reported to investigators that Feldheim was allegedly hoarding enough medical supplies “to outfit an entire hospital.” The materials included hand sanitizers, Clorox wipes, chemical cleaning agents and surgical supplies. By last Monday, Feldheim was operating from his Brooklyn home, offering to push surgical gowns to a nurse, the feds said. Two days later, the suspected hoarder received a gigantic shipment at his home of about eight pallets of face masks. FBI agents then staked out his house, first noticing empty boxes of N95 masks outside. On Sunday, they said they witnessed “multiple instances” of people approaching Feldheim’s residence and walking away with what appeared

to be medical supplies. The agents confronted Feldheim outside his house, keeping a safe social distance over coronavirus fears. “When the agents were within four to five feet of him, Feldheim allegedly coughed in their direction

without covering his mouth,” the US attorney’s release said. “At that point, Feldheim told the FBI agents that that he had the Coronavirus,” the statement said. Feldheim then allegedly lied to FBI agents regarding his possession and sale of

medical supplies. He falsely told the agents that he worked for a company that bought and sold PPE and that he never took physical custody of the materials. Following Feldheim’s arrest, the FBI on Monday night raided a

warehouse on Pennsylvania Avenue in an industrial section of Linden, NJ, that housed Feldheim’s suspected stash of 80,000 masks, a source said. Mask-wearing agents and other workers placed the eight pallets of medical supplies into a box truck.

Policing under coronavirus: the real test is yet to come

Today’s events are reminding a new generation of police chiefs and officers that relations with the public are always contingent. For generations, police in this country have set great store by the notion that they police “by consent” rather than by imposition. They like to think it distinguishes them from an un-British “gendarmierie”, against whom the Chartists protested in the early days of the Met. But “policing by consent” is often used, by both police and their critics, in unrealistic and idealised ways. Margaret Thatcher, for example, once said the police need “support and not criticism”. Approaches like that bear no relation to complex social realities, not least in emergencies.

Policing is a public good, but it is simultaneously a confrontational activity. It is a mistake to dismiss all

policing as authoritarian. But nor is it the case that policing is just another public service. Consent, whether to policing or anything else, is always conditional. Consent has to be won and given, negotiated and sustained. Consent routinely involves invoking and accepting some degree of power. What is consent for some may be imposition for others. That goes with the territory. Consent may be problematic, but it is nevertheless crucial. Today’s police chiefs properly invoke policing by consent. Greater Manchester’s chief constable Ian Hopkins, in his public statement this week said, rightly, that mistakes had been made in policing the lockdown and that some officers would get things wrong. The Met’s assistant commissioner Neil Basu did the same thing when he wrote that policing by

consent remained the mantra even in “a period of readjustment to our new responsibilities”.

No one should be surprised that the appropriateness of various forms of policing has come to a head again in a time of pandemic. The state, after all, has just claimed unusual powers to direct our lives for the common and individual good. Those powers need to be debated — which parliament did not do — before they receive consent. The entire episode embodies what the philosopher Benedict de Spinoza wrote in 1670. “It is not, I contend, the purpose of the state to turn rational beings into beasts or automata, but rather to allow their minds and bodies to develop in their own ways in security and enjoy the free use of reason Therefore, the true purpose of the state is in fact freedom.”



Will the coronavirus kill the oil industry and help save the climate?

Some oil major stock market valuations halved since January. At least two-thirds of annual investment – \$130bn – dumped and tens of thousands of job losses. In a few markets prices have gone negative – sellers will pay you to take the oil, as global storage capacity fills.

“The price war and Covid-19 have really thrown the oil and gas sector into turmoil, and now we have companies really in survival mode,” said Valentina Kretzschmar, director of corporate research at analysts

Wood Mackenzie.

Oil wells responsible for almost 1m barrels a day may have already been shut down because the price of oil is now lower than the cost of shipping it, according to US banking giant Goldman Sachs, with the number of wells growing “by the hour”. This is likely to “permanently alter the energy industry and its geopolitics” and “shift the debate around climate change”, said Jeffrey Currie, head of commodities at the bank.

Demand for oil has plummeted

as the coronavirus locks down people in their homes and airplanes on runways. “The virus will bring forward peak demand for fossil fuels,” said Kingsmill Bond, at analysts Carbon Tracker. This latest cyclical oil shock is hitting an industry already heading towards a structural peak created by nations committing to net zero future emissions, he said.

“As for the impact of the virus on the timing [of peak demand], it depends of course on the severity,” he said. In 2018,

Carbon Tracker estimated peak demand would come in 2023 but Bond said it was possible that the crisis has advanced this by three years. “That means that peak emissions was almost certainly 2019, and perhaps peak fossil fuels as well,” he said. “It will be touch and go if there can be another mini-peak in 2022, before the inexorable decline begins.”

While the oil companies themselves have long argued peak demand is too far off to put a number on, most observers thought it would happen

this decade. Mark Lewis, head of climate change investment research at BNP Paribas, agreed the crises could bring it closer. “When the dust settles, the peak demand narrative will be there stronger than ever,” he said. “This is particularly true if long-haul aviation fails to recover. This has been a very strong source of oil demand growth in recent years but the longer we are at home – remote working, using video conferencing – the more people will wonder: do we really need to get on a plane?”

Coronavirus upends US census as bureau looks to save official count

The coronavirus is upending the 2020 census, disrupting an already fragile operation that faced immense challenges in counting minority populations and other groups in the US before the outbreak of a global pandemic.

Americans started receiving invitations to respond to the census online, an option never offered before, or by phone on 12 March, just as governors and mayors started shutting down businesses and telling people to stay home. While the US Census Bureau is already delaying some of its operations, the US constitution mandates a decennial census and it cannot be cancelled. Federal law also sets 1 April as census day – the date at which the government must try to get as accurate a count of the US population as possible.

There are certain populations already vulnerable to going undercounted in the census, including minorities, immigrants and the poor. The outbreak will make it even harder, especially

if the government is forced to scale back critical door-to-door operations to count people later this year. There is an ongoing push to get people to respond online now while they are quarantined at home, but swaths of the American population without reliable internet can’t do that. These issues build on persistent distrust among immigrants of the Trump administration, fueled by its unsuccessful attempt to add a citizenship question to the survey. For now, elected officials and advocacy groups will have to find a way to persuade them to respond and to ensure they get counted without face-to-face contact.

“It couldn’t have snowballed at a worse time,” said Terri Ann Lowenthal, a consultant who works on census issues with lawmakers and advocacy groups. The further away from 1 April that the bureau counts people, she said, the more difficult it will be to collect accurate data, and 21% of US households have responded to

the census so far.

An inaccurate count would have severe consequences. The data from the census is used to allocate \$1.5tn in federal funds and determines where governments build hospitals, roads, public transportation and other infrastructure. It’s also used to draw political district lines in place for the next decade and determine how many representatives in the US House each state gets by 31 December. Depending on how severe delays are because of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Census Bureau may have to ask Congress to change federal law to extend that deadline, said John Thompson, the director of the Census Bureau from 2013 to 2017. The Census Bureau is already pushing back some of its programs, including an operation to dispatch workers to heavily trafficked areas to help them fill out the census and another to count the homeless population as well as people living in nursing homes and prisons. The bureau also announced earlier

this month it was delaying the final deadline for the count from 31 July to 14 August.

The bureau has also delayed the start date of a critical door-to-door count from mid-May to late May following up with people who don’t respond on their own. The program is critical to getting traditionally hard-to-count populations to respond to the survey. It is unclear how the bureau would proceed with that operation if current social isolation practices are still in place then.

This is “uncharted territory”, said Margo Anderson, a historian who has extensively studied the census. While the bureau plans extensively for emergencies, and has \$2bn in contingency funds, it has never faced a pandemic during its peak operations. There is already concern that it will be increasingly difficult to count college students, who are supposed to be counted where they live and sleep most of the time, because many schools have closed their campus for the semester.

The lack of in-person interaction will probably make it more difficult for organizers to build trust in vulnerable communities. At the Arab-American Family Support Center, which serves immigrants and refugees throughout New York City, organizers planned to host in-person workshops about filling out the census. Those workshops are no longer happening, and the center is focused on the 1,300 people who signed pledge cards to fill out the census.

“It’s a level of being able to read a person and what their comfort level is and whether your message is getting through or not,” said Howard Shih, director of research and policy at the Asian American Federation. “It’s that face-to-face thing.” In New York City, where 29% of households lack broadband internet, officials planned more than 300 “pop-up” centers – libraries and other public facilities – where people could use a computer to fill out the census online.

When Can America Reopen From Its Coronavirus Shutdown?

After days of market freefall, President Donald Trump hinted two weeks ago that he was thinking about relaxing public-health restrictions for the sake of the economy—"WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF," he tweeted, before promptly getting roasted by the public health world. Did he really want to sacrifice American lives to goose the Dow back up? It seemed inhumane.

Since then, the president has backed away from opening businesses up right away, but he also had a point: This cure is pretty bad. This week's report that 6.6 million Americans had filed for unemployment insurance was double the previous record, which was set only last week. Analysts are predicting that GDP could shrink by double-digit percentages this quarter. That's a lot of future unhappiness. At the same time, the disease might be even worse. Trump's coronavirus task force has said that 100,000 to 240,000 Americans could die from the virus, and that's the best-case scenario. So, what's the right amount of economic pain to endure in order to save lives? The debate will only intensify over the next month, as we approach the April 30 endpoint Trump set for national social-distancing guidelines, and pressure builds to re-open businesses, despite the high likelihood the virus will still be spreading.

