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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

*Late City Vol. 16 Issue 92
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

BHUBANESWAR, FRIDAY APRIL 10, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



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TO KEEP GOING
10 VIVACITY

Biggest spike in corona cases

Total crosses 6,650; death toll over 200; Maha retains top slot

ARCHANA JYOTI/TN
RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW
DELHI/MUMBAI

The country saw a big spike in number of positive cases on Thursday with the total count crossing 6,650 and death toll breaching 200 mark.

With States still reporting the numbers at the time of writing this report, Thursday could see the biggest one-day jump since the coronavirus outbreak in the country. Maharashtra may have recorded both the highest number of positive cases and deaths, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State Gujarat has recorded the highest mortality rate.

The total count is based on figures tallied from States till late in the evening.

As many as 25 persons on Thursday succumbed to Covid-19 in Maharashtra taking the total number of deaths to 97 in the State, while an alarming 229 persons tested positive for coronavirus in a single day. Overall, it has reported more than 1,450 cases.

Maharashtra appeared to be peaking in terms of the spread of coronavirus, as the pandemic shocked the State health authorities by claiming 25 lives. Pune accounted for a maximum 14 deaths, while there were nine deaths in Mumbai. Malegaon and Ratnagiri reported one death each.

Tamil Nadu added 96 new cases on Thursday to reach a

total of 834 followed by Delhi with 51 new cases and total of 720. Telangana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh were all in the 400-plus bracket while Andhra Pradesh and Kerala added 15 and 12 cases respectively. While AP had 363 cases Kerala had 357 positive cases.

Gujarat reported as many as 56 new cases on Thursday while Chhattisgarh suddenly saw addition of nine new cases to the existing one active case. Bihar and Jharkhand where the number of positive cases were low till now have also come into the grip of the deadly virus, reporting 12 and nine new cases respectively.

Uttar Pradesh too painted grim picture with 49 new cases till late evening taking the total tally to 410. On Wednesday, the Yogi Government in Uttar Pradesh decided to strengthen restrictions on movement in 105 hotspots of the Covid-19 disease in 15 districts, prohibiting people in these places from stepping out of their houses to buy even grocery and other essential items. Gautam Buddh Nagar and Ghaziabad are among the districts where the restrictions have come into effect till April 15 morning.

Similarly, cases in Punjab witnessed northward movement, adding 24 new cases to its Covid kitty of 130 positive cases.

The ICMR said that 1,30,000 samples have been tested so far. Out of these 5,734 samples tested positive till



Health workers ask questions from a woman during a door-to-door surveillance in a red zone area for COVID-19, amid the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus in Srinagar on Thursday PTI

date. Positivity rate ranges between 3-5 per cent in the last 1-1.5 months. It has not increased substantially, said a senior scientist from the ICMR.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the death rate showed some interesting findings. Till April 8, Maharashtra reported 72 deaths and 1,135 cases, which worked out to a mortality rate of 6.34 per cent, which incidentally is the third highest in the country, according to an analytical report released by the Medical Education and Drugs Department.

First death in Gurugram

Gurugram: The Gurugram district witnessed its first coronavirus death on Thursday as a 75-year-old Italian national died during treatment at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugram. This is the first death of a foreign national in the city due to COVID-19. With this, the number of deaths due to coronavirus in Haryana has increased to 2.

Dharavi 3rd death raises concerns

Mumbai: Alarm bells started ringing in Maharashtra, as Mumbai's populated Dharavi locality reported third Covid death and 14 positive pandemic cases, even as the police and health authorities began enforcing the lockdown measures strictly in Asia's largest slum. A 70-year-old woman from Kalyanwadi in Dharavi died of Covid-19 earlier in the day, taking the number of deaths to three.

₹15K-cr 5-yr Central Covid plan in place

Funds will be divided among all States, UTs to ramp up infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday geared up for a long battle against coronavirus and put in place a five-year ₹15,000-crore plan to ramp up its health infrastructure to deal with the crisis.

This will be 100 per cent Centrally-funded scheme to strengthen national and State-level health systems. The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package will be implemented in three phases from January 2020 to June 2020, from July 2020 to March 2021 and from April 2021 to March 2024. This fund will be divided among all States and Union Territories.

The Central Government aims to arm States with adequate Covid-19 dedicated hospitals, isolation wards, personal protection equipment (PPE) in the first phase of the three-phase funding project from January 2020 to March 2024. The fund will be utilised for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (amount of ₹7,774 crores) and rest for medium-term support (1-4 years) to be provided under



Firefighters spray disinfectants at a locality near Nizamuddin during the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

mission mode approach.

"The project will be implemented with the objectives of emergency COVID-19 response, strengthening national and State systems, procurement of essential medical equipment and drugs, strengthening of surveillance including setting up of laboratories and bio-security preparedness," the Health Ministry said in a letter to the States and UTs.

The letter stated that the Union Ministry will release the funds immediately for the implementation of the plan.

The Union Health Ministry has already disbursed ₹4,113 crore to all the States and UTs for dealing with the emergency COVID response. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had late last month said that it will be used for treating coro-

navirus patients and strengthening the medical infrastructure such as rapidly ramping up the number of corona testing facilities, PPE, isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment.

On its part, the Centre on Thursday said that there were enough PPEs and Hydroxychloroquine tablets in India. Addressing the daily presser, Health Ministry's Joint Secretary Lav Aggarwal said the fear around the dearth of PPEs was unfounded and misguided.

He said contrary to popular belief, PPE does not only mean overall covers, "It's a mix of components. Only in high-risk areas, the whole component is used while in other places, N95 masks and gloves were sufficient."

CAPSULE

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT GROWS 4.5% IN FEB
New Delhi: India's industrial production grew at the fastest pace in seven months at 4.5 per cent during February, mainly on account of uptick in mining and manufacturing activity as well as power generation, official data showed on Thursday.

2020 COULD SEE WORST ECONOMIC FALLOUT: IMF
Washington: The year 2020 could see the worst global economic fallout since the Great Depression in the 1930s with over 170 countries likely to experience negative per capita income growth due to the raging coronavirus pandemic, IMF (International Monetary Fund) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

2 TIGERS FOUND DEAD IN FOREST RESERVE
Coimbatore: Two tigers were found dead at Sethumadai coming under Anamalai Tiger Reserve in the district, officials said on Thursday. Both the carcasses were found lying within some distance from each other, police said. The forest officials have taken viscera of the tigers, both at an identical age of eight, and sent for testing to know the real cause of the death. The carcasses were later burned, they said.

After panic, sealed areas come to terms



Police outside a sealed Pandav Nagar J-Block Gali NO-9 which has been marked as a hotspot for COVID-19 in New Delhi on Thursday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Operation SHIELD launched in Delhi

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

Following the complete restrictions on the movement in hotspots across the national Capital to stop the COVID-19 spread, the residents in these areas found it difficult to get essential items such as milk, vegetable and other household commodities. As the Delhi Police increased its vigil across the 21 hotspots in the city since

Wednesday night, there was chaos like situation, before people could really come to terms with the fact that they are not supposed to venture out of their homes under any circumstances. However after the initial panic, it seems the people realised that this is the new normal for a few days.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced "Operation SHIELD" in 21 containment zones and warned of strict action against those misbehaving with healthcare personnel in the city.

Odisha 1st State to extend Covid lockdown by 16 days till April 30

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha has become the first State in the country to extend the 21-day lockdown — which was scheduled to end on April 14 — till April 30 to end the Covid-19 crisis.

The Naveen Patnaik Government on Thursday announced the decision even as the Centre weighs the proposal by many States to expand the duration of the shutdown.

The CM also declared schools and other educational institutions will remain closed till June 17.

"We have decided to extend the lockdown till April 30. We will also recommend to the Government of India to extend the national lockdown up to 30th April, Patnaik said in a video message soon after the Cabinet meeting he held with five senior ministers through video-conferencing.

Odisha has recorded 44 positive cases of coronavirus so far and one death from the disease.

35 workers crammed in shop, owner booked, Bengali Market sealed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police registered an FIR on Thursday against a pastry shop owner in Bengali Market after 35 workers were found living in "unhygienic conditions" in a small space in the shop, flouting the social distancing order.

The market thereafter was sealed by the authorities as there were fear of coronavirus outbreak among the people.

The group of people was found staying at Bengali Pastry Shop after the officials of New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), along with doctors and local police, carried out surveillance in the area.

A senior police official said on April 8 an extensive surveillance was carried out in Babar Road, Bengali Market and nearby areas of Babar Road by the surveillance team of the NDMC, along with doctors and local police, as earlier three COVID-19 positive cases were found in house number 68, Babar Road.



Police personnel stand guard outside a colony at Bengali market in New Delhi on Thursday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

"During the exercise, house-to-house survey was carried out for influenza like illness or fever. The teams found 35 people at the Bengali Pastry Shop, Bengali Market, living in unhygienic condition in a small space and no norms and measures of social distancing were followed. Two of the workers had fever and were not feeling well," said the senior police official, adding that an FIR under section 188/269 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 3 Epidemic Diseases act has been registered and investigation of the case going on.

Saudi royal family afflicted with corona

AGENCY ■ NEW YORK

According to news reports, about 150 members of Saudi Arabia's royal family have contracted the coronavirus.

Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulziz al Saud, the Governor of Riyadh and a nephew of King Salman, was confirmed to have tested positive by two doctors, a person close to the family told *The New York Times*.

King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) have retreated into isolation to avoid the outbreak.

Doctors at an elite hospital that treats royals are preparing 500 more beds for an expected influx of patients.

"Directives are to be ready for VIPs from around the country," the operators of the elite facility, the King Faisal Specialist Hospital, wrote in a "high alert" sent out electronically on Tuesday to senior doctors and later obtained by the *Times*.

"We don't know how many cases we will get but high alert," said the message, which



instructed "all chronic patients to be moved out ASAP" and only "top urgent cases" will be accepted, according to the newspaper.

The alert added any infected staff members will now be treated at a less elite hospital to save room for royals.

There are thousands of Saudi princes. Many travel regularly to Europe and some are believed to have contracted the virus abroad and brought it back to Saudi Arabia, the report said.

Lockdown extended till April 30 in Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The ongoing 21-day nationwide lockdown till April 14 as a measure to curb the coronavirus outbreak would be extended till April 30 in Odisha. In fact, Odisha is the first State in the country to have taken such a decision.

A proposal in this regard was approved by the State Cabinet held for the first time through a videoconference from the Naveen Niwas here on Thursday. The meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was attended by five Ministers.

"The entire human race is facing the biggest enemy (COVID-19) during a century. We have to decide between human life and economy. Emphasising on safety of human life, the State Cabinet has decided to extend the lockdown period till April 30," said the Chief Minister in a

video after chairing the Cabinet meeting. Patnaik thanked line Government departments for supporting and contributing to make the lockdown successful. "I understand that you (people) are facing difficulties due to the lockdown. But there is no other way to combat the deadly virus. I appreciate your support and sacrifices," said he.

The Cabinet also took a decision to send a recommendation to the Union Government to extend the lockdown till April 30 and suspend train and flight ser-

vices till that date. The Chief Minister said a proposal was also approved to make all arrangements for conducting 1 lakh rapid tests for COVID-19.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday appreciated the State Government's decision of extending the lockdown period till April 30. "Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has taken a welcome step. We all have to follow the Government's lockdown regulations," said Pradhan.

2 more corona positive cases

Active cases 41; BBSR records 35

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The COVID-19 cases in the State rose to 44 on Thursday after detection of two more positive patients. A 51-year-old woman in Dhenkanal town tested positive.

The day's second case was admitted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. The patient is a 69-year-old man from Medinipur in West Bengal who was undergoing treatment at a private hospital here. He was brought in an ambulance directly from West Bengal as per the Health and Family Welfare Department.

The Dhenkanal woman, who tested positive for the virus has Nizamuddin link. An attendee of the Tablighi

Jamaat at Nizamuddin Markaz had stayed at her house. A total of 15 persons, including the woman, are now placed under quarantine," said Dhenkanal Collector Bhumes Chandra Behera.

The woman patient would be admitted to the COVID facility at Ashwini Hospital in Cuttack and the concerned locality would be sanitised, Behera added.

After detection of the two fresh cases, the active COVID-19 cases in the State now stand at 41. On Wednesday, 400 samples were sent for testing (264 to RMRC, 60 to AIIMS and 76 to SCB) and all tested negative for coronavirus.

Bhubaneswar has reported the highest number of COVID cases so far at 35 including the West Bengal Medinipur case, followed by Bhadrak with three cases, Puri, Cuttack, Kalahandi, Kendrapada, Jajpur and Dhenkanal have recorded one case each.

State Cabinet decisions

Schools, colleges closed till June 17

- Agri, MGNREGS works to continue amid social distancing
- Transport of essential commodities to continue unhindered
- Other States urged to take care of stranded Odisha people

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

All schools, colleges and other educational institutions will continue to remain closed till June 17, 2020.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced this in a video soon after chairing a State Cabinet meeting at the Naveen

Niwas here on Thursday. The Cabinet took as many as nine decisions to combat the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Cabinet approved proposals to allow continuation of agriculture activities and various project works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) across the State.

However, social distancing would be maintained at these workplaces, said the Chief Minister.

Patnaik said all State Governments have been requested to take care of the Odisha people stranded in their provinces due to the coronavirus-related lockdown. "Our

Government is providing all support to brothers and sisters of other States stranded at different places in Odisha. We have too requested other States to take care of stranded Odisha people," said the Chief Minister.

Patnaik further said that the Cabinet approved a proposal to continue ensuring food security to people. "To ensure food security to people, movement of vehicles carrying essential commodities will remain unhindered across the State," said the CM.

Patnaik too thanked doctors who responded to his request and have come forward to volunteer providing telemedicine services to people during the lockdown period.

Mask use becomes mandatory in State

Fines of ₹200 to ₹500 for violation

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government's order for mandatory use of masks by people while venturing out of their houses came into effect from Thursday in view of the coronavirus threat.

The Revenue and Disaster Management Department's order has made it compulsory for people to cover their faces and mouths with a mask or a handkerchief or any other piece of cloth with at least two layers.

The district and municipal authorities have been directed to strictly ensure that there is no crowding and people use masks or cloths such as handkerchief or dupatta to cover



their faces and mouths while stepping out of their houses.

Single-use masks should be properly disposed of after use and cloths used for the purpose should be cleaned with disinfectants after every use. Masks used by a person must not be used by another, according to the order.

People violating the order by not wearing masks when

outdoors have to cough up fines between Rs 200 and Rs 500.

"Wearing masks in public places is mandatory in the State and it has been decided that Rs 200 penalty will be imposed for first three instances of violation, and thereafter, a violator will be penalised Rs 500, said Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy.

HC switches to videoconferencing option

PNS ■ CUTTACK

An Orissa High Court e-Filing and Video Conferencing Scheme, 2020 has been launched in view of the COVID-19-related lockdown.

The move by the High Court facilitated e-filing of cases and hearing of cases through videoconferencing in the court with effect from Thursday (April 9).

Earlier, the Supreme Court had issued guidelines for courts to function through videoconferencing during COVID-19 pandemic.

Filing of cases can be done by sending the scanned copies of applications and relevant documents through email to efilngohc@gmail.com.

In case of difficulty in joining the videoconferencing session or in case of any grievance regarding quality or audibility of feed of videoconferencing, anyone can contact the VC Helpline Number: 9437900550.

"Advocates/ Parties whose cases shall be heard through videoconferencing are requested to remain in readiness one hour prior to commencement of court hours for the purpose of testing the functionality of video conferencing."

Such Advocates/Parties are further requested to ensure availability of the Video Conferencing software applications (as mentioned in the scheme) in their respective devices prior to testing," the Orissa High Court said in a statement.

K'put Divyang makes thousands of masks

During COVID crisis

SURAJ MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prasad Pattnayak (44), a deaf and dumb, has hogged the limelight due to making thousands of masks for others during COVID-19 crisis.

Born in remote forested Panchada village of Laxmipur Tehsil of backward Koraput district amidst infamous Left Wing Extremism activities, Prasad was neglected by society, villagers and family even after no doctor or deity could cure his deafness.

Once he was spotted in a skill development mapping camp organised by District Social Security Officer (DSSO) Simanchal Mohapatra along with chairperson of an NGO Gurukul Foundation Smita Tripathy and team, who convinced his parents for skill

training in collaboration with Centurion University, Bhubaneswar.

The Bhima Bhoi Bhinnakhyama Samartha Abhiyan Sibir at Koraput became a turning point for Prasad. He later came to Bhubaneswar to join free training, boarding and lodging at GFET, Bhubaneswar and got employment as an apparel dress designer and advanced sewing machine operator, said DSSO Mohapatra.

There he learned proper Indian sign language, yoga, participated in games and sports and other wellness programmes too.

Prasad alerted all his friends in Odisha about COVID-19 through video calling to become aware of social distancing, a call by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik,



whom he met during his recent visit to his training centre. Prasad and others drew a portrait of CM and PM on canvass and CM put signature on it, which inspired Prasad a lot to do something for society, said Prasad in sign language.

Prasad recently prepared hundreds of masks to be sent to other severely COVID-19 areas in the country with hard work day and night, which made him a hero among divyang community all over the State and outside who are linked through video calling apps.

121 city drug stores to give home delivery

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), in coordination with the State Drug Controller, has identified as many as 121 medicine stores across the capital city for home delivery of medicines during the lockdown period.

Denizens can contact the stores through call/WhatsApp, the BMC said on Thursday, adding that while placing an order through WhatsApp, one needs to send a clear photo of the prescription besides mentioning the name of the patient, contact number and address.

The BMC published the list of the medicine stores meant for home delivery of drugs.

Lingaraj Chandan Yatra likely to be cancelled

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After cancellation of the Annual Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lord Lingaraj here due to the coronavirus crisis, now uncertainty is looming large over Chandan Yatra of the Lingaraj Temple.

This year, Chandan Yatra is scheduled on April 26, the first day of the annual festival. If COVID-19 lockdown gets extended further, the Yatra would be suspended as the rituals for the event could not be performed later on other days, the temple servitors said.

The Chandan Yatra is observed at the Puri Jagannath Temple and other

shrines across the State. Every year, it begins on holy Akshaya Trutiya and continues till Chandan Purnima, as per Hindu almanac.

According to lockdown guidelines, no religious event can take place during lockdown to maintain physical distancing in the battle against COVID-19. Under the rule, the annual sojourn of Lord Lingaraj on Ashokastami was suspended this year.

"If the lockdown restriction period gets extended, no religious programme can be held as per the Government guideline," said Lingaraj Temple Executive Officer Prasanna Dash.

COVID-19

Odia doctor in nat'l research group

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha-born physician Prof Digambar Behera has been included in the Clinical Research Group formed by the National Task Force for COVID-19.

A total of five research groups have been formed by the National Task Force to identify research priorities, develop research protocols and identify partner-institutes for initiating studies. Dr Behera is a part of the Clinical Research Group.

Prof Behera is a highly-regarded physician in respiratory medicine. Born in Cuttack district in 1953, he had his MBBS from the SCB Medical College, Cuttack, MD from PGIMER, Chandigarh, and MNAMS qualification in General Medicine and Respiratory Medicine.



Since 1981, he has held several positions at the PGIMER, Chandigarh where he is currently working as Professor and Head, Department of Pulmonary Medicine.

Odisha-born doc dies of corona in UK

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

An eminent doctor settled in the United Kingdom has died due to COVID-19 disease.

The London-based consultant psychiatrist Dr Radharaman Sharma, who was in his late 70s, died late on Monday night. He has two sons, one an interventional cardiologist in London and the other a dentist.

After completing his intermediate studies from the Stewart School in Cuttack, Dr



Sharma had pursued MBBS course at the SCB Medical College. Later on, he relocated to the UK for career advancement where he settled.

Scared youths fall at Baladevjew feet

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

As coronavirus positive cases are coming out in the State each passing day, a band of youths fell back on God's mercy to tide over the crisis.

In order to appease Lord Baladevjew to save the whole country from the pandemic, they organised a special puja at the Tulashi Kshetra.

Science has failed to tackle the virus, whereas chaos and panic has become the order of the day in most of the countries, including India. So unflinching faith on Lord will come handy, said the youths

who fell at the feet of Lord Baladevjew to find a solution.

Sunakar Pradhan, a local youth, said, "When doctors fail to save patients, they ask his relatives to pray God. So in the ongoing crisis period due to Corona virus, we decided to offer a special puja at the Baladevjew temple to save the world."

"We communicated with the sevayat of the Baladevjew temple and asked him to perform a special puja by offering 108 basil leaves on the feet of the Lord and lighting an Akhanda (diya) for 21 days," said Pradyumna Moharana, another youth.

SOG Havildar cremated with State honours

PNS ■ BARGARH

The body of SOG Havildar Prakash Sahoo was given the guard of honour when it reached his village Katapali village under the Sadar police station in Bargarh district on Wednesday.

Later, it was cremated with State honours after tributes were paid by senior police officials and other personnel. Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari, Bargarh SP Padmini Sahoo and many locals were present during the cremation.

Prakash was the son of former Physical Education Teacher Bharat Sahoo of Katapali. Notably, Prakash was imparting hand grenade training to some new recruits when the grenade exploded when it fell from the hands of a trainee Barsa Hansda.

Prakash was killed on the spot trying to save Hansda, who also sustained severe injuries. More than 24 trainees were present when the incident took place at the SOG Training Centre at Chandaka, on the outskirts.

40 kilogram venison seized; taxidermists held

KENDRAPADA: Rajnagar forest personnel on Wednesday arrested two poachers of Okilapala village under Rajnagar police limits for poaching a male spotted deer. They also seized more than 40 kg of raw venison, a snare and two bags from the accused's possessions, informed Range officer of Rajnagar forest Surjit Sahu.

The two arrested were identified as Dinabandhu Das and his son Pratap Das.

According to Ranger Sahu, the duo along with another fellow villager Braja Sundar Das, allegedly trapped the male spotted deer after trespassing into Sunei Rupee protected forest. Acting on the tip-off from a reliable source, the forest personnel conducted a raid at the house of the taxidermists.

