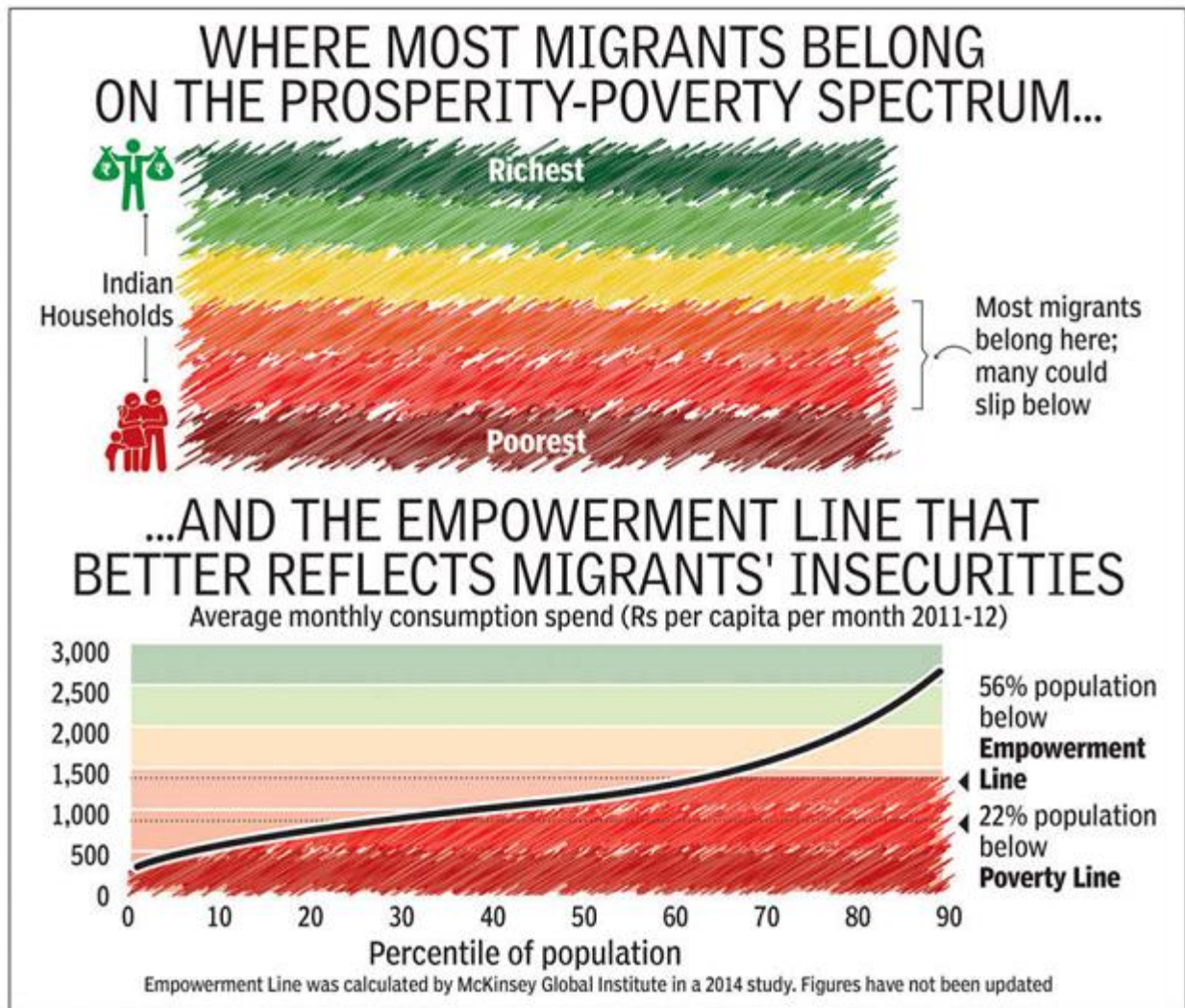


## Why millions defied the lockdown

- Collectively, they were **more anxious than fearful, felt more abandoned than angry, were lacking security not courage** and were dispossessed by the cities they had been working in with a dream to build a **better life**.
- That a lockdown could shatter migrants' dreams so completely proves how little most of **'India'** knew them.
- Questions people asked initially betrayed their ignorance: **Why are they walking? Can they really walk 500 km? Do their bags have all they owned?** ... all signs of discomfort among those with creature comforts.
- **Poverty line to dignity line:** People desperate to leave cities were **poor in assets, not in aspiration and self-esteem**. They were earning a livelihood **not living on handouts**.
- They were poor, but not in the way most people think of the poor – and that's because the **popular understanding of poverty is badly outdated**.
- Especially in a country where you can drive from one of the planet's largest slums, **Dharavi**, to arguably the **world's most expensive residence in just 20 minutes**.
- When last estimated in **2011-12** nearly **22% Indians were below that line**. Since then the country's GDP has almost doubled and the population has risen less than 10%, implying that the number of poor should be less – much less – than they were a decade ago.
- **How less? We don't know for sure.**
- An **illness, a job loss, death of an earning member** ... is all it takes for a family in this zone to **plunge back into poverty**.