A handful of thinkers—people who have studied the impact of pandemics, recessions and more—to help us understand how to even begin to think about the dilemma ahead. Do we really need to weigh lives against money? If so, how do you do it right? Spoiler alert: No one offered us a hard date for when life will go back to normal. But there were some surprises. You'll find a clear guide to making the lives-money tradeoff (and a good rationale for doing it), a surprising fact about the economics of the response to a past global pandemic, a suggestion for a surgical middle-ground approach to a reopening, and a strong argument that recessions actually save lives. It might feel heartless when President Donald Trump muses about whether the "cure is worse than the problem," as though a plunging stock market and a patchwork of business and travel shutdowns could possibly outweigh the lives saved by America's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. And it might feel uncomfortable to think about the response as a tradeoff between saving the economy and saving lives. But we really are facing that tradeoff, and, in fact, economists make a routine practice of comparing dollars with lives. There are costs and benefits to every policy decision, and



by valuing human lives in dollar terms we can arrive at a way to measure those costs and benefits against each other.

As human beings, we tend to see life as having almost infinite value, but it's also worth remembering that money spent to save one life has an opportunity cost: It could have been spent in another fashion and—if spent more efficiently—saved even more lives. Resources are never unlimited, and without assessing the dollars-to-lives tradeoff, it's likely that policymakers will fail to save as many lives as they otherwise could.

When it comes to policy, and especially an urgent and life-altering policy issue like the current epidemic, the problem with this kind of cost-benefit calculation isn't in the idea, it's in the execution. Even for run-of-the-mill policies, it's tricky to assess whether a policy does more good than harm. With respect to Covid-19, an exhaustive cost-benefit analysis is even harder because of limitations in our ability to track the disease's spread, predict the human response to it and analyze the effects that policy will have in slowing its transmission.

Acknowledging these challenges, here's what the numbers look like, as best we can determine.

On the cost side of the ledger, it is difficult to disentangle the costs of the shutdown policy from the costs of the coronavirus itself. Many of Trump's supporters talk as though the economy would fully re-open if the restrictions were lifted. But even if governors around the country lifted their emergency orders overnight, would life return to normal, and the stock market revive fully? Likely not. There would still be a new and dangerous virus in the country. Aside from the thousands, maybe millions, who became sick, many more people would still stay home while the risk of infection remains high.

To get a handle on the costs of current policies, one must identify the elusive "counterfactual" scenario—what would happen if the government did nothing. If we assume that most

people would choose to stay home regardless of any government action, then the costs of government orders to stay inside and close businesses could be close to zero. At the other extreme, Federal Reserve analysts have estimated that GDP could decline by as much as 50 percent in the second quarter of this year. If we assume that it's really government orders driving this behavior, and otherwise people would be going about their business, then the cumulative cost of the government's response is vast, as much as \$2.5 trillion just in this quarter. The cost over the long-term would be even higher.

The true cost likely falls somewhere in between these extremes. The debate in Congress about the proper amount of stimulus might be instructive. One way to look at the \$2 trillion stimulus package passed last week is as an attempt by the government to make Americans whole for the costs of being forced to stay home by government orders. Provisions of the stimulus bill directly address these costs—increasing unemployment benefits and broadening eligibility for millions of recently unemployed Americans, as well as loan and grant programs that may allow small businesses to make payroll during the shutdown.

Then there is the benefits side of the ledger, which is also difficult to gauge. A study from Imperial College London estimated that as many as 2.2 million Americans might die as a result of Covid-19, but this was an early estimate that basically assumes no behavioral responses from the public as the disease devastates the country. Even if we assume that number is a reasonable upper limit on how many people might die, there's still the question of how effective government policy will be in changing the trajectory of the pandemic's progression and saving lives. Some epidemiologists believe that as soon as the social distancing efforts end, the virus will return with a vengeance.

Here's where assigning a dollar value

to life-extending benefits enters the equation. One common way to do this is by using the "value of a statistical life," or VSL, which reflects what current citizens are willing to pay to reduce their own risk of death. (It's usually estimated by looking at how much extra compensation workers in dangerous professions get paid.) Estimates of the VSL vary, but tend to average about \$10 million for Americans. If we assume, for example, that the government's response to Covid-19 prevents an enormous death toll of 2 million citizens, the value of all those prevented deaths could be as much as \$20 trillion.

However, the value of a statistical life is not universally accepted by economists. For one thing, what an individual is willing to pay to reduce risk might be very different from what society should pay. A person nearing the end of life might find it rational to expend all of his or her wealth on potential life-extending treatments. But society, which will endure past any of our individual lives, ought to be more frugal with its finite resources. An alternative approach to the VSL is to consider the productive contributions associated with extending life—that is, the economic value people are expected to contribute. Such an approach is commonly employed when valuing the benefits of regulations that enhance our health. For example, an environmental policy that prevents asthma attacks or non-life-threatening illnesses might end up saving society money by reducing hospital stays or emergency room visits. Compared with the VSL, this approach provides more of an apples-to-apples comparison between benefits and financial costs. It accepts that the true value of a life is likely undefined, but we are at least able to estimate the economic value each person creates.

One 2009 study estimated the total value of worker production at different stages of life, including the value of "nonmarket" roles such as staying at home to raise kids. The authors

estimated that the present value of future worker contributions ranged from about \$91,000 to \$1.2 million in 2007, depending on the age of the worker.

Age is an important factor in the coronavirus pandemic, too. The CDC has reported that, as of March 16, 80 percent of U.S. deaths from Covid-19 have been people ages 65 or older. Combining the CDC's numbers with the aforementioned estimates of the value of worker production at various ages (and updating them for rising productivity and inflation since 2007), we end up with an expected value of forgone earnings for victims of Covid-19 of about \$414,000 per person. Even this estimate of benefits—already drastically lower than the VSL at \$10 million—likely overestimates the economic value of workers in cases when the cost of replacing them is relatively low.

In other words, the economic benefit of preventing all those potential deaths depends on which controversial measure you use: In this case, upper-bound estimates of mortality benefits associated with government interventions range between \$20 trillion with the VSL approach and \$828 billion if the worker production approach is extended to 2 million lives saved. Twenty trillion dollars is roughly the value of an entire year of the nation's GDP; \$828 billion is considerably less than the value of Congress' latest economic stimulus bill.

Here are other costs and benefits to account for as well. On the one hand, a prolonged shutdown of the economy could increase some health risks for those who lose their jobs, a knock-on cost of impoverishing so much of the citizenry. On the other hand, Covid-19 has been shown to cause significant lung damage among some of those who recover; reducing those cases is another potential benefit of government action. An economic shutdown could even have unexpected benefits—for example, a decrease in air pollution or the number of car crashes.

To go strictly by the numbers, Trump may well be right that the government "cure"—in the form of restrictions on commerce and movement—might be worse than the Covid-19 disease. But it's also possible, given what we know, that everything the government is currently doing is worth it, and relatively inexpensive to boot.

Cost-benefit analysis can offer us a way to think about decisions, and put some boundaries around the likely outcomes. But even in simpler circumstances, it cannot always provide bright-line recommendations. And it can't answer our deepest and most profound questions. In some cases, the calculus has to be driven not by a set of numbers, but by our values.

Congress hits out at PM Modi over medical supplies to Serbia

The Congress's offensive came in response to a tweet by an official account of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia.

(News Agencies) The Congress on Wednesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the export of 90 tonnes of personal protective equipment (PPE) to Serbia at a time when the country's health workers are struggling to get necessary medical supplies to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. "What is this happening Mr Prime Minister Narendra Modi? While Frontline Indian Health workers are struggling for protective equipment we are supplying Serbia. Air India to fly out Germans and 90 tonnes of Protective Medical Equipment to Serbia. Are we nuts? This is CRIMINAL," Congress spokesperson Manish Tewari tweeted. People familiar with

developments said an assessment by the commerce and external affairs ministries concluded the equipment sent to Serbia – 3.5 million pairs of surgical gloves sold by a Kerala-based private company – was not on the list of medical gear whose export is prohibited.

At the Congress' news briefing through video conference, Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill hit out at the government on the issue. He alleged that when doctors and nurses across the country are crying for better equipment, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government was exporting PPE to Serbia.

Shergill attacked the

government for using Air India to fly out German nationals to their homes when Indian migrant labourers are dying on the roads. "This is heartless, shameless and brainless behaviour of the BJP government," he alleged. On March 29, the official Twitter handle of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia said a Boeing 747 had arrived in Belgrade with 90 tonnes of medical protective equipment from India. "The transportation of valuable supplies purchased by @SerbianGov has been fully funded by the #EU while @UNDP_Serbia organized the flight & ensured the fastest possible delivery," it tweeted.

The people cited above, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the guidelines regarding medical equipment whose export is prohibited are very clear. "The restricted items can be exported on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the DGFT (Director General of Foreign Trade)," said a person. Notifications issued by the DGFT on Feb 25 and March 19 state the exports of surgical and disposable masks, ventilators, and textiles and raw materials for masks and overalls are prohibited. Other equipment such as gloves, non-woven shoe covers and gas masks with chemical absorbents can be exported.

4 men trek through Pir Panjal range to reach home during lockdown, 3 die of cold

The four men, who tried to reach home through a mountain trek amid the nationwide lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus, were caught in bad weather.



(News Agencies) Three young labourers who tried to trek to from Kashmir valley to Banihal in Jammu region through the Pir Panjal mountain range died of hypothermia while another was rescued in Ramban district on Wednesday, a top police officer said. The four men, who tried to reach home amid the nationwide lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus, had taken mountainous trek in the Pir Panjal range to reach Banihal in Ramban but were caught in bad weather.

Ramban's Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Haseeb-ur-Rehman said, "Three labourers died of hypothermia while another was rescued and shifted to a hospital. It had snowed and the night temperature had plummeted. They were coming from Anantnag to Dooligam area in Banihal area but died of hypothermia." Three other labourers had also trekked to their village in Banihal from Anantnag.

