

OPINION 6
NEW ORDER
IN THE MAKING

MONEY 9
EQUITY BENCHMARKS SURGE TO
NEAR 7-WEEK HIGH ON STIMULUS HOPES

AVENUES 11
PROPER
STRATEGY IS KEY

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**BUNDESLIGA
COULD START
IN MID MAY**
12 SPORT

Covid fight hinges on 15 cities

Delhi, Mumbai, Ahd among them; 7 show high cases: Niti Aayog



A health worker sanitises the premises of NITI Aayog building after a director-level officer tested positive for Covid-19 in New Delhi on Tuesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Niti Aayog has identified 15 places, including Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad as "high case load" and said India's success in battling coronavirus pandemic is dependent on them. Out of these 15, seven districts show particularly high case volumes. They are Hyderabad (Telangana), Pune (Maharashtra), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Delhi.

Other high case load places that are "critical" in the battle against Covid-19 include — Vadodara (Gujarat), Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Thane (Maharashtra), Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Surat (Gujarat). "These 15 districts are critical in our battle against Covid-19. Of them, 7 show particularly high case volumes. India's success in battling Covid-19 is dependent on them. We must aggressively monitor, contain,

test, treat in these districts! We must win here," NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said. As per the report, Gujarat and Maharashtra are the only States where three districts in each are in "critical" situation. Gujarat's Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Surat districts and Maharashtra's Thane, Pune and Mumbai are declared "critical". Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan with two districts each are mentioned in the list with Bhopal and Indore, and Jodhpur and Jaipur respectively as critical hotspots.

Among the "high case volume districts", Delhi with 100 per cent contribution to "State case load" and 12.62 per cent contribution to "India case load" is passing through most crucial phase in the fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic amid reports of 54

deaths and 3,108 confirmed infected cases, the data said.

Ahmedabad in Gujarat is second in terms of contribution to State case load estimated 66.07 per cent and 9.43 per cent to India case load; followed by Hyderabad with 55.64 per cent State case load and 2.41 India case load and Indore with 49.57 per cent State case load and 4.48 per cent India case load contribution.

Jaipur with 36.98 per cent State case load and 3.49 per cent India case load is on the fifth position in terms of "high case volumes" followed by Mumbai with 33.30 per cent State case load and 11.62 per cent India case load contribution; and Pune with 8.45 per cent State case load and 2.95 per cent India case load.

Kant said if we carefully observe the daily and weekly case growth rates in high case-load States in conjunction, it is "encouraging" that Telangana is showing noticeable improvement. The Government had on March 29 constituted 11 empowered groups to suggest measures to ramp up health-care and put the economy back on track. Kant heads the Empowered Group coordinating with private sector NGOs and international bodies.

China rues ICMR's decision to not use test kits

New Delhi: China on Tuesday said it was "deeply concerned" over the evaluation result of the Covid-19 rapid testing kits supplied by two Chinese firms and subsequent decision by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to not use the equipment, and hoped that India will resolve the issue "reasonably".

At 30K & counting, India 15th worst hit

Total cases at 30,631 with 977 deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the Covid-19 cases breached 30,000 marks and death surging to 1,000, India moved up by two slots to the 15th position among the list of 20-worst Covid-19 affected nations in the world in just a week.

The total confirmed cases in the country stood at 30,631 and 977 deaths, at 11 pm on Tuesday on the basis of figures reaching from States.

Experts said that the number could be on the higher side given that India is yet to ramp up the testing in the country. Global data shows that as on Tuesday, just 519 people per million population are being tested in India. This is quite low when compared to other countries like Belgium and Canada where the count is over 19,000 per million people.

Worldwide, over 31 lakh people have been infected with Covid-19 which has claimed more than 2.1 lakh lives so far.

Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi remained the worst affected States, while Madhya Pradesh stole march over Rajasthan on Tuesday to occupy the fourth place. Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, UP and Andhra



People return from a market carrying essential items in Jabalpur on Tuesday PTI

Pradesh were ranked behind them in that order.

Maharashtra has 8,590 cases. Gujarat reported another big spike of 226 new cases, raising total confirmed cases to 3,774 and 181 death, 19 of them on Tuesday alone.

National Capital Delhi reported 206 new cases to reach a total of 3,314 and 54 deaths.

After recording 75 cases on Monday, Madhya Pradesh saw big leap adding 222 cases on Tuesday for a total of 2,387 cases and 120 deaths.

It turned out to be a Black Tuesday in Tamil Nadu as 121 persons tested positive for coronavirus on a single day taking the number of Covid-19 patients in the State to 2,058.

The last few days have been showing some kind of fluctuations in the number of persons tested positive for the

pandemic which encouraged the government to loosen the lockdown guidelines and this could have played havoc, according to medical experts.

Trump wants to exact from China over \$140 bn for corona pandemic

Washington: The US is carrying out a "very serious" investigation against China, President Donald Trump has said, indicating that his administration is looking at a bigger compensation from Beijing than the \$140 billion being sought by Germany over the coronavirus pandemic.

Health Min plays down plasma therapy efficacy

Says it is in experimental stage, warns of health issues

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Just as plasma therapy offered some hope for critical Covid-19 patients, many of who responded well to it, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday tried to play down its efficacy saying it is in experimental stage and warned it can cause life threatening complications if not used in proper manner under proper guidelines.

The Ministry's observation comes days after the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a health research wing of the Ministry, gave permission to a string of States such as Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Delhi to use



plasma of the Covid-19 cured patient for the treatment of the virus-infected person.

Ministry's Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said currently there are no approved therapies for Covid-19 and there is not enough evidence to claim that plasma therapy can be used for treatment of the disease.

"The ICMR has launched a national-level study to assess the efficacy of plasma therapy in treatment of Covid-19," he said.

"Till ICMR concludes its study and a robust scientific proof is available, plasma therapy should be used only for

research or trial purpose. If plasma therapy is not used in proper manner under proper guidelines, then it can also cause life threatening complications. It'll be harmful to patient and illegal," Agarwal added.

Incidentally, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal too said in view of positive results from a few Covid-19 patients, his Government will conduct more trials in the sector. On his appeal scores of Tablighi Jamat members who recovered from the Covid-19 disease registered to donate their plasma.