Centre responsible for corona spread

State must supply essentials at doorsteps: Congress

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State Congress spokesperson Ashok Samal has blamed the Union Government for the spread of coronavirus in the country and demanded that all households be supplied with essential commodities at their doorsteps by the State Government during the lockdown.

"The coronavirus was first seen in China in November 2019 and subsequently it spread to other countries. By now, thousands of people have died. The virus came and spread in our country as the Union Government remained callous between December 2019 and March 15, 2020. Had foreign people been screened at airports and ports, the alarming situation would not have occurred in our country," said Samal.

He also blamed the Union Government for allowing a Tablighi Jamaat to be held at Nizamuddin in New Delhi, which turned a hotspot of COVID-19, from March 10. Samal said common people

have been facing difficulties due to the long lockdown period. While gatherings occurred in markets after the 48-hour shutdown in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, police assaulted many people on the charge of not maintaining social distancing. While the State Government imposed lockdown without any preparation, people are being beaten inhumanly in streets, alleged Samal.

He demanded that the Government take all steps to supply essential commodities like ration, vegetables, meat and medicines at doorsteps of people. He warned that lingering of lockdown would have an adverse impact on the economy.

Startups seek support to survive COVID impact

CM urged for six months' incentives, soft loans

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously dented the startup ecosystem in Odisha and many of them may shut shops and the impact would be devastating for all the stakeholders. So, the State Government should provide the required support to the sector to ensure its objective of creating employment and making contribution to the economy.

Raghu G has submitted a petition to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in this regard.

He informed that 595 entities of diversified sectors are registered as Startup with Startup Odisha. They include e-commerce, agri business, art and culture, ITES, jewellery, IT products and healthcare.

While it takes around seven to 10 years for a startup eco-system to evolve and show its true potential, in Odisha, it is in a nascent stage, needing proper care and grooming.

In view of COVID impact, the startups need one time help to take care of their expenses.

Any company registered between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020 should get Rs 15,000 for six months starting May 1, 2020.

Any company registered before April 1, 2019 and in

idea stage to get Rs 25,000 for six months starting May 1, 2020.

Any company registered before April 1, 2019 and in pilot stage with at least one client should be provided Rs. 40,000 for six months.

Any company registered before April 1, 2019 and in growth stage with at least 15 client and/or revenue of Rs 1 lakh per month should get Rs 50,000 for six months.

The CEO also proposed to provide soft loans to the above four categories of startups. The Government can be the guarantor for the soft loans or disburse collateral free soft loans to interested startups. The four categories of startups should get approval to get soft loans up to Rs 5,00,000, Rs 7,50,000 (both payable in two-three years), Rs 10,00,000 and Rs 15,00,000 (both payable in three-four years), respective-

ly. The CEO also suggested that the Government provide credit guarantee for startups if the soft loan would take longer and is an issue.

Besides, he demanded that the Government expedite the process of approval for any pending application for financial assistance for any startup and also release of any payments towards subsidy or payment pending by any Government department.

Startups should be given priority to get Government projects apart from the existing incentives.

"At this dire time of extraordinary economic downturn, Startups need your support else all our collective efforts of the past few years will go in vain. We stand shoulder to shoulder with your efforts to collectively fight against the devastation brought over by COVID-19," read the letter.

MV tax period now up to June 30

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

To ease the burden of tax payment on various carriage vehicle owners, the State Government on Thursday extended the grace period for payment of Motor Vehicle (MV) tax and additional tax to June 30.

A notification to this effect was issued by the Commerce and Transport Department.

The department said due to the lockdown situation, the owners of stage carriages and contract carriages are not able to pay their MV tax and additional tax for April. Similarly, owners of the goods carriages are unable to submit their quarterly tax for the period April-June.

HC partially lifts ban on use of vehicles

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Orissa High Court has directed the State Government to bring out a composite planning on availability of essential commodities locally so that people during the lockdown period can walk the distance to procure the commodities.

"Until such mechanism is in place during which medicines, vegetables and grocery items are available within walking distance for all...; there should not be complete ban of movement of two-wheelers in the State," the HC said.

The HC order further said the relaxation of use of two-wheelers be made subject to satisfactory explanation by such riders. "This (order) may not

3 more corona test centres soon

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

COVID-19 testing facilities would be available at three more places in the State soon, informed Health & Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das on Thursday.

The facilities would be operational at the MKCG Medical College Hospital in Brahmapur from April 12, at the VIMAR in Burla from April 15 and Ispat General Hospital (IGH) in Rourkela on April 17, the Minister said.

Planning is being done to carry out at least 1,000 tests per day, he added. Currently, the tests are being carried out at the RMRC in Bhubaneswar, SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack and AIIMS, Bhubaneswar.

7 Covid hospitals set up

Total bed strength is 1,497 to fight corona

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While the Union Government and the State Governments are mulling all sorts of efforts to contain spread of deadly virus COVID-19, Odisha leads the show.

The State has so far created seven special COVID-19 Hospitals with a total bed strength of 1,497. Apart from two major hospitals like SUM Hospital and KIMS Hospital

in Bhubaneswar, Ashiwini Hospital has already become operational in Cuttack.

Two Tata Hospitals at Duburi in Jajpur district and at Joda in Keonjhar district are also ready for COVID-19 treatment. Hi-tech Hospital is also all prepared to treat patients at Rourkela in Sundergarh district, while ID Hospital in Puri is also ready for treatment of COVID-19 patients, an official said.

And the Odisha Government on Tuesday said it has separated novel corona virus patients from other sick persons in the State-run medical facilities. The State Government made it clear as people fear that they may get corona virus infection if they visit the hospitals.

The Government also said that doctors, nurses and other para-medical staff engaged to treat COVID-19 patients will not handle other patients.

"I assure people that there is no COVID-19 patient in any of the State-run medical colleges including SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack and other district headquarters hospitals. Therefore, people can freely visit Government and private hospitals without fear," said Principal Secretary Health and Family Welfare, Nikunj Bihari Dhal.

Dhal said there is no COVID patient in SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack or in any other medical college in the State. Though there is one COVID-19 negative person admitted at the Capital Hospital here, he will be discharged soon.

People should now feel safe in general hospitals, both Government and private, the Health Secretary said, adding the private hospitals have been instructed not to admit any COVID-19 patients and to refer all with flu symptoms

to the special hospitals, said the Principal Secretary.

Indicating that the number of COVID-19 patients have swelled in rich countries because they did not segregate novel corona virus patients from others, Dhal said the Odisha Government was extremely careful in this regard.

He said the State has, meanwhile, developed seven special COVID-19 hospitals where confirmed and suspected patients are being treated. Therefore, people should not be afraid that they will get corona infection if they visit hospitals.

Director of Medical Education and Training (DMET) Prof CBK Mohanty said private hospitals have been asked to create separate COVID corner for screening of the patients. If they suspect COVID in any one, they will refer it to a COVID hospital, he informed.

Darswal gets Harvard PH programme

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha-cadre 2002-batch IAS officer Dr Mrinalini Darswal has been selected by Harvard for Doctoral Studies in Public Health, the niche DrPh Programme of Harvard TA Chan School of Public Health.

She is an MBBS degree holder with 21 gold medals. The In fact DrPh Programme of Harvard TA Chan School of Public Health is the highest degree in public health in the world. It is awarded to just seven to 12 candidates every year.

Dr Darswal's series of research articles on COVID-19 are globally appreciated. She is just finishing her Masters in Economics from the University



of Texas, Austin. Earlier, Dr Darswal had served as Special Secretary, Health and Drugs Controller, Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Presently, she is Special Resident Commissioner, Odisha Bhawan, New Delhi.

Briefs

SBI DONATES UMBRELLAS TO KANDHAMAL COPS



Phulbani: The State Bank of India (SBI) handed over 100 white umbrellas to the Kandhamal Superintendent of Police here on Wednesday for use by police personnel engaged to enforce the Covid-19-related lockdown.

MASKS, SOAPS FOR SANITATION WORKERS



Koraput: Members of the Biju Aeronautics Employees' Union (BAEU), HAL, Sunabeda on Wednesday distributed masks, soap, gloves and soft drink Mazza to sanitation workers engaged to sanitise different parts of Sunabeda in view of corona threat. BAEU secretary Srinibas Manik, working secretary Natabar Mohanty and office bearers Siba Jena, Simanchal Bhanja, Kapila Patra, Gopal Brahma and Alok Ray distributed the items.

7 ENTRY POINTS TO FATEGARH BLOCKED

Bhupur (Nayagarh): To strictly implement the coronavirus-related lockdown in Fategarh block, police have blocked seven entry points to the block by erecting barricades at Manipur, Manir, Karadapalli, Olas, Jagannath Prasad and Ainsakhil villages. The police took this move as it was seen people were coming to the area in early morning hours. The police, however, erected a temporary camp at Manipur to look into exigencies. If a person has any urgent work, then he or she is allowed entry after his or her name, mobile number and address are noted down by police.

Lockdown woes: Tete meets S'garh DM

Wants all needy be provided food, ration

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

Sundargarh Sadar BJP MLA Kusum Tete discussed with Sundargarh Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan on Wednesday regarding various problems faced by public during the lockdown.

She apprised the Collector regarding omission of the names of the persons in the list of beneficiaries due to some mistakes, those who have no Aadhar card or omission due to some reasons.

All the poor people must get food and ration without any discrimination, she demanded.

The MLA also raised the issue regarding illegal sale of liquor and strict action against the offenders. She told that



there is a surge in supply of country liquor which should be stopped forthwith.

She alleged a liquor mafia-police nexus in the district.

Tete also urged the need for adequate availability of masks and insisted for immediate supply.

Satkosia Tiger Reserve ponds to be disinfected

PNS ■ ANGUL/ROURKELA

In view of an advisory by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change following reports of a tiger infected with COVID-19 in the United States, the State Forest Department is planning to disinfect ponds near human habitats in the Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Angul district as a precautionary measure against transmission of the virus from humans to animals.

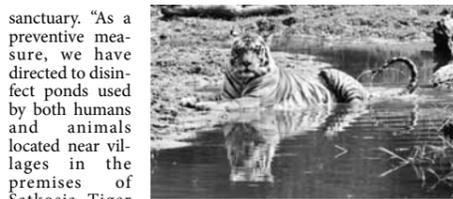
Notably, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has put all the tiger reserves in the country on high alert.

Angul RCCF Pradeep Raj Karat said the NTCA has issued an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for safety of wild animals in forests. As human is the only medium for spreading the virus in animals, restrictions will be imposed on free movement of people in the wildlife

sanctuary. "As a preventive measure, we have directed to disinfect ponds used by both humans and animals located near villages in the premises of Satkosia Tiger Reserve." The authorities have restricted villagers from accessing the ponds directly and to use water after collecting it from ponds.

Another sanctuary official said that there is a move to disinfect the ponds with potassium permanganate. The sanctuary houses only two Royal Bengal tigers. While one has been kept in an enclosure, the other has been released into the wild.

Adhering to the NTCA guidelines, officials have been asked to sanitise their hands and maintain social distancing while handling the tigers and other animals. All the animals



in the forest would be monitored through CCTV.

Meanwhile, as per an advisory issued by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) authorities have begun a disinfection process at a zoo in the premises of Indira Gandhi (IG) Park in the steel city.

A team headed by senior veterinary officer Dr Avijit Biswas has been assigned to disinfect the entire zoo managed by the RSP. The officials have been engaged in spraying chemicals at the zoo to prevent transmission of COVID-19 to the animals.

207 bikes seized for lockdown violation

235 court-forwarded in Brahmapur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Brahmapur police arrested and court-forwarded 235 persons and seized 207 motorcycles for violating lockdown restrictions imposed to curb the coronavirus outbreak in the city.

Besides, police have also imposed fines on 11 persons for not using masks while purchasing essentials.

"We have been urging peo-

ple to stay at home and remain safe. We have also urged them not to move out of house and return with infection. Earlier, we were releasing arrestees on bails from police stations. Now, the violators would be arrested and forwarded to court," said SP Pinak Mishra.

Informing that 65 bikers have been issued fine chalsans, the SP said all seized vehicles would be released only after April 14. He said all police personnel deployed at entry points have been asked to ensure that nobody enters or moves out of the during the ongoing lockdown period.

Corona effect Vegetables prices all time low in Sambalpur

Farmers hit hard

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

The prices of all varieties of vegetables are falling sharply in Sambalpur in comparison to other parts of the State. Most importantly, the price of potato is Rs 20 only in Sambalpur whereas it is Rs 25 to Rs 28 in other parts.

A few days back at the beginning of the lockdown, the price of potato had reached Rs 40. Collector Subham Saxena,

after getting a complaint, had assured of prompt action and even went to the extent of initiating legal action against the hoarders and black marketers. And that worked.

The result was that suddenly price came down to Rs 20 and it remained so since then.

Potato and onion apart, the prices of other vegetables, green vegetables in particular, are also the lowest. The reason is there is no buyer for the produce in the markets in Sambalpur and Bargarh districts due to the lockdown and fear of public to go to market freely. Hence, the farmers prefer to sell their produce to the middlemen at throw away

price. This has led to a sudden dipping in the prices of the vegetables in the ongoing summer with brinjal selling just at Rs 15, ladies finger at Rs 20-30, bitter gourd at Rs 30 and rest others at equally lower prices.

"We have no market now. It is also equally difficult to come from our villages to Sambalpur," said roadside vendor Ratani Mirdha from Kadalimunda of Jujumura block.

Mrutyunjay Panigrahi, a leading farmer of Padiabahal, lamented that it was the farmers who had faced the jerks due to the sudden fall in prices of vegetables.

Ensure essential commodities' availability: Centre

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has been advised to take urgent steps to ensure availability of essential goods by invoking provisions of the Essential Commodities (EC) Act 1955.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has said the Government of India under the Disaster Management Act has allowed manufacture, production, transport and other related supply-chain activities in respect of essential goods like foodstuff, medicines and medical equipment.

However, there are reports of loss of production due to various factors, especially reduction in labour supply.

In this situation, the possibility of inventory building, hoarding and black marketing, profiteering and speculative trading, and the resulting price rise of essential goods cannot be ruled out, said Bhalla. He said these measures

include fixing of stock limits, capping of prices, enhancing production, inspection of accounts of dealers and other such actions.

Offences under EC Act are criminal offences and may result in imprisonment of seven years or fine or both.

He advised the State Government also to consider detention of offenders under the Prevention of Black-Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980.

The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is authorising State Government to notify orders under the EC Act, 1955 by relaxing the requirement or prior concurrence of the Central Government up to June 30, 2020.

Bhalla has urged Chief Secretary to take urgent steps to ensure availability of these commodities at fair prices for public at large.

Three injured in bear attack in Balangir

PNS ■ BALANGIR

Three people were injured when a bear attacked them in different villages in the Titilagarh Forest Range in Balangir district on Thursday morning.

According to forest officials, a bear first attacked a woman, Kabita Bhoi, of Yubamal village while she had gone to her house backyard to attend to nature's call. The bear attacked her in her face, hand and other parts of her body. She was taken to the Sainthala Community Health Centre for treatment.

As locals raised alarm and drove the bear out of the village, the animal attacked two more persons, Kishore Kumbhar and Anjana Majhi, of Dehel village when they were going to their agriculture fields.

After injuring the three persons, the bear went to the other side of the Lanth river.

Sub-Collector thrashed by villagers

PNS ■ NABARANGPUR

Nabarangpur district Sub-Collector Bhaskar Raita was allegedly thrashed by villagers at Jhadabandhaguda under Nandahandi block on Thursday.

The Sub-Collector was visiting the village accompanied by the CDPO to inquire into charges levelled by villagers in connection with the local Anganwadi Centre. Locals alleged that children were not getting boiled eggs at the Anganwadi Centre.

While the Sub-Collector and the CDPO were discussing the matter with villagers, some of them attacked them. The Sub-Collector sustained injuries and later was admitted to the Tentulikhunti hospital.

Though no one lodged a complaint till yet, police suo moto investigated the matter after receiving the information and detained two persons.

2 R'kela shops sealed for selling non-essentials

₹50K fine collected; seized items set on fire

PNS ■ ROURKELA

The Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) on Thursday stepped up its efforts to enforce the COVID-19 lockdown and sealed two shops for breaching the rules at Udit Nagar here.

The shops sealed are Doyal Enterprises in Kacheri Road and Govind Enterprises at Bisra Dahar Road.

Tipped off, five teams of the RMC along with police conducted raid and found the two shops selling items like tobacco and soft drinks despite the lockdown order issued by the Government.

During the raid, the enforcement team seized a



huge cache of cigarettes, tobaccos and soft drinks worth around Rs 1.50 lakh. The RMC slapped a fine of Rs 50,000 on the shop owners and set on fire the seized items.

Similar raids were also carried out simultaneously at the Daily Market, Traffic Gate and

S'pur youths feed distressed at railway station

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Youths and residents of Fatak area of Gopalmal, Budharaja, have come forward to serve the people in distress, particularly in terms of providing food to the hungry ones.

Since the place is almost on the Sambalpur road railway station many strangers are seen here every day.

Due to closure of rail and road services, many labourers could not return their homes and have stayed put there. Mainly public places are their place of living. Temporary shades in totally shabby conditions are homes for daily labourers of outside. And now there is none to feed these people or look after here.

Most pathetic is that they don't have any address in any part of the country. A shed (home) over their head is also a dream. And this came to the notice of the youths of the Maa Mahamaya Shop Owners' Association, Fatak, who are both shopkeepers and residents of the Fatak area and they started a 'charity canteen' for these needy people.

"At the same time, we have also added the daily labourers from other parts of the States and Murshidabad district of West Bengal in particular who

are passing through utter hard days for lack of food. This is time to help people in distress, we shouldn't always depend on the government," said Bikash Panda, the owner of the Tulsi Stores, Fatak and one of the key persons of this youth group.

"Labourers from Murshidabad (WB) are mainly from other religion. But we have no such negative consideration in our mind at this juncture," added the members. "We are providing both lunch and dinner to them," they said.

"In order to maintain social distance and follow the instructions of the Government, we are not allowing these people to sit and eat. We are packing food and distributing them to 300 people everyday of whom we have prepared a list. They are coming in very disciplined manner and taking cooked food packets. Really, it is great pleasure for us to feed the hungry people," said another youth Jayal Meher, the owner of the Meher Bstralaya in Fatak.

"Further, we are also giving food to the strangers whom we see at the spot," said Munu Bani, another organiser of the charitable work. "We will continue till this problem is over. We will never allow anyone to go to bed in empty stomach in our area," said secretary of the association Harshad Sahu.

Sarpanch misbehaves with doc, detained

PNS ■ NAYAGARH

A day after the Odisha police warned of strong action against persons found ill-treating doctors and health workers, the Sarpanch of Madhyakhanda gram anchayat under Nayagarh district's Daspalla block was on Thursday detained by police for allegedly misbehaving with a doctor posted at Madhyakhanda Community Health Centre (CMC).

Sarpanch Ganeshwar Nayak also allegedly gave death threat to the on-duty doctor, Brajendra Kumar. Acting on a complaint of Dr Kumar, police detained the accused and were interrogating him.

Sources said the CHC is run by two doctors. It witnessed rush of patients after the outbreak of coronavirus.

While locals alleged that the doctors remained absent often, the Sarpanch went to the CHC and allegedly hurled abuses at Dr Kumar and asked him to attend the patients regularly.

LOCKDOWN IMPACT Not a single FIR filed by CBI since March 20

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 lockdown has taken a toll on registration of fresh cases by the premier anti-corruption agency, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which has not lodged a single FIR since March 20.

Sources said the agency is functioning from a pool of skeletal staff due to preventive measures like work from home and social distancing.

So only matters of urgency like filing of chargesheets in pressing cases before relevant courts are being taken up amid a slew of restrictions across the country to beat the spread of the pandemic, they pointed out.

In view of the restrictions that also involve checks on movement of personnel besides minimal attendance of staff at agency offices across the country, even questioning of suspects and accused are being undertaken sparingly, said an official.

On the CBI's official website, the new FIRs were posted last on March 20 and thereafter, not a single case has been uploaded.

As per a Supreme Court directive, the new FIRs are supposed to be uploaded on the agency's official website within 24 hours and those of secretive nature and with bearing on ongoing probe need to be posted within 72 hours.



Sources said in the given scenario it will be difficult for the agency to file chargesheets in the stipulated 90-day period in special crimes under the Indian Penal Code and within the requisite 60-day limit for filing chargesheets in anti-corruption cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Once the lockdown and related restrictions are lifted post-containment of the viral disease that has hit almost each and every country around the globe, it will be difficult for the sleuths to wrap up probe and the agency may be bound to seek extensions from related courts to pursue the investigation, another official said.

Processing of Letters Rogatory (judicial requests) and notices under the Interpol have also been hit due to the Covid-related containment measures, leading to delays in wrapping up probe in certain cases, another official said.

As per the prevailing instructions, non-essential staff barely visit the agency headquarters here and some of them attend their offices barely once a week, added a source.

Modi assures help to all countries in crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday assured all countries that India will help them in this hour of crisis.

In response to US President Donald Trump thanking him for allowing export of the hydroxychloroquine drug to his country, the Prime Minister said, "Times like these bring friends closer. The India-US Partnership is stronger than ever. India shall do everything possible to help humanity".

Thanking India and Modi, the US President said India's help during this crisis will not be forgotten. "Extraordinary times require even closer cooperation between friends. Thank you India and the Indian people for the decision on HCQ. Will not be forgotten! Thank you Prime Minister @NarendraModi for your strong leadership in helping not just India, but humanity, in this fight!" Trump tweeted on Wednesday. He later described PM Modi as 'terrific' for allowing the export of the key drug.

Trump had earlier said the US too would retaliate if India continues with its export ban. Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro also thanked India and Modi for allowing the export of the life-saving drug being used to treat Covid-19 patients.