- The **downward spiral** could also pull in people who are vaguely defined as **'lower middle class'**, especially the self-employed.
- The **rapid expansion of the gig economy** (Ola and Uber drivers, courier delivery boys ...) in recent years means there will be job losses that won't show up as job loss.
- That's because these jobs exist somewhere between the official **definition of employed and self-employed**.
- One way to track poverty in all its dimensions is to replace the poverty line with what **McKinsey** calls the **Empowerment Line**.
- It's a line at which everybody has **access to 8 basic needs of life with some dignity** – drinking water, education, energy, food, healthcare, housing, sanitation and social security.



- In **2014**, when McKinsey did the study, **56% of Indians were estimated to be living below the empowerment line.**
- The migrant crisis would not have been half its size if most Indians were above this line.
- No doubt **social welfare schemes** now reach far beyond the officially poor.
- The **JAM trinity** (Jan Dhan account, Aadhaar number and mobile phone) has helped target the needy far better.
- But the exodus tells us what needs to be done next – **delivering the help in real time.**
- If most migrants were **reached on their mobile** with instructions on **where they can find a safe shelter with food and income support**, or information

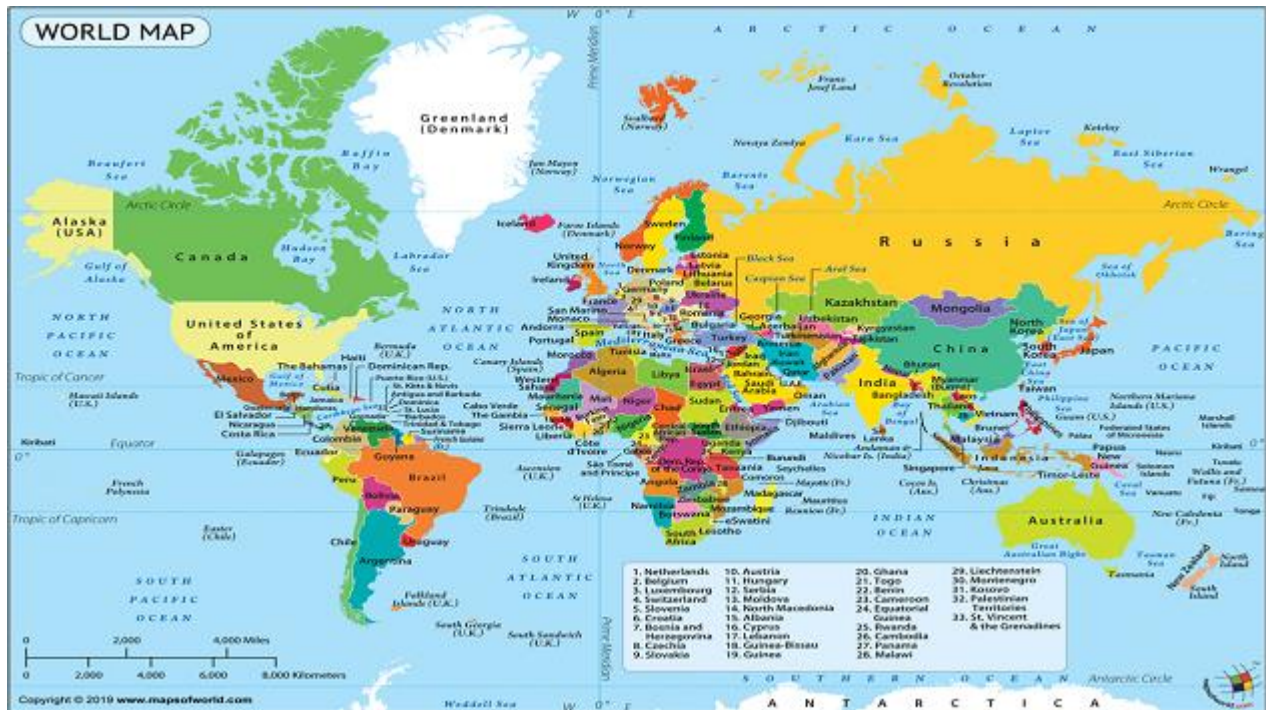
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that their **employers and landlords** will be paid to take care of them during the lockdown, **they wouldn't want to stream out of the cities in such despair.**