"The Centre had given us permission only for limited trials of plasma therapy on critically ill Covid-19 patients at LNJP hospital. We will conduct more trials in the next 2-3 days and then will seek permission from the central government next week, for all the serious patients," Kejriwal said.

Delhi lifts some curbs for eco activities, cases soar to 3,314

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On a day when the Delhi Government lifted lockdown restrictions for electricians, plumbers, and water purifiers maintenance technicians, the Capital crossed 3,314 coronavirus cases with no deaths reported in last two days, according to officials.

However, the relaxation will not be applicable in containment zones.

Delhi has 99 containment zones and 54 deaths have been registered till Tuesday evening. A CRPF man, who died due to Covid-19 in Delhi, is a first such case among CAPFs.

An official order issued by Chief Secretary Vijay Dev late on Monday after an empowered group, constituted by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, recommended that a section of service rendering persons must be allowed to work even if the lockdown is extended beyond May 3. Other activities that have

been exempted are veterinary hospitals, dispensaries, clinics, pathology, and sale and supply of vaccine and medicines. Movement (inter and intra-state, including by air) of all medical and veterinary personnel, scientists, nurses, paramedical staff, lab technicians, mid-wives and other hospital support services including ambulances have also been allowed.

The operation of shelter homes for children, disabled,

mentally challenged, senior citizens, destitute, women and widows, shops of educational books for students, shops selling electric fans have also been allowed to open.

The Chief Secretary asked the agencies concerned, including the Delhi Police, to ensure that "status quo" be maintained across the city with regard to restrictions that will continue until further orders.

The MHA had earlier allowed these services.

5 new cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar; count 134

Noida: Five more people, including two teenagers, tested positive for coronavirus in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar on Tuesday, taking the district's tally to 134, officials said.

Free cab service from Gautam Buddha Nagar to Delhi for patients

Noida: The Gautam Buddha Nagar administration has made arrangements of free cab service for people who need to travel to Delhi for special medications like dialysis or cancer treatment amid the lockdown imposed to control the spread of coronavirus.

Charged with 'stealing tongs', man kills 2 UP sadhus inside temple

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Days after the lynching of two seers of Juna Akhara in Palghar, Maharashtra, which created a massive furore across the country, two sadhus were battered to death in Bulandshahr late on Monday.

The incident created tension in the area but swift action by the police defused the situation. The police nabbed the alleged killer about 2 kilometres away from the spot. He was allegedly under the influence of cannabis.

The accused revealed that after taking bhong on Monday night he went to the temple and killed the sadhus with a lathi. He said that he carried out God's will, denying he had any quarrel with the priests. The senior official said the youth will be interrogated at length later as he was still under the influence of the drug.

After the news spread about the murder, tension ran



Police arrest a suspect involved in the murder of two temple priests, in Bulandshahr on Tuesday PTI

high in the area and people assembled in large numbers near the temple. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has assured strict action against the accused. Yogi, who was highly critical of the Palghar incident, received a call from Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray who requested him to take strict action against the culprit.

CAPSULE

MOODY'S SLASHES INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST
New Delhi: Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday slashed India's growth forecast for calendar year 2020 to 0.2 per cent, from 2.5 per cent projected in March.

GOVT EXTENDS DEADLINE TO BID FOR AIR INDIA
New Delhi: The Government has extended the deadline to bid for Air India by two months till June 30, as the Covid-19 fallout has disrupted economic activity globally. This is the second extension in the deadline to submit bids by investors for Air India since it initiated process of stake sale in the debt-ridden national carrier on January 27.

OLYMPICS UNREALISTIC WITHOUT A VACCINE?
Tokyo: The head of Japan's medical association thinks it will be difficult to hold the Olympics without an effective coronavirus vaccine. "I hope vaccines and drugs will be developed as soon as possible," Japan Medical Association President Yoshitake Yokokura said on Tuesday.

Double NREGs man-days to 10L daily: CM

Directs for priority to migrants in quarantine centres

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Expecting arrival of a huge number of Odia migrant labourers in the State from other parts of the country, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in a video-conference on Tuesday directed the Government's Covid-19 observers of different districts to double the man-days under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme (NREGS).

Patnaik asked the officials to make the job scheme target-oriented and increase the present five lakh man-days under the NREGS to 10 lakh man-

days daily in next one week.

He directed the Forest Department to begin labour-based works while ensuring protection of the livelihood of kendu leaf pluckers and binders.

The Chief Minister also asked the observers to look into the food security of Odia migrant labourers when they return after the lockdown ends. Whether the migrant labourers hold NFSA or SFSA ration cards, they shouldn't face any difficulties in getting grains.

Keeping the possible scenario during the next eight to 10 days in mind, he directed the officials to be prepared and create opportunities for the migrant labourers at panchayat level. Especially, the quarantine centres at the panchayat level must get the priority.

State to have three more COBAS machines

BHUBANESWAR: The State Government would set up three more COBAS machines that are playing a crucial role in Covid-19 testing.

Industries Secretary Hemant Kumar Sharma said the three COBAS machines would be installed in next two months at three Government medical colleges as per the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

The machines would be set up at the Koraput, Baleswar and Balangir medical colleges, he informed.

Currently, the RMRC, Bhubaneswar has the State's only COBAS 6800 machine. This has helped the Government conduct more number of tests of samples. Out of about 2,500 samples being tested daily, testing of 800 samples are being carried out in the COBAS machine. **PNS**

HC suspends summer vacation of courts

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic-induced lockdown, the Orissa High Court on Tuesday decided to suspend the ensuing summer vacation of courts in the State this year.

In a notification, the High Court said that it took the decision to suspend its summer vacation after consultation with the Advocate General and the president, vice-president and secretary of the Orissa High Court Bar Association.

The suspension of summer vacation would be in force if the lockdown is not extended beyond May 3, the notification added. The HC also suspended the summer vacation of subordinate courts of the State.

7 more test coronavirus positive, total 118 in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/ BHADRAK/ ROURKELA

Seven more people tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday, taking the total number of cases to 118 in the State.

Of the new cases, three were reported from Bhadrak district and four from Nala Road in Rourkela of Sundargarh district.

The three Bhadrak cases included a 45-year-old man, a 25-year-old man and a 29-year-old man, all having a travel history to West Bengal and being asymptomatic.