In his address to his nation on Wednesday, Bolsonaro thanked Modi and the people of India for the 'timely help to the people of Brazil.' He said: "We have more good news. As an outcome of my direct conversation with Prime Minister of India, we will receive, by Saturday, raw materials to continue production of hydroxychloroquine so we can treat patients of COVID-19 as well as of lupus, malaria, and arthritis. I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India for such

Pakistan trying to undermine India's role in war on corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as India is trying to move at a fast pace to jointly fight the coronavirus pandemic in the South Asian region, Pakistan is trying to undermine New Delhi's efforts in this regard by making efforts to bring the coronavirus-related interactions under the formal South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) umbrella by seeking to involve its secretariat. This attempt is to get free hand to block India's initiatives.

Red flagging this development, Government sources said here on Thursday the activities undertaken by the SAARC countries in the recent days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held video conference with heads of all

the States of this association were under extraordinary circumstances to deal with challenge. These endeavours were moving in a result-oriented manner without being bound by any procedural formalities which could prove to be constraints.

Sources said Pakistan's efforts to bring COVID-19 related interactions under the formal SAARC umbrella was an attempt to get free hand to block all initiatives and proposals by India by using the SAARC charter provisions and rules of procedure including application of principle of consensus for the drafting of agenda, outcome document, concurrence of all member states for each and every thing every step of the way.

Sources said keeping control of the activities that

supply and, on March 25, banned export until domestic reserves are considered sufficient. The ban was lifted with the Indian government saying it will allow the export "in view of the humanitarian aspects of the pandemic". Trump responded on Wednesday: "Thank you India and the Indian people... Will not be forgotten".

The United States is now the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic with nearly four lakh active cases and nearly 15,000 deaths. Trump in the last few days has claimed that hydroxychloroquine will be the "game changer" in fighting the pandemic.

ia drug and more than 30 countries including the US were urging New Delhi to ease the restrictions imposed on March 25 on its export. The US's Food and Drug Administration has identified this drug as a treatment option against the COVID-19 virus. Bolsonaro, who was the chief guest for India's Republic Day celebrations this year, January, spoke to Modi last week to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister assured all possible support to the people of Brazil.

India manufactures around 70 per cent (approximately 20 crore tablets of 200 mg each) of the world's

which continues through mid-July, harvesting of crops begins by October. Besides holding the kharif conference, Tomar in the meeting asked State Governments to sensitise field agencies about exemptions given to the farm-related activities and allow movement of farm produce, farming products, fertilisers and farm implements and machinery.

In the meeting, the crucial issues related to farming operations and harvesting, agriculture marketing and mandi operations, procurement at minimum support price (MSP), provision of inputs (seeds and fertilisers), and issues related to logistics and movement of agriculture and horticulture produce were discussed.

Tomar also appreciated the proactive steps taken by the State Governments to ensure agriculture activities even during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmad, appearing for the petitioner, contended that in view of the ongoing lockdown

Drones playing key role in India's Covid-19 fight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drones are playing a key role in India's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, especially for sanitising crowded places, narrow stretches and market areas besides, of course, carrying out surveillance of public to ensure adherence of lockdown orders.

Cities big or small like Madurai, Noida, Jaipur, Raipur, Warangal, Guwahati, Chennai, Bengaluru and Mumbai among several others are putting the drones to good use.

The drones apart, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), several cities have also come up with disinfection tunnel or cabin for disinfection of public places using sodium hypochlorite.

With drones are being viewed as tools to limit human exposure, several smart cities have decided to use the flying machines to disinfect the public spaces in the situation where human access gets difficult.

As per the information provided by the MoHUA, Chennai, Guwahati, Bengaluru and Raipur have decided to use drone to disinfect the public places where human access gets difficult. In Coimbatore, authorities used drones to sterilise public spaces.

Earlier, these drones were used to spray disinfectants on farmlands. China and Australia have used drones to disinfect the streets, shopping malls, and playgrounds to combat the coronavirus outbreak.

The drones apart, according to the MoHUA, Mysore and Tiruppur, have installed a disinfection tunnel/chambers at the entry gate of vegetable wholesale market which is now replicated in numerous cities at their agricultural/vegetable markets. Modeled on this, various establishments entrusted

with provision of essential services are deploying the disinfection chambers. In Amritsar, sanitisation of whole city is under way using chemicals as specified. Help from fire brigade is taken for such sprays.

To facilitate availability of essential supplies such as fresh vegetables the agricultural markets have been made operational in cities and hand-washing facilities are being provided at vegetable markets and other public places, the Ministry said.

In Patna, authorities have ensured disinfection of all public places in the city using Jetting Machines since 24 March 2020. "Sanitization of all the public utility buildings such as banks, hospitals, etc. has been undertaken. Bihar State Road Transport Corporation buses were sanitised by Patna Municipal Corporation. This step has been taken as a precautionary measure against corona virus outbreak," the ministry said in a statement.

According to the MoHUA, Rajkot uses high-clearance boom sprayers for disinfection of public streets and public places. Soon 14 more such machines to cover all 18 wards of the City.

Authorities in Guwahati are using anti-bacterial sprays even as many as 1,200 workers are assigned duty, door-to-door garbage collection. Authorities in Dharamshala are using fire tenders for spraying sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution for comprehensive disinfection of public places. In Ranchi, one percent hypochlorite solution is used for sanitization of whole city using fogging machines.

A solution with 5 percent Lizol is being applied in public places, markets, schools, roads, using 7 numbers of Jet Roding Machines twice on daily basis in Madurai.

Centre asks States to look into farmers' grievances

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Admitting that farmers are facing shortage of labourers at the time of harvesting of rabi crops, the Centre has asked the State Governments to issue necessary instructions to facilitate selling of produce by farmers at their doorsteps and also to ensure smooth inter-State and intra-State movement of machines used for harvesting and sowing, such as combine harvesters. The directive is meant to achieve two objectives - to decongest mandis in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and to allow farmers to sell their products at remunerative prices by allowing aggregators to source it directly from them.

The ministry has also issued an order increasing procurement from 25 quintals per day per farmer to 40 quintals per day per farmers

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who held a video conference with State agriculture ministers and other State officials, also informed them that the kharif national conference will be held on April 16 through video conferencing. During the discussion, various issues relating to harvest procurement, availability of inputs, credit, insurance and inter-State movement of agriculture produce came up. While some of these issues were solved immediately, other issues requiring deliberations were noted with the assurance to the States that they would be looked into and necessary action would be taken in due course.

At the meeting, states have stated that acute scarcity of labour has posed a serious challenge to crop procurement and is threatening to leave a lasting impact on agriculture as it will delay the harvest of winter-sown crops, particularly wheat, and is delaying the planting of the next crop. Apart from procurement, planting

of cotton and summer 'moong' pulses is a challenge for farmers in Madhya Pradesh, UP, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan because of concerns of labour shortage as well as availability of fertilisers and seeds.

Sources said that the Centre also the States to issue authorisation letters to companies and organisations having a nationwide supply chain of essential goods, allowing them to issue regional passes for easy movement of critical staff and workers to maintain their supply chain.

The video conference assumes importance as quick and effective policy responses



which continues through mid-July, harvesting of crops begins by October. Besides holding the kharif conference, Tomar in the meeting asked State Governments to sensitise field agencies about exemptions given to the farm-related activities and allow movement of farm produce, farming products, fertilisers and farm implements and machinery.

In a statement, the agriculture ministry said that Kharif National Conference will be held on April 16, 2020, through video conferencing.

A decision in this regard was taken after reviewing the relief measures taken for farmers with state agriculture ministers and senior officials through a video conference on Wednesday.

Normally, about 106 million hectares are planted during the kharif crop season. While the onset of monsoon kick-starts sowing in June,

lockdown. Kharif sowing begins with the onset of the June-September south-west monsoon.

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Top court asks Centre, J&K to reply on plea for 4G services restoration

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court asked the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Thursday to respond to a plea seeking directions to them to restore 4G internet in the Union Territory in view of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic.

A bench of Justices N V Ramana, R Subhash Reddy and B R Gavi issued notices to them and sought their reply within a week on the plea filed by 'Foundation for Media Professionals' which has assailed an order of the J&K administration on March 26 that restricted to the internet speed to 2G only in the UT.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmad, appearing for the petitioner, contended that in view of the ongoing lockdown

it is very necessary to enhance the technology and connectivity in the Union Territory. He said that the virtual classes of students, whose schools are shut due to the lockdown, can only be done through enhancement of technology and better connectivity.

The bench said it is issuing notice which may be served through e-mail on standing counsel of the Jammu and Kashmir administration and the Centre.

The plea filed through advocate Shadan Farasat, while seeking restoration of 4G internet services, alleged that the action of the Government was violative of Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of speech) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmad, appearing for the petitioner, contended that in view of the ongoing lockdown

Implement five-point plan suggested by Modi, Nadda asks BJP State units



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Thursday asked BJP's North, South and Central zone State units to implement five points suggested by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that includes feeding poor affected by the lockdown, contributing to PM Cares fund and distributing face masks.

Nadda held five separate meetings here with the BJP state chiefs, district and mandal heads and reviewed party's relief work in the light of coronavirus spread, said a BJP statement. The interaction was done through audio conferencing.

The States and cities which came under review included Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Maharashtra, Mumbai, Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadar Nagar Haveli, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Nadda said Prime Minister is leading the global corona battle with a message of 'vasudev Kutumbkum'.

He asked party workers and leaders to implement five-point suggestions of Modi which include feeding poor, each worker making 40 people contribute to PM Cares fund, installation of 'Arogya app' and making and distribution of face masks.

Nadda lauded the example set by 60-year-old Devika Bhandari of Uttarakhand who he said had donated her lifetime savings to PM cares fund.

The work of some of the state units towards the containment of coronavirus was being done for the second or third time, BJP said.

TO HELP COMBAT SCOURGE OF CORONA

Govt allows makers of industrial oxygen to manufacture oxygen for medical use

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has allowed makers of industrial oxygen for medical use to help combat the scourge of Covid-19.

Subsequently, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has directed state licensing authorities (SLAs) to urgently grant permission to manufacturers of industrial oxygen to manufacture oxygen provided they meet certain parameters.

Supplemental oxygen therapy is a part of the clinical management of COVID-19. It is the use of oxygen as a medical treatment. This also includes supplementing oxygen for low blood oxygen, carbon monoxide toxicity, cluster headaches and to maintain anaesthetics and while inhaled anaesthetics are given.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), although the majority of people with COVID-19 have uncomplicated or mild illness

(81%), some will develop severe illness requiring oxygen therapy (14%) and approximately 5% will require intensive care unit treatment. Of those critically ill, most will require mechanical ventilation. The most common diagnosis in severe COVID-19 patients is severe pneumonia.

The move to give nod for oxygen manufacture for therapeutic purpose followed after the All India Industrial Gases Manufacturers' Association (AIGMA) proposed such a request.

As per the DCGI directive issued recently, "it has been decided in public interest that the premises which are having facility to manufacture industrial oxygen should be granted manufacturing license to manufacture oxygen for medical use within 24 hours of the submission of application and fees as per the Drugs and Cosmetics (D&C) Act.

"An undertaking needs to be furnished in writing to manufacture medical oxygen in compliance with standards pre-

scribed in Indian Pharmacopoeia and labeling requirement as per the D&C Act and Rules.

"SLAs are requested to take action in public interest to grant permission to manufacturers of industrial oxygen to manufacture oxygen for medical use in light of COVID 19," DCGI stated.

According to health experts, oxygen therapy is likely to be the single most effective supportive measure in COVID-19 patients in critical stage. Children with emergency signs (obstructed or absent breathing, severe respiratory distress, central cyanosis, shock, coma or convulsions) should receive oxygen therapy during resuscitation.

The expert said that during the ongoing COVID19 pandemic, ventilator support will be required for about 5-8 per cent of patients with symptoms whereas a large number would require Oxygen support. The existing facilities are not adequate to cater for such large requirements.

Revised version of Swachhata App launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched a revised version of Swachhata App to handle queries specific to COVID-19.

According to Secretary, MoHUA, Durga Shankar Mishra, the new version would handle the request for Fogging/Sanitisation, violation of Quarantine, violation of Lockdown, report suspected cases of COVID-19, request for food, shelter, medicine, assistance for COVID-19 patient transport & waste pickup from Quarantined Areas. "These are in addition to the existing categories on the App & citizens may continue to post grievances in either of the categories," he said.

The Swachhata-MoHUA App, a highly popular grievance redressal tool for citizens under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) already has over 1.7 Crore+ urban users across the country, the Ministry said in a statement on Friday.

CITU seeks Govt's intervention in illegal retrenchment, salary cuts in IT sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M)'s trade union wing, CITU, on Thursday urged the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment to intervene in the matter of illegal retrenchments and salary cuts in the Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled services sector in Bengaluru and Kolkata, in violation of the strict guidelines of the Ministry issued in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a letter to the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, CITU general secretary Tapan Sen submitted the list of around 20 companies which terminated the employees during the pandemic.

"In Bengaluru, Travel PD Co terminated one employee, Parallel Wireless in Bengaluru terminated 15 employees, Chumbak Design Private Ltd terminated 247 employees through forced resignation, Hula Infotainment terminated 30 employees, M/s Hem & RA T terminated 4 employees, M/s Mistefa terminated 60 employees through forced resignation, IVT Co terminated 22 employees, M/s Flying Out terminat-



ed 90 employees and M/s Timken and M/s Classlap India Pvt Ltd invoked a 50% salary cut while not paying the March salary to all the employees yet. "In M/s Erevmax Technologies, 80 per cent employees were sent on forced unpaid leave which tantamount to wage cut. M/s Soumak, PICON, EEMDEE Digitronics Pvt Ltd and Pace Computer Service have invoked wage cut on all the employees," said Sen asking the Ministry to take strict action against these companies by the Government. He said certain IT companies in Chennai are also terminating employees through forced resignations.

The CITU leader also reminded the Labour Ministry that there was no action taken against the similar retrenchment incidents by certain Central government PSUs and banks. "All my previous four letters to you cited specific instances of violations of your directive/advisory by way of termination of employment of contract/casual workers in Banks in West Bengal, Border Roads Organisation and Hydro Power Project in Jammu & Kashmir, nonpayment of wages in Jute Mills and Tea Gardens in West Bengal, requesting your corrective intervention to enforce the directive/advisory issued by your office only to all concerned," said Sen.

TN CM warns of community transmission possibility

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami cautioned on Thursday there is every possibility of Tamil Nadu progressing to Stage 3 of COVID-19 from its present status of Stage 2. This means that the State faces the danger of community transmission of the virus which may force the administration to resort to extreme measures like extending the lockdown duration which was supposed to be over by April 15.

Palaniswami was addressing the media on Thursday after presiding over the meeting of the task force constituted by the State Government to monitor control and prevent the spreading of corona virus. The decision would be taken only on the basis of the severity of the spread of the pandemic. The spread has been increasing day by day. Every other day, Corona virus spread has been on the rise, "said the chief minister while asked about the possibility of extending the shut down.

Beela Rajesh, secretary, health and family welfare, in her daily media briefing said that the number of persons tested positive for corona virus in Tamil Nadu stood at 834 on Thursday evening. "Thursday saw 96 persons testing positive for corona virus. Out of this, 84 are from the single source event (Tablighi Jamaat conference held in Delhi)," said Rajesh. This means that 763 out of the 834 corona virus positive cases are from single source event. "We have details of 1480

persons from the State who attended the congregation and returned. Efforts are on to trace all of them. As on Thursday, full-fledged containment activities are happening in 34 districts. We have screened a population of 58 lakh till date," said the secretary. Alarmed over the spurt in the number of persons tested positive for corona virus, the Government has ordered the procurement of 4,00,000 rapid test kits which would give the test results in 30 minutes while

the test kits in service talk a minimum of six hours. This was disclosed by the chief minister while speaking to reporters after meeting the task force committee members. Since the State is not showing any signs of reduction in the corona cases, there has been a demand from all sections in the society for the extension of the lock-down period. While Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Telangana has asked the Centre to extend the 21-day national lock down by another fortnight, veteran

medical scientist Prof B M Hegde and the DMK, Tamil Nadu's main Opposition party demanded that the lock down period be extended by 'at least one month. Prof Hegde, a medical scientist with four FRCP degrees (Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians) from Royal Colleges of Physicians in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dublin said that the situation in the country because of corona virus is a serious matter of concern which could be addressed only by a total shut down. "This is an

extraordinary situation and needs an extra ordinary response. Shut down and social distancing are the best options because we do not have any medicines available to treat the COVID-19 disease," Prof Hegde told The Pioneer. Prof Hegde, who was honored by the President of India with Padma Bhushan is a veteran of many a medical war, notably the one against the H5N2 pandemic flu which claimed hundreds of lives in London said that it was possible to contain the corona virus

with effective measures like social distancing and shut down. Dr Gautham Sigamani, orthopaedics surgeon and member of parliament from Tamil Nadu said it was the 21-day lock down announced by the Government of India which prevented the spread of corona virus from reaching an alarming situation. "I would like to see the national lock down extended at least by another 30 days because human lives are more important than other factors," said Dr Sigamani.

Covid-19 situation in Srinagar alarming: DM 12 new +ve cases in Kerala, total active cases now 258

Srinagar: Spread of coronavirus in the Srinagar district was described as alarming by the administration, here on Thursday. Addressing the media, Srinagar District Magistrate Shahid Iqbal Choudhary termed the coronavirus scenario worrisome but also assured that the administration was doing its best to contain the infection. "There are 14 red zones, here. We have 1,000 teams

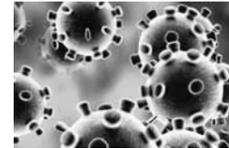
with 4,000 people on job in these zones. We have to ensure that there is no leakage from the red zones. 800-900 people who hid their travel history had been traced by control room through crowd-sourcing of information and were quarantined or put under isolation," Choudhary said. He urged people to cooperate in contact tracing and reveal travel history voluntarily. "Our fight is not only against coronavirus outbreak.

We are also focusing on patients suffering from other terminal illnesses," he said. Denying any shortage of medicines, Choudhary said, two aircrafts full of drugs arrived on April 6 and 7 and one more was expected on Thursday. "We will ensure to get the required medicine from any place across the country. We have stock of life-saving drugs for 6 weeks. We are open to inspection if anybody has

doubt," he said. As doctors and para-medical staff were risking their lives in the line of duty, supplies of PPE kits and masks were being streamlined. "During the lockdown, 9,000 counter transactions and 19,000 ATM transactions are happening a day," he said. SSP Srinagar Haseeb Mughal told the media, aerial surveillance were being conducted through drones and CCTVs were being monitored.

"Deployment on ground is also there," Mughal said. "This is not usual law and order lockdown, but 24x7 lockdown. Don't come out in the evening like you did during other days. "Passes will be valid from the place of stay to the place of work from now onwards. The inter-district movement has to be restricted. Family and friends would not be entertained on one pass," the SSP said. IANS

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said 12 new coronavirus positive cases were reported, taking the total number presently under treatment to 258. The number of cumulative cases, including those treated and cured, now stands at 357. Two deaths had been reported previously, but those



patients had other serious underlying ailments. "Today there are 1,36,195 people under observation at

homes and 723 at various hospitals in the state," said Vijayan. He also said that eight foreign tourists have completely recovered and have been discharged. Meanwhile, the police registered 2,206 cases, recorded the arrest of 2,166 people and seized 1,450 vehicles for violating curfew norms. IANS

24 new COVID-19 cases take tally to 184 in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

With coronavirus cases spiraling up rapidly especially in Kashmir Valley, the Government agencies on ground zero are leaving no stone unturned to track down contact persons of positive cases and conduct door to door testing of suspected cases across areas, which have been declared red zones. Meanwhile, 24 new COVID-19 cases were detected in Jammu&Kashmir on Thursday, taking the total number of infected persons to 184. Late Wednesday night, Jammu region reported its first Coronavirus casualty taking the total death toll due to Covid-19 to four. Three deaths were earlier reported from Kashmir. In another related development, Lt Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Girish Chander Murmu Thursday said, 80,000 Rapid testing kits are expected to arrive in Jammu and Kashmir soon to carry out screening of suspected cases in most affected areas. He made this announcement in an exclusive interview to a local news

channel. On the other hand, government spokesman Rohit Kansal Thursday said, "the total number of cases in the Union Territory has risen to 184, out of which 152 are in Kashmir and 32 in Jammu". He said all the fresh cases were contacts of the already positive patients. "The increase in detection of positive cases in the Union Territory is a result of aggressive testing," he added. The number of positive cases has been steadily increasing in the valley over the past one week. The officials said aggressive contact tracing of the new cases has been started while some new areas have been declared red zones in Srinagar following the detection of fresh cases. In Jammu region as well, efforts are on to track down contacts of positive cases. Since majority of cases had a history of attending religious congregation in Nizamuddin the government agencies have sealed down affected areas across different residential areas to prevent further spread of coronavirus.

Father, son shot in UP

LAKHIMPUR: A 48-year-old man and his 25-year-old son were shot dead on Wednesday when they were on way to purchase grain in Mankipura village under Fardana police station of the district.