- One way to do this is to build an **Aadhaar Plus platform.**
- An optional layer built on top of **Aadhaar where people voluntarily put in their** job status, income, assets, access to amenities, residence and contact number.
- This will help **identify and grade beneficiaries** and **deliver help** to them just **when they need it and in the form they need it** – sometimes just a text message saying assistance is on its way.
- The **Aadhaar Plus database** will also help build a '**vulnerability index**' that could, eventually, replace all other poverty measurements.
- Policy makers will be able to see precisely where families are along different shades of poverty and help them accordingly.
- As it turns out, the **labour ministry** has been working on creating something loosely along these lines called **UWIN. Its progress should be made public.**
- The migration should serve as a **vision correction** for those who were unable to grasp India's growing urban underbelly.
- People have wondered **why migrants aren't listening** to governments. They are, but they **aren't convinced** that **governments can walk the talk.**
- **Isolated** and **jobless**, they are relying on their faith (lack of it, actually) more than any reasoning.
- This is happening in a country where budget after budget has been dedicated to '**the face of the poorest and the weakest person**' finance ministers have seen.
- And that should make everybody rethink their faith – and understand why migrants have stopped taking words seriously.

## **BRICS against COVID-19**

- **Global war** against the **novel coronavirus.**
- India has reinforced its credentials as a rapidly emerging pharmacy of the world.
- As the **world's largest producer** of **hydroxychloroquine**, India has recently exported the drug not only to **SAARC** countries and to its "**extended neighbourhood**" in the **Gulf**, but also to **Russia, Brazil, Israel** and the **U.S.**
- This has set the stage for India to forge an **inclusive BRICS-driven pharma alliance**, which could also actively explore the production of vaccines.



- **China** responded strongly in containing the pandemic.
- **Health Silk Road doctrine:** Chinese reached out to two of the worst global hotspots, **Italy** and **Iran**.
- A Chinese shipment of **31 tonnes**, which included essential supplies and equipment, including respirators, protective suits, masks and medications, arrived on **March 12** in **Rome**.
- **Six days** later another **Chinese** team flew directly to **Milan**.
- Soon China was running a **medical air bridge** bound for **Europe**.
- Despite fighting the virus at home, **Russia** too sent its doctors and virologists overseas, including the launch of the famous '**From Russia with love**' air mission to Italy.
- At the request of **U.S. President Donald Trump**, a **Russian Antonov-124**, packed with **medical supplies and experts**, landed at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport.
- Since **Soviet times**, **Russia** has **top-of-the-line emergency services**, which are equipped to handle any kind of emergency including biological attacks, nuclear radiation, and chemical weapon attacks.
- On the **African continent**, **South Africa**, the current rotating head of the African Union, is engaged in framing a **pan-African response** to COVID-19.

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- Among the BRICS nations, **only Brazil's response may need a course correction**, as its resistance to breaking the infection chains through travel bans, lockdowns, isolation and testing appears to have led to an infection surge.
- Having demonstrated their comparative strengths as providers of **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)**, **BRICS countries now need to pool and coordinate their efforts**, in partnership with the **WHO**, and **Europe and North America**, both badly affected by the pandemic, as part of a **global assault on the virus**.
- But for seeding a robust institutional HADR response, the BRICS countries may have to **reactivate an existing disaster response mechanism**, and  **earmark resources and assets** to combat a whole range of natural disasters, with special focus on the emerging economies and the global south.
- The **Shanghai-based New Development Bank** of the **BRICS countries** has already demonstrated the way forward to **allocate financial resources** to combat COVID-19.
- In **April**, during a meeting of the **NDB Board of Governors**, **NBD President \_\_\_\_\_** announced that apart from disbursing a **\$1 billion emergency loan** to **China**, and subsequently to **India, South Africa and Brazil**, the NDB had the financial heft to provide **\$10 billion** in “**crisis-related assistance**” to BRICS member countries.
- The NDB's financial model, demonstrated to address the pandemic, can now become a template to address natural disasters.