While two of them are residents of Basudevpur block, the other hails from Bonth block. With the fresh cases, the total number of cases rose to 19 in the district out of which two have recovered.

The four positive cases in Nala Road included two

4 more infected in Rourkela, 3 in Bhadrak 1 more recovers in BBSR; total recoveries 38

women aged 55 and 35 and two men of 38 and 27 years. All are residents under the containment zone of the area. They were admitted to the Rourkela Covid Hospital. The four persons were infected after coming in contact with the sixth case.

On Tuesday, Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) Commissioner Dibyajoti Parida inspected the containment zone along with other

officials. Besides, surveillance of the area is being carried out by a drone. With the fresh cases, the total number of cases in Sundargarh district rose to 10.

Meanwhile, one more person of Bhubaneswar recovered and tested negative for the virus. Later, he was discharged from hospital. With this, the number of recoveries rose to 38, said the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Rules for medical camps, quarantine centres issued

Officials asked to ensure privacy, safety of returnees
₹120 for food of adults; ₹100 for children

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
 The State Government on Tuesday laid down guidelines and approved expenditures for functioning of Temporary Medical Camps (TMCs) or quarantine centres for people stranded outside Odisha who intend to come back to State after the lockdown period.
 While the Government has made it mandatory for the returnees to remain under quarantine in TMCs, the task of managing the centres has

been assigned to the respective gram panchayats (GPs) and the urban local bodies (ULBs).
 The officials in charge of the TMCs have been asked to keep in mind three crucial aspects such as privacy, safety and dignity. "As far as privacy is concerned, separate rooms, baths and toilets must be arranged for men and women. "No discrimination of any sort shall be practised, promoted or tolerated," a notification issued by Special Relief Commissioner Pradeep Jena stated.

The Government has also approved the cost of expenditure for running of the TMCs. Food expenditure of Rs 120 has been fixed for every adult per day and Rs 100 for child below 14 years for 14 days from the date of reporting in the GP and ULB.

Similarly, Rs 300 has been earmarked for personal hygiene kit which includes tooth brush, toothpaste, tongue cleaner, soaps, oil, razor, masks, sanitary

pad, mug, bottle and bucket. "Two bed sheets and two pillow covers will be procured for each bed. Procurement of beds (cots and mattresses, pillows) may be made through hiring and hiring cost can be charged to SDRF. If these have to be procured, funds under other schemes of the concerned department may be utilised," the notification stated.

The cleaning, sanitation and security cost per centre should not exceed Rs 2000 per day. A detailed account of persons lodged in the TMC should be maintained in a register. The data of such people should be uploaded on the official website of the concerned district. Details of people engaged for cleaning and maintenance of the facilities should also be maintained for records.

Notably, as many as 7,102 TMCs with 2.27 lakh beds have been made functional in the State so far for migrants.

VOSS 92 honours Corona Yoddhas



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Members of the Vani Vihar Old Students' Society 92 (Voss 92) honoured cleaning staffs of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation engaged in the Utkal University campus as Corona Yoddha on Monday.

Masks, gloves and dry food were distributed among 30 cleaning staffs at the same time.

Association president Priyabrat Mohanty, secretary Gadadhar Rath and Sarit Panda, among others, coordinated the programme. Souvagya Mohapatra, Guru Prasad Sahoo and Priyabrat Mohanty extended all supports. Former president of UUSU Tanmaya Swain and executive body member of the Utkal University Alumni Association also joined the programme.

State package for industries' revival soon: Minister

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government would soon unveil a comprehensive package for a quick revival of the industrial sector which has been severely hit due to the Covid-induced nationwide lockdown, said Industries Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra on Tuesday.

Agricultural activities, works under the MGNREGA and certain construction operations have already commenced following Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's directions, Mishra said, adding that steps are being taken to rejuvenate the industrial sector.

He told a media agency that the Government is mulling measures required to put the ailing industries, particularly the MSMEs, back on the rails. The issues were discussed at a meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee with representatives of 17 industrial associations from different sectors through videoconferencing last

week, he said.

During the meeting, the Government ascertained the problems faced by the industries and also the nature of support they need for their revival. The industry representatives were assured that large investments would be made in industrial projects and infrastructure, he said, adding that another such meeting would be held soon. Social distancing and other safeguards would have to be adhered to while restarting activities in the industrial sector in view of the coronavirus crisis.

Mishra also said he has held discussions with Union Ministers for Railways, Heavy Industries, Chemicals and Fertilisers, Power and MSME, who have promised to extend assistance for revival of industrial activities in the State.

Getting labourers and employees back to their workplaces during the corona scare is going to be a big task, he observed.

But taking into account all the aspects, strategies are being worked out to bring back normalcy in the industrial sector, he said, adding that it is necessary to generate industrial demands within the State itself by infusing large-scale public investment to create industrial infrastructures like road, power distribution network and industrial parks.

The State Government wants to develop new industrial parks along with proper implementation of the ongoing projects like PCPIR and a plastics park at Paradip, a steel hub at Kalinganagar and an aluminium hub in Angul district, he said.

Besides, there would be new mega textile parks in Ganjam district where a large number of migrant workers are set to return from different parts of the country after the lockdown, he said, adding setting up of a mega IT park and a data centre is also proposed at Naraj in Cuttack.

Tributes paid to Madhubabu on birth anniversary

U Sammilani seeks statue installed in Parliament

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday paid tribute to veteran freedom fighter Utkalgaurab Madhusudan Das on his 172nd birth anniversary.

The CM took to twitter recalling Das' contribution for creation of a modern Odisha as an independent province and for preservation of the State's art, culture and education.

PCC president Niranjan Patnaik and party MLA Suresh Routray garlanded Madhubabu's statue at the Bhubaneswar District Congress office.

Madhubabu's birth

anniversary Das was celebrated by people separately at their houses across the State in view of the lockdown restrictions.

Founder of the Utkal Sammilani, Madhubabu had played a pivotal role in creation of new Odisha on linguistic basis.

Garlanding a photo of Madhubabu, Sammilani Mancheswar Industrial Estate Branch president Dillip Dashsharma demanded that a statue of the legend be installed in the Parliament premises.