According to the police, Ramesh Shukla, his son Bholu Shukla, along with a friend were on way to purchase grain in Mankipura village when unidentified persons shot at them. The assailants also stabbed Bholu with sharp object after opening fire. Bholu died on the spot. The father succumbed to injuries at a hospital. Station House Officer of Fardana police station Vimal Gautam said, "The deceased had enmity with someone and the family is suspecting their role. Ramesh was also accused of murder some years ago, but he was acquitted." Four days ago a man was shot dead in Allahabad. IANS

Alarm bells start ringing; Dharavi records 3 deaths Corona cases mount to 14 in Asia's largest slum

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Alarm bells started ringing in Maharashtra medical circles on Thursday, as Mumbai's Dharavi locality reported third Covid-19 death and 14 positive pandemic cases, even as the police and health authorities began enforcing the lockdown measures strictly in Asia's largest slum. A 70-year-old woman from Kalyanwadi in Dharavi locality died of Coronavirus earlier in the day, taking the number of deaths to three. A high-risk patient, the deceased woman had been undergoing treatment at the KEM Hospital. Her family members had been home-

quarantined. "The swab samples of the family members of the deceased, her neighbours and those with whom she had come in contact with have been sent for clinical analysis," a senior BMC official said. The first Covid-19 death had taken place on April 1, a 56-year-old resident of Dharavi's Shahunagar area, succumbed to the pandemic. On Tuesday, a 64-year-old patient, who had been hospitalised with fever, cough and breathlessness on Tuesday, succumbed on the same day. His death was confirmed by the BMC on Wednesday. In an update released on Thursday, the BMC confirmed the third death in

Dharavi - of a 70-year-old woman - and said that the total number of infected cases had risen to 14 in the largest slum. The infected cases that have been reported so far included: four cases from Dr Baliga Nagar where one person died and three persons are hospitalised, the death of a 35-year-old male doctor from Vaibhav Apartment, two cases - that of men aged 49 years and 25 years - from Mukund Nagar, the case of a 21-year youngster from Madina Nagar, the case of a 35 year man from Dhanwada Chawl who lives in Wadala hostel and that of a 50-year-old woman from Muslim Nagar. Meanwhile, following the total lockdown, there has been no moment of people on the roads, while all shops and establishments, fruit/vegetable markets or vendors, hawkers, etc, have been shut down,

barring medical stores in Dharavi. In an effort to reduce inconvenience to the local residents, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), plans to roll out a scheme for doorstep delivery of essentials in the coming days. State Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad, who represents Dharavi constituency, had - along with Health Minister Rajesh Tope - visited hospitals and quarantine centres in her constituency on Wednesday to take stock of the situation there. Talking to media persons after she attended a State Cabinet meeting earlier in the day, Gaikwad said: "We have requested Home Minister Anil Deshmukh to instruct the local police officials to enforce the lockdown strictly in Dharavi to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. We

have also requested the government to provide more ventilators for the local hospitals and speed up the process of making available test reports of those who are in quarantine. This is essential because more and more cases coming to hospitals". Meanwhile, the BMC authorities have identified 10 hotspots within Dharavi, which is spread over 240-hectare area, and are maintaining vigilance on matters relating to health in the area. There are 60,000 to 70,000 families (more than three lakh people) in Dharavi. Dharavi has several business units - right from textiles to pottery to fabrication to leather industry. Plastic recycling and garbage segregation too is done here. Mainly a hub of cottage industries, it has an estimated 5,000 business entities and 15,000 single-room factories.

K'taka favours lockdown for 2 more weeks: CM

BENGALURU: The Karnataka Cabinet is in favour of extending the 21-day nationwide lockdown by two weeks to fight the coronavirus scare, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said on Thursday.

"All the Ministers are in favour of continuing the lockdown for two more weeks to contain Covid-19 spread in the State, which has recorded 191 positive cases and 6 deaths till date," Yediyurappa told reporters after an emergent Cabinet meeting here. All the Ministers are in favour of continuing the lockdown for two more weeks to contain Covid-19 spread in the State, which has recorded 191 positive cases and 6 deaths till date. Though a panel of eminent doctors on Wednesday recommended continuing the lockdown -- set to end on April 14 - till April 30 only in hotspots like Bengaluru and Mysuru, the Cabinet did not want to take any chance by lifting the lockdown in districts not affected by the virus. "The lockdown should continue for two more weeks to ensure that the number of coronavirus cases do not spike as was the case in some states and to prevent community spread," said Yediyurappa. The panel, headed by eminent doctor Devi Shetty, and C.N. Manjunath, Nagaraj, Ravi and Sudarshan as members, was

set up by the state in March to assess the pandemic and advise measures to contain its fallout across the southern state. "The lockdown should not be lifted in the hotspots or relaxed in the districts with less or zero cases so as to contain the virus and control the situation, especially physical distancing," asserted the Chief Minister. Of the 30 districts in Karnataka, 18 districts have reported corona cases, including two hotspots. "A final decision on the lockdown will be taken on Sunday or Monday after our videoconference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and as per his advice for the welfare of all," added Yediyurappa. Modi had advised the states to suggest if the nationwide lockdown should be extended beyond April 14 or eased with curbs in areas that were free from the infection so far. Though the 21-day lockdown was clamped on March 24 midnight across the country, nine districts of Karnataka have been under shutdown since March 14 on the panel's advice to contain the virus fallout. In a related development, the Cabinet decided to deduct 30 per cent from salaries and allowances of all legislators, amounting to Rs 15.3 crore, for fiscal 2020-21 through an ordinance, as the Assembly is not in session. Governor Vajubhai Vala and Yediyurappa have already pledged their salaries for this year to the CM relief fund for spending on tackling coronavirus. IANS

Gujarat has highest mortality rate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home State of Gujarat has recorded the highest mortality rate ever since the outbreak of coronavirus in the country, while Maharashtra - which has accounted for highest number of deaths and infected cases - has relatively lesser mortality rate than its neighbouring State. Till April 8, Maharashtra reported 72 deaths and 1,135 infected cases, which worked out to a mortality rate of 6.34 per cent, which incidentally is the third highest in the country, according to an analytical report released by the state Medical Education and Drugs Department (MEDD) here on Thursday. On the other hand, Gujarat with 19 deaths and 179 infected cases has topped the list with a mortality rate of 8.94 per cent, while Punjab ranks second

with eight deaths and 101 infected cases has a mortality rate of 7.92 per cent. Kerala with just two deaths and 345 infected cases recorded the lowest mortality rate of 0.57 per cent, while Rajasthan with three deaths and 381 infected cases has emerged second lowest in terms of mortality rate which is just 0.78 per cent. Tamil Nadu with eight deaths 737 infected cases has also fared well by emerging as a state with third lowest mortality rate of 1.10 per cent. Surprisingly, Uttar Pradesh with four deaths and four infected cases has done well by coming out as a state with fourth lowest mortality figure of 1.10 per cent. The other states which have succeeded in containing the numbers deaths arising out of Covid-19. The relatively low mortality rates other states include: Andhra Pradesh

- 1.14 per cent (4 deaths, 348 infected cases), Delhi -1.34 per cent(nine deaths,669 infected cases), Telangana -1.67 per cent (7 deaths,427 infected cases) and Haryana -2.04 per cent (three deaths,147 infected cases). In the high mortality list, Madhya Pradesh with 13 deaths and 229 cases has emerged as the fourth -- 5.68 per cent. Himachal Pradesh with just one death and 18 positive cases has a mortality rate of 5.55 per cent -- followed by West Bengal with five deaths and 103 positive cases which has notched a mortality rate of 4.85 per cent. The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir with four deaths and 158 infected cases has passed the muster by setting for a mortality rate of 2.53 per cent. Karnataka with five deaths and 181 positive cases (mortality rate 2.76 per cent) has

done better than West Bengal with five death and 103 infected cases has notched sixth highest mortality rate of 4.85 per cent. Bihar with one death and 38 infected cases and Odisha with one death and 42 infected cases have recorded mortality rates of 2.63 per cent and 2.38 per cent respectively. In significant finding, north eastern states with collective 32 infected cases-- Assam (28) and one each in Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura -- have recorded zero mortality rate. The other states like Uttarakhand with 33 infected cases, Chandigarh with 18, Union Territory of Ladakh with 14, Andabar & Nicobar Islands with 11, Chhattisgarh with 10, Goa with 7, Puducherry with 5, Jharkhand with 4 cases have not reported any death and their mortality rate zero.

Howrah Govt Hosp chief among 11 new cases

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Eleven people --including a senior Government doctor -- have tested positive for the coronavirus in the past 24 hours taking the total number of affected patients in Bengal to 83. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday urging the pharmaceutical companies of the State to explore possibilities of producing hydroxychloroquine, the much sought after drug to minimise the effects of the dreaded corona infection. In what sent the medical circle and the State administration to a tizzy the superintendent of Howrah district general hospital was on Thursday admitted to the MR Bangur hospital after he tested positive for the virus, sources said adding all the medical staff, including other doctors, with whom the senior doctor held meetings in the past few days were being quarantined. Close watch was also being kept on the District Magistrate, Commissioner of Police and other senior officials of the district administration with whom the stated doctors held meeting in the past few days, insiders said. The Chief Minister who held a meeting with all the relevant people including the representatives of various industries said the State had tested 1,886 people for the virus out of whom 83 have tested positive. Three out of them were released on Thursday. About 4,700 people have been put under government quarantine, she said adding 55,172 people were under observation. The Government had set up 562 quarantine centres and 61 designated hospitals Banerjee said. Among those placed under quarantine were about 200 people who returned to Kolkata after attending the Tablighi Jamaat programme in Delhi's Nizamuddin area from where a gush of Corona cases spread

BENGAL FIRMS TOLD TO PRODUCE MORE HCQ DRUG

all over India in the past more than a week or so, sources said. The Chief Minister who announced partial opening of the tea industry also launched an "App", "Sandhaney" for the Asha workers (primary health staff) who will now be able to upload information of new corona suspects electronically. For the tea industry she said only 15 per cent of the workers would be allowed to work in the gardens. "The relaxation is given in the tea industry where only 15 per cent workers will work on rotation," she said. The CM who earlier said that the Government had identified 7-8 hotspots urged the pharmaceutical companies of the State to explore possibilities of producing the much required hydroxychloroquine. The much sought after drug to fight malaria is considered the best possible weapon to minimise the effect of the virus. Sources said Bengal Chemicals have approached the Government seeking license to produce the drug. "In fact we do have raw materials. We can produce 2.5 crore tablets ... if given permission we can start producing immediately," a senior official of the company said. Meanwhile the State Government has urged the private schools to refrain from hiking fees considering the grave economic crisis the pandemic has brought in its wake. State Education Minister Partho Chatterjee on Thursday said that he had "received a number of complaints from guardians that a section of private schools has effected a steep hike in fees regardless of the hardship in this unprecedented crisis" and urged such schools to "roll back any such decision for the greater interest of the students.

COVID testing: Patna hospital microbiology HoD suspended

IANS ■ PATNA

Patna Medical College and Hospitals Microbiology Department head Dr Satyendra Narayan Singh has been suspended on the charge of dereliction of duty in the testing of coronavirus samples, a health official said on Thursday. Dr Satyendra Narayan Singh also did not allegedly cooperate in the testing of the samples from suspected cases, the senior officer of the Health Department said. Patna Medical College and Hospitals (PMCH) is one of the four hospitals in Bihar authorised to conduct tests for coronavirus suspect cases. As many as 51 coronavirus positive cases have so far been reported from the State.

Goa refuses to let cruise liner enter Mormugao port

Panaji: Citing the Centre's guidelines on quarantining of seafarers, the Goa Government, here on Thursday, refused to allow a cruise liner with 600 crew -- 100 of them Goans -- to enter the Mormugao Port, Ports Minister Michael Lobo said. He said the vessel, MS Karnika, operated by Jalesh Cruises, had arrived at the Goa port from Mauritius on Thursday and was carrying 100 Goan crew members on board. "The ship will not be allowed to enter Goa port. We don't have the authority to bring the ship in. There are MHA guidelines to be followed. They have to follow protocol. Their disembarkment is in Mumbai. The crew have to de-board and stay in 14-day quarantine in Mumbai first," Lobo said. If they received Covid-19 free certificate, a bus would be sent from Goa to pick them up. They would again be tested for coronavirus on arrival and would have to stay in 14-day home isolation, he said. "This is the protocol to be followed," Lobo said. The Minister said the 100 Goan crew members mostly work as accountants, food and beverage specialists and floor supervisors. "The rest of the crew are from other parts of Maharashtra," Lobo said. IANS

Russian rescued from flooding beach cave by Goa lifeguards

Panaji: Lifeguards in Goa on Thursday rescued a middle-aged Russian from a beach cave near Keri beach, amid the 21-day lockdown imposed in the State in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a statement issued by Drishti Marine, a private lifeguard agency appointed by the State Government to man Goa's beaches, the Russian named Valenti (last name not known yet), is believed to have been living in the cave for the last several weeks. "During a routine patrol by the lifeguard stationed at the Keri beach area, lifeguard Girish Talkar spotted a man in a small narrow cave along the shoreline. He seemed to be in obvious distress as the cave was flooding rapidly due to the high tide. The man also appeared to be physically challenged as he was unable to walk," the statement said. He was eventually rescued with the help of a spine board and brought out by the lifeguards. Valenti is currently in shock and is being treated at the Public Health Centre in Mapusa. Ever since the lockdown nearly 2000 foreigners, including hundreds of Russians, have been repatriated from Goa to their home countries. IANS

Ear to the ground

Ignore the politics but WHO did misread the pandemic as it evolved. India has done well to rely on its field assessment



First things first. India has no choice but to develop its own template of protecting itself from the monstrous attack of the Coronavirus. That means in a densely populated country like ours, we will need to minimise the rush of people in danger of contaminating each other. Hence a protracted spell of lockdown and a behavioural monitoring, for example, at markets. The other is harvesting available resources in a poorly developed health framework to treat the sick, which means aggressive testing in clusters and faster serology tests besides pool tests in virgin areas. In other words, a tiered approach to the problem. Then there is the larger challenge of enabling the economy at the local level through staggered permits for agriculture and production. And given Indian doctors and researchers have gone on to achieve world acclaim, it is time for us to trust home-grown experience and expertise to fight our battle, both on the medical and economic fronts. Simply because nobody else will fight it for us. Certainly not the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has bungled in estimating the extent of the Wuhan contagion and led many countries to believe that it was a local problem. US President Donald Trump has threatened to cut funding to the world body, saying while his nation keeps it alive, it had been guided by Chinese projections of the virus. While transactional politics should certainly not be the order of the day in this test of survival of the human race, the fact is that the WHO did mislead us by changing its own advisories and delaying the classification of the virus as a pandemic. Had we gone by all its advisories, then we could have gone under. Already the spiral, largely the result of focussed testing, shows how deeply the disease has spread in the hinterland and how an early warning system could have helped us shut down international flights at least two weeks earlier. As late as January 30, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he would not recommend travel restrictions to China. Yet on the same day, WHO's International Health Regulations Emergency Committee raised a global alert on the need for containment, surveillance, detection, isolation and even contact tracing. India's first advisory on avoiding non-essential travel to China came before but by then hotspots had sprung up in Europe and the US.

The Government, while taking note of the WHO advisories, has totally relied on the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and in a collaborative effort is sharing the experience of several State Governments — be it Kerala, Rajasthan, Maharashtra or Uttar Pradesh. The aggressive containment, cluster isolation, aggressive testing and minute observation at hotspots is a story of learning and sharing that has made cooperative federalism the new credo. The all-party consultative meetings are back, too. The Government, alarmed by reports in the US that droplets of infected people could hang in the air for a while, made mask-wearing mandatory while stepping outdoors although the WHO argued against a directive on face covers, saying masks were needed for those who are symptomatic, health workers or caregivers. And while the WHO stuck to the "test, test, test" formula, the ICMR countered that with "isolate, isolate, isolate," given that we cannot afford to let precious test kits go waste even as we indigenise production. In fact, some States adopted voluntary quarantine even before the national lockdown based on this advice. Simply because the airport screening was not effective in identifying carriers and spreaders. This may not entirely flatten the curve but at least won't let it bulge and break either, considering we are yet assessing the depth of seepage at the community level. While testing is going on according to parameters, the rapid antibody tests in "areas reporting clusters and in large migration gatherings/evacuee centres" are a faster way of data collection and establishing the right graph. And though the WHO did not recommend a treatment protocol, doctors in Jaipur tried out two anti-virals — lopinavir and ritonavir — in saving patients. Doctors here also worked out a combination of hydroxychloroquine and the antibiotic azithromycin to slow down the progress of the disease. A vaccine and cure are far away and Indian researchers are part of global trials on the disease. But till then, smart COVID management and a ground-up, felt approach will be our only saviour.

E-commerce to rescue

With deliveries getting going once again, but now supported by physical stores, is the way India shops going to change?



There will be several societal and behavioural changes in the next few years that we will all be able to ascribe to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. A global phenomenon of wearing masks might take off beyond East Asia where it had normalised after the SARS pandemic. Personal hygiene changes will almost certainly become a norm. Everybody will wash hands more often and carrying a small personal hand-sanitiser will become a must. But what about shopping? With major outlets closed, traditional retail has

taken a hit across the world, one, which coupled with the rise of online commerce, might make it difficult for the industry to recover. But some of the changes in online commerce, especially in India in Corona times, are noteworthy. One is the support that some online chains, from Amazon to Zomato, are getting from the public authorities in deliveries, especially to quarantined zones. The other major change is the way the delivery services are working. Small kirana outlets are making local area deliveries of bread, milk and eggs as well as fresh produce like fruits and vegetables. While some parts of major cities have decent access to provisions despite the lockdown, the fact that certain hotspots are being sealed as well as the news that the lockdown might continue for several more days mean that such deliveries are becoming even more vital. In times of restricted customer mobility, a smooth functioning of such platforms can help serve high demands. But for that, it is essential for them to remain automated and mechanised, they need to ensure adequate sanitisation of personnel and products and strive to drive innovation in the last mile. These new models, which marketing experts would describe as "competitive collaboration," might be the way forward for the growth of e-commerce in India. This is because social and physical distancing might also become a norm across huge swathes of the nation.

Of course, it is too early to predict when the nationwide lockdown will be completely lifted; it may be a month before some areas of the country are opened up. It is also impossible to predict which business models will survive the lockdown. Business as usual, as this paper has noted in the past, is over. That is also going to be the case with e-commerce. But will this collaborative model be the best way out of the lockdown rut for e-commerce companies? One will have to wait and watch.

Light at the end of tunnel

While dealing with the Coronavirus epidemic, India must draw a fine line between reaction and response. Its measures must be thoughtful rather than emotive



AJOY KUMAR

It has often been said, yet it bears repeating: The Coronavirus epidemic will, in all probability, leave the world looking significantly different from the one we inhabited prior to the outbreak of the infection. The global nature of COVID-19 has ensured that this realisation is not limited to only a few but finds resonance across borders. India's response to the outbreak has been comparatively swift. Credit, therefore, must be given to all parties, who have fought, and continue to fight the notorious virus.

While praise is well-deserved, we must ensure that our response to this novel threat is swift and decisive. We cannot afford to be reactive. This is where I would like to draw a distinction between "reaction" and "response." For the purpose of this article, the latter refers to a well-calibrated decision, one that considers all factors and puts things into the context while also keeping in mind the consequences of the former. This should be a decision that utilises the slow thinking part of our brain. A "reaction," on the other hand, is, as the word suggests, "reactive." It is our first response to the problem, where what is right in front of us is the only thing we react to. Such a "reaction" is intuitive and born from the fast-thinking part of our brain. In this particular case of Coronavirus, the big thing in front of us is that it is one of the biggest pandemics of our times.

For example, our obsession with the Coronavirus and the news surrounding it is unsurprising. However, it must be put into context. Tuberculosis kills an estimated 1,200 people per day in India. Compare this with the number of Coronavirus deaths, which currently is as low as 10-30 per day. However, our "reaction" to the Coronavirus is much more severe than the one to tuberculosis. Of course, this is an oversimplification of the problem and I do not want to be misunderstood in saying that the current pandemic requires any less effort, vigilance or focus. This could be a terminal mistake for the country and we must exercise as much caution and care as suggested by our leaders and healthcare professionals. After all, any negligence could cost the lives of several other people and we owe a duty of care to each other during these difficult times.

However, the human mind is really strange. We tend to focus a lot more on things that evoke strong "reactions." For example, terrorism and murders are immense social evils. They take up a chunk of the time of television news hours, space of newspapers and are a hot topic for social discussion. But globally, the number of people who die due to suicide in a year, is almost twice the number who die due to homicide. Yet, we do not as yet have as frequent discussions or serious debates about addressing mental health issues. Instead, we end up focussing more on the problem that evokes greater emotions. We are humans, after all.

In the fight against Coronavirus though, we cannot afford the same reaction. We must



be thoughtful rather than emotive in our response. One aspect of the fight against COVID-19 is the immediate decision to impose a nationwide lockdown. There is no denying the fact that this is the only "true" way to fight this dreaded virus at this particular time. However, while implementing the lockdown, we cannot ignore the fact that cure runs the risk of causing more harm than the disease.

Over 76 per cent of Indian workers are engaged in "vulnerable employment." This was starkly visible when millions of migrant workers from all over the country tried to make their way home on foot. While Governments and civil society groups have come forward in a commendable way to help and ensure that the workers do not die due to hunger, we cannot expect this to be a long-term solution.

A large part of the working force in our country are either daily wagers or contractual workers. While even for a short period of time, a lockdown is more palpable for salary earners and business owners, for daily wage earners, it is a daily struggle of life and death. Therefore, in my opinion, a complete lockdown will have the effect of pushing the country 25 years back. We cannot, therefore, give in to our intuition.

We must think of more novel and nuanced ways whereby this problem can be

“UNFORTUNATELY, FOR OUR ELECTED LEADERS, THERE IS LITTLE SCOPE FOR SUCH BLIND SPOTS WHILE DEALING WITH A PANDEMIC AND BALANCING OUR ECONOMIC INTERESTS ON THE SAME SCALE. WE MUST, THEREFORE, BE UNAFRAID OF DIVERSE VIEWS AND ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION”

tackled. Whether it is about targeting specific hotspots through sealing drives, as being done in certain parts of the national capital by ensuring doorstep delivery of essentials, or something else, our approach cannot afford to be simplistic and carte blanche.

The other thing we must do is, carry forward this deliberative approach, going forward. What this means is that we must ensure that Governments spend more on healthcare and education rather than on statues. We must look at ways by which our spending can be better utilised and how social goals can be achieved more efficiently. Health, for example, has a close causal relationship with cleanliness. In order to enforce cleanliness, we cannot merely rely on advertisement campaigns or just be content with building a record number of toilets. Both these measures have been proven to not nudge the people to do the right thing. Instead, what has proven problematic is not the existence of toilets in many areas but the fact that they are often dirty and lack proper waste disposal measures. This dissuades the people from using the toilets even if there may be many around them.

Therefore, the focus needs to be on understanding what are the behavioural reasons behind the people who do not adopt clean habits. Only after understanding these cues can

an effective strategy be implemented. One way of ensuring that we understand these social behaviour and calibrate the efficacy of our systems is by ensuring that maximum amount of accurate information is at our disposal. This cannot be done solely by the Government.