## Slow release

- **Balancing lives and livelihoods.**
- National lockdown extended for **2 more weeks**.
- **Kerala**, lauded for its success in containing the pandemic, has chosen to **retain some curbs** even in **green zones**.
- Home Ministry's orders require a **high degree of civic cooperation**.
- Allowing **some economic activity**, though not at full pace, and under safeguards, **was inevitable**.
- The relaxation process can be eased greatly if States adopt a ‘**how to**’ approach and communicate to citizens clearly.
- In the absence of **medical remedies**, **prevention remains the only option against the virus**.

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- Using face masks, now mandatory, hand washing and physical distancing at all times are **universally recognised precautions**.
- States must also prepare for the arrival of **expatriate workers** in large numbers from **West Asia and elsewhere**.
- Unsurprisingly, the **biggest cities**, with a legacy of market-driven housing policies, unplanned densification, rampant pollution and poor health-care access are **red zones**, with large infection clusters.
- It is a **new reality**, one that calls for safe, measured activity.

## During Lockdown 3.0

- The step towards allowing some **resumption of activity** is **welcome**.
- Unfortunately the **current phase may not see a significant uptick in economic activity**, at a time when **every single day** of such activity foregone generates forbidding opportunity costs in **lost income and livelihoods**.
- India's economic engines, the sprawling **urban centres** such as **Mumbai** and **Delhi**, have been designated red zones.
- The **Centre's categorisation sets a floor** which cannot be breached by states, even if they disagree.
- States will **struggle to restart economic activity** within such tight constraints.
- In this context, **Delhi's** chief minister **Arvind Kejriwal** has observed that even green zones will turn into red zones if current yardsticks continue.
- States which are at the forefront of the Covid mitigation strategy are now struggling with an **acute resource constraint, with roots in the economic standstill**.
- **Supply chains**, particularly after the **introduction of GST**, have taken on a **seamless pan-India character**.
- It's helpful here that last week India joined a handful of countries to complete a **million Covid-19 tests**.
- India's tests of at-risk population show encouraging results.
- At the one-millionth mark **infection rate was just 4%**, compared to 16.5% in the US and 7.4% in Germany, a country believed to have done well in containing the virus.
- This data suggests that India's strategy should be calibrated to reflect the demographic and related details of our population and climate.

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- The **world can't follow a standard template** given inherent differences across countries – here South Asia as a whole has done pretty well on Covid, without necessarily resorting to India's tough restrictions.
- Leverage these **positive facts**, and **use this fortnight** to forge a **meaningful exit from a lockdown** that's rapidly outliving its usefulness.

## No comfort in numbers

- **West Bengal**, which reported its first **COVID-19** case in mid-March, has now recorded a total of **922 cases**.
- The State has reported **48 deaths** but had **not counted 72 who died of comorbidities**.
- Though it is **India's fourth populous State**, it now **ranks fourth lowest** in terms of the number of those **tested**, and is also way lower than **Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan** and **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Against a national average of **721 tests per million**, **West Bengal** has a dismal **212.6 tests per million**.
- But what is disturbing is the general reluctance of the government to ramp up testing and to **acknowledge deaths** from the **disease** as such.
- It was the **first State** to move from **containment to mitigation** to contain the spread when it announced a **complete lockdown before the Prime Minister announced** it nationally.
- **Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee** was seen doing all the **right things** including **demonstrating how social distancing** is to be practised and setting up quarantine centres in every district.
- At over **13%**, the **case fatality rate is very high** in **West Bengal** while the detection rate continues to remain the same, which is a reflection of poor surveillance and a failure to actively look out for fresh cases.
- Trying to keep the **numbers artificially low** by testing fewer people or **not divulging the actual numbers** and **tracing their contacts** allows the **virus to spread unchecked**.
- At some point, **poor surveillance and delay in testing** will overwhelm the health system and result in even more deaths, something that no government would be proud of.
- A **higher number of cases is only a reflection of how active the State has been in waging a war against the virus**, while a **higher case fatality rate serves as evidence of poor response**.