Sammilani advisors Dr Dwarikanath Mohanty and Nimain Das, vice-president Shital Chandra Mohanty, secretary Gobinda Chandra Subhuddhi, joint-secretary Sidharth Sekhar Gadanayak,



Askhay Jethi, Maheswar Biswal, Dr Shiba Prasad Mishra, Pratap Kumar Nanda and Prakash Kumar Samal paid tributes to the legendary by garlanding his photos at their houses. Born in Satyabhapur, 20 km from Cuttack,

Madhusudan Das was the first graduate and lawyer of Odisha. He is referred to as 'Kulabruddha' (grand old man) and 'Utkalgaurab' (Pride of Utkal). Popularly called Madhubabu, he died on February 4, 1934.

14L Kendu leaf workers' future gloomy: BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Kendu leaf workers, most of whom are tribals, give revenue of Rs 500 crore to the State Government every year. But future of Kendu leaf pluckers and other people involved in the Kendu Leaf Organisation has become very gloomy due to the lackadaisical attitude of State Government, former BJP MLA Pradeep Purohit has alleged.

Addressing a Press meet, Purohit said the Kendu Leaf Organisation had been nationalised in 1973 when Nandini Satpathy was the Chief Minister. The main objective was to give more benefit to pluckers, workers and seasonal employees. Now, about 14 lakh workers are involved in Kendu leaf activities. While the Union Government has directed not to expel any employee for Covid lockdown, it is very disappointing that the State

Government has ousted 2,000 seasonal employees who were engaged by the organisation for over 30 years. He too alleged that over 50 per cent of Kendu leaf pluckers would be affected as the Government has now decided to sanction welfare fund and educational support to children and death assistances if the pluckers pluck 20 chata of leafs instead of earlier 10 chata.

He further alleged that 18,000 seasonal workers have suffered as they have not been paid revised wages since 2019. While 100 per cent of Kendu leaf profit was being provided as bonus to pluckers and workers, the Government has changed the norm to 50 per cent this year, he alleged.

Purohit demanded that the Government soon reinstate expelled employees and provide all supports to pluckers and workers soon.

Sweetie Housing distributes foods in city



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Sweetie Housing Complex Welfare Society, Ganganagar, Bhubaneswar has been distributing dry and cooked foods to distressed and daily wagers, who have been severely affected due to Covid-19 threat at different places in the city.

All habitats of the housing society have contributed to the cause. Distribution work would

continue till end of the current lockdown on May 3, 2020.

The society is distributing foods to people in the Master Canteen private bus stand, Rasulgarh over-bridge under pass and Nayapalli Durgamandap areas, informed society president Somanath Rath, VP RK Panda, secretary Niranjan Mishra and retired Col SP Patnaik and members AK Jena, Antaryami Patra and SK Parida.

Covid testing ramped up to 15,000 per week

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Covid-19 testing in State has been exponentially ramped up from a mere 58 per week to around 15,000 per week, said the Health and Family Welfare Department on Tuesday.

The department said that the State reported its first case of coronavirus on March 15 and the testing capacity has increased from 58 in first week to 14,939 in sixth week till April 27.

The week-wise data states, 58 tests were conducted between March 16 and March

23 while 285 conducted in second week i.e from March 23 till March 29. In third week (from March 30-April 5), 1518 tests were done and the number increased to 2,846 in fourth week (April 6 till April 13).

In fifth week starting from April 14 till to April 20, total 7,014 samples were tested while as many as 14,939 samples were tested in sixth week i.e from April 21 to April 27.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had a discussion with district-level Covid-19 observers and asked them to focus on increasing the

number of tests as several migrant labourers stranded outside Odisha are set to reach the State after the lockdown period.

Currently, coronavirus testing is being done at the Regional Medical Research Centre-ICMR Bhubaneswar, SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) in Bhubaneswar, MKCG Medical College Hospital in Brahampur, Ispat General Hospital (IGH) in Rourkela and VIMSAR in Burla.

2 killed as tractor overturns in K'pada

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

Two persons died and another sustained critical injuries on Tuesday evening when a tractor turned turtle near the Kendrapara canal at Kora under the Nikirai police station.

The deceased were identified as Ratikanta Sethy(42) and Gagan Das(22), of Palakana village. The injured Ramakanta Mallick was shifted to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, said Nikirai PS ICC Kabuli Barik.

The mishap occurred when they were returning to Palakana village.

Dalmia Cement supports SHGs to produce masks

PNS ■ RAJGANGPUR

The Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited has imparted training to more than 50 women of various Self Help Groups from Rajgangpur and Lanjiberna in Sundargarh district for bulk production of face masks in the unprecedented covid crisis.

The SHG members, after taking up mask production professionally, have managed to secure a bulk order of 1,10,000 masks that are to be delivered within 2 months. Apart from providing raw material for the production of these masks, the DCBL is helping them in sanitisation and packaging of the deliverable masks.

CM unveils 'Aau Kichi Dina pare'

Panda's music video sings post Covid-19 joys

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nilima Madhab Panda's latest music video on hope and happiness, 'Aau Kichi Dina Pare', was released by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday.

The video focuses on times to look forward, times when things will return to normal after Covid-19 and people will once again rejoice in all the tiny nuances of a

joyful life. This music video has been supported by Information and Public Relation Department in the public interest. The objective of the video is to give hope to people and paint a beautiful world to look

forward post Covid-19.

More than 2.5 million people viewed the video in just six hours of its release on Monday afternoon across digital media and there have been unlimited views across TV channels.



₹50L aid to cop's kin in case of death

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has included police personnel under its scheme to provide assistance of Rs 50 lakh in case of death while performing Covid-19-related duty.

DGP Abhay thanked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for the decision to provide Rs 50 lakh compensation to the family of a police personnel in the event of his unfortunate death on Covid-19 duty. Earlier, the Chief Minister had announced an ex-ratio of Rs 15 lakh to the family of a working journalist if he dies of coronavirus infection while performing his or her duty.

Drone disinfection in BMC north zone

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Drones deployed by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to spray disinfectants across market places would now cover the entire north zone of the city. The week-long spraying, which began on Tuesday night from the Chakeisiani Durga Mandap, would continue till May 5 ending at Pahal Medical Road.