Every Government (just as every person) has an incentive to show itself in the best light. Therefore, we must encourage civil society and the media to provide ground-level feedback. Here, too, there is a chance of bias and fake news being circulated as we have seen from time to time. Thus, any supply or encouragement of fake or unsubstantiated data must be soundly punished.

In the case of Coronavirus, just as in every sphere of our lives, we have our blind spots, too. Unfortunately, for our elected leaders, there is little scope for such blind spots while dealing with a pandemic and balancing our economic interests on the same scale. We must, therefore, be unafraid of diverse views and encourage open communication. The virus does not affect just a few of us but all of us in one way or the other. Therefore, we have little option but to come together to try and ensure there is some light at the end of this long tunnel.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

While forces are serving the needy amid the prevailing situation in the country, the border deployment has not been affected in any manner.



BSF Director-General —SS Deswal

I don't have the expertise in that department, I lack the skill to market myself. Some people have it and they are blessed but I don't think I have expertise to promote myself.



Actor —Kay Kay Menon

I would like to reopen the US economy with a big bang but the death toll from Coronavirus needs to be on the down slope before that can happen.



US President —Donald Trump

Government has given relaxations, farmers will not have to face problems during the lockdown. Shops of agriculture machinery and equipment will remain open at highways.



Union Minister —Narendra Singh Tomar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Take the call soon

Sir — Many States are demanding extension of the 21-day lockdown to allow fears and to mitigate the spread of the virus. The impact of the current lockdown has been such that it has affected the economy drastically, including slowing the growth, migration, closure of public transport and rising unemployment. The Government should make a quick decision either to lift the lockdown soon or extend the same. This will dispel fake messages and rumours now doing the rounds on social media.

An early decision by the Government will not only help the citizens gear up for coming days but also help the agencies to be better prepared to fight the pandemic by staying abreast of the situation. A prompt decision will also help them procure necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits, ventilators and medical supplies, among other things in sufficient quantities if the need so arises. Timely harvesting of the wheat crop, too, is essential for the farmers.

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Locking India is the safest option

It is clear from the rising number of cases in India that we have not at all reached a stage of containment or "flattened the curve" to lift the 21-day nationwide lockdown on April 14. To put it simply, the extension of the lockdown has become not just essential but inevitable. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is reported to have advised the Government to stretch the lockdown. Given the mode of transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is human-to-human, it is common sense that "physical distancing" needs to be maintained to stop the spread of the virus and save lives. Considerations of survival must override all other concerns. While "sustained and uninterrupted lockdown" is needed, we shouldn't be thinking in terms of "staggered exit", "periodic relaxation" or "hot spot strategy."

The pandemic has necessitated staying indoors; all except healthcare workers, police personnel and providers of essential goods and services must stay indoors. Of course, we can step out to fetch foodgrains and groceries but "social distancing" must be maintained. This is important in view of the potential of the conta-



gion to engulf clusters of human populations overwhelmingly. It will become very hard to manage if "community transmission" takes place. In these difficult and unsettled times our collective efforts, marked by our rational and responsible behaviour, alone will overcome the killer virus. In the name of resumption of economic activities or economic renewal, we cannot afford to cast prudence to the winds and imperil lives.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Make a phased exit plan

Sir — Over the last few days, there has been a demand in the media to stretch the current lockdown period beyond April 14. Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that everything should not be opened on April 15; rather the lockdown should be lifted sys-

tematically and scientifically to avoid chaos. Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, after a recent meeting of the Cabinet, said that a decision would be taken "in the national interest" at the right time. India is monitoring the world situation to be able to fight the highly contagious virus effectively. My personal opinion is that

the lockdown should be withdrawn in a phased manner. That is because saving lives is more important than the economy. Lifting the lockdown unsystematically will certainly increase the incidence of COVID-19 infection. Therefore, the Government must take a considered step so that people do not face the kind

of situation many Western countries are facing.

AL Nadwi
Bengaluru

Putting heads together

Sir — This refers to the report, "PM, Opp concur on more lockdown" (April 9). For a change, the ruling Government and Opposition parties are on the same page in the battle against Coronavirus. Yes, an extension of the lockdown will be tough for millions of Indians, especially for daily wagers and poor people, but the Government will have to take a hard decision in the larger interest of the nation.

While the Prime Minister has spoken to Opposition parties, economists, business tycoons and other stakeholders, State Chief Ministers can also give feedback. A collaborative approach will be of immense help. A staggered lifting of the lockdown is essential. Areas not/less affected by the infection can be opened up first.

Bal Govind
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A Catch-22 situation

While short lockdowns would be valid, long shutdowns would not be good for the people or the economy of the country



MARKANDEY KATJU | DHRUVI KAPADIA

Should the lockdown be ended after the three-week period announced on March 24 by the Prime Minister expires on April 14, or should it be continued thereafter? This is the Catch-22 situation which the authorities in India are facing. Some States are already putting pressure on Narendra Modi to extend the lockdown while Odisha has gone ahead and extended its shutdown till April 30. The PM will take a call on extending the shutdown in other States on April 11. So let's look at the alternatives before the Government and their consequences.

The consequences of lifting the lockdown: Ending the lockdown may result in a huge surge in Coronavirus cases and many more deaths. Till now the number of infected people in India is 5,865 and we have seen - 169 deaths so far. Globally, the effect of the pandemic has been felt more by the developed nations and the number of cases worldwide has touched 15,36,205 with 89,887 deaths. Nations are fighting over medicines they think can help them stop the march of the Coronavirus as it is universally accepted that as yet there is no vaccine or cure for the disease (though research is going on at a war footing worldwide). Till now the only way we know how to stop the spread of the virus in through social distancing. The 21-day lockdown in India forced people to observe social distancing and this meant that a Corona-positive person could not infect others. This enforced social distancing will end when the shutdown is lifted as people will start meeting each other in schools, factories, offices, business houses, media houses, courts, malls, restaurants, cinema halls, religious places, trains, buses and so on, thereby spreading the disease.

If there is anything that we know about the Coronavirus with certainty is the fact that it is highly infectious and spreads rapidly when social distancing is not maintained. A single person may infect half a dozen others and each one of these may infect half a dozen more and so on, till thousands of people are sick. This is like a chain reaction in an atomic bomb. So, if the Government lifts the lockdown, it will be endangering millions of people who will start going about their business as usual, because even if one or two in the crowd is a COVID-19 vector, they will set off the chain-reaction of infection, till it spreads to lakhs of people.

The biggest problem that India is facing is that there is little medical testing in the country for the Coronavirus as we simply do not have enough testing kits/equipment and so on, to meet the requirement of 1.3 billion people. Hence, it is difficult for us to plug the gaps and it is easy for persons infected with the Coronavirus to fall through the cracks as the disease is asymptomatic for the first 15 days. It is because of the fear of an explosion in Coronavirus cases that States are reluctant to lift the lockdown. While Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu is in favour of extending the shut down in his State, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Assam, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have indicated that they would not fully lift the restrictions after April 14. In fact, in UP 15 districts have been sealed as they have emerged as COVID-19 hotspots.

The consequences of not lifting the lockdown: To continue with the shutdown may result in poor people dying of hunger in large numbers as they are deprived of food, work and money, like the immigrant workers in cities who had to trek hundreds of kilometres on foot to their villages. A whopping 80-90 per cent of Indian workers are in the unorganised sector of the economy and these are daily wage earners, having no security of tenure. The shutdown has hit these workers and their families the hardest. Reports are coming in from rural areas that farmers cannot sell their produce as there is no transport available to take it to the wholesale markets, besides the fact that no one is coming to them. Hence their produce is often perishing unsold. Also, this is harvest time but the labourers who used to work fields are not available, as they mostly used to come from towns or nearby districts, but are unable to do so because of the lockdown. Hence, farmers will suffer major harvest losses. The police force seems to have become baton-happy these days and there are reports of cops beating people found outside their homes, no matter what their reason for doing so. Consequently, people are afraid to step out of their houses. Many village shops have run out of stock as shopowners cannot replenish their goods. So people cannot buy essentials like medicines and groceries. Business houses are suffering as the economy, which was already in a bad shape prior to the lockdown, is crumbling even further. International exports have taken a steep dive. Huge infrastructure projects are at a standstill due to the lockdown. Many industries and sectors have closed down putting lakhs of workers out of jobs.

Government must strike a balance: Article 19(1)(b) of the Constitution grants citizens the right to assemble peacefully, Article 19(1)(d) grants them the right to move freely throughout India and Article 19(1)(g) grants them the right to practice any profession, trade or vocation. No doubt these rights are subject to reasonable restrictions, but it is well settled that for a restriction to be valid, it must not be excessive. While short lockdowns would be valid, long shutdowns would not be good for the people or the economy. Man is a social being. Human beings cannot survive for long in isolation since we are dependent on others for our existence. Hence social distancing may be possible for short periods but not for long ones. India is thus caught in a catch-22 situation, with hard choices to make.

(Katju is former Judge, Supreme Court and Kapadia is Advocate and Solicitor, Bombay High Court and Advocate on Record, Supreme Court)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT THE WHO HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT IT WAS DESIGNED TO. WE JUST CAN'T CONTINUE TO PERMIT THAT TO GO ON.

—US SECRETARY OF STATE MIKE POMPEO



SOLIDARITY AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL AND LEADERSHIP FROM THE US AND CHINA. THE MOST POWERFUL SHOULD LEAD THE WAY. QUARANTINE COVID POLITICS.

—WHO DIRECTOR GENERAL TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

Locked down with a predator

In its bid to flatten the COVID-19 curve, the Govt overlooked the need to formally integrate domestic violence/abuse into the public health preparedness and emergency response plan



SIMI MEHTA | BALWANT MEHTA | ARJUN KUMAR

In the run-up to the announcement of a nationwide lockdown starting from March 25, there were several areas where the Government failed to craft a strategy to address its possible fallout. One such aspect that was completely ignored was the way to deal with incidents of domestic violence (DV) against women and children in the country during the 21-day shut down. The checks and balances that needed to be in place for victims of DV to resort to in their hour of need were unheeded.

The term "domestic violence" (DV) is used in many countries to refer to intimate partner violence (IPV) but it also encompasses child or elder abuse, or abuse by any member of a household. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in every three women across the globe experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by any perpetrators in their lifetime: At least 30 per cent of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.

It has been seen that violence against women tends to increase during every type of emergency, including epidemics. So, not surprisingly it has increased globally during the lockdowns enforced by governments to combat the spread of COVID-19. It is fuelled by social distancing, economic uncertainties and anxieties caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

For instance, countries like China, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Brazil, Tunisia, France, Australia and many others have reported cases of increased DV/IPV. India is also showing symmetrical trends, especially when it is infamous for being the fourth-worst country (after the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) for gender equality (ranked by perception).

According to the *Crime in India Report, 2018*, published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every 1.7 minutes a crime was recorded against women in India, every 16 minutes a rape was committed and every 4.4 minutes a child is subjected to domestic violence.

Within a few days of the lockdown, the National Commission for Women (NCW) noted a rise in the number of DV/IPV complaints received via e-mails. The NCW Chairperson believes that the real figure is likely to be more since the bulk of complaints comes from women in the lower strata of society, who send their complaints by post. In March and up to April 5, the NCW received 310 grievances of DV. During this period, a total of 885 complaints were received by the NCW for other forms of violence against women (example: Bigamy/polygamy; denial of maternity benefits to women; dowry deaths; harassment of married women/dowry harassment; outraging the modesty of women/molestation; rape/attempt to rape; right to live with dignity; sexual assault and sexual harassment). Several women's rights organisations have also been receiving numerous DV complaints since the enforcement of the lockdown.

The number of cases reported might not be proportional to the actual rise in the number of DV/sexual abuse cases. This is because the woman/child locked down with the abuser does not get access to a mobile phone or the space and time, with limited access to financial resources and social networks or even the courage when s/he could call up for help. In other words, all options of escape for the former from their situation of despair are impaired.

Thus, the intensity of the impediments s/he would normally face has been exacerbated by the



“ IN ITS EFFORTS AGAINST COVID-19, THE GOVERNMENT MUST ALLOW CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, COUNSELLORS, MENTAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS AND PROVIDERS TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF THE WOMEN/GIRLS FACING DV/SEXUAL ABUSE. REACHING OUT TO WOMEN/GIRLS IN DISTRESS AND THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM NEED TO BE CLASSIFIED AS AN 'ESSENTIAL SERVICE' BY THE GOVERNMENT ”

pandemic and the lockdown.

While the NCW Chairperson has urged women to contact the police or reach out to State Women's Commissions if they face DV or their children are being abused, it must be noted that there might be chances where the police are delayed in such rescues. This is because they are already handling challenges of enforcing the lockdown, ensuring delivery of essentials to vulnerable sections and in several places assisting health workers in the discharge of their duties. Further, women have felt additionally unsafe in approaching the police because they think that if their husbands are arrested, they could be harassed by in-laws, or once their husbands return, they or their children would be tortured even more.

With partners and children potentially trapped at home during the COVID-19 lockdown, the rate and intensity of abuse could get even worse and extend to child abuse. Repeated acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating; sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion; emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children; controlling behaviour, including isolating a person from family and friends; monitoring their movements; restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care, often result in depression, panic attacks, other anxiety disorders and even suicides.

It often has lasting impacts on the survivors as research suggests that the memory of abuse persists long after the violence has stopped. This often results in chronic health problems and developing risks of many diseases that arise from prolonged stress.

In the critical situation of trying to combat a pandemic, an increased number of women/children are faced with the

plague of DV within their households. It must not come as a surprise because DV topped in the category of violence against women/girls in 2018. As per the data, a total of 89,097 cases related to crimes against women/girls were registered across India in 2018. The figures indicate that not much has improved when compared to the figure of 86,001 cases registered under this head in 2017. The crime rate per lakh women/girl population was 58.8 in 2018 in comparison to 57.9 in 2017.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16 highlighted that 30 per cent of women/girls in India in the age group of 15-49 experienced physical violence since the age of 15.

Among married women experiencing physical, sexual or emotional violence, an alarming 83 per cent claimed that their husbands were the main perpetrators of such forms of abuse, followed by abuse from the mothers (56 per cent), fathers (33 per cent) and siblings of the husbands (27 per cent). The major crimes reported by women in India are — cruelty by husband or relatives (32.6 per cent), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (25 per cent), kidnapping and abductions (19 per cent) and rape (11.5 per cent).

The above crime statistics are unable to capture the data on violence against women in its entirety. This is primarily due to the prevalence of orthodox social norms and the stigma that is placed on survivors of DV/sexual abuse which leads to such cases being grossly under-reported. The report also shows that unemployment and alcoholism of the male partner are highly associated with DV/sexual abuse on women/girls.

In addition to the direct health threat posed by the Coronavirus, the pandemic and restrictions aimed at checking its spread have heightened anxieties, right from apprehensions of catching the disease, to financial worries, to social con-

cerns. There is also a concern that DV/sexual abuse would further increase with job losses and other economic pressures. An added challenge has been the importance of intertwined negative psycho-social impact on mental health of women/girls.

In the attempt to flatten the COVID-19 curve, women's equality and physical and mental health seem to have suffered a collateral damage. The Government overlooked the need to formally integrate DV/sexual abuse and mental health repercussions into the public health preparedness and emergency response plans against Coronavirus. In fact, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) that seeks to "eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres and to undertake reforms to give them the same rights to economic resources and access to property by 2030", is being enormously compromised.

Members of the community must be made aware about the increased risks to women's/girls health and life in the lockdown days. They must develop the ethos to condemn violence and shoulder the responsibility of offering all possible assistance to ensure their safety. In its efforts against COVID-19, the Government must allow civil society organisations, counsellors, mental health organisations and providers to come to the rescue of the women/girls facing DV/sexual abuse. Reaching out to women/girls in distress and the need to address the various forms of violence against them need to be classified as an "essential service" by the Government. Finally, the perpetrators of DV/IPV/sexual abuse must be brought to trial and repeat offenders must be dealt with strictly as per the provisions of law.

(Simi is CEO and Editorial Director, IMPRI, Balwant is Fellow at IHD, Co-Founder and Visiting Senior Fellow, IMPRI and Kumar is Director, IMPRI)

Big Brother is watching behind COVID mask

We all agree that the Coronavirus crisis must be stopped by all means necessary but we should be very careful that our AI-based remedies don't seed the next disease – a mass surveillance State



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law," says Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The ability of our governments to respond to the pandemic must be extolled. Some heads of States, shedding their differences, appealed to humanity to fight unitedly against the Coronavirus.

As of now, all options are open, right from the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to biotechnology to win the battle against the Coronavirus.

As the world is literally in a lockdown, Governments, right from China to the US, are allowing private AI and data analytics firms to sweep through personal data on phones for locations and so on. Facial recognition technology is also deployed to search for people with Coronavirus. It is reported that companies like Tencent and Alibaba are working with the Chinese Government to deploy these technologies and Beijing is using apps to collect travel history, time spent in infected places and details of an individual's interactions. So, in short, they know every personal detail of an individual they want to track, with the help of AI and apps.

In India, too, various Corona apps are being made popular as a screening and tracking tool.

In China, once the information is collected, algorithms assign people health codes. These yellow, red and green codes notify whether one is to be quarantined or not, whether one can use the public transport or not. Most

of this data collection is not by choice of the citizen. AI reports back to the Government if the individual has given inconsistent answers or simply lied. Coercive actions follow that. The Government has superseded all privacy conventions and is freely allowing private companies to look into phones, computers, public cameras to achieve the results. The Chinese State has an extensive and often-called "Black Mirror-esque and dark" social credit system, which allows for monitoring of each action and behaviour. If the behaviour is aligned with the State, you are rewarded, otherwise you can't even board a train.

Looking Westward, in England Sky News reports, "The Government is working with mobile network O2 to analyse anonymous smartphone location data to see whether people are following its social distancing guidelines." Israel is using mobile surveillance to send users customised messages about whether they are infected or not.

Social media firms like Facebook, Google and so on, are doing their bit, too, by giving Governments our data. So no matter where you are, the Coronavirus crisis has given "Big Brother" an excuse to watch you all the time. And remember it is for "public health and your own good." And of course we have nothing to hide.

The stakes are getting higher as the US-China trade wars have entered a new horizon of AI-based technology. Both nations are cognisant of the enormous power of AI-based surveillance and medical technology. No friend of the Silicon Valley, US President Donald Trump now has taken assistance from a company called BlueDot to create a mass surveillance system to monitor people for COVID-19. The US Government last year had already tried to outlaw encryption and forced Facebook to give it access to WhatsApp messages. It is only a matter of time before other Silicon Valley giants like Microsoft and so on begin their dal-

liance with the White House to birth the most sophisticated reconnaissance systems engineered to feed the Government your per-minute heart rate. Emergency legislations are introduced across the world to expedite data collection and give the Government "war-like situation" powers. In a statement, Kamran Khan of BlueDot told the media, "We know that governments may not be relied upon to provide information in a timely fashion. This reflects the larger disbelief in governments and democratic institutions at large by this class of technocrats."

I don't doubt the noble intentions of our Governments and private companies in their efforts to control COVID-19 but the AI-based systems they are creating do force us to beg the question, what happens to mass surveillance-based systems after COVID-19 goes away? Will the mass surveillance, too, go away or evolve further? Can citizens of the world be certain it

won't be misused?

Coupled with 5G technology, this system will be extremely powerful and its master will be the overlord of our planet. One can only think of Abraham Lincoln's warning that, "Nearly all men can stand adversity but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." What will happen to our leaders when they can pry into our lives on the touch of a button. This system will open up a Pandora's box of control. People of the world must be very careful, for under the garb of remedies of COVID-19, lurks a far sinister danger. AI-based mass surveillance slithers into our lives with our approval. As fear reigns, neighbour has already turned against neighbour. People of Asian descent are becoming Hitler's Jews. As news of racial hatred is rising, we are globally descending into chaos. We have to ensure the virus doesn't aid another holocaust of hate and fear empowered by technology. From the gas chambers to the nuclear bomb, they

were all cutting-edge science of their time and yet they served Satanic ends. Champions of technology and science like Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking along with other scientists, have already cautioned the world against AI. In fact Musk goes on to say that, "AI is more dangerous than nuclear weapons." We need to curb indiscriminate use of AI-based technology, especially applications that loot our privacy and rights. Democracy, privacy and humanity are threatened by private technocratic tools like AI-based surveillance. The crisis is not an excuse to free them from regulation, we need to have a "pre-nuptial" agreement with these firms and technology.

We all agree that the Corona crisis must be stopped by all means necessary but we should be very careful that our remedies don't seed the next disease — a mass surveillance State.

(The writer is Programme Director for Policy and Outreach at the National Seed Association of India)

GLOBAL DEATH TOLL ABOVE 92K

More than 1.5 mn cases registered; New York records a new single-day high of 799 deaths



Medical staff tends to a patient in the ICU unit of Rome's San Filippo Neri Hospital's Covid department, in Rome, on Thursday

AFP ■ PARIS

The worldwide number of fatalities from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 92,109 on Thursday.

More than 1,555,019 declared cases have been registered in 192 countries and territories. Of these cases, at least 345,834 are now considered recovered.

AMERICA's coronavirus epicentre of New York recorded a new single-day high of 799 COVID-19 deaths on Thursday but Governor Andrew Cuomo said the rate of hospitalisations continued to fall. Cuomo said 799 people died in the last 24 hours, outdoing the previous high of 779 announced on Wednesday, but added that the curve was flattening because of social confinement measures.

"We had a 200-net increase in hospitalizations, which you can see is the lowest number we've had since this nightmare started," Cuomo told reporters, adding that intensive care admissions were also at the lowest yet.

COVID-19 has killed more than 14,800 people in the United States, and the number of confirmed cases has grown to more than 432,000, according to a running tally by Johns Hopkins University.

New York is bearing the brunt of the United States' deadly coronavirus pandemic, accounting for around half the

number of deaths across the country.