"In fact, seven labourers took

a hilly route from Verinag in Anantnag towards Banihal on Tuesday. While three labourers reached their village, remaining four got stuck at a hilltop in Nagimandu (Hingal Top), about five km from Dooligam in Banihal

because of extreme bad weather conditions and snowfall," he added. "These four labourers could not cross the hilltop and a rescue operation was launched this morning. While three dead bodies were recovered from the spot, one person was found alive and rescued," said Rehman. The deceased were identified as Ghulam Mohiuddin (30), Zubair Ahmad Drabu (20) and Reyaz Ahmad (22). The man who was rescued was identified as Parvaiz Ahmad of Hinyal and has been hospitalized in Sub-District Hospital, Banihal.

The SSP said that all the

deceased were related to each other and belonged to Dooligam.

"While three had reached their homes last night, these four men decided to cut short their distance and chose to cross a snow y peak fearing that they might not be allowed to pass Jawahar Tunnel due to the ongoing lockdown restrictions," the SSP said. Deputy magistrate of Ramban district, Nazim Zai Khan said, "We had requested everyone to stay put where they were but they took a treacherous route which wasn't right. They were coming from Verinag in Kashmir and were crossing a

mountainous pass."

Khan also said that despite repeated advisories people have been violating lockdown norms and putting themselves and others at risk in Ramban district.

"Nearly 200 people have reached Banihal and probably want to go to Kashmir. We are giving them food and shelter but their number is increasing every day. They have been kept in quarantine for 14 days at Banihal railway station. Though there is no suspected case among them so far but they are certainly adding to the worries of the administration," he said.

Tablighi Jamaat head booked over Covid-19 spurt not in UP hometown, say police, relative

Maulana Saad Kandhalwi and five other top functionaries of the Tablighi Jamaat were booked on Tuesday after its headquarters in Delhi's Nizamuddin area emerged as the single biggest source of Covid-19 infections in the country.

(News Agencies) Tablighi Jamaat head Maulana Saad Kandhalwi who is now in the eye of a storm over a spurt in coronavirus cases in the country following a congregation at Delhi's Nizamuddin area, was not in his hometown Kandhla in Shamli district of western Uttar Pradesh, police said on Wednesday.

Shamli's Superintendent of police, Vineet Jaiswal said that he had no information about Maulana Saad Kandhalwi's arrival in the town.

Maulana Saad's relative Maulana Badrul Hasan said he usually stayed at the Nizamuddin Markaz and visited his home in Kandhla for a day or two every month. But he didn't come to Kandhla on Wednesday as claimed by a section of the media, Hasan said. Maulana Saad has been in the news after at least eight people, who participated

in a religious gathering at the Tablighi Jamaat's Markaz (centre) in Delhi between March 13 and 15, died of coronavirus.

Saad and five other top functionaries of the Tablighi Jamaat were booked on Tuesday after its headquarters in Delhi's Nizamuddin area emerged as the single biggest source of Covid-19 infections in the country. Maulana Hasan said, "Maulana Saad is not a fugitive as presented in a section of the media. He is in Delhi and we support every action and order of the government during this crisis."

He claimed neither Maulana Saad nor other organisers had received a copy of the FIR lodged by the Delhi Police against the cleric. "Media trials should be stopped against the Markaz

and its organizers," he said. Maulana Saad Kandhalwi is the great grandson of Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalwi, who organised a group of young madarsa graduates from Deoband and Saharanpur in early 1920s and sent them to Mewat to establish a network of mosques and Islamic schools. Later, people of South Asia started calling these devotees 'Tablighi' and the organisation became popular as Tablighi Jamaat. Maulana Hasan said it was an apolitical organisation with over 20 crore (200 million) members across the world. He said Maulana Saad preferred to keep a low profile during his visits to his hometown where he has an ancestral house in Maulvian locality of the town.

J&K parties call new domicile rights 'insult', seek suspension of 'casual' order

Apni party said the new domicile policy didn't take the expectations of the local people into account. It demanded that the order be suspended for now.

(News Agencies) A Central notification issued on Wednesday defining domicile rights for the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir has led to criticism from most regional parties including the newly launched Apni party which described the policy as an "ill-timed" and "casual" attempt. The notification grants domicile rights in Jammu and Kashmir to those who have lived there for 15-years and to children of central government employees who have served in the UT for at least ten years among others. The rules also reserve group-4 level jobs for domicile right holders. Former J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah described the notification as an "insult" while questioning the timing of its release.

"Talk about suspect timing. At a time when all our efforts & attention should be focused on the #COVID outbreak, the government slips in a new domicile law for J&K. Insult is heaped on injury when we see the law offers none of the

protections that had been promised," tweeted Omar Abdullah.

The policy also grants domicile to those who have studied in J&K for seven years and appeared in Class 10 and Class 12 examinations in an educational institution located in the Union Territory apart from those registered as migrants with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants).

Apni party president Altaf Bukhari said the policy didn't take the expectations of the local people into account and demanded that the 'ill timed, order be put in abeyance till the Covid-19 pandemic is over.

"While JKAP had been vehemently demanding Domicile Rights on land and jobs for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the order issued by the union government reflects a casual exercise carried out at bureaucratic level without taking aspirations and expectations of people into consideration," Bukhari said.

Bukhari said the order was "causal" in attempt and designed to "hoodwink" the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"This Order in its entirety is a casual attempt, cosmetic in nature, to hoodwink the people of Jammu and Kashmir who genuinely believed that post October 31, 2019, their rights and privileges in the matter of employment and other rights would remain as it had been," he said, adding that being a government-issued order and not a law made by the Parliament, the new gazette notification regarding domicile rule for J&K was not immune to any judicial review.

Bukhari said a tangible, legal and constitutional mechanism was needed to safeguard privileges such as employment rights to non-Gazetted and Gazetted post and admissions to professional colleges for "the permanent residents" of J&K. As many as 28 of the 138 acts have been repealed as the domicile policy was notified months after

the union territory came into existence on October 31, 2019, after its special status and statehood were taken away by the Parliament in August. J&K Peoples Conference led by Sajjad Lone said the order fell way short of expectations. "The new definition of 'domicile' is humiliating and insulting. Adds insult to injury. The lowest rung in jobs has been reserved for locals - not even non-gazetted but Class IV jobs," J&K Peoples Party spokesman said in a statement. Congress said the notification diluted the privileges enjoyed by Jammu and Kashmir residents instead of safeguarding their interests with provisions that exist in the northeastern states.

"This is an insult to the people of J&K. By this order the centre has made lakhs of people eligible for the jobs and other things which were reserved for the people of J&K," J&K Congress president Ghulam Ahmad Mir told Hindustan Times.

More than 8,500 military doctors, support staff on standby as India fights Covid-19

The armed forces have said they are ready to pitch in with additional medical personnel and treatment facility to help in fight against the coronavirus.



"Over 1,000 evacuees are quarantined at facilities in Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Chennai, Manesar, Hindon and Mumbai. Their quarantine period will end by April 7," Rawat said during the video conference that was attended by the top military and ministry brass.

Last week, the army said it was prepared to extend its network of military hospitals and laboratory facilities to the civil administration to assist in managing Covid-19 hotspots.

Lieutenant General Anup Banerji, who heads the Armed Forces Medical Services, said,

"Retired health professionals have also been kept in readiness to volunteer their services... Necessary equipment has been procured and dispatched to various hospitals."

Around 25,000 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets are also being mobilised to provide necessary local assistance, said a defence ministry release.

Indian Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria said the air force had flown 25 tonnes of medical supplies during the last five days. He stressed that critical operational work was

being undertaken with all necessary precautions. The essential medical supplies airlifted by the IAF include personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizers, surgical gloves and thermal scanners, apart from medical personnel. "Regular airlift of Covid-19 test samples from the Union Territory of Ladakh to Delhi is also being carried. Towards this, C-17, C-130, An-32, Avro and Dornier aircraft are being tasked on as required basis and IAF is adequately geared up to meet all the emerging demands," an IAF spokesperson said.

(News Agencies) More than 8,500 military doctors and support staff are ready to help the government in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic, apart from 9,000 hospital beds that have been prepared to meet emergency requirements, the government was told by the armed forces on Wednesday.

Review of the preparation of the armed forces to fight Covid-19 came during a video conference chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh. It was also attended by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, army chief Manoj Mukund Naravane and IAF chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhaduria.

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat told the minister that the armed forces have made more than 9,000 hospital beds available for Covid-19 cases and separate hospitals have been earmarked to exclusively deal with the coronavirus. The armed forces have earmarked 28 service hospitals for

managing Covid-19 cases. Also, five hospitals run by the armed forces are equipped to carry out Covid-19 tests and six more would be added to the list soon.

'No exceptions to lockdown': MHA order after Kerala's 'liquor on doc advice' rule

Kerala government had allowed people to pick up their supply of liquor if they could get a doctor to prescribe it to them.

(News Agencies) Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Wednesday ordered all state governments to stop making exemptions to the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown ordered by him under the Disaster Management Law. Bhalla told them that they had to stick to the script outlined by the Centre and enforce the lockdown in "letter and spirit".

Bhalla had invoked his powers under the disaster management law to order the nationwide lockdown on March 24, shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke the news to the country in a televised address to the nation. Since then Bhalla

has tweaked the ground rules on a few occasions. But there have been instances of some state governments relaxing the lockdown to make exemptions.

Like the Kerala government which has allowed people to pick up their supply of liquor if they could get a doctor to prescribe it to them. The unusual order was issued by the Pinarayi Vijayan's government after eight deaths linked to non-availability of liquor were reported. In Punjab, on the other hand, the government asked industrial units and brick kilns to resume operations to stop migrant workers from heading home if they can accommodate

the workforce within the complex.

In his letter to states, home secretary Bhalla did not cite any specific instance but sent his message across. "It has been noticed that some state governments/UT administrations are allowing exceptions beyond what has been allowed under lockdown measures by the Ministry of Home Affairs," Bhalla's letter to the states said. "This amounts to violation of the lockdown measures issued by MHA under the Disaster Management Act 2005 and may defeat the overall objective of containing the spread of Covid-19 in the country," it said.

Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- **Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- **Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific “sick room” and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- **Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Call ahead before visiting your doctor

- **Call ahead:** If you have a medical appointment, call your doctor’s office or emergency department, and tell them you have or may have COVID-19. This will help the office protect themselves and other patients.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- **If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office.
- **If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- **Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- **Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- **Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- **Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- **Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- **Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- **Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



Pakistan's blame game shifts to Iran as coronavirus cases surge



(News Agencies) All hell broke loose in a coronavirus quarantine site in the Pakistani city of Sukkur last week. Those inside, including Shiite pilgrims who had just returned from Iran, brought the doors down in protest. The heated crowd included people who had tested positive for coronavirus mixed in with those who were healthy or waiting for their results. Police propelled the crowd back but many are said to have escaped, shouting that the virus was an American conspiracy. The scene is symptomatic of Pakistan's handling of COVID-

19. The country now has the highest number of confirmed cases in South Asia.

In recent weeks, reports have rolled out that those locked into other isolation camps in remote parts of Pakistan – such as Baluchistan – have attempted to break free from cramped camps after returning from Iran, one of the world's epicenters of the spread. The first known case was a pilgrim coming back from the neighboring Islamic Republic, whose diagnosis was confirmed on Feb. 23. "The virus has spread across the regions bordering with Iran, which was a failure on the part of our incumbent government, who didn't seal borders with them until the catastrophic outbreak struck

Pakistan," Salman Ahmed, assistant commissioner in Central Punjab, which has the highest number of coronavirus cases in Pakistan, told Fox News.

"Despite this, we allowed thousands of Shiite pilgrims stranded in Iran to be transported back home. We have converted hostels and public schools to quarantine facilities, although we are running out of budget," he added. Now, the already economically embattled nation is contending with almost 2,000 cases and has documented at least 26 deaths. Some officials fear that the real number of cases in the country of 230 million is far greater. And while some individual provinces have put in

place different variations of social distancing and stay-at-home mandates, along with banning communal prayers, mosques nationwide remain wide open. "Many religious clerics have sought to defy government orders, with some insisting that praying at the mosque is the only way to combat the coronavirus. The government has been reluctant to oppose them," said Jeff Smith, a research fellow for South Asia at the Heritage Foundation. "Some clerics have preached the only cure for the coronavirus is reciting the Quran." Moreover, many religious figureheads are declaring that now – more than ever – it is time to trust God.

Coronavirus and Islam: Pakistani clerics refuse to shut down mosques

As Islamic clerics refuse to stop allowing religious congregations, Prime Minister Imran Khan continues to downplay the coronavirus threat to his country. Could this be a "recipe for disaster" for Pakistan?



(News Agencies) Last week, Pakistani President Arif Alvi and provincial governors held a meeting with Sunni and Shiite clerics to convince them to close mosques for congregational prayers across the country amid rapidly

increasing COVID-19 cases in the country. The clerics, however, rejected the request. "We can in no way close mosques... It is not possible in any circumstances in an Islamic country," said Muneeb-bur-Rehman, a cleric who attended the meeting. The clerics' blatant refusal to shun collective prayers has raised doubts about Pakistan's resolve to fight the pandemic, which has killed at least 25 people in the country and infected nearly 2,000. Earlier in March, when coronavirus cases in Pakistan were relatively lower, the federal government allowed Shiite pilgrims from Iran to return to the country through Baluchistan province.

The pilgrims were not properly quarantined, which resulted in a spike of infections. Also, the government allowed thousands of Sunni worshippers to go

ahead with the "Tablighi Jamaat" congregation in Punjab province. Many of the new COVID-19 cases have emerged from that mass gathering. Health experts say the government's measures are inadequate, fearing that the number of coronavirus cases in the South Asian country could increase exponentially in the coming weeks. Civil society activists say that Pakistani authorities continue to appease Islamists even when the country is facing a worsening public health crisis. Many Pakistanis have refused to offer their prayers inside their homes,

saying that religion is more important than anything else. "I offered prayers in the mosque on Friday. More than 300 people were in attendance and it looked like a routine Friday prayer," Muhammad Ashraf, a kiosk-owner in Islamabad, told DW. "The mosque is a safe place. I don't fear coronavirus," Ashraf said, adding that he intended to attend the next Friday prayer as well. Many Islamic countries have shut down mosques and banned mass prayers after the emergence of coronavirus cases. Saudi Arabia even closed down Islam's holiest site, the Kaaba, and other sacred mosques to contain the spread of COVID-19. But even these examples did not deter many Pakistanis.

"The pandemic is spreading due to our sins and because we are not following the teachings of Islam," Ejaz Ashrafi, a senior cleric belonging to the Tehreek-i-Labaik (TLP) Islamist party, told DW. Ashrafi leads the Friday prayer at a mosque in the eastern city of Lahore. "People are still going to super markets, yet the state only wants to shut down mosques. We will continue to offer prayers in the mosques," he said. Fawad Chaudhary, the federal minister of science and technology, told media that the coronavirus is spreading in Pakistan "due to the ignorance of religious clerics." Islamist groups decried Chaudhary's statement. Rights groups say the government must act strictly against the clerics who are defying its orders.

'Our Situation is Apocalyptic': Bangladesh Garment Workers Face Ruin

The new coronavirus is potentially disastrous for low-wage workers who power the global clothing trade.

(News Agencies) The empty, echoing shopping malls of Western cities are a testament to the biggest crisis borne by global clothing and retail industries in over a generation. But the impact of the coronavirus on retail is a two-part devastation, as the daily flow of thousands of orders placed by Western retailers to supplier factories in South Asia has suddenly slammed to a halt. Factory owners face financial ruin, while the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of garment workers hang in the balance.

"Our situation is apocalyptic," said Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which represents Bangladeshi factory owners. "The cancellations and hold instructions coming in from Western fashion retailers are pushing us to the point of insolvency, with massive open capacity and raw materials

liabilities." Fast fashion retailers rarely own the factories that supply them with their wares. Instead, the vast majority of garment and footwear orders are outsourced to suppliers in emerging markets like Bangladesh, where overhead is cheap and the cost of human labor is cheaper. The majority of suppliers are in countries that can be the most vulnerable to large global economic shocks, such as India, Myanmar, Cambodia and Bangladesh, which is the second largest garment exporter nation after China. Bangladesh, in particular, which has been the site of one of the most effective campaigns of the globalized era to improve labor and safety conditions for garment workers, has seen more than \$2.8 billion worth of orders canceled or postponed since the start of the coronavirus crisis, according to Ms. Huq. Ready-made garments comprised 84 percent of Bangladesh's total exports,

worth \$40.5 billion, in its 2019 fiscal year, according to data posted on the website of the BGMEA. This loss compromises the ongoing employment of more than two million Bangladeshi garment workers.

"The situation is very bad. The Bangladeshi supply chain is in complete disarray with many foreign brands acting irresponsibly," said Sharif Zahir, the managing director of the Ananta Group, which owns seven factories with a total of 26,000 workers. His company supplies brands that include H&M, Zara, Gap, Levi's and Marks & Spencer.

According to Mr. Zahir, most Bangladeshi factories had already faced losses or thin margins since last year because of government-implemented wage increases in December 2018. Now, many buyers were canceling orders that had been produced, delaying payments and asking for discounts on already shipped goods.

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Coronavirus: Bangladesh defends readiness after leaked UN report warns 2 million could die

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Shahriar Alam said social distancing policies and Chinese medical supplies will help in the fight

But the country's manufacturing industry is suffering, including firms owned by ethnic Chinese businessmen

(News Agencies) The United Nations warning that up to two million people could die of coronavirus in Bangladesh was based on the assumption that no steps were being taken to contain the spread, a senior official from the country said, stressing that a raft of measures are already in place. Bangladesh has implemented social distancing policies; shut down malls, shops and restaurants; and suspended all domestic and international flights, except flights to and from China, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Shahriar

Alam told This Week In Asia, adding that the country was working closely with others to fight the pandemic and had received medical supplies from China and India. [The UN report] was based on the assumption of 'no interventions,' he said. "As you can very well imagine, we have taken numerous measures." As of Tuesday, Bangladesh had confirmed 51 cases of Covid-19 in the country of 160 million people, with five deaths. A policeman urges residents not to come out of their homes in Dhaka, Bangladesh, last week. Photo: APA

week. Photo: AP A policeman urges residents not to come out of their homes in Dhaka, Bangladesh, last week. Photo: AP The United Nations' warning that up to two million people could die of coronavirus in Bangladesh was based on the assumption that no steps were being taken to contain the spread, a senior official from the country said, stressing that a raft of measures are already in place. Bangladesh has implemented social distancing policies; shut down malls, shops and restaurants; and suspended all domestic and international flights,

except flights to and from China. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Shahriar Alam told This Week In Asia, adding that the country was working closely with others to fight the pandemic and had received medical supplies from China and India. The UN report was based on the assumption of 'no interventions,' he said. "As you can very well imagine, we have taken numerous measures." As of Tuesday, Bangladesh had confirmed 51 cases of Covid-19 in the country of 160 million people, with five deaths. However, these relatively low numbers have done little to quell mounting fears that the pandemic will



batter the country's economy, with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association saying on Monday that US\$3 billion of garment orders have been cancelled or put on hold across the nation's factories. More than one million garment workers in Bangladesh have already been fired or furloughed because of order cancellations, according to a recent online survey by Pennsylvania State University's Centre for Global Workers' Rights. Last week, online news outlet Netra News quoted a leaked United Nations report as saying that between half a million to two million people could die of Covid-19 in Bangladesh, given the "extraordinary human densities" in the country. The report, titled "Country Preparedness and Response Plan" and dated March 26, said that while preparedness has improved in some facilities at the national level, health care workers and medical facilities were generally unprepared for managing suspected and confirmed patients.