The BMC has deployed two drones in a bid to use technology against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The spraying would include six markets under the Mancheswar police limits, two under Infocity, seven areas



under Chandrasekharpur and one under Balianta police limits. After the north zone, other

two BMC administrative zones would also be covered under the drive.

IIT BBS develops multi-surface sanitiser

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

IIT Bhubaneswar researchers have designed a safe multi-surface sanitiser using UVC lights to disinfect Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs), surgical masks and electronic gadgets.

The chamber was developed to control surface contamination of bacteria and viruses including Covid-19.

"You can place an infected device into the chamber; and once it gets exposed to ultraviolet light, the device would be disinfected within 10-15 minutes. We have created two different chambers of different sizes for disinfection of masks and PPEs worn by the doctors and electronic gadgets like cell phone as they cannot be dis-



infected with soap water easily," said IIT Bhubaneswar Director Prof RV Raja Kumar.

However, there is a long way to go for the multi-surface sanitiser to be used in houses as it needs to be verified and certified by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), he said.

"This device has been

developed based on the results available for SARS CoV-1 and the same device is expected to work for SARS CoV-2. We are going to test for SARS CoV-2 and then get a certificate from ICMR," he said.

Kumar said the device was developed to control possible deaths of healthcare workers due to Covid-19.

LETTER Bikers flout lockdown norms

Sir,

It can be seen through media that still many people are riding doubles on two-wheeler during the lockdown period in Odisha violating the advisory given by police to keep social distancing even while travelling. Triple riding, all without helmets, is most common even now in peripheral areas if not in city limits. In addition, many have forgotten wearing helmets (in most of the cases both bikers and pillion-riders). Similar to helmet, mask has also become a showpiece as many are seen not wearing it properly when they are moving around or keeping in hands while walking or going by two-wheelers.

K Ravi, E-237, GGP Colony, Bhubaneswar

Ayush doctors demand pay equal to MBBS counterparts

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■
BALESWAR

Strong discontentment is brewing among the Ayush doctors as they feel that their services are undermined by the State Government even though they contribute a lot during the critical time.

They have alleged step motherly attitude of the Government towards them. Although they are working relentlessly like the MBBS doctors and health workers from urban locations to the rural patches in this extreme critical situation, yet they are neither paid advance salary for four months like their counterparts nor covered under the life insurance in case of any fatality.

They stated that for last 14 years they have been rendering services under the National Health Mission and are presently fighting the dreaded disease like another Corona warriors.

They are deployed in the outdoor service, quarantine centres and health care faci-

ties in the containment zones. Thus they are exposed to high risk, they told.

Lamenting the Government's discriminatory approach towards them, they said their services and sacrifices are undermined. They demanded equal pay, status and security like MBBS doctors.

Ayush doctor Asit Pradhan said, "Although my posting is at Rupsa CHC, yet for the Corona virus, I am deployed in the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH). We are doing all duties like other MBBS counterparts. We are looking after quarantine centres, visiting containment zones. But unfortunately, we are neither given salary advances nor the insurance coverage like MBBS doctors."

He added, "In last 14 years, we are kept as contractual and given consolidated salary. Neither are we made regular nor pay hike is considered for us. This is gross injustice and the Government should look into it."

123 R'kela students stranded in Kota

PNS ■ ROURKELA

As many as 123 students, who are residents of Rourkela, have been stranded at medical and engineering entrance coaching centres in Kota, Rajasthan and crying for their rescue.

Plea to be shifted home falls on deaf ear

Though the students have narrated their plight to the administration and also to the Rourkela MLA, but no effort has yet been taken to bring them back.

A total of about 2,500 students of Odisha have been stuck at Kota. They stay in their hostels. But they are not getting proper food.

The students had also launched a social media campaign urging Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to evacuate them. Later, their parents met the Rourkela ADM and and MLA Sarada Nayak but to no avail.

ANMs shed fear, make villagers aware on corona

SRIKUMAR MAHANTA ■
SONEPUR

The fear of contacting the deadly coronavirus has not dissuaded female health workers or ANMs from operating in remote hamlets of Subarnapur district.

Ramakanti Panda from Kamsara village of Tarbha block, who is working as an ANM in Dowlong village under Chhakormal panchayat in Sonepur block, is one such warrior fighting the Covid-19 outbreak. "We have been asking people not to come out unless they have any important work," said she.

"But we the ANMs have no choice but to come out of our houses," Panda said. She has been visiting hamlets and villages for several days now, asking people to keep their guests or relatives coming from outside in quarantine.

"In this time of hardship, policemen, doctors, Anganwadi Workers and sanitation workers are doing their



2 scribes held in JSpur for scaring girl

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

Police have arrested two news reporters of the Balikuda area in Jagatsinghpur district for allegedly threatening a girl to withdraw a case she had lodged against a teacher.

The arrested are Bipin Sethi and Pradipta Muduli of the locality.

Reports said a computer teacher of the locality, Sagar Mohapatra, had forced a girl to have physical relationship with him after sending obscene photos and videos to her mobile a few days back. Acting on the girl's complaint, the Balikuda police had arrested him.

The two reporters went to the girl's house and asked her to withdraw the case against the teacher. They also asked her to pay Rs 10,000. As the girl refused to do so, they threatened her of dire consequences.

The girl then lodged a complaint against them. On her complaint, police arrested the two and forwarded them to a court.

Briefs

SCHOOL HOLDS MEET ON FAMILY LOCKDOWN
Bhubaneswar: The Blossoms School organised a Webinar via Zoom cloud meeting in its campus here on Saturday. Baha'i Academy Panchgani Director Lesan Azadi addressed the teachers on the topic "Family Lockdown: Challenges and Opportunities". It was an interactive session which brought a great deal of awareness and understanding about human values and fostering family bonds.

44 KG GANJA SEIZED; ONE HELD IN PURI



Puri: Excise officials seized 44 kg of cannabis from a car and arrested a person in this connection in Puri district on Tuesday. The accused was Debashis Swain (30), a resident of Nahantara village under the Nimapara police limits. Acting on a tipoff, the excise squad intercepted the car near Sandha Bazar at around 5 am and found around 44 kg of ganja in the vehicle. The accused was forwarded to court later in the day.