BRITAIN announced another 881 deaths of people testing positive for coronavirus in Thursday's daily update, bringing the country's total toll to 7,978. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, in charge as Prime Minister Boris Johnson remains in intensive care battling COVID-19, announced the figures as he warned that the country hadn't "yet reached the peak of the virus".

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's health continues to improve on his fourth day in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a London hospital where he is being treated for the coronavirus, Downing Street said on Thursday. The 55-year-old was shifted to the ICU of St. Thomas' Hospital in London on Monday night as his condition worsened over 10 days after he had tested positive for the coronavirus and went into self-isolation. He has since received "standard oxygen treatment" but has not been diagnosed with pneumonia or required a ventilator to aid his breathing.

The daily death toll from the coronavirus fell to 683 in SPAIN on Thursday, after rising for two days, with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez urging people to keep up the fight against

the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The country, one of the worst hit by the pandemic, has now recorded 15,238 coronavirus deaths. The official daily toll was down from 757 on Wednesday. However, there has been growing speculation that the death toll may have grossly underestimated. Authorities in the Madrid region acknowledged on Wednesday that the number of deaths in retirement homes could be five times as high as that announced by health officials, who have not included almost 3,500 deaths of people who had not been tested for the virus.

The coronavirus pandemic could kill between 11,000 and 22,000 people in



China orders re-test of recovered Covid-19 patients, intensified screening of asymptomatic cases

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Thursday unveiled a new trial protocol warranting re-testing of the recovered coronavirus patients besides intensifying the screening of asymptomatic cases as concerns grew over the second wave of virus infections in the country.

The move comes a day after China lifted the 76-day lockdown in Wuhan, where the pandemic originated.

China's National Health Commission (NHC) on Thursday reported 63 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus, including 61 imported ones taking the total to 1,104 cases.

Two more persons were killed due to the disease, taking the death toll in the country to 3,335. The overall coronavirus cases have reached 81,865 in the country.

After nearly three months of grim battle against the coronavirus, China is fast returning to normalcy with factories and business humming back to activity amid concerns over coronavirus rebound due to a steady rise of new infections, especially coming from thousands of Chinese returning from abroad.

As the 76-day lockdown of Wuhan was lifted on Wednesday, tens of thousands of people in the city, the origin point and epicentre for the coronavirus pandemic, began travelling out by road, rail and air. China on Thursday released a new trial protocol on recovered Covid-19 patients' quarantine which included return visits by doctors, re-testing and their health monitoring.

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Khamenei: Mass Ramadan events may stop over virus

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's supreme leader suggested on Thursday that mass gatherings may be barred through the Muslim holy month of Ramadan amid the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, Amnesty International said it believed at least 35 Iranian prisoners were killed by security forces amid rioting over the virus.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the comments in a televised address as Iran prepares to restart its economic activity while suffering one of the world's worst outbreaks. He is also the highest-ranking official in the Muslim world to acknowledge the holy month of prayer and reflection will be disrupted by the virus and the COVID-19 illness it causes.

"We are going to be deprived of public gatherings of the month of Ramadan," Khamenei said during a speech marking the birth of revered 9th century Shiite Imam Mahdi.

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	4,54,615	16,074
Spain	1,52,446	15,238
Italy	1,43,626	18,279
Germany	1,14,257	2,349
France	1,12,950	10,869
China	81,865	3,335
Iran	66,220	4,110
UK	60,733	7,097



One hundred Italian doctors have died of virus: Medics

AFP ■ ROME

One hundred Italian doctors have died of the novel coronavirus since the pandemic reached the Mediterranean country in February, Italy's FNOMCeO health association said on Thursday.

"The number of doctors who have died because of COVID-19 is 100 — perhaps even 101 at the moment, unfortunately," a FNOMCeO spokesman told AFP.

The toll includes retired doctors the Government began calling in a month ago to help

fight a coronavirus that has officially claimed a world-topping 17,669 lives in Italy.

Italian media reports estimate that 30 nurses and nursing assistance have also died of COVID-19.

"We can no longer allow our doctors, our health workers, to be sent to fight without any protection against the virus," FNOMCeO president Filippo Anelli said on the association's website. "It is an unfair fight."

Rome's ISS public health institute estimates that 10 percent of those infected with the novel coronavirus in Italy work in health care.

Around the Globe

SINGAPORE reported 287 coronavirus cases on Thursday, the highest single-day rise, taking the total number of positive cases to 1,910, as Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong warned of tough action on people gathering in public places. The Prime Minister warned that the authorities will strictly enforce the "circuit breaker" measures from Thursday, noting there are still far too many public gatherings taking place.

THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC) is set to hold a secret meeting on the Covid-19 pandemic on Thursday amid divisions on recognising its origin and international action. The Dominican Republic, which holds the rotating presidency of the Council, said that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will brief the meeting on his call for a global ceasefire, the pandemic's impact on peacekeeping operations and the humanitarian response. China and Russia were reported to be opposed to the meeting, while the US wanted China be named as the source of the pandemic.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL on Thursday said more than 30 prisoners are feared to have been killed by Iranian security forces during protests over novel coronavirus safety concerns. The UK-based organisation said in a statement that thousands of inmates in at least eight prisons in the Islamic republic had held demonstrations in recent days. Citing "credible sources", Amnesty said authorities at several facilities responded with live ammunition and tear gas, killing some 35 inmates and wounding hundreds of others.

THE FRENCH ANTI-COMPETITION WATCHDOG on Thursday asked tech giant Google to negotiate with publishers and news agencies on paying them proper remuneration for re-using their content on its platforms. The French 'Autorite de la Concurrence' body in a ruling granted requests for urgent interim measures presented by press publishers and the news agency AFP. "It requires Google to negotiate with publishers and news agencies the remuneration due to them under the law relating to neighbouring rights for the re-use of their protected contents," the authority said in a statement.

THE NEPAL GOVERNMENT on Thursday went back on a reported decision to lift the ban imposed on the plying of vehicles on Friday and Saturday to allow people stranded here due to the coronavirus outbreak to return to their homes in other districts. Deputy Prime Minister Ishwor Pokharel said no decision has been taken regarding lifting that imposed on vehicles for Friday and Saturday to allow people to leave Kathmandu to return their homes during lockdown.

AS CORONAVIRUS rapidly spreading in every corner of the globe, CHINESE RESEARCHERS have found that newborns infected with COVID-19 in China experienced mild symptoms, and the babies may be at risk of catching the virus from their mother during pregnancy. For the findings, published in the European Respiratory Journal, researchers studied a total of four cases of newborn babies with COVID-19 infection in China. In all cases, the babies experienced only mild symptoms with none requiring intensive care or mechanical ventilation.

TAIWAN demanded an apology from the World Health Organisation chief after he accused the island's Government of leading personal attacks against him and his agency's response to the coronavirus pandemic. WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called Wednesday for unity to fight the disease after US President Donald Trump criticised the global health body and threatened to cut its funding.

Pak PM warns situation 'can further deteriorate' as tally reaches 4,414

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has warned that the situation due to coronavirus pandemic "can further deteriorate" and "hospitals may not be able to cope" with the increasing number of COVID-19 patients, as authorities on Thursday reported 340 new cases, taking the tally to 4,414.

The Ministry of National Health Services reported that the number of patients in worst-hit Punjab province was 2,171, Sindh 1,128, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 560, Gilgit-Baltistan 213, Balochistan 212, Islamabad 102 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 28.

According to the ministry, 63 people have died due to the infection, including five in one day. A total of 572 people have recovered. Thirty one people are in critical condition.

Trump quietly shuts down asylum at US borders to fight virus

SAN DIEGO: A US Border Patrol agent wouldn't let Jacqueline Reyes explain why she and her 15-year-old daughter needed asylum, pointing to the coronavirus.

That confrontation in Texas came just days after the Trump administration quietly shut down the nation's asylum system for the first time in decades in the name of public health.

"The agent told us about the virus and that we couldn't go further, but she didn't let us speak or anything," said Reyes, 35, who was shuttled to a crossing March 24 in Reynosa, Mexico, a violent border city.

She tried to get home to crime-ridden Honduras despite learning her brother had been

killed there and her mother and 7-year-old daughter had fled to the Nicaraguan border. But she was stuck in Mexico as the virus closed borders in Central America.

The US Government used an obscure public health law to justify one of its most aggressive border crackdowns ever.

People fleeing violence and poverty to seek refuge in the US are whisked to the nearest border crossing and returned to Mexico without a chance to apply for asylum.

It eclipses President Donald Trump's other policies to curtail immigration — which often rely on help from Mexico — by setting aside decades-old national and international laws.

Countries start thinking about easing up restrictions

AP ■ NEW YORK

Even as coronavirus deaths mount across Europe and New York, the US and other countries are starting to contemplate an exit strategy and thinking about a staggered and carefully calibrated easing of restrictions designed to curb the scourge.

"To end the confinement, we're not going to go from black to white; we're going to go from black to gray," top French epidemiologist Jean-Francois Delfraissy said in a radio interview.

Deaths, hospitalizations and new infections are leveling off in places like Italy and Spain, and even New York has seen encouraging signs amid the gloom. At the same time, politicians and health officials warn that the crisis is far from over and a catastrophic second wave could hit if countries let down their guard too soon.

"We are flattening the curve because we are rigorous about social distancing," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. "But it's not a time to be



York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. "But it's not a time to be

complacent. It's not a time to do anything different than we've been doing."

In a sharp reminder of the danger, New York state on Wednesday recorded its highest one-day increase in deaths, 779, for an overall death toll of almost 6,300.

"The bad news is actually terrible," Cuomo lamented. Still, the governor said that hospitalizations are decreasing and that many of those now dying fell ill in the outbreak's earlier stages.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it was issuing new guidelines for some workers who have been within 6 feet of someone with a confirmed or suspected infection to go back on the job if they have no symptoms. The guidelines apply to employees in critical fields such as health care and food supply and require they take their temperature beforehand, wear face masks at all times and practice social distancing.



A worker wearing a protective suit sprays disinfectant on a woman passing a tunnel to enter a market, as authorities take measures to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus in Tirana, on Thursday

Space station crew dock at ISS after virus-hit build up

AFP ■ ALMATY

A three-man crew docked successfully at the International Space Station Thursday, leaving behind a planet overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic. Russian space agency Roscosmos said the Soyuz MS-16 capsule "docked successfully" in a statement on its website.

Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Roscosmos and NASA's Chris Cassidy reached the ISS at 1413 GMT, just over six hours after blasting off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, where COVID-19 caused changes to pre-launch protocol.

Usually the departing crew faces questions from a large press pack before being waved off by family and friends.

Neither was possible this time round because of travel restrictions imposed over the virus, although the crew did respond to emailed questions from journalists in a Wednesday press conference.

Cassidy, 50, admitted the crew had been affected by their families not being able to be in Baikonur, Russia's space hub in neighbouring Kazakhstan, for their blastoff to the ISS.

"But we understand that the whole world is also impacted by the same crisis," Cassidy said. Astronauts routinely go

into quarantine ahead of space missions and give a final press conference at Baikonur from behind a glass wall to protect them from infection.

That process began even earlier than usual last month as the trio and their reserve crew hunkered down in Russia's Star City training centre outside Moscow, eschewing traditional pre-launch rituals and visits to the capital.

The next crew to return to Earth from the ISS will be flying to their home countries on April 17 via Baikonur, rather than Karaganda in central Kazakhstan as usual, as part of new travel measures related to the pandemic.

Rigorous testing key to fight COVID-19: Johns Hopkins epidemiologist

IANIS ■ NEW YORK

Countries that have conducted widespread testing have done fairly well in the fight against COVID-19 and those struggling to contain the spread of the pandemic may do well to follow their lead, according to epidemiologist Jennifer Nuzzo, a Senior Scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in the US.

Rather than hoping that a vaccine will soon be available and everything will suddenly be alright, nations affected by the pandemic should continue to test widely, identify those with the disease and isolate

them, while also asking the general population to continue to practice social distancing until effective treatments are available, she said in an interview to JSTOR Daily, an online publication that contextualises current events with scholarship.

In September 2019, less than three months before the outbreak of COVID-19 in China's Wuhan area became public, Nuzzo and her colleagues published a WHO/World Bank-commissioned report titled "Preparedness for a High-Impact Respiratory Pathogen Pandemic."

Virus to retard India's GDP rate to 4.8%: UN

Report: COVID-19 to have adverse economic impact globally

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India's GDP growth for the current fiscal is expected to slow down to 4.8 per cent, a UN report has said, warning that the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to result in significant adverse economic impacts globally.

The UN 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) 2020: Towards sustainable economies' said that COVID-19 is having far-reaching economic and social consequences for the region, with strong cross-border spillover effects through trade, tourism

and financial linkages. India's GDP growth for the fiscal year 2019-2020 was estimated at 5 per cent and is forecast to slow down to 4.8 per cent for the current fiscal 2020-21. Economic growth for the country could stand at 5.1 per cent for fiscal year 2021-22, the report said.

The report noted that these are very preliminary forecasts based on the data and information available up to March 10. "As the COVID-19 pandemic is still evolving rapidly and showing no signs of abating as of March 31, 2020, its negative impacts on economic performance of countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific will likely be very significant," a disclaimer accompanying the GDP chart for economies in the Asia and Pacific in the report says.

"India's economic growth declined considerably by more than the earlier estimate (5 per cent in 2019 compared with previous estimate of 7 per cent), as uncertainties ahead of the general election and tighter credit conditions weighed on manufacturing activities and investments. Weakness in income growth and a rising unemployment rate also undermined consumer sentiment. Its exports were affected by global trade tensions as well, while extreme weather events — especially rainfall — disrupted agricultural activities," the ESCAP report said. The report noted that COVID-19, first reported in China and subsequently globally, has significantly increased the downside risks to the Asia and Pacific region's near-term economic outlook.

16.8 mn Americans thrown out of work as economic toll rises

AP ■ NEW YORK

The coronavirus outbreak has thrown at least 16.8 million Americans onto the unemployment rolls in just three weeks, underscoring the terrifying speed with which the crisis has brought world economies to a near standstill.

Meanwhile, world leaders and health officials are fervently warning that hard-won gains in the fight against the scourge must not be jeopardized by relaxing social distancing during the Easter holiday.

A spike in deaths in Britain and New York and surges of reported new infections in Japan and in India's congested cities make it clear the battle is far from over.

Numbers released by the

US Government on Thursday showed that 6.6 million workers applied for unemployment benefits last week, on top of more than 10 million in the two weeks before that.

That means more than 1 in 10 American workers have been forced out of a job since the crisis took hold.

The real numbers could be even higher because the surge of jobless claims has overwhelmed state unemployment offices around the country, and some people have been unable to get through by telephone or website. And still more job cuts are expected.

The US unemployment rate could hit 15 per cent — a number last seen at the tail end of the Depression — when the figures for April come out.

IMF anticipates sharply negative economic growth fallout since the Great Depression

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The year 2020 could see the worst global economic fallout since the Great Depression in the 1930s with over 170 countries likely to experience negative per capita income growth due to the raging coronavirus pandemic, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Thursday.

Georgieva made the remarks during her address on "Confronting the Crisis: Priorities for the Global Economy" here ahead of next week's annual Spring meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

"Today, the world is confronted with a crisis like no other. COVID-19 has disrupted our social and economic order at lightning speed and on a scale that we have not seen in living memory," she said. The

virus is causing a tragic loss of life, and the lockdown needed to fight it has affected billions of people. What was normal just a few weeks ago — going to school, going to work, being with family and friends — is now a huge risk, she said.

Observing the world is faced with extraordinary uncertainty about the depth and duration of this crisis, she said it is already clear, however, global growth will turn sharply negative in 2020. "In fact, we anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," Georgieva said.

"Just three months ago, we expected positive per capita income growth in over 160 of our member countries in 2020. Today, that number has been turned on its head: we now project that over 170 countries will experience negative per capita income growth this year," she said.

'Coronavirus ceasefire' in Yemen's long conflict begins

Riyadh: The Saudi-led coalition began a unilateral ceasefire in Yemen's long war on Thursday, saying it hoped the initiative to prevent coronavirus in the impoverished country would lead to a wider political solution.

The Iran-backed Huthi rebels have not made any comment on the coalition's declaration of a two-week pause in the five-year conflict that took effect from 0900 GMT.

If the ceasefire does hold, it would be the first breakthrough since the warring parties agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire in the port city of Hodeida during talks in Sweden in late 2018.

The UAE, a key ally in the coalition which drew down its troops last year as the conflict became increasingly intractable, applauded the Saudi move as "wise and responsible". AFP

RBI hopes monetary, fiscal measures to spur eco activity once normalcy is restored

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Among lockdowns and global slowdown adversely impacting the economic activity, the RBI on Thursday expressed hope that recent monetary and fiscal measures will mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on domestic demand and spur growth once the normalcy is restored.

Observing that it was difficult to make growth projections at this point of time, the Reserve Bank in its Monetary Policy Report said the lockdown following the outbreak of COVID-19 and expected contraction in global outlook would weigh heavily on the growth outlook.

It said prior to the outbreak, the outlook for growth for 2020-21 was looking up. The RBI noted that the bumper rabi harvest and higher food prices during 2019-20 provided conducive conditions for the strengthening of rural demand, the transmission of past reductions in the policy rate to bank lending rates has been improving, and reductions in the tax rates and measures to boost rural and infrastructurespend-

ing were directed at boosting domestic demand more generally.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered this outlook," the report said, and added the global economy is expected to slump into recession in 2020, as post-COVID projections indicate.

The RBI added the sharp reduction in international crude oil prices, if sustained, could improve the country's terms of trade, but the gain from this channel is not expected to offset the drag from the shutdown and loss of external demand. "COVID-19, the accompanying lockdowns and the expected contraction in global output in 2020 weigh heavily on the growth outlook. The actual outcome would depend upon the speed with which the outbreak is contained and economic activity returns to normalcy.

"Significant monetary and liquidity measures taken by the RBI and fiscal measures by the government would mitigate the adverse impact on domestic demand and help spur economic activity once normalcy is restored," it said.

₹ recovers from record lows on forex inflows, firm stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Rupee on Thursday recovered from record low levels to settle 6 paise higher at 76.28 against the US dollar tracking gains in equity markets and foreign fund inflows.

The local unit had settled at an all-time low of 76.34 against the greenback on Wednesday. Forex traders said the rupee traded in a narrow range as gains in domestic equities supported the local unit amid lingering concerns over coronavirus outbreak in the country.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened higher at 76.11, but witnessed heavy volatility and slid to its all-time intra-day low of 76.55 against the American currency. The domestic unit later recovered ground to settle at 76.28 against the greenback, up 6 paise over its previous close.

Traders said concerns over the impact of coronavirus outbreak on the domestic as well as the global economy continued to haunt investors.

"Uncertainty and fragile market sentiments over COVID-19 will continue to keep the rupee under pressure. Further pressure will come from the uptick in crude and

surge in the dollar index," said Rahul Gupta, Head of Research- Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services.

Gupta added, "Also, OTC timings have been trimmed to 10AM-2PM, and it is an illiquid, pessimistic market at this point in time and won't be surprised if 77.50 is breached next week."

Rupee opened stronger, but pared its gains soon and made a fresh all-time low, Devarsh Vakil Head Advisory HDFC Securities Research said, adding that "dollar selling from exporters near 76.5 and foreign fund buying in domestic equities for the last two days supported rupee recovery through day and rupee managed to close near April 8 levels."

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers in the capital market, as they bought equity shares worth Rs 1,943.41 crore on Wednesday, according to provisional exchange data.

Meanwhile, equity benchmark Sensex rallied over 1,265 points on Thursday, led by robust buying amid hopes of a second stimulus package from the Government. The BSE barometer ended 1,265.66 points or 4.23 per cent higher at 31,159.62. The NSE Nifty soared 363.15

points, or 4.15 per cent, to 9,111.90.

On a weekly basis, the currency has depreciated by 15 paise. "The Indian rupee has been under pressure throughout the week, hitting record lows due to the uncertainty in trade created by Covid-19. INR hit a fresh record low of 76.54/US dollar earlier today," said Nish Bhatt, the founder &

CEO of Millwood Kane International.

"The unpredictability on the Covid-19 influence means that the INR may come under more pressure in the coming weeks. Most Asian currencies have been falling due to uncertainty over the economic outlook, with near-zero exports due to the outbreak of coronavirus," Bhatt said.

RBI expects ₹ to hover around 75/\$; Indian crude basket to \$35 per barrel in FY21

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank expects the value of the domestic currency to hover around Rs 75 to a dollar and Indian crude basket to about USD 35 per barrel during 2020-21.

The rupee came under intensified and sustained depreciation pressures from mid-January, reflecting a generalised weakening of emerging market currencies amid flights to safety, RBI said in its Monetary Policy Report.

Taking into account the sizable two-way movements in the nominal exchange rate

during October-December 2019, RBI expects the value of Indian rupee to be around Rs 75 to a dollar.

"...the nominal exchange rate (INR vis-a-vis US dollar) exhibited sizable two-way movements during October-December 2019. The INR came under intensified and sustained depreciation pressures beginning mid-January, reflecting a generalised weakening of emerging market currencies amidst flights to safety." Accordingly, the baseline assumes an average of Rs 75 per US dollar to reflect these recent developments," said the RBI report.

EMI moratorium fraud: Banks asking customers to be alert, not to share OTP with imposters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to warn customers against fraudsters who may attempt to exploit the EMI moratorium scheme, leading banks are reaching out to their customers to caution them against 'EMI moratorium frauds' and strongly advising them not to share sensitive information like OTP and PIN with imposters.

Over the past few days, Axis Bank, State Bank of India and other banks have sent out SMSs and e-mails to their customers informing them about new modus operandi being adopted by fraudsters and cyber criminals, to gain access to banking details.

Asking customers to protect their financial details, Axis Bank said in an e-mail to customers said fraudsters have started a new modus operandi to gain access to banking details.

Imposters may contact you to help postpone your EMI payments and request you to share OTP, CVV, password or PIN related to your banking accounts, it said.