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Covid-19: India to accept help from abroad for PM-CARES Fund

The decision was in line with the unprecedented situation created by the coronavirus outbreak that has resulted in more than 850,000 infections and around 42,000 deaths globally, people familiar with the development said.

(News Agencies) The Indian government has decided to accept contributions from abroad for the PM-CARES Fund created to fight the Covid-19 outbreak, marking a shift from its earlier position of refusing foreign donations during crises. People familiar with developments said on condition of anonymity the decision was in line with the unprecedented situation created by the coronavirus outbreak that has resulted in more than 850,000 infections and around 42,000 deaths globally.

"The pandemic is

unprecedented and when the prime minister spoke to envoys [via video conference on Monday], he asked them to make efforts for contributions towards this fund. A decision has been taken to accept contributions from abroad in the PM-CARES Fund," said a person who declined to be named. The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund was set up in view of several spontaneous requests from India and abroad for making contributions to support the

government's fight against Covid-19, the people said. Contributions to the fund can be made by individuals and organisations, both in India and abroad, in view of the expressed interest to contribute to the government's efforts and keeping in mind the "unprecedented nature" of the pandemic, the people said. In 2018, the government refused all foreign aid, including a reported offer of \$100 million from the United Arab Emirates, for disaster relief following floods in Kerala that displaced millions of

people. Offers of help from Thailand, Qatar and the Maldives too were declined.

This was in line with a long-standing policy put in place after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, and at the time, the external affairs ministry had said in a statement that the "government is committed to meeting the requirements for relief and rehabilitation through domestic efforts". The people cited above pointed out that no foreign governments had so far come forward to

donate to the PM-CARES Fund, which has largely attracted pledges from NRIs and people of Indian origin based in several countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed the heads of Indian missions around the world to explore the possibility of sourcing medical equipment needed to fight Covid-19 – especially personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, ventilators, and three-ply, surgical and N95 masks – as there is a huge shortage in the country, the people cited above said.

India alerts countries whose nationals misused visas for Tablighi meet

Action will be taken under India's regulations and laws against hundreds of foreign nationals who entered the country on tourist visas and joined the gathering at Tablighi Jamaat's Markaz or headquarters in Nizamuddin area of New Delhi.



(News Agencies) The Indian government has alerted envoys of several South and Southeast Asian countries whose nationals violated visa regulations to attend a gathering of the Tablighi

Jamaat in New Delhi that has emerged as a Covid-19 hotspot, people familiar with developments said on Wednesday. Action will be taken under India's regulations and laws against hundreds of foreign

nationals who entered the country on tourist visas and joined the gathering at Tablighi Jamaat's Markaz or headquarters in Nizamuddin area of New Delhi, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity.

The Jamaat's six-storey headquarters has emerged as the single biggest source of Covid-19 infections in the country, after being linked to at least eight deaths and 117 infections. Officials have said members who joined a gathering at the Markaz earlier this month had

tested positive in New Delhi, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Kashmir. "All the ambassadors of the concerned countries have been contacted and they've been informed about the position of various nationals who are involved in this [matter]," said a person who declined to be named. The home ministry is taking action in close coordination with external

affairs ministry, the people said. "If there have been violations of the rules and laws of the land, appropriate action will be taken by relevant authorities," said the person cited above. According to a statement from the home ministry, as of March 21, there were 216 foreigners at the Jamaat's Markaz and 824 more foreigners engaged in activities of the Jamaat in different parts of India. The home ministry directed state

police forces to identify these 824 foreigners, medically screen and quarantine them. A classified assessment by the home ministry, accessed by HT, said eight Indonesian nationals who were part of a Jamaat team tested positive for Covid-19 in Telangana. It also estimated some 2,000 foreigners from 70 nations, who all entered India on tourist visas, were "spread all over the country for Tablighi work".

Sri Lanka Navy hauls the vessel seized with over one tonne of crystal meth and ketamine

(News Agencies) In a special operation launched by Sri Lanka Navy's Offshore Patrol Vessel SLNS Sayura in high seas about 463 nautical miles (835km) off the southern coast, the Navy has intercepted the flagless vessel carrying the narcotics on Saturday, 28th March 2020 around 9.30 a.m. Upon search, about 605kg crystal methamphetamine (Ice), around 579kg of ketamine were found onboard the suspicious vessel. Also among the consignment of drugs were 200 packets of babul drug and another 100g of unidentified drug pills. The Navy arrested nine Pakistan nationals aboard the vessel in connection to the incident.

The consignment of crystal methamphetamine has been valued at about Rs. 6.05 billion. This remains to be the biggest haul of narcotics seized in an operation at sea till date. According to the Navy, this is the third foreign vessel to be detained while transporting narcotics to Sri Lanka, during the past three months.

The Navy on 22nd and 25th February intercepted two foreign vessels carrying narcotics to Sri Lanka and seized a Sri Lankan fishing vessel transferring narcotics from those foreign vessels. As part of that interception, 16 foreigners and 5 locals as well as another 6 locals

involved in transfer of narcotics at sea were also held in southern part of the island.

Further, the Navy was able to seize 3,653kg of Kerala cannabis, 762kg of heroin, 3kg of crystal methamphetamine in 2019 and 2,339kg of Kerala cannabis, 739kg of crystal methamphetamine, 438kg of heroin, and 579kg of ketamine in the past 3 months of this year. Commander of the Navy, Vice Admiral Piyal De Silva, senior naval officers and a group of senior officers from the Police Narcotic Bureau were also present on this occasion when the consignment of drugs being brought to the Dikkowita fisheries harbor.

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Las Vegas homeless people are sleeping in a parking lot - six feet apart

(News Agencies) In Las Vegas, the Catholic Charities' homeless shelter has long served as a facility for people in need of accommodations. But after one homeless man who used the facility tested positive for coronavirus last week, the shelter was forced to close, leaving 500 homeless people scrambling for a new place to stay. Even Courtyard Homeless Resource Center, a nearby open-air facility, was unable to take in more people as it was almost at capacity.

So City of Las Vegas and Clark County, Nevada officials decided to create a makeshift homeless shelter — in the parking lot of Cashman Center.

Over the weekend, the parking lot of the center, which is normally a convention and baseball stadium complex, transformed into a sleeping space with help from volunteers. But the sleeping arrangements ignited some backlash on Monday, after an image of homeless people circulated across social media. In the

photo, a handful of people are seen lying in white boxes painted on the concrete floor — six feet apart to enforce social distancing. On Saturday, setting up the temporary shelter went smoothly.

About 50 volunteers laid out 24,000 square feet of carpet to create sleeping mats, according to the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Nearly a dozen medical students from Touro University Nevada helped screen incoming guests, and took their temperatures.

"I'm about to cry," Denise



Lankford, a homeless woman, told CNN affiliate KLAS. "This right here is helping us feel secure, feel safe. Other places, you don't feel safe." The first night the shelter opened, 66 people slept there. But officials started to realize that the carpet could be more harmful than beneficial.

"We found that it was very difficult to disinfect and clean," David Rigglesman, communications director for the City of Las Vegas, told CNN. "We had asked for sleeping mats, which we use at the Courtyard — and those can be disinfected easily. But there were none to be had."

Russia sends plane with medical supplies to U.S. for coronavirus response



(News Agencies) other supplies to help the United States fight the coronavirus pandemic as

The plane will arrive today, after President Donald Trump accepted an offer by Russian President Vladimir Putin to send personal protective equipment and other gear.

the number of cases threatens to top 200,000 across the country.

The plane will arrive today, after President Donald Trump accepted an offer on Monday by Russian President Vladimir Putin to send personal protective equipment and other gear, a senior administration

official confirmed to POLITICO. The Russian government first announced that the plane, an An-124 Ruslan cargo aircraft filled with equipment to help America battle the pandemic, was en route early today.

"Following phone talk between Presidents #Putin & @realDonaldTrump

#Russia sends largest cargo aircraft An-124 Ruslan with medical supplies (masks + equipment) to #US to help fight #COVID19 pandemic, save lives of American citizens," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tweeted. The tweet showed video of boxes being loaded onto a cargo plane. The U.S. will

immediately put to use any needed items that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, the senior administration official said.

"Likewise, the United States is sending equipment and supplies to many other countries and will continue to do more as we are able," the official said.

States overwhelmed by previously unimaginable layoff numbers

The state-by-state systems for getting benefits into the hands of the unemployed are stressed, inefficient and not sending money quickly enough to the people who need it.



(News Agencies) In Michigan, the state unemployment filing system crashed this week because it was overloaded. In California, it may take much longer than usual for hundreds of thousands of jobless people to get their benefits. In New York, one laid-off worker says she called the state labor department 800 times before getting through. As previously unimaginable layoff

numbers pile up across the country, the state-by-state systems for getting benefits into the hands of people who lost their jobs are stressed, inefficient and not sending money quickly enough to the people who most need it. And it may only get worse: The weekly unemployment figures that will be reported Thursday are expected to climb higher than last week's record-shattering totals, thrusting more people into

already overwhelmed systems.

In the wake of the largest economic rescue in American history, individual workers needing to pay their rent, food bills and utilities after being laid off have encountered more obstacles to getting help. The record numbers of unemployment claims have revealed a system that has long been neglected, and wasn't ready for Great Depression

levels of unemployment need.

"If you neglect the unemployment insurance system for years, it won't be there for you when you need it," said Martha Gimbel, a labor economist at the philanthropic group Schmidt Futures, who previously worked for Indeed.com. "States have not received the funding they needed to modernize their systems, and people are experiencing the impacts of that right now as they're desperately trying to file."

More companies are also continuing to lay off more workers as a growing number of states issue shelter-in-place orders and consumers curb spending even further. And an ever-larger percentage of gig-economy workers and other independent contractors who did not previously qualify for unemployment benefits —

but who now should be covered under the CARES Act — are also clamoring for help under new rules that states themselves are just learning to decipher.