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- With the lockdown now extended by two more weeks, the government should **follow the advice of WHO** and **cover lost ground** by aggressively testing and isolating cases, and tracing contacts.

## The Nanded Lessons

- **Migration** has played a **key role in economic growth**, and resumption of economic activity will need the **workers homebound now to migrate once again**.
- Stigmatising them on top of everything they have already suffered will **seriously discourage** this.
- As **Lav Agarwal** has said, *we have to fight the infection not the infected*.
- The second Nanded lesson is that even after the lockdown **crowded religious gatherings must remain suspended**.
- **Eid, Diwali, Gurpurab, Christmas ...** they will **all need reinventing**. Prayers should continue only with **physical distancing**.

## Rising fatalities



Gujarat has the highest COVID-19 case fatality rate (CFR) of 5.3 while Bihar (0.8) has the lowest. The table on the left shows the eight States with the highest COVID-19 CFR among States that have recorded at least 350 cases, while the one on the right shows the ones with the lowest CFR

HIGH CASE FATALITY RATE				LOW CASE FATALITY RATE			
State	Deaths	Cases	Case fatality rate (%)	State	Deaths	Cases	Case fatality rate (%)
Gujarat	290	5428	5.3	Bihar	4	503	0.8
M.P.	151	2,846	5.3	Kerala	4	499	0.8
W.B.*	48	922	5.2	Tamil Nadu	30	3,023	1.0
Maharashtra	521	12,296	4.2	J&K	8	701	1.1
Karnataka	25	614	4.1	Haryana	5	376	1.3
Telangana	29	1,063	2.7	Delhi	64	4,122	1.6
Rajasthan	71	2,832	2.5	U.P.	43	2,645	1.6
A.P.	33	1,583	2.1	Punjab	21	1,102	1.9

\*48 deaths in West Bengal is the official figure, which does not include fatalities due to comorbidities. Data for all States are as of 8 p.m. on Sunday



## TWO-DAY ENCOUNTER



Army and J&K Police personnel pay tributes to the five slain bravehearts in Handwara on Sunday

**Intel says 2-4 terrorists in Wadarbala-Rajwara forests, Kupwara. Army begins combing op on May 1 morning**  
**May 2, 1.30pm** | Army, CRPF, J&K Police start cordon & search op at Chanjimulla on info that terrorists have taken hostages  
➤ **Gunfight begins around 3.45pm with terrorists holed up in adjacent houses. 1 terrorist killed**

**in mortar blast. 4 Army personnel and 1 cop enter a house to evacuate civilians (as per Army & police). But locals say 2nd terrorist was hiding in cowshed**  
➤ **Terrorist opens fire, lobbs grenades. Team loses contact with colleagues**  
**6pm** | Attempts at contact fail, reinforcements arrive. **Op halted** due to darkness, bad weather

**Sunday**  
Op resumed at first light. 2nd terrorist killed around 9.30am

**Bodies of 5 security personnel, 2 terrorists found.** Terrorists identified as LeT commander Haidar alias Iqbal, a PoK-resident, and local Asif Reshi

- **Central health teams to monitor 20 districts with heavy case load**
- **Delhi is ready to deal with COVID-19: CM**
- **Economic recovery may take over a year, says CII**
- **Over 3,200 migrants arrive home in U.P.**
- **27 Bangladeshi nationals held in Assam**
- **Javadekar slams report on press freedom**
  1. Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, in a tweet on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, said the government “will expose” surveys that portray a “bad picture about ‘freedom of Press’ in India”.
  2. The Minister’s comments came against the backdrop of the latest survey of Reporters Without Borders that shows India dropping two places on the global press freedom index ranking to 142nd on the list of 180 countries. Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are ranked higher.
- **UAE books 3 more Indians on charges of spreading hate**
- **‘Saudi investments in India on track despite economic downturn’**
- **Kim did not undergo any surgery, says Seoul**
- The \_\_\_\_\_ parallel north formed the border between North and South Korea.

1. 37th

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2. 38th
3. 39th
4. 40th