APDI writes to PM apprising of substandard, counterfeit products being sold to people

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Association of Professional Detectives and Investigators (APDI) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, apprising him of substandard and counterfeit products being sold to "innocent" people amid coronavirus lockdown.

These spurious products, the association said, pose serious health and safety challenges for the country. "I am writing to bring to your notice the danger of substandard counterfeit products flooding our markets during the COVID-19 lockdown and beyond, potentially causing a mammoth health and safety challenge," APDI chairman K Vikram Singh said in a letter to Modi.

The letter stressed that these challenging times are being used as a potential opportunity by fraudsters, "especially counterfeiters who indulge in manufacturing and selling spurious products to our innocent and unassuming fellow citizens".

As per industry estimates, counterfeiting causes a loss of over ₹1 lakh crore annually to the Indian economy. Every single successful brand is suffering from this menace including pharmaceuticals, FMCG, automotive, liquor, cement, electronics, etc. Actions of these counterfeiters directly pose as a health, safety and security risk to Indians.

Industrial output grows 4.5% in Feb; highest in 7 months

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production grew at the fastest pace in seven months at 4.5 per cent during February, mainly on account of uptick in mining and manufacturing activity as well as power generation, official data showed on Thursday.

Factory output, as measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), had recorded a growth of 0.2 per cent in February 2019. It had registered a growth of 4.9 per cent in July 2019.

The production contracted by 1.4 per cent in August, 4.6 in September and 6.6 per cent in October last year. It grew 2.1 per cent in November and 0.1 per cent in December 2019 and 2.1 per cent in January 2020.

Last month, provisional data showed IIP growth of 2 per cent in January, 2020. According to a data by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the manufacturing sec-

tor output grew at a rate of 3.2 per cent in February compared to a contraction of 0.3 per cent in the same month a year ago.

Electricity generation increased by 8.1 per cent against a growth of 1.3 per cent in February 2019. Mining sector output surged by 10 per cent compared to a growth of 2.2 per cent earlier. The IIP growth during April-February period of the last fiscal decelerated to 0.9 per cent from 4 per cent expansion in the same period of 2018-19.

The data for February showed that production of capital goods, a barometer of investment, shrunk by 9.7 per cent as compared to a contraction of 9.3 per cent in the corresponding month of the previous year. As per use-based classification, primary good registered a growth of 7.4 per cent, intermediate goods 22.4 per cent, and infrastructure/construction goods 0.1 per cent in February 2020 as against the same period a year ago.

COAI to Trai: Extending benefits to all prepaid users amounts to unjustified subsidy

New Delhi: Telecom industry

has rejected Trai's call to provide talktime credit and extended validity to all pre-paid mobile phone users, saying telecoms had offered benefits worth over ₹600 crore to low-income subscribers to stay connected during the lockdown, and extending it to all pre-paid customers was unjustified. The response from COAI, whose members include Bharti Airtel, Reliance

Jio and Vodafone Idea, comes just days after Trai pulled up telcos on selective approach in extending validity and giving talktime credit.

The sector regulator had insisted that uninterrupted services need to be ensured for all prepaid subscribers amid the ongoing lockdown. Putting up a strong defense, the industry has said that adequate measures have already been taken to

ensure that those who genuinely require support due to unavailability of options to recharge are provided help to tide over the situation.

COAI said in case Trai and the Government still feel need for extension of benefits to all prepaid feature phone subscribers, this should be provided in form of a subsidy to telecom sector like many other essential services. PTI

OPEC puts heads together over oil output cuts

PTI ■ LONDON

Top oil producers are on Thursday to discuss a possible cut in output after a collapse in demand due to the coronavirus and a Saudi-Russian price war caused the market to crash. The teleconference sched-

uled for 1400 GMT between OPEC, its OPEC+ allies including Russia and other key non-members is seen as the best chance of providing support to prices which are wallowing near two-decade lows. Experts warn that without concerted action the commodity risks another steep sell-off.

SCOPE EMPLOYEES DONATE 1 DAY'S SALARY TO PM-CARES FUND

New Delhi: Employees of Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE), the apex organisation of Public Sector Enterprises in India contributed their one day salary to the PM-CARES Fund, to combat the COVID 19 epidemic. It is privilege of SCOPE to partake in the nation's resolve to overcome the biggest calamity of recent times.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. PC

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Kamal Sharma S/o Chajjial R/o Village-Pathredi, P.S. Paragpura, Tehsil-Kothputli, Rajasthan, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No.463/15 at Police Station - Kotwali, Delhi which is punishable under section 392/397/411/34 of Indian Penal Code and a warrant of arrest issued thereupon has been returned unexpected stating that the said accused Kamal Sharma could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Kamal Sharma has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Kamal Sharma is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 15.05.2020.

By Order
Ms. Prigya Gupta
Metropolitan Magistrate-08,
Room No. 272
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/130/N/2020 (Court Matter)

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Anjum D/o Aslum R/o. 31 Mangal Bazar Road Part II Samta Vihar Mukundpur Delhi Age-16 years, Height-5', Face-Round Built-Thin, Complexion-whitish, Wearing-Firoji Printed Suit & Salwar And Chapal in her feet has been missing/kidnapped since dated 11.03.2020 at 07:30 PM In this regard a case vides FIR No. 144/20 U/s 363

Anjum
IPC Dated 11.03.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
27811934

DP/138/ON/2020

Appeal for Identification



General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Rajesh, S/o Pappu, R/o: ISBT Kashmere Gate, Age: about 30 years, Height: 5'5", Complexion: Shallow, Sex: Male, Built: Thin, Face: Round, Wearing : Hospital Clothes, was found dead at RML Hospital, Delhi. In this regard, a DD

No. 13-A, U/s 174 CrPC dated 05.04.2020 has been lodged at PS Kashmere, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any, person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23967889, 8750870123

DP/169/N/2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Vinod, S/o Jagdish, R/o Village Khara, Sambhal, (U.P.) has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 1259/14 U/S 279 IPC, P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Vinod cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Vinod has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vinod of FIR No. 1259/14 U/S 279 IPC, P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 28.07.2020.

By Order
Sh. Vaibhav Mehta,
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North),
Room No. 114, First Floor,
Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/176/ON/2020(Court Matter)

Trend Slazer

HRITHIK advises fans to keep going

Actor **HRITHIK ROSHAN**'s tough journey doesn't stop the superstar from challenging himself, which can be seen in the video he has put out on his social media.

He took to his social media and shared an inspiring documentation of his transformation from Anand Kumar of *Super 30* to Kabir from *War*.

He wrote, "To the Kabir in all of us. Don't forget to thrive while you survive. Enjoy it all. The good, the bad. Juice everything out." Amidst this lockdown, nothing can be more inspiring than this powerful video that imparts a efficacious message of "keep going."



The web space is a great platform for actors and filmmakers alike, to explore new themes and genres.

With my new web series, I will get an opportunity to work with one of my favourite directors, **Prakash Jha**. The show has a unique and interesting storyline and it will be amazing.

—Chandan Roy Sanyal

Producer SAJID NADIADWALA

wanted the family of over 400 employees, including those earning daily wages to do their bit in these trying times. Hence, he announced a bonus for each of his employees, to strengthen their hands, so that they too can contribute.

Empowering them with assistance to mark their donations, each and every employee of Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, working at various levels, has pledged to donate to the PM-Cares Fund and the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The employees took to their social media to express their gratitude.

Gwyneth gets moral support from kids

Actor **GWYNETH PALTROW** is enjoying working from home with a little "moral support" from her children — Apple, 15, and Moses, 14.

She took to Instagram to share a selfie with her kids during quarantine at home. "WFH with some moral support," she captioned the image, which features herself smiling while her children look less impressed.

Paltrow and her husband, Brad Falchuk, recently opened up about what life has been like for their family in quarantine.



A sliver of silver

PRATEEP SEN and TAMOJIT DUTTA say that the care of seniors has to change keeping the pandemic in mind

Juggling hectic work schedules with elderly care was always a question of achieving a fine balance. At times you wanted to go back home at regular intervals just to check on your elders because you were anxious. It was a tussle to make them feel independent while ensuring that they took every medicine on time. Well, all of this overthinking has come to a grinding halt as the world experiences the COVID-19 pandemic which demands a change in elderly care as it has given rise to anxieties of an altogether different kind.

Across the world senior citizens are more susceptible to the Coronavirus because their immunity is compromised which is coupled with co-morbidities and pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. A survey of the Coronavirus death has a chilling report. It says that one in every 12 elders will die from COVID-19 if aged between 70-80. This will climb up to one in seven if aged over 80.

Suffice it to say that it is not an easy time to be a senior citizen currently. It may be worthwhile to take a look at different categories of senior citizens and see how they were leading their life before the lockdown.

There are seniors in their late 60s, early 70s who enjoy an active life. They go to the local shops, watch a film at the nearest cinema hall and love going to the local market to buy vegetables and meat and hire someone to help them bring the groceries home. They have maids who cook, do the household chores and act as company. They also have relatives visiting them every now and then. They cope well and are not fully dependent on anyone, but they need help with daily activities.

Then there are seniors who are fully dependent on people and need a support system. They are not in a position to run their households by themselves. Typical cases include those that are 80 years and older, who live alone and have attendants round-the-clock who look after the household while their children live and work in another city or are abroad. Another example is of those who live with



'THE MAIN GOAL NOW IS TO CREATE AN ENVELOPE OF CARE BY A SELECTED GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO CAN PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE ELDERS WHILE MAINTAINING HYGIENE THEMSELVES. THE ELDERLY CARE WILL NOW HAVE TO BE SOLVED DIFFERENTLY'



their families and need full time monitoring and physical assistance because of health issue, leaving them semi-bedridden.

It is well known that seniors are dependent on some kind of support system, whether through a personal network of care providers — care takers, neighbours, family and friends, or on a professional healthcare provider.

With the lockdown in place, the areas where they have been affected include:

Disruption of routine activities: Most of these elders depend on local shops and outlets for their daily requirements right from groceries to medicines. Access to bank accounts is difficult given the restrictions, long queues, hygiene issues and their limited knowledge in managing ATMs and online banking platforms.

Loneliness and depression: The seniors are going through stress, anxiety and isolation as a result of being under lockdown. Their recreational activities usually include morning and evening walks or a tea with an old friend. Low usage of technology by them has impacted their digital participation. They can't even seek help from close family and friends.

Healthcare access limitations: The lockdown has affected healthcare delivery at hospitals and clinics, both for chronic and acute illnesses. Purchase of medicines, ordering blood tests at home, access to doctor consultations and elective surgeries — every aspect of healthcare has been impacted as a result of lockdown. We also need to take into account that the seniors are the biggest users of these facilities and now they have lost access to these.

However, with the pandemic hitting worldwide elderly care will change, given the need of the hour where you need to stay indoors, restrict movement and limit outside contact. Whether the lockdown lasts for four weeks or two months, it is safe to assume that the lifestyle of seniors, as well as their care, will change for good. The elderly care has witnessed

a massive change as they have a higher risk of getting infected. One needs to maintain the continuity of care while protecting them from exposure to possible infection. The main goal now is to create an envelope of care by a selected group of people who can provide them all the assistance required while maintaining hygiene themselves.

Keeping these in mind, the care for elders will need to change to help them in the areas that are the most difficult, and will now have to be solved differently. Some simple initial changes in care are required:

An attendant: Having a single live-in attendant who can help with daily activities and provide physical assistance will help them in their routine activities. This will help in full-time monitoring, physical assistance and limits outside contact.

Home delivery: Home delivery of essentials is an absolute must, as it is one of the main reasons why seniors go out. They go to buy staples, food and medicines. While online delivery providers can provide the basic essentials, it is better for seniors to be able to have access to local providers who can supervise the entire delivery process and ensure sensitivity towards seniors, while maintaining hygiene.

Telephonic consultation with doctors: Seniors should consult their doctor on call for basic issues or regular health updates. It is the best way to reach out to them and make payments online, thus avoiding a physical visit.

It is also important to document all aspects that need to be covered during an emergency — ambulance numbers, choice of hospital for admission, identification documents and funds required. All of this should be planned on a structured basis. It is best to get professional help for this to avoid stress or unpreparedness at a later stage.

Most importantly, be vigilant at all times about hygiene for both seniors and those living with them — washing hands, using sanitisers and maintaining social

distance, even if it is a family member.

These times will also bring a new conversation-driven change. Earlier, most of us did not have enough time to sit and chat with our elders or share a cup of tea with them in the evening. We don't even realise the amount of care they need as they grow old. Spending time with them not only helps them feel better and fight loneliness but also helps us get an insight into the past. Right from teaching us about our past values to becoming good human beings, they help us become the best versions of ourselves. Many of us would realise this now as we now have enough time to communicate and spend time with them.

However, it might be different for those who are not living with their parents or elderly loved ones. For them interactions with seniors would mean being in touch with them over the phone rather than physically meeting them. This, however, may be very cold and impersonal, and there is a huge chance of home bound seniors getting depressed, especially if they are used to an active social life where children and grandchildren visit them often. Under such circumstances, it is important to call every day and maintain contact. If they are comfortable, a Whatsapp or a Skype call, or even using Alexa to "drop in" can be helpful. It is important not to lose touch as a result of the restrictions placed on them. Making the seniors tech-friendly, even at a basic level, can go a very long way. Having conversations, introducing them to online recreational activities can actually help in combating depression and isolation.

Our elderly care platform has launched three initiatives keeping social distancing and hygiene factors in mind.

Dare to Care: a no contact grocery and medicine delivery service at home.

Talk to Me: a free call service for medical and psychological support and assistance by experts.

Happy at Home: Access to recreational activities through WhatsApp groups and Zoom sessions such as crosswords, yoga, book reading, music to combat loneliness.

(The authors are Co-CEOs at TribeCa Care, an elderly care platform).

Back to basics

Now, in an unsettling era of staying at home, revive forgotten house skills



Janice Simonsen, who works in corporate communications in Philadelphia, helped sew masks for medical personnel, following instructions on a YouTube video. "I haven't pulled my sewing machine out for many years. I never really had the time," she says. "Those junior high sewing classes kicked back in."

She plans to keep the machine out and try some projects, like pillow covers, that she's put off for years. "It felt good to create something useful again," says Simonsen.

Yes, you can still order takeout in most places and call the plumber or electrician. But more people are trying to do that only when absolutely needed. Hardware stores have seen high demand for home-repair and lawn tools. Social media feeds everywhere are full of posts from newbies planting vegetable gardens, giving themselves haircuts and baking bread.

Jeanne Huntley, who taught high school home economics for 35 years in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, thinks society lost something important when schools phased out home economics and shop classes in favor of computer science, robotics and STEM.

A lot of younger people have been brought up in a consumer society — "You don't fix things, you replace things," she says. "Parents are busy too, and there's not a lot of time to pass on those skills. But knowing you can make things and fix things gives us a sense of confidence in ourselves."

This is not new for everyone. There's always been a countercurrent of people yearning to get back to basics.

The DIY movement has blossomed in recent years, and long before the coronavirus "urban homesteaders" experimented with backyard chickens, homemade dyes, wooden toys and organic food. Concerns over climate change have kickstarted a strong movement toward buying fewer things and leaving a lighter footprint on the environment: "Reduce, reuse, recycle."

Now, in a time of feared shortages and limited mobility, this emphasis on self-sufficiency is going wider.

Sharon Bowers, co-author with her husband, David, of a book about life skills called *The Useful Book* (Workman), embraces the trend. But she cautions people to be smart — and check out books and YouTube videos before plunging in.

"I'm urging you to boldly go and try something new, but not something that you know is way outside your ability. ... You could probably wire a lamp, but don't mess around with the circuit board in your house," she says. "If you make a mess — assuming you don't break something you really need — you can always call the professionals when we're out the other side."

Even the Bowerses, fix-it pros who live outside Dublin, Ireland, with their two teenage sons, "have a plumbing problem that's complicated" to deal with. "And," she says, "we're just going to have to wait."

—AP

Bhumi learns hydroponics farming

Actor **Bhumi Pednekar** is an environmentally conscious actor who wants to propagate the idea of sustainable living and is an advocate for climate change. India is in lockdown mode due to the Coronavirus crisis and the actor decided to learn the science of hydroponics farming from her mom, Sumitra Pednekar. The mother-daughter duo have always wanted to build a garden to table concept of sustainable lifestyle and looks like that dream is coming to fruition.

Bhumi shares, "My mom and I always wanted to have a hydroponics garden of our own where we grow our own vegetables and can have a fully sustainable lifestyle. We wanted to have a garden to table lifestyle at home and we are both happy with the progress."

The actor is also the brain behind her much-lauded online and offline initiative *Climate Warrior* through which she is raising awareness on how citizen of India can contribute to protect the climate.

She adds, "This quarantine has made me get into learning the science of hydroponics and understand the essence of what conservation of environment can truly mean. I have been working closely with my mom during this time. I'm proud that our garden can now produce food for two days of the week. I have tried to be closer to nature during the lockdown and it has made me realise that we can become completely self-sustaining as a community and do our best for its preservation."

The science of soil-less gardening is called hydroponics. It basically involves growing healthy plants without the use of a traditional soil medium by using a nutrient like a mineral rich water solution instead. A plant just needs select nutrients, some water, and sunlight to grow. Such farming reduces the use of chemicals and is a brilliant way of cutting down soil pollution.





Instagram is evidence how experimenting with food and cooking new dishes have become most-seen household activities during self-quarantine. Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, people in their homes are not just giving a chance to themselves but also looking at healthier eating practices thanks to lockdown, which has made us forego junk. The craving is being satiated by equally delicious but healthier options.

Some chefs and food experts suggest a few mantras on cooking such meals at home, keeping in mind the availability of resources.

COOK WISELY

Deepankar Arora, chef and partner at BEEP, Agra, says, "In such times, the best way to keep hunger at bay is to keep it simple. Since going out to buy stuff regularly isn't a very viable option, a lot depends on the ingredients you already have at home. And when you're buying, go for items like cabbage, root vegetables and winter squash, which can last longer in your fridge. So plan all meals in advance to avoid stepping out unnecessarily. Use the ingredients in a way that only small quantities get exhausted or wasted."

He adds that since we're all multi-tasking with our domestic chores too, "to save time, one can prepare a basic tomato and onion puree and freeze it in an ice cube tray. The cubes can be used as and when required. As the weather gets drier, one can also try experimenting with flavoured water

Heal thyself

Experts suggest eating nutrient-dense foods, which can help strengthen the immune system, during self-quarantine as there is lesser physical activity. By CHAHAK MITTAL

which can be made easily by adding mint leaves, lemon or sweet lime zest or slices to a bottle of water to sip on."

Vikas Malik, chef, Danbro, says, "The lockdown can mean scarcity of even the basic ingredients which we use while cooking. During crisis, the bottom-line is to maximise the resources we have and to innovate with the limited material available."

Prem Kumar Pogakula, executive chef, The Imperial Hotel, New Delhi, agrees that people are making the most of their time at home by experimenting with new cuisines. However, he cautions that one of the biggest barriers with experimental food could be "the availability of necessary ingredients. Since at this moment, it's a little hard to move out of the



LEARN NEWER TECHNIQUES

Deepankar suggests that if there are kids at home, it's a great time to involve them in the kitchen and introduce them to the art of cooking. He says, "Younger ones can be educated about different types of fruits, vegetables and pulses available and the older ones can help with basic peeling and chopping under supervision."

He suggests that one can also consider learning new cuisines and experimenting with the presentation. And one of the best ways to do it is to "try recipes from Mexican cuisine as it shares many ingredients with ours. You can try your hand at a *Phulka* Taco or look at Lebanese and Greek dishes for healthy food inspirations. Use your imagination to try plating the Indian food differently."

house frequently, we need to make sure we use what we have, wisely. We can still experiment with ingredients which match our regular recipes."

GO THE HEALTHY WAY

Executive chef, Jayanandan Bhaskar, Onkourse at Karma Lakelands, Gurugram, says that while a little indulgence in snacks at home is fine, one shouldn't be overdoing it, especially now. He says, "We should opt for healthy eating in the times like these when we are not stepping out and there is less physical activity. We should consume lots of fruits and can also be creative and make fruit jams which can be consumed with *paranths* or pancakes. We should also increase the intake of raw vegetables and dry fruits soaked in water since they help boost our immunity. Including some sort of physical activity in our daily routine like skipping, yoga or anything that you like is another healthy practice."

Vikas believes that it is also important not to be repetitive when it comes to food. He says, "It is very important to keep our palate interesting while trying to stay healthy at home. One can make new combinations of salad using different vegetables and dressings, keeping it simple and light. With ample time at hand, it gives us a great opportunity to venture into trying out new recipes and cuisines."

Chef Lalit Mohan, director, Asian Academy of Culinary Art, suggests that we pay special attention to the diet of the elderly at this time. He says, "The diet of older people must have low-sugar and low-fat foods while including whole grains and lean proteins. This will tend to improve their digestive and overall immune system."

Vikram Shokeen, junior sous chef, The Ashok, wants us to take a look at the larger picture. He says "It's a hard time for all of us but look at it as a blessed time, too. It's a chance for you to have a balanced diet and maintain it while being at home. It's not important to eat extensively but healthy. We should cut down on sugar, starch and excess salt, and eat more fibres and whole-grained food. It is good for digestion. Drink lots of water."

THE SUSTAINABLE WAY — ONE-POT MEALS

Having multiple but mini meals in a day to avoid any overeating and feeling lethargic is the best way out, suggests chef Prem, and at the same time, sustainable. He says, "Since we are less active, physically, need to eat more and digest less. Try cooking one-pot meals at this time, which are easy to prepare at one go. You also don't need to spend a lot of time in the kitchen preparing it. This way, we can save some water too."

Some blends he suggests are Pasta cooked with homemade *dal tadka* or tossed in *Bhindi* fry, Roti cut into strips and mixed with noodles, *Payasam* with Maggi noodles.

Said Michael Twitty, food historian and author of *The Cooking Gene*, recently, "One-pot" is an umbrella term for dishes made in a single skillet, sheet pan or roasting pan. For our ancestors, the technique was a favourite because it met essential survival needs. It saved time, water and firewood — the three most important elements to prepare food."