"The labor market just got upended in a matter of three weeks," said Heidi Shierholz, a senior economist and director of policy at the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute. "We're in completely new territory."

Economists widely expect the numbers to worsen in the Department of Labor's next set of jobless claims data for the week ending March 28, which will be released Thursday morning. Morgan Stanley economists say they expect an estimated 4.45 million in new weekly claims, while Goldman Sachs analysts forecast a staggering 5.5 million. Last week's headline number of 3.28 million claims — itself a more than 1,000 percent

increase — is also expected to be revised upward, in part because of stark discrepancies between data that states reported at the ground level and what the Department of Labor recorded.

Florida's initial claims hit a record for the week ended March 21, and then tripled to 222,054 for the week ended March 28, according to the state Department of Economic Opportunity.

And that's probably only scratching the surface. Florida's unemployment system already is notorious for its buggy online application.

Victoria Olsen, a costume designer who works for traveling theatrical productions that tour South Florida, was thrown out of work after Mean Girls abruptly shut down with only five shows left. It took Olsen eight days to successfully log into Florida's CONNECT system.

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The coronavirus is the worst intelligence failure in US history



The Trump administration's unprecedented indifference, even willful neglect, forced a catastrophic strategic surprise on to the American people

(News Agencies) Last September, I met the vice-president for risk for a Fortune 100 company in Washington DC. I asked the executive – who previously had a long career as an intelligence analyst – the question you would ask any risk officer: “What are you most worried about?” Without pausing, this person replied, “A highly contagious virus that begins somewhere in China and spreads rapidly.” This vice-president, whose company has offices throughout east Asia, explained the preventive mitigating steps the company

had subsequently adopted to counter this potential threat.

Since the novel coronavirus has swept the world, I have often thought about this person's prescient risk calculus. Most leaders lack the discipline to do routine risk-based horizon scanning, and fewer still develop the requisite contingency plans. Even rarer is the leader who has the foresight to correctly identify the top threat far enough in advance to develop and implement those plans. Suffice it to say, the Trump administration has

cumulatively failed, both in taking seriously the specific, repeated intelligence community warnings about a coronavirus outbreak and in vigorously pursuing the nationwide response initiatives commensurate with the predicted threat. The federal government alone has the resources and authorities to lead the relevant public and private stakeholders to confront the foreseeable harms posed by the virus. Unfortunately, Trump officials made a series of judgments (minimizing the hazards of Covid-19) and decisions

(refusing to act with the urgency required) that have needlessly made Americans far less safe.

In short, the Trump administration forced a catastrophic strategic surprise onto the American people. But unlike past strategic surprises – Pearl Harbor, the Iranian revolution of 1979, or especially 9/11 – the current one was brought about by unprecedented indifference, even willful negligence. Whereas, for example, the 9/11 Commission Report assigned blame for the al-Qaida attacks on the administrations of presidents Ronald Reagan through George W Bush, the unfolding coronavirus crisis is overwhelmingly the sole responsibility of the current White House.

Chapter 8 of the 9/11 Commission Report was titled, The System Was Blinking Red. The quote came from the former CIA director George Tenet, who was characterizing the summer of 2001, when the intelligence community's multiple reporting streams indicated

an imminent aviation terrorist attack inside the United States. Despite the warnings and frenzied efforts of some counter-terrorism officials, the 9/11 Commission determined “We see little evidence that the progress of the plot was disturbed by any government action ... Time ran out.”

Last week, the Washington Post reported on the steady drumbeat of coronavirus warnings that the intelligence community presented to the White House in January and February. These alerts made little impact upon senior administration officials, who were undoubtedly influenced by President Donald Trump's constant derision of the virus, which he began on 22 January: “We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine.”

By now, there are three painfully obvious observations about Trump's leadership style that explain the worsening coronavirus pandemic that Americans now face. First, there is the fact

that once he believes absolutely anything – no matter how poorly thought-out, ill-informed or inaccurate – he remains completely anchored to that initial impression or judgment. Leaders are unusually hubristic and overconfident; for many, the fact that they have risen to elevated levels of power is evidence of their inherent wisdom. But truly wise leaders authentically solicit feedback and criticism, are actively open thinkers, and are capable of changing their minds. By all accounts, Trump lacks these enabling competencies.

Second, Trump's judgments are highly transmissible, infecting the thinking and behavior of nearly every official or adviser who comes in contact with the initial carrier. Unsurprisingly, the president surrounds himself with people who look, think and act like he does. Yet, his inaccurate or disreputable comments also have the remarkable ability to become recycled by formerly honorable military, intelligence and business leaders.

'Zoom-bombing': FBI warns some teleconferences, online classrooms vulnerable to hackers



(News Agencies) The FBI on Monday warned of a nationwide rise in so-called “Zoom-bombing,” or video hacking, as more people have turned to video-teleconferencing amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent weeks, the bureau has received multiple reports of conferences – and in some cases, online classrooms – being disrupted by pornographic, hateful images or threatening

language. Last week, a high school in Massachusetts reported that someone dialed into the classroom while a teacher was conducting an online class, the FBI said. The individual shouted profanities before leaving the teacher's home address. A similar incident played out in another school in Massachusetts this month: an individual could be seen on a conference call displaying swastika tattoos.

A spokesperson for Zoom told Fox News that the company has taken the security of its meetings seriously and was “deeply upset to hear about the incidents involving this type of attack.” The company added that it encouraged users hosting large, public group meetings to review settings for their safety and report incidents to its support team so it could “take appropriate action.” As a safety precaution against such incidents,

the FBI has issued a set of guidelines to implement while conducting a video-teleconference. When using Zoom for online classrooms, teachers are advised to making meetings private and require a password or use the waiting room feature to control the admittance of

additional people. Links to a teleconference or classroom should be sent directly to individual participants and never be publicly available on a social media post. Lastly, those managing a conference in Zoom should change the screen sharing option to “Host

Only.” Americans have increasingly used Zoom and Skype to carry out some semblance of a normal routine while stuck at home during the coronavirus epidemic. In the past month, these platforms have been used for religious ceremonies, schools and even dates.

Spain Sees Record Death Toll With 849 Fatalities In 24 Hours: Govt

Another 9,222 people tested positive for the virus over the past 24 hours, raising the total number of confirmed cases to 94,417.



(News Agencies) Once again, Spain hit a new record with 849 people dying

of COVID-19 in 24 hours, hiking the overall death toll to 8,189, the government

said on Tuesday. The increase came after a day in which the number of deaths had fallen slightly, raising hopes the epidemic could be reaching a peak in Spain, which has logged the world's second-highest number of deaths from the virus, after Italy. Another 9,222 people tested positive for the virus over the past 24 hours, raising the total number of confirmed cases to 94,417.



California's farm workers pick America's essential produce unprotected from coronavirus

Amadeo Sumano picks strawberries with his bare hands in Ventura county, on California's central coast, and packs them into plastic containers bound for supermarkets. He received a letter from his employer informing pickers about the importance of hand-washing amid the coronavirus outbreak. But Sumano, 38, and his co-workers, he said, have not been given any gloves.

"Nothing has changed at work," Sumano said in Spanish. "The distance principle, six feet between people, does not work in agriculture."

He worries about getting sick, or having his hours cut as some growers contend with a loss in food service orders, and the financial pressure that would come with either scenario, made even more intense because of his undocumented status.

"It is an honor to be a farm worker and an essential worker," said Sumano. "But I have many worries."

The workers who pick and pack the fresh produce in America's fields now find themselves on the frontline of shoring up a supply chain straining under new pressures amid the coronavirus crisis. In California, which grows two-thirds of the country's fruit and nuts and one-third of its vegetables, the pressure to shift and bolster that fast-changing food system is felt acutely. The state's roughly

400,000 agricultural workers are exempt from shelter-in-place orders, and vital agriculture work is continuing to keep markets stocked nationwide. Growers and labor contractors say they are putting new practices and measures in place to keep workers socially distanced and maintain sanitized common facilities.

But workers and their advocates tell a different story: of vulnerable, low-wage workers operating in fear, without proper protections let alone information about the risks involved in their essential labor, and without hope of any share in expanded unemployment benefits should they fall ill or lose work. America's farm workers have always done the essential work of feeding the nation for little reward and with few codified protections or benefits. Researchers and advocates estimate between

60% and 75% of California's more than 400,000 agricultural workers are undocumented. The United Farm Workers of America estimates only about 10,000 are unionized. An additional 20,000 are in California on H2A visas, a visa category that has seen some processing delays amid coronavirus shutdown orders. In March, as the coronavirus spread across the US and California ordered residents to stay at home, the United Farm Workers of America sent an open letter to agricultural employers calling for more sick pay, protections and information for workers in the fields.

"What we noted immediately was that workers were not being provided protections or information. [Growers are] not even trying. And that's gotten workers very scared," said Armando Elenes, secretary-treasurer

of the United Farm Workers of America. "The last hands that touched that produce before the consumer puts it in their mouth is a farm worker's hands, so we better care about what happens to these workers."

He laughed at the notion of growers voluntarily offering hazard pay to compensate for their new risks, as some frontline workers in other sectors have demanded. "The 'essential' part doesn't show up on their paycheck. They're lucky to get minimum wage," he said.

"They're getting paid the same, yet they're exposing themselves to more dangers," said Irene de Barraicua, spokesperson for Líderes Campesinas, an advocacy organization of and for California female farm workers. "There is no standard for safety

orientation. Sometimes we're hearing they just get a five-minute talk – stay six feet apart, don't do this, don't do that – but they're working in big crowds. It feels like it's not being taken seriously because the money is more important." Líderes Campesinas is working to arrange for health professionals to train farm workers on keeping themselves safe, a program they hope would be made mandatory in agricultural counties. For now, growers and farm labor contractors are doing it themselves.