BHAPUR SOCIAL ACTIVIST PRADHAN NO MORE
Bhapur: Eminent social activist Surendra Pradhan passed away at the AIIMS Bhubaneswar while undergoing treatment recently. He was 73. A native of Khalipatna village under Bhapur block in Nayagarh district, Pradhan got into active social service following his superannuation from the Main Branch of the State Bank of India in 2008. He was a soft-spoken, helpful and philanthropic person. A pall of gloom descended in the area following his demise.

PALLAHARA PRESS CLUB HOLDS CORONA AWARENESS
Pallahara: The Press Club of Pallahara organised an awareness programmes on corona preventions in different villages near Pallahara on Saturday. Club president Dr Sontosh Dehury and all members were present. They distributed masks to people at Rohila, Inzid, Mundribeda, Sankhamur and Khamar villages. They also gave masks to police personnel and Khamar PHC staffs. General secretary Sushil Samal, vice-president Tusarkant Mohanty, treasurer Bishnu Prasad Behera, assistant general secretary Sumanta Pradhan, Pradeep Pradhan, Tunga Bhadra Sahoo, Ranjan Sahoo, Himansu Garnayak, Dileswar Bhukta participated.

ADANI FOUNDATION SANITISES VILLAGES
Dhamra: Continuing its efforts to fight out coronavirus, the Adani Group's CSR wing Adani Foundation has been sanitizing villages and distributing foods to vulnerable and economically disadvantaged people in the villages around the Dhamra Port periphery and rail corridor. Awareness programmes are still continuing in 25 villages with the help of Suposhan Sangini. More than 10,000 masks have been distributed. SHGs members have been deployed for mask preparation. The Adani Foundation has declared Rs 100 crore and Rs 4 crore from the staffs to PM Cares Fund.

GRASIM DISTRIBUTES 70K IN GANJAM
Bhubaneswar: As its endeavour to fight out Covid-19, the Aditya Birla Group's Grasim Industries Ltd (GIL) has distributed around 70,000 masks amongst the people in its peripheral villages in Ganjam district. It has also provided essential commodities to them. It also conducted regular health checkup of people. A total of 30 Women SHG members stitched masks. The GIL has also extended support to district administration for developing quarantine centres in Ganjam.

Tribal children engage in creative works

300 art pieces shared with Mo Prativa Prog

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Lockdown regulations have helped bring out creative essence in children in tribals-dominated districts of Ragagada and Malkangiri.

The volunteers belonging to Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD) in partnership with Child Fund India, a development organisation, and the Government of Odisha, engaged about 3,000 children of 163 villages in home-based activities like art and craft, creative writings like poem, song, stories and slogans.

The children were provided materials required for cre-

ating art and craft items and were guided by nearly 40 trainers to give expression to their inner thoughts. Besides, they made arts and crafts on Covid-19.

"Realising that the children were sitting at home as schools were shut because of lockdown regulations, we decided to bring out their creative essence by grooming their hidden talents. They made painting on themes like how to contain Covid-19 and social distancing, personal hygiene like hand washing and wearing mask. These arts and crafts have been widely appreciated. It has been decided at official level that in every week under each seg-



ment one child will be felicitated at the block level," said programme manager, CYSD, Rayagada, Amit Mohapatra.

The creative works of the children will be uploaded in the 'Mo Prativa' (My Talent) programme website/ WhatsApp

'Giving DM power to Sarpanches illegal'

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Bharatiya Bikash Parishad, State unit president Surendra Panigrahi has alleged that the recent announcement made by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik delegating powers of a district Collector to all 6,798 Sarpanchas is illegal and humbug.

Panigrahi said that as per the provisions laid in Sub Section-H of Section-44 of the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1964, control and checking spread of any epidemic in a GP is an obligatory function of the concerned GP. He said the

Chief Minister has made this announcement to befool people of the State. Earlier, Patnaik had cheated people by not disbursing 2nd installment of the Kalia Scheme, he said.

Panigrahi alleged that PS to the CMO, Principal Secretary to Panchayat Raj Department and the Chief Secretary have misgued the CM in the matter for personal gains and demanded that they should be brought under investigation.

He too demanded that the CM either tender an unconditional apology to the public or resign from the post.

Bring back students from Kota: Narasingha to CM

PNS ■ BALANGIR

Local MLA and Congress Legislature Party Leader Narasingha Mishra on Tuesday urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to take steps to bring back the Odisha students, including of Balangir and Subarnapur districts, from Kota in Rajasthan at the earliest.

In a letter to the CM, Mishra hailed all steps taken by him to fight Covid-19 and appraised him that he has received messages from different parts of State about the plight of students detained in Kota.

"In my view you should intervene to get back the stu-

dents from Kota to Odisha particularly in the districts which we consider as green zone. There will be no major problems to take such steps at least after May 3, 2020," read the letter.

He wished the CM good health and promised to provide all support to him to combat the pandemic.

Earlier, parents of several students from Balangir and Subarnapur districts had submitted a memorandum to Mishra to bring back their wards from Kota. They appraised that other States have already taken their students from Kota by making special arrangements.

More areas under containment in Bhadrak

PNS ■ BHADRAK

Following three persons in Bhadrak district testing positive for coronavirus, the authorities on Tuesday sealed several areas of Basudevpur and Bonth blocks in the district.

Four villages of Bonth block and Chudamani and the Kismatpur area of Basudevpur block were declared as containment zones and sealed.

The three positive cases (two of them from Basudevpur block and one from Bonth block) have travel history to West Bengal.

Notably, 19 virus cases have been reported from the district so far with 17 active cases as two patients have recovered.



In another development, the shutdown in Basudevpur panchayat of Jajpur district was extended on the day as one more Covid-19 case was detected here on Monday.

District Collector Ranjan Kumar Das said the shutdown

Eco-Earth feeds stray street animals

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Animal welfare body ECO-Earth Crusaders has been feeding stray animals since the commencement of lockdown in the State.

The drive is known as "Feed The Streets". Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Odisha has been in complete lockdown. Stray animals are starving due to the complete closure of market and hotels. These hotels and food stalls were the primary food source for them. Territorial conflicts and food conflicts were evident because of the food scarcity. These conflicts can give rise to severe diseases like rabies which can prove deadly to these strays and

create another health crisis in human society as well. Therefore ECO decided to feed these animals and has been feeding 5,000 stray animals daily Khordha, Cuttack, Dhenkanal and Rourkela, said Eco founder Aurobindo Samal.