The bar comes home

Dubai allows home delivery for alcohol as cafes shut down amid virus fears

The Champagne corks no longer pop at Dubai's infamous alcohol-soaked brunches. The blaring flat-screen TVs stand silent in the sheikhdom's sports bars. And the city-state's pubs have shrink-wrapped their now-idle beer taps.

This skyscraper-studded desert metropolis on the Arabian Peninsula has long been one of the wettest places in the Mideast in terms of alcohol consumption, its bars and licensed restaurants serving tourists, travellers and its vast population of foreign workers.

Up until the global Coronavirus pandemic, that is. With the virus now threatening a crucial source of tax and general revenue for its rulers, Dubai's two major alcohol distributors have partnered to offer home delivery of beer, spirits and wine, yet another loosening of social mores in this Islamic city-state.

"Luxury hotels and bars have been the worse impacted within the sector and this had a direct impact on the alcohol consumption... in the UAE," said Rabia Yasmeen, an analyst for a market research firm.

Maritime and Mercantile International, a subsidiary of the government-owned Emirates airline known as MMI, and African & Eastern, partnered to create the website offering home delivery. Its products range from a \$530 bottle of Don Julio 1942 Tequila to a \$4.30 bottle of Indian blended whiskey, with beers and wines in between.

Their website *legahomedelivery.com*, a nod toward the online bootleggers long operating in the gray margins of Dubai, describes the service as needed "in these unprecedented times."

Tourists, the few remaining here, can use their passports to buy the alcohol. Residents, however, need an alcohol license, a plastic red card issued by Dubai police that requires annual renewal. Only non-Muslims 21 and older can apply for a license — though bartenders across the city never check for them before pouring drinks. Text-message alerts give imbibers a predicted delivery time

within a few hours. The delivery crew shows up wearing masks and disposable gloves.

"We are in the early days of the service and interest has been high already," Mike Glen, MMI's managing director for the UAE & Oman said. However, there are no sales statistics currently available.

A push to keep alcohol shops open during the pandemic may be surprising to some, especially as drinking is illegal in the neighbouring emirate of Sharjah and the nations of Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But alcohol sales long have been a canary in the coal mine — or in this case, the cocktail lounge — for the wider economy of Dubai, one of seven sheikhdoms in the UAE.

There's a 50 per cent import tax on a bottle of alcohol, as well as an additional 30 per cent tax in Dubai on buying from liquor stores. Dubai Duty Free, which is also government owned, sold nine million cans of beer, 3.1 million whiskey bottles and 1.5 million bottles of wine to those passing through airport terminals in 2019. Duty-free sales, while limited, never require an alcohol license.

Even before the pandemic, lower global energy prices, a 30 per cent drop in the city's real estate market value and trade war fears have seen employers shed jobs. Dubai now is trying to postpone its Expo 2020, or world's fair, to next year, another major blow.

The lower sales of alcohol affect everyone from waitresses to Dubai's ruling Al Maktoum family, which has worked over decades to make the city a major tourist destination, home to the world's tallest building. Also, most bars in Dubai are attached to hotels.

The home service charges 50 dirhams (\$13.60) per delivery. That's additional revenue for the stores, even as bars and restaurants remain closed. While some aid groups have sprung up to offer help to out-of-work bartenders elsewhere, there's been no similar measure here in the UAE, whose waitstaff comes from all across the world.

—AP

R E C I P E S

CAESAR SALAD

WHAT YOU NEED

- Lettuce: 3 cups
- Soft cheese (cubes): ¼ cups
- Bread croutons: 2 cups
- Del Monte mayonnaise: ½ cup
- Del Monte extra virgin olive oil: ¼ cups
- Lemon Juice
- Garlic (finely minced)
- Worcestershire sauce
- English mustard paste: ½ tsp
- Salt to taste

METHOD

- To make bread croutons, remove the sides of stale bread slices.
- Cut the bread slices into equal-sized cubes.
- Brush the cubes with melted butter.
- Bake at 175 degrees C for 15 minutes or until browned. Let cool.
- To make the salad dressing, combine



Del Monte mayonnaise, garlic, sauce, mustard paste and lemon juice in a bowl. ● Whisk nicely until well combined. Now slowly pour the Del Monte olive oil while continuously whisking. Season with salt and pepper.

- Arrange lettuce leaves in a salad bowl. Add bread croutons and cheese cubes.
- Pour dressing over the salad. Sprinkle some parmesan shavings if you like.
- Serve the Caesar salad with toasted bread on the side.

Courtesy: Del Monte.

LEMON & WALNUT DRIZZLE CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Walnut (roughly chopped): 100 g
- Butter (softened): 125 g
- Caster sugar: 125 g
- Lemon: 2
- Egg: 3
- All purpose flour: 150 g
- Baking powder: ½ tsp
- Granulated sugar: 2 tbsp

METHOD

- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degree C, gas mark 4.
- Grease and base line a 1 kg loaf tin.
- Place 50 g walnuts in a food processor and blitz to a coarse powder. Chop another 25 g.
- Whisk the butter and sugar in a large bowl until pale and fluffy.
- Whisk in the zest of two lemons and



then whisk in the eggs, one at a time.

- Fold in the flour, baking powder and prepared walnuts to get a smooth batter.
- Spoon into the prepared tin and bake for 35-40 minutes until golden and a skewer comes out clean.
- Just before the cake comes out of the oven, mix half the juice with granulated sugar.
- Chop the remaining 25 g walnuts and stir into the syrup.
- Prick the cake with a skewer several times and drizzle over the lemon syrup.
- Allow to cool a little in the tin before removing then allow it to cool completely.
- A tip: Try using a mixture of lemon and lime juice. This cake will stay fresh for two to three days if wrapped in foil.

Courtesy: Chef Sabyasachi Gorai.

IMMUNE BOOSTER JUICE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Beetroot: 300 gm
- Carrot: 300 gm
- Apple: 100 gm
- Lemon: ½ tsp
- Ice cubes
- Salt to taste (optional)

METHOD

- Cut the beetroot, carrot and apple.
- Squeeze out their juice in a juicer.
- Blend it well and



strain it to remove all the fibres. The pulp itself is rich in fibres.

- Add half a teaspoon of lemon juice and salt to taste.
- Mix it and serve chilled with ice cubes
- Please note: Do not add ice cubes in case you are not well or don't feel like consuming it chilled.
- Serve in room temperature.

Courtesy: Chef Anshu Raj, Caterspoint.

PAPRIKA & WALNUT SCRAMBLED EGG BAGEL

WHAT YOU NEED

- Bagel (halved): 90 g
- Baby spinach: 75 g
- Oil: ½ tsp
- Smoked paprika: ¼ tsp
- Walnuts (chopped roughly)
- Eggs (beaten): 2
- Milk: 1 tsp
- Chopped chives (to sprinkle)

METHOD

- Toast the bagel and set on a plate.
- Meanwhile, place the spinach in a microwave-safe bowl.



- Cover with cling film and microwave on high for one minute or until just wilted.
- Heat the oil, paprika and walnuts in a small saucepan until it just starts to sizzle, remove and set aside.
- Beat the eggs and milk together and season.
- Add the eggs to the pan and stir gently to scramble.
- Place the spinach on top of the bagel and top with the eggs.
- Serve sprinkled with the reserved walnuts and chives.

Courtesy: Chef Sabyasachi Gorai.

Avoid fights with Kohli to keep him quiet, not to save IPL contracts: Paine

Test skipper rubbishes Clarke's statement on Australia being nice to Virat

PTI ■ HOBART

The Australian cricket team avoids provoking "any fight" with Virat Kohli, concedes Test skipper Tim Paine but he also asserts that it's a strategy to keep the Indian captain's bat quiet, not a ploy to save IPL contracts, as claimed by his predecessor Michael Clarke.

Paine rejected Clarke's claims that there was a phase in Australian cricket when the side "sucked up" to Kohli to land fat deals with IPL franchises.

"I certainly didn't notice too many people being that nice to Virat or not trying to get him out or anything like that," Paine told *ESPNCricinfo*.

"I'm not sure who was going easy on him; we certainly had a thing where we didn't want to provoke any fight with him because we think that's when he plays at his best," he said.

India are scheduled to tour Australia from October, 2020 to January, 2021 to play four Tests, three ODIs and three T20 matches.

"Who knows what will happen this series and, as we saw in the documentary, there was still quite a lot of heat in some of those games. I certainly wasn't holding back, but again the IPLs not a huge draw for me at the moment, so I had nothing to lose," Paine said.

"But anytime our guys go out and play a Test match for Australia, they'll be giving their absolute all and I'm pretty sure they're not thinking about an



Indian skipper Virat Kohli and Australian captain Tim Paine in action during India's tour of Australia for four-match Test series in 2018-19. AP/File Picture

IPL contract when they're running in, bowing to Virat."

In November, 2018, Clarke had slammed attempts to improve Australian cricket's image owing to the infamous ball-tampering scandal, saying the national team "won't win a game" by "worrying about being liked".

Paine said verbal wars cannot win matches unless one displays the requisite skills on the field.

"What you say on the field is irrelevant 99 per cent of the time," Paine said. "Sometimes you can get a little inside someone's head or something like that, but if you're not batting well and not bowling well, all the talk in the world doesn't mean anything," he said.

Rejecting a one-size-fits-all kind of approach to planning, Paine said strategy has to be formulated keeping the opposition's strengths in mind.

"There's no doubt our first focus is on executing our skill and being as good as we can possibly be in that area and then sometimes things happen on a cricket field and you've got to go in, you've got to change your tack, or you've got to have a few words.

"As we've seen the last 12 or 18 months, we still do that, we still stick up for each other, we still fight as hard as any Australian team, but we've probably just had to move with the times and I've been really proud of the way we've played out cricket," he explained.

Kapil rejects Akhtar's proposal for Indo-Pak series

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



World Cup-winning former captain.

The legendary Kapil Dev on Thursday slammed Shoaib Akhtar's idea of a made-for-television three-match ODI series between India and Pakistan to raise funds for the COVID-19 pandemic, saying "India doesn't need the money" and it is not worth risking lives for a cricket match.

Akhtar on Wednesday proposed a closed-door series to jointly raise funds to fight the deadly virus both in India and Pakistan. Dev said the proposal is not feasible.

"He is entitled to his opinion but we don't need to raise the money. We have enough. For us, what is important right now is that how our authorities work together to deal with this crisis. I am still seeing a lot of blame game on television from the politicians and that needs to stop," Dev said.

"Anyway, the BCCI has donated a hefty amount (₹51 crore) for the cause and is in a position to donate much more if the need arises. It doesn't need to raise funds.

"The situation is unlikely to get normal anytime soon and organising a cricket game means putting our cricketers at risk which we don't need to," said the

Dev said cricket should not even matter for at least the next six months.

"It is just not worth the risk. And how much money can you make from three games? In my view, you can't even think of cricket for the next five to six months," he said.

Dev said the focus, at the moment, should only be on saving lives and taking care of the poor, the hospital workers, the police and all other people who are on the frontline of this war," said the 61-year-old.

LONDON: Australian cricketers had gone "out of control" and turned "pretty average people" two-three years before the ball-tampering scandal, says former ICC Elite Panel umpire Ian Gould, who was the TV official in the infamous Cape Town Test of 2018.

Gould, who retired after last year's World Cup, relayed what had been spotted on the TV — Cameron Bancroft putting sandpaper down his trousers — to the on-field umpires.

"If you look back on it now, Australia were out of control probably two years, maybe three years, before that, but not in this sense. Maybe — behavioural, chatty, being pretty average people," Gould told the *Daily*

Aussies were out of control well before ball-tampering scandal: Gould

Telegraph while promoting his autobiography *Gunner — My Life in Cricket*.

The fallout of the Newlands Test was huge.

Then captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were slapped with a one-year international ban while Bancroft was suspended for nine months by Cricket Australia for his role in the scandal. It also prompted a cultural review into Australian cricket.

"... I didn't realise what the repercussions would be," Gould said.

"But when it came into my earpiece I didn't think the prime



minister of Australia was going to come tumbling down on these three guys. All I thought was — Jesus, how do I put this out to the guys on the field without making it an overreaction.

"It was a bit like on Mastermind when the light is on top of you and you're going — oh dear, how do I talk through this?"

Ball-tampering was classed as a level two offence under the ICC Code of Conduct, but it has since been elevated to a level three category, which carries a ban of up to six Tests or 12 ODIs.

Gould admitted he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing on TV, but said what came out of it was good for the game, especially Australian cricket.

"When the director said, 'He's put something down the front of his trousers,' I started giggling, because that didn't sound quite right. Obviously, what's come from it is for the betterment of Australian cricket — and cricket generally," he observed.

Gould said that he still has the balls that were used in the Newlands Test.

"If you saw the balls, you would get it completely wrong. At the end of the day, the sandpaper didn't get on that ball.

"They were working to get the ball to be pristine. Once they'd got one side bigger and shinier, that's when the sandpaper was coming in." **PTI**

Gloucestershire call off Pujara deal



NEW DELHI: Star India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire for the first six matches of the County C'ship has been cancelled due to

COVID-19 pandemic.

The 32-year-old Indian, who has scored 5840 runs at an average of 48.66 in 77 Tests, was supposed to play six County C'ship matches for the club at the start of the county's first season back in Division One.

However, Gloucestershire on Thursday said that the deal is off now given the global health crisis, which has forced the ECB to suspend all professional cricket until May 28.

"We will also now miss the opportunity to see Cheteshwar Pujara play for the mighty Glos in the 2020 season which we know our supporters were really looking forward to," the club said in a statement. **PTI**



Rafael Nadal in action during Roland Garros tournament in 2019. ATP

ATP chief hoping for Roland Garros and clay-court season in Sept

AFP ■ MILAN

ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi on Thursday said he hopes the clay-court season and French Open can be played in September as tennis scrambles to salvage a season in danger of being wiped out by the coronavirus pandemic.

"If we manage to start again in August, we'll save three Slams and six Masters 1000, otherwise the problems will increase tenfold," Gaudenzi said in an interview with several Italian media outlets.

"We are working on the hypothesis of four weeks on clay after the US Open, with Madrid and Rome before Roland Garros."

Tennis has been in lockdown since early last month and is not scheduled to return until July 13 at the earliest following the cancellation of Wimbledon for the first time since World War II.

The decision to axe the sport's oldest and most prestigious Grand Slam event followed the French Open's unilateral switch from its traditional May-June slot to September-October.

Gaudenzi said no sanctions would be taken against Roland Garros for taking the decision alone to postpone.

"Now we are working together," Gaudenzi, who took over as ATP chief in January, told *Gazzetta Dello Sport*.

"Tennis needs unity, Paris acted out of fear, making a mistake. But they have recognised this."

All this will depend on the virus which has infected over 1.5 million with the United States and Europe hit hard.

"We have made 50 versions of the calendar that we change day by day," said Gaudenzi.

"I am confident that the season in America can begin with the August Masters 1000 in Toronto and Cincinnati and then the US Open.

"In this way three Slams and six Masters 1000 would be played (there are also Shanghai and Bercy) and the season would be 70 percent safe.

"Of course, if the whole American slot were to skip, the difficulties would increase tenfold."

Gaudenzi said the options were being examined in conjunction with the ATP Player Council including Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

He stressed it was hoped to maintain the ATP Finals, scheduled for London in November 15-22.

"The 02 Arena is only available in the week already fixed. I don't like closed doors, it's the last resort."

Rangers blast plans to end Scottish season early

GLASGOW: Rangers strongly criticised plans to terminate the divisions' below Premiership, warning of "severe consequences for the Scottish game".

With play halted due to the coronavirus, the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) announced proposals to determine final placings by points per game in league matches played to date by each club.

The resolution, to be voted on by clubs, also recommends the top tier remains postponed for the time being, although final placings would be determined by the same system if the SPFL's board determines matches cannot be played.

That would see Celtic crowned champions for the ninth successive season and Hearts relegated, but the immediate impact of the plans would be relegation for Partick Thistle from the second-tier Championship and Stranraer from League One.

Steven Gerrard's second-placed Gers, 13 points behind Celtic, said in a statement they would oppose "in the strongest possible terms" any attempt to railroad changes to existing rules.

They said they would immediately propose a member's resolution that would release prize money to be distributed to all clubs throughout Scotland urgently.

Rangers said forcing through change "without due care and attention" would have severe consequences for the Scottish game.

Partick, bottom of the Championship, said they would not accept the proposal as it stood, adding it needed more scrutiny and debate.

Dundee United would be promoted to the Premiership if the resolution passed, while Raith Rovers would move up to the Championship and Cove Rangers would join League One. **AFP**



Boucher optimistic about rebuilding strong SA side

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's ODI series victory over Australia was the "light at the end of the tunnel" for Team Director Mark Boucher, who remains optimistic about rebuilding a strong Proteas side despite a tough summer.

The former wicketkeeper-batsman took over in mid-December ahead of the England tour which saw South Africa lose a Test and T20 series while drawing a rain-affected ODI series.

The Proteas then suffered a home T20 series defeat to Australia before a young Quinton de Kock-led side registered a 3-0 win over Aaron Finch's men in the ODIs.



"If I look back over the summer and reflect on the team's performances and progress, especially against England and Australia, I think it was quite disappointing

to be honest," Boucher told *Cricketer South Africa*.

"Especially against England, we didn't perform like we wanted to perform. In saying that I think we, as a new coaching staff, asked some questions and I think we got some answers. Some were good and some were bad."

The 43-year-old is delighted with the team's performance in the shorter formats of the game but reckons the Test side needs rebuilding.

"The nice thing for me about the whole summer was the light at the end of tunnel, especially in our short formats. I think we have a lot of work to do with our Test cricket still, there's probably a lot of rebuilding in that respect."

Pandemic unwanted but 'good break' for cricketers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The complete lack of live action due to the COVID-19 pandemic is a "good break" for modern cricketers spending most of their time on the road, feels legendary Pakistan batsman Zaheer Abbas.

The international calendar, in his playing days, was not as crammed as it is today.

"I think it is a good break for them. They always live on suitcases, play too much cricket, and rarely get time to be at home. Now they have got a chance to spend time with family," Abbas said.

"I would suggest them to introspect, keep working on fitness and do whatever they were not able to because of their busy schedule. It will also keep them refreshed for the future," added the former skipper.

Tour de France racing against time, and losing

PARIS: For the Tour de France, one of the last of the summer's major sports events still standing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the stop-watch is ticking.

While the Tokyo Olympics, the Euros, tennis and golf majors and the Giro d'Italia have already been postponed or even cancelled, the Tour is still scheduled to start on June 27.

Christian Prudhomme, the Tour director, made clear that before the race he wants "two months of exposure for the riders."

That means training rides and races and with most prospective competitors confined, the chances of their getting back on the road by

late April look slim.

The race also needs France to end its lockdown, not just so the riders can ride but because the Tour attracts 10 to 12 million spectators who stand by the roads to watch.

Last week, when he announced the postponement of the Dauphine, an eight-day Tour warm-up stage race in the southeast of France due to start on May 31, Prudhomme said: "The most important word in Tour de France is France, and health concerns come first."

The situation across Europe suggests that a postponement is increasingly likely.

Prudhomme is not prepared to discuss alternative plans in public,



but said: "As of today, the dates of the Tour de France are maintained. But it would be a lie to say that we are not studying other hypotheses."

Behind the scenes, it is learnt, the organisers have sounded out

cycling teams as well as French politicians and broadcasters about a postponement to August.

Sports Minister Roxane Maracineanu talked of banning spectators. But the idea seems to have died.

The Tour is fuelled by its fans and it would be hard to prevent people coming out of their houses when the race passes by.

Welshman Geraint Thomas, the winner in 2018, and Julian Alaphilippe, France's hero of the 2019 Tour after wearing the leader's jersey for 14 days, used almost identical words. "Without the fans, it wouldn't be the Tour de France," was how Thomas put it. **AFP**

Mid-May possibility for League clubs to return to training: EFL

LONDON: Clubs outside the Premier League cannot resume training till "May 16 at the earliest" due to the coronavirus pandemic but the season can be completed in "56 days" English Football League chairman Rick Parry informed them in a letter.

The 72 clubs have been kicking their heels since the EFL suspended the campaign in the Championship, League One and Two on March 13.

All 24 sides in the Championship still had nine matches to play.

Some clubs in League One have 12 games remaining, while in League Two, teams have either nine or 10 matches remaining to complete the regular season.

However, Parry said following an EFL board meeting on Thursday they were confident



once there was a resumption of the league fixtures and the promotion play-offs could be completed within two months.

"The EFL Board determined that to provide a level of certainty, clubs should not recommence any training activity with players until May 16 at the earliest," Parry wrote.

"Whenever the decision is taken that it is safe to resume, we

currently estimate that the League will require 56 days approximately to complete the outstanding matches in the season (including Play-Offs)."

Parry said it is probable the matches will be played behind closed doors due to the British Government's social distancing measures.

"It is our working assumption at this stage that matches will be played behind closed doors when we eventually return," he said.

His letter also suggested the delayed resumption of the present season could impact on the start of the 2020/21 campaign.

"We will ensure there is a suitable break between the two, so as to allow clubs and staff sufficient time to regroup and prepare accordingly," he said. **AFP**

Labbadia succeeds Klinsmann at Hertha

AFP ■ BERLIN

Bruno Labbadia will succeed Jurgen Klinsmann as head coach of Hertha Berlin, the Bundesliga club announced on Thursday, confirming earlier reports in the German media.

"With Bruno, we have someone who knows the Bundesliga well from his many years as a player and a coach and has shown that he can stabilise teams and lead them back up the table," sporting director Michael Preetz said.

According to newspaper *Bild* and football magazine *Kicker*, 52-year-old Labbadia will sign a contract until 2022 to oversee preparations should the German league resume next month after being halt-



ed on March 13.

The former Wolfsburg and Hamburg coach will be the fourth different person to occupy the Hertha dugout this season, and will be charged with saving a miserable season for the capital city club.

Hertha, who are backed by a wealthy investor, are 14th in the table, six points from the relegation places with nine games left.