"We think that if you do what all the health experts have explained – if you can keep your social distance, if you can keep things sanitized, if you can keep sick people at home – we believe that people can work safely," said Lupe Sandoval, managing director of the California Farm Labor Contractor Association.

The association is advising farm labor contractors on best practices to prevent viral spread. Sandoval said some of the contractors who serve as middlemen between farm workers and growers are spacing workers out in the fields and stepping up the sanitization of toilets, water jugs and rest break tables,

while some are even considering "busting out the forehead thermometers".

"There are a lot of employers jumping through a lot of hoops right now trying to figure out how to make this happen properly," he said.

With the more farming-intensive spring season about to set in, and a surge in Covid-19 cases expected statewide, there's a small and rapidly closing window to establish meaningful safety measures in the fields. An outbreak in the farm worker community would wreak havoc on an already strained food system. But there are currently no known coronavirus infections in California's agricultural community, said Sandoval, "and we want to keep it that way". Farm workers are an ageing labor force facing higher rates of respiratory disease and hypertension: all factors that would put them at greater risk for more deadly Covid-19 complications. And the masks that shield them from dust and pesticides, and that would also protect against the virus, are now in short supply for frontline workers across the world.

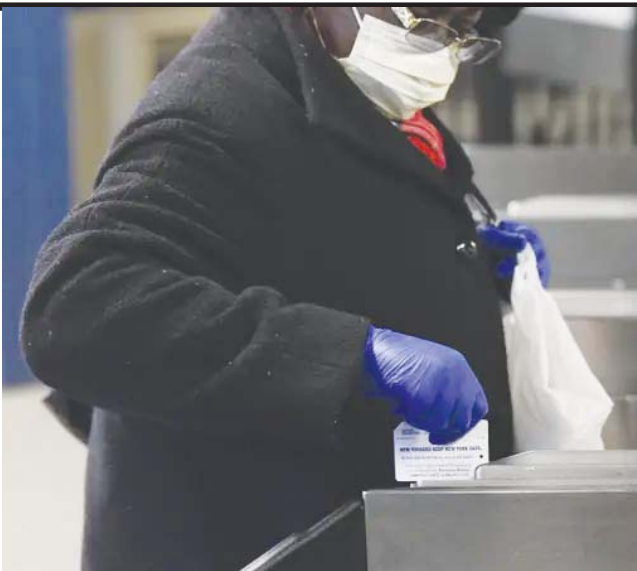
If they are unfortunate enough to fall ill with Covid-19, farm workers would qualify for the additional sick leave provided through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the national legislation that expanded paid leave amid the Covid-19 crisis, but most would probably struggle to pay the resulting healthcare costs. Many farm workers have no health insurance. While Sandoval worries about workers who would abuse new, more abundant paid leave, Elenes of the United Farm Workers of America remains skeptical that workers will be able to utilize it at all.



Social distancing?

Working-class people don't have that luxury

While the rich work from home, others are packed on subways or losing their jobs. This pandemic calls for a reckoning



Except for the photos of people who have recovered from Covid-19, flashing victory signs, some wearing the new accessory, oxygen cannulas, few encouraging images have emerged from the pandemic. We've seen coffins in Bergamo, panicked migrant workers in New Delhi, patients on gurneys lining the hospital hallways in Spain and here at home.

Among the most disturbing are the photos and videos of jam-packed New York subway stations and cars, crowded with passengers – mostly people of color – on their way to work. Some passengers are wearing masks, some aren't. Whether they like their jobs, believe in what they do, worry about health protections at work, fear losing their health

insurance, if they have any, they probably have something in common: they wouldn't be on this packed subway if they didn't have to be.

They know how you get the virus, and they don't want it, but they need the money they make as supermarket clerks, janitors, nursing home aids, medical workers and first responders. It's foolish to think we can know the thoughts of others, but I'd imagine that these people would rather be hunkered down with their families in light-filled country houses, e-ordering gourmet pantry items, letting the nannies home-school the kids, Instagramming dinner. That families needed a disaster plan was something one heard after 9/11. Now, it turns out that the rich and the upper middle class have always had a plan:

leave the city with the families, and if possible servants. Work from home. Do jigsaw puzzles and try to keep the kids from fighting or watching TV all day. Bake bread and post it on Facebook.

The working class has a very different plan, perhaps because the plan was made for them. Find someone to watch the kids. Ride the crowded train or bus. Worry when someone coughs at work, where there's not enough hand sanitizer. Do the same thing in reverse. Repeat. Maybe these are the lucky ones, compared with the ones who can easily self-quarantine because they have lost their small businesses and jobs and are worried about paying the rent. Their stories are out there, but not as much as the statistics of the confirmed

cases and the dead. The numbers have our attention, along with the political circus in Washington, and the latest major or minor celebrity who has been diagnosed. Occasionally the media will run the story of a person who isn't famous but who contracted the virus in an interesting way.

Perhaps that jam-packed subway car isn't an interesting story. Perhaps the way that the working class is knowingly being fed to this virus isn't an interesting story. And besides, it makes us feel bad. We know the virus isn't our fault, but the fact that there are human beings, packed in during a plague, in a metal tube speeding underground, the fact that some warehouses, trucking firms and big box stores don't protect their workers, well,

that sort of is our fault. We could have done something about it before we had to leave our offices and focus on survival. Before things got so complicated.

Of course, we all have a lot to think about, at the moment. Ventilators, for one thing. Staying alive, for another. But when we come through this – as history and science suggest we will – we might take this chance to reflect on how the last 40 years of American politics have not only hardened our hearts but encouraged that hardening. We have seen ourselves transformed into Reality TV contestants on Survivor and The Apprentice, with their zero-sum games and rightwing Darwinian faith in the survival of the fittest. We have been taught that you don't have to care about anyone outside your family

circle. To see any human commonality with those subway passengers is to be a weak little bleeding heart snowflake. In the aftermath of 9/11, newspapers ran whole sections commemorating the lives lost in the Twin Towers, on the planes and among the first responders, not only the CEOs but the receptionists and support workers who rode to work on the trains like the ones in the recent photos and videos. But now it's the cultural figures we read about, the scientists, politicians, educators, athletes, musicians, glamorous high achievers to whom this was not supposed to happen. For us to read about the woman who cuts our hair or works in our dentist's office, she'd have to have been a guest at some spectacular super-spreading social event.

There is no greater illustration of corporate America's moral decay than Amazon



On Monday, Amazon fired a warehouse worker who had been protesting about conditions at a New York City facility during the coronavirus outbreak. Chris Smalls, an assistant manager and organizer, had led a walkout demanding Amazon temporarily shut the facility for cleaning after multiple workers tested positive for Covid-19.

It was a move that spoke to the inherent inhumanity of the trillion-dollar corporation, one that will need to be brought to heel by a future presidential

administration. The workers were seeking hazard pay and more protective gear as they labored during the pandemic. This, along with Smalls' willingness to challenge the company, was apparently too much to take. Amazon claimed Smalls was dismissed because he had close contact with a worker diagnosed with Covid-19 but refused to stay home for 14 days. According to the company's previous statements, the infected co-worker in question last reported for work on 11 March. Had Smalls been exposed that day, a 14-day mandatory quarantine would have made him eligible to return as soon as 25 March. Smalls, however, claimed

Amazon did not send him home until 28 March, three weeks after the exposure.

Smalls is rightfully considering legal action and the New York state attorney general's office is calling on the National Labor Relations Board to investigate. It's likely Smalls was dismissed because he was a worker who dared to raise the consciousnesses of those around him. For a corporation as virulently anti-union as Amazon, workers like Smalls are particularly dangerous: they are the future leaders of a labor movement. Amazon, perhaps the most successful corporation on Earth, can more than afford to turn a profit and treat their warehouse workers with dignity. Jeff Bezos will remain a billionaire if he chooses to pay every worker a middle-class salary with healthcare benefits and a pension. But doing so would require a slight reduction

of his world-historical wealth and be a violation of the iron law of greed: more is always better. There is no greater illustration of the moral decay of 21st-century corporate America than Amazon. Past behemoths trafficked in noblesse oblige, tolerating unions and even investing in their workforce. Automobile plants and steel mills accepted that the price of doing business was guaranteeing their workers more than a subsistence wage.

Amazon, which employs a well-compensated white-collar workforce and a vast range of warehouse workers who labor in punishing conditions to get products shipped all across the world, is not interested in the social contract. Rather than collaborate with their New York warehouse workers to safeguard their health amid the worst pandemic in a century – more American lives have been

lost than on 9/11 and hundreds of thousands more could die – Amazon would rather leave an employee without a job at the worst possible moment. The firing sends a clear message: come against us and you will be crushed. It's raw authoritarian logic, instilling fear to smother all dissent. If Amazon merely eviscerated brick-and-mortar stores across America, triggering massive job losses, it would be an unfortunate company. But kneecapping the competition was never enough for Bezos. He needs to pit the nation's cities against each other in a race to the bottom for extraordinary tax breaks, depriving them of revenue they could use to fund schools and public infrastructure. He needs to erect draconian warehouses where workers are forced to pee in bottles and pop pain medication to cope with prison-like conditions.

Case study of first US community spread patient offers vital Covid-19 clues

Following the diagnosis of the first community spread patient of the US, the country ramped up testing to discover the staggering magnitude of the epidemic, and now has the highest number of cases in the world, with at least 190,000 cases and 4,000 deaths.



While health ministry officials quibble over whether increasing clusters of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases across India should be classified as “local transmission” that implies the infection source can be traced, or “community transmission”, which indicates more widespread disease because the source cannot be traced and contact tracing cannot be carried out to identify potential cases, clinicians in California have published a detailed case study of the first case of community transmission in the United States on February 26, underlining the need for expanded, aggressive testing to tackle the pandemic.