ECO feeds them with both cooked food and packaged beverages like biscuits, etc.

More than 25 volunteers are involved in the drive led by project coordinator Kalinga K Jena (co-founder) and other volunteers including Udaya, Tiki, Deeptanshu, Binayak and Rashmi Ranjan Mahendra Jena, Prashant Dash, Gantayat.



NTPC helps women earn living by mask-making

Has distributed 12K masks so far

PNS ■ TALCHER

Because of COVID-19 outbreak, making of facemasks has become a source of income generation for many. In this pursuit, the NTPC Talcher Kaniha has been working persistently to support women in villages around its station.

Partnering with various women self-help groups, NTPC Talcher Kaniha is now providing raw materials for stitching of masks which are then being procured by the station for distribution among various stakeholders. This effort is not only making masks more accessible for people in rural areas but also ensuring an effective means of livelihood for many.

Pushpalata Sahoo of the



Mahamai SHG stitches around 300 masks every day, besides doing her household chores. In total, women from four SHGs have been supplied with cloth material to stitch 10,000 reusable cloth facemasks.

"With this lockdown, the usual stitching of ladies suits and blouses has stopped, so the sale of masks provides a stable source of income for me," said Jashoswi Sahoo of the Maa

Tulsi Self Help Group in Bhimkand. Sewing machines and all necessary trainings were also provided to the women by the NTPC under its Corporate Social Responsibility for women empowerment.

The station has distributed over 12,000 masks among contractual workers, sanitisation staff, villagers and other stakeholders and would continue to do so.

'No Strings Attached...' by Bhaskar Parichha

MANAS JENA

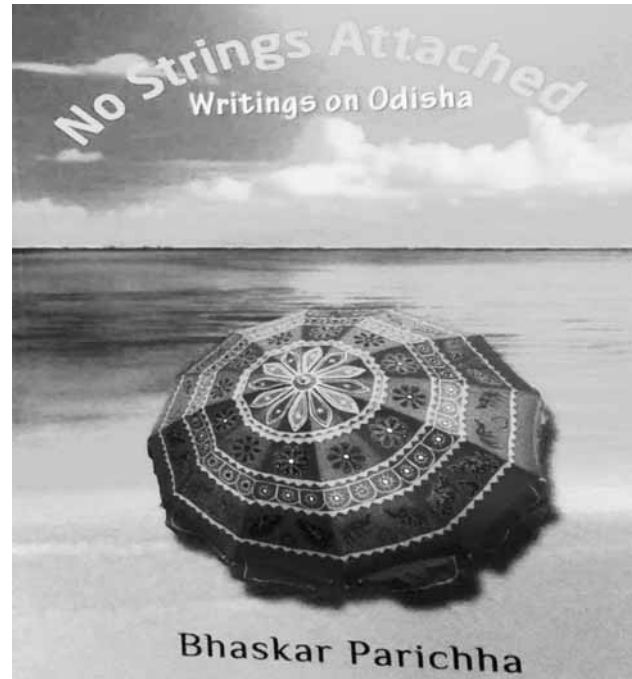
Bhaskar Parichha is more known as a journalist, an editor and a writer and keeps writing for newspapers and also reviews books of public interest.

In recent times, among his other major works, he has attempted the political biography of former Chief Minister of Odisha Biju Patnaik. But his recent fiction is a fusion of journalism and literature on Odisha and a unique record of events and profile of personalities of Odisha.

The book is very much helpful to outsiders who do not know Odia. Especially English readers interested to update them on many happenings must go through it.

The book is a compilation of many of his published articles about Odisha's socio-economic and political scenario and these pieces are regularly contributed to a national daily.

The book began with depicting portraits of historical personalities of Odisha who have contributed to take forward the socio-economic life of the people of the State.



The names include icon of Odias' pride Madhusudan Das, Biju Patnaik, Harishchandra Baxipatra as political personalities, Raghunath Panigrahi for music and dance and Nirod Mohapatra for parallel cinema

The second chapter of the book is devoted to political happenings in Odisha during last 20 years specially about the rising of Naveen Patnaik and the ups and downs of his political career as Chief Minister and president of the regional party BJD and also about the role of other major two political parties, BJP and Congress in the State.

The third and fourth chapters are discussions on issues relating to Odisha with which include controversies of Polavaram, chit fund, Puri's terror risk, Make in Odisha conclave in Delhi, Odisha's economy, special category State, mineral based industries, suffering of elderly people, Phalini, health of Odisha and Ollywood actors and politics of Odisha etc.

In the epilogue, the writer keeps faith on the five-time CM and the development of the State under his leadership. Written in a very lucid form someone can finish off within a few hours, the book has been published by Dhauili Books of Dhauili Review Trust, Bhubaneswar.

(manabbsr15@gmail.com)

Cancel CBSE 10th, 12th Boards pending exams: Centre

'Students should be evaluated, promoted on the basis of their internal exams'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision impacting lakhs of students, the Centre on Tuesday announced that the pending CBSE Board exams for Class 10 and Class 12, which could not be conducted due to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, will not be held any more and students should be evaluated and promoted on the basis of their internal exams. However, it left to the States to take a decision on the exams conducted by their respective State Boards.

The CBSE had postponed the Class 10 and Class 12 examinations in March to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country. Later, the Board decided to conduct exams only for about 30-odd subjects. During a video conference meeting with the State Education Ministers and officers, Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank

apprised them of the decision and hinted that the syllabus for next year's entrance test of JEE, NEET, etc based on Class 12 qualification will be cut down by 30 percent.

The HRD Minister also appealed to all the States to start the process of evaluation of answer sheets of Board exams, facilitate CBSE to evaluate answer sheets of the students in their respective States and make preparations to declare the results of board examinations on scheduled time as done every year.