Following the diagnosis, the US ramped up testing to discover the staggering

magnitude of the epidemic, and now has the highest number of cases in the world, with at least 190,000 cases and 4,000 deaths.

For clinicians, the medical history of an otherwise healthy woman in her 40s, whose chest infection rapidly deteriorated to near-fatal septic shock, offers critical clues to the management and treatment of Covid-19.

The woman was admitted to the UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, California, with a respiratory infection, which chest imaging indicated was pneumonia.

Her condition worsened within 24 hours of admission, and she was quickly moved to the intensive-care unit (ICU) and put on ventilator support to help her breathe. She was given

antibiotics, including linezolid, piperacillin-tazobactam and azithromycin, to kill a possible bacterial infection.

The battery of tests over the next few days included a viral panel, respiratory culture, blood cultures, bronchoscopy cultures to identify infection source, but all came up negative.

The doctors then started suspecting coronavirus disease but did not test her as she had no history of international travel or contact with a person with Covid-19, which was the testing criterion of the US Centers of Disease Control a month ago when no community transmission has been recorded. She next developed acute respiratory distress, with fluid building up in her lungs and making it difficult for her to breathe, which quickly worsened to septic shock, a potentially fatal sudden drop in blood pressure in reaction to severe infection.

The severity of her respiratory condition and her lack of response to all supportive treatment led the clinicians to put her on airborne precautions and strict contact precautions and finally get her tested for Covid-19. Two days later, the results came back

positive.

Since there were no approved antiviral therapies for Covid-19, but the UC Davis got regulatory approval to treat her with an investigational drug called remdesivir, the broad-spectrum antiviral developed by Gilead Sciences that has shown promise against coronaviruses in animals. Remdesivir infusions resulted in the patient needing significantly less ventilator support and having better oxygen levels and chest X-ray results. Fourteen days after first admission to UC Davis, she was taken off ventilation. She has since been discharged and is recovering at home.

“Remdesivir is an experimental drug, though there are ongoing clinical trials to analyse its safety and effectiveness against Sars-Cov2, the virus that causes Covid-19. In Medanta, we managed the 14 Italian patients who have recovered and been discharged. Only one is still in the ICU, but she is stable,” said Dr Yatin Mehta, chairman, Chairman Institute of Critical Care and Anaesthesiology, Medanta-The Medicity, UC Davis Comprehensive Gurugram, where India’s first large group of 14 tourists were

isolated for treatment in March.

The US case study emphasises knowledge gaps in the diagnosis and management of Covid-19 patients in the absence of known community transmission. Without clear risk factors, such as travel history, contact, co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes, and advanced age, Covid-19 infection can initially masquerade as pneumonia.

“According to recent guidelines in India, all hospitalised patients with severe acute respiratory infection, such as acute respiratory distress syndrome or pneumonia without an explanatory diagnosis, must be tested for Covid-19 even if no clear source of exposure is identified,” Dr Mehta.

The US study underscores the value of expanded testing. “There are individuals in the community who are not manifesting severe enough symptoms to check with their health care providers. To tackle the pandemic, there needs to be significantly faster, less expensive and more widespread testing of all patients who potentially have Covid-19,” said Michael Schivo, co-director of COPD Clinic and senior author on the study, in a statement.



Trump’s Breakdown

Now the context has changed but—so far—Trump has not, or to the extent he has tried it, has not lasted more than a few hours at a time. Admirers and foes alike have become so casually accustomed to this president’s shattering of norms in a contemporary political setting that people easily miss how bizarre these circumstances are in historical terms. Is there any equivalent example in American history of a president confronting a grave domestic or international crisis with a similar combination of impetuosity and self-reference? In just the past few days (who keeps track of time in self-quarantine?), Trump has gone from shocking his own health experts with a prediction that church pews would be filled and the country “raring to go” by Easter to

extending the national shutdown through April. He has questioned whether governors are exaggerating their need for medical equipment and then indignantly denied saying that the next day. He has boasted of the television ratings for his coronavirus briefings. True enough. But there is a difference between the current moment and the pre-corona past. Previously, his most flamboyant behavior was, for many of his admirers, an essential part of his appeal. It is unlikely that many Trump supporters are genuinely enthusiastic about his parade of errant statements on coronavirus, from the claim in late February that the number of U.S. cases “within a couple of days is going to be down close to zero,” to his insistence earlier this month that,

“Anybody that needs a test, gets a test,” even as the person shepherding the administration’s response, Vice President Mike Pence, was saying, “we don’t have enough tests today to meet what we anticipate will be the demand going forward.”

The fact that Trump’s style of boasting about himself and denouncing critics is thoroughly familiar is not necessarily reassuring when it is employed in circumstances that are radically unfamiliar.

If there is any common trait of successful presidents, it is what Lippmann called “resiliency”—the capacity for personal growth, for recalibration, and for principled improvisation in the face of new circumstances.

If there is any common trait of failed presidents, it

Old traits-bluster, defiance, implacable self-promotion -that once worked well now threaten to sink a presidency.

is incapacity for growth—a reliance on old habits and thinking even when events demand the opposite.

The coronavirus drama, with 180,000 cases, rather than the 15 at the time Trump made his “close to zero” prediction, is still closer to the beginning than the end. On Tuesday, he took a much more sober tone, saying: “I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead. We’re going through a very tough two weeks.” With some lucky breaks, combined with the policy shifts he and his health team have made, he could yet retain his title as the Houdini of his era.

Before Herbert Hoover earned a reputation as a tragic failure, he had a reputation for heroic success—a can-do businessman who arrived in the presidency with no previous elective experience. He was one of the most celebrated men of his times. Then times changed.

Lippmann didn’t mean breakdown in a psychological sense so much as a political one—describing a leader who found himself trapped by experience and instincts that suddenly were irrelevant to the moment.

Now Donald Trump during the pandemic is giving a new generation reason to wonder whether he—like other presidents who suddenly find currents of history shifting violently before them—is on the verge of breakdown.

Trump emphatically has faced real opposition, and reveled in it, on his path to power. But he has met earlier chapters of adversity, in politics and business, with reliance on traits—bluster, defiance, implacable self-promotion—that, however unorthodox, served him quite well in the old context.

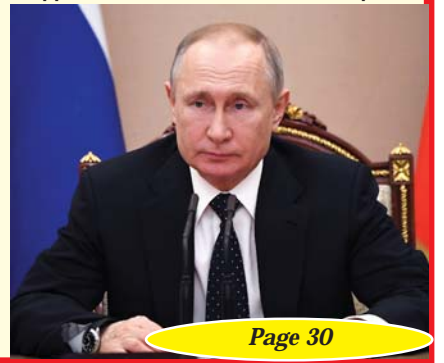


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Russia sends plane with medical supplies to U.S. for coronavirus response



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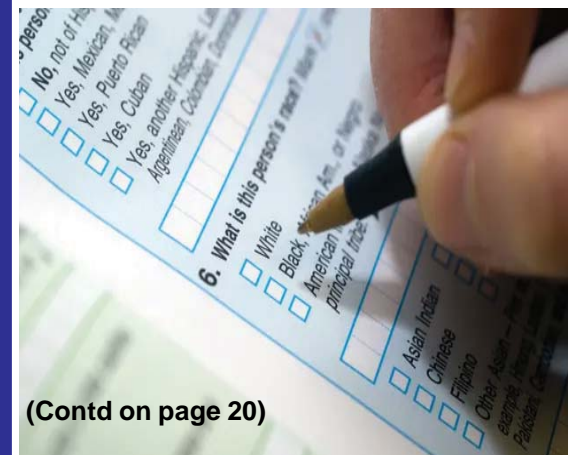
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Coronavirus upends US census as bureau looks to save official count



(Contd on page 20)

Brooklyn man arrested for hoarding masks, coughing on FBI agents



(News Agencies) A Brooklyn man claiming to be infected with the coronavirus coughed on FBI agents who were investigating him for hoarding medical supplies, the US Attorney's Office said Monday. Baruch Feldheim, 43, is facing charges of assault and making false statements to the feds on Sunday outside his Borough Park home where he allegedly peddled and stored massive amounts of N95 respirator masks, federal officials said. Feldheim is also accused of price-gouging. On March 18, he's suspected of selling a New Jersey doctor about 1,000 of the masks for \$12,000, a markup of roughly 700 percent, authorities said. (Contd on page 20)

Will the coronavirus kill the oil industry and help save the climate?

Analysts say the coronavirus and a savage price war means the oil and gas sector will never be the same again

(News Agencies) The plunging demand for oil wrought by the coronavirus pandemic combined with a savage price war has left the fossil fuel industry broken and in survival mode, according to analysts. It faces the gravest challenge in its 100-year history, they say, one that will permanently alter the industry. With some calling the scene a "hellscape", the least lurid description is "unprecedented".

A key question is whether this will permanently alter the course of the climate crisis. Many experts think it might well do so, pulling forward the date at which demand for oil and gas peaks, never to recover, and allowing the atmosphere to gradually heal. The boldest say peak fossil fuel demand may have been dragged into the here and now, and that 2019 will go down in history as the peak year for carbon emissions. But some take an opposing view: the fossil fuel industry will bounce back as it always has, and bargain basement oil prices will slow the much-needed transition to green energy.

Who is right depends on a heady mix of geopolitics, profit, investor sentiment, government bailouts and net zero emissions targets, campaigner pressures and, not least, consumer behaviour – is

virtual working, for instance, the new normal? What is beyond doubt is the carnage in the sector. The lowest oil prices for almost two decades, with worse potentially on the way.

(Contd on page 21)

Supreme Court concerned over 'fake news' on Covid-19

(News Agencies) Media should maintain a strong sense of responsibility, while disseminating news on coronavirus and should ensure that unverified and fake news is not published,

the Supreme Court said on Tuesday after the central government drew the court's attention to the possibility of people panicking due to "fake" and "inaccurate reporting" of news connected with Covid-19.

(Contd on page 19)