A senior HRD ministry official said that States will now have to decide on the Minister's appeal regarding the evaluation of board exams. "Since board exams are part of the federal structure, Centre can't be imposing but the States acknowledged the ground situation and will do accordingly. It was brought to the notice of HRD Minister that most of



the education boards had done with 80 per cent of their examinations except for Kerala which was hit with the Corona

Mid-day meals to be served during summer vacation too

New Delhi: In view of the ongoing coronavirus crisis, the Centre on Tuesday announced approval for providing Mid-Day Meal (MDM) to schoolchildren during summer holidays too, on which an additional expenditure of about ₹1,600 crores will be made. In addition, under the

MDM Scheme, while an ad-hoc grant of ₹2,500 crore is being issued for the first quarter, the annual central allocation of cooking cost (for procurement of pulses, vegetable, oil, spices and fuel) under the scheme has been enhanced to ₹81,00 crore from ₹7,300 crore (an increment of 10.99%). PNS

examinations based on the internal marks.

Some of the states highlighted the issues like non-availability of smart phones, computers or where they are, internet data is a problem or in cases such things are not affordable and in past candidates of such areas have secured good positions in entrance test like that for IIT, NDA, Medical etc.

Pokhriyal, alongwith HRD Minister of State Sanjay Dhotre, interacted with Education Ministers and Education Secretaries of all the States through video conferencing. Education Ministers of 22 States and secretaries from 14 States and Union Territories attended the conference.

Pokhriyal informed them on his Ministry's request, the MHA has relaxed the lockdown rules to open bookstores so that students can avail books to continue their studies.

POSTLOCKDOWN

Rajnath asks OFB, DPSUs to ramp up production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday directed the defence public sector undertakings (DPSU) and Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) to be ready with contingency plans to ramp up production and contribute extensively to the economic recovery.

Taking stock of the overall preparedness of the PSUs to compensate for the lost working time due to lockdown, Singh referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plans to revive the economy post-lockdown and said the defence production units along with private defence industry could play a major role in the economic revival. The minister conveyed this message during video-conference meeting with the PSUs and OFB.

"Several Units of OFB and DPSUs which are located in non-red zones have already started operations. Almost all DPSUs have made contingency plans to ramp up production after the lockdown is lifted by drawing up plans to work in three shifts and extending the work days from five to six days a week," defence ministry officials said after the meeting. They also said work will be carried out in the defence factories by observing social distancing and other relevant health guidelines.

During the conference, OFB conveyed that it has manufactured 12,800 overalls, developed specialised machines

for testing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), supplied 6.35 lakh masks to local authorities and 340 specialised tents to Arunachal Pradesh for COVID 19 patients. The OFB is more than 100 years old and has 41 factories across the country manufacturing missiles, tanks, guns, ammunition and other weapons for the armed forces.

The Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has made arrangements to manufacture 12,000 ventilators in the month of May 2020 and another 18,000 in June 2020, the defence ministry statement said adding, around 3,000 engineers will also participate in training health professionals in operationalising these ventilators.

The Department of Defence Production (DDP), defence ministry, OFB and DPSUs made a contribution of ₹77 crore to the PM CARES fund generated from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and one day salary contribution, the statement said.

Separately, the Defence Research and Development Services (DRDS), the main cadre of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to which about 7,000 scientists belong, made a contribution of ₹10 lakh to PM CARES fund in addition to one day salary. The demand draft of ₹10 lakhs was handed over to Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik by All India DRDS Association (AIDA) last week.

During the conference, the

OFB also reported that there was no COVID 19 positive case in any of its 41 manufacturing locations. Moreover, in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic, the OFB distributed one lakh litres of hand sanitizer and earmarked 280 isolation beds at its hospitals in 10 locations.

The aviation conglomerate Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has also earmarked 93 isolation beds in Bengaluru for COVID-19 patients. The HAL has manufactured 300 aerosol cabinets and supplied them to various hospitals. It has also distributed 56,000 masks and extended support to migrant labourer.

The Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL) is also working with eminent scientists for finalisation of design for ventilators and to make the prototype. The

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) provided PPE and medicines worth Rs Five lakh to Naval Quarantine Centre, Mumbai and distributed 4,000 litres of sanitizer.

Secretary, (Department of Defence Production) Raj Kumar, senior officials of Department of Defence Production, senior officials of OFB, BEL, HAL, MDL, Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML), Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE), BDL, Hindustan Shipyard Ltd. (HSL), Midhani Mishradhatu Nigam Ltd (MIDHANI) and Goa Shipyard Ltd participated in the video conference.

1st Covid death in paramilitary: CRPF SI

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In the first casualty due to Covid-19 in the paramilitary forces, a CRPF Sub Inspector Md Ikram Hussain of 31 Battalion on Tuesday succumbed to the fatal disease. This even as 12 more CRPF jawans tested positive for Covid-19 in Delhi taking the total tally to 47 cases in the force, including the deceased.

Hussain, 55, had on Friday reported at the DG Staff Camp Hospital at RK Puram with the symptomatic issues at 10.40 AM complaining of running nose, difficulty in breathing,

fever and headache.

Keeping in view his symptoms, Hussain was immediately referred to Safdarjung Hospital for further investigation/treatment. The test report had confirmed his condition as Covid-19 positive on Friday.

On Tuesday, Hussain succumbed due to Covid-19 at 3.30 PM at Safdarjung Hospital. He had underlying conditions for the viral disease in the form heart condition, officials said.

Hussain hails from Barbari village under Sarupeta post of Barpeta district in Assam. After Hussain testing positive, all the medical and para-

medical staff of the DG Staff Camp Hospital were quarantined at the CRPF Quarantine Centre at Narela here and a few others were advised home quarantine for 14 days. The DG Staff Camp Hospital was also temporarily closed and the patients have been asked to report at Detachment Composite Hospital of Northern Sector at RK Puram.

While 17 personnel who came in direct contact with Hussain were earlier quarantined at Narela, a Chief Medical Officer and a Nursing Assistant were home quarantined.

Earlier, 47 personnel of 31

Battalion were quarantined at Narela after a Constable/Nursing Assistant had tested positive for the viral disease last week. As many as 25 persons out of this group of 47, including a private person (plumber) have been diagnosed so far to be Covid-19 positive, officials said.

Besides this, a CMO had tested positive for the disease earlier this month and a Head Constable of Rapid Action Force deployed in Ahmedabad had been diagnosed with the disease.

The paramilitary has launched a detailed survey of personnel deployed in Covid-

19 related duties in the hotspots and other operational areas and if positive cases have been reported from such locations in order to take preventive steps, officials added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah took to Twitter to express his condolences following the death of Hussain. "I am deeply saddened by demise of Sub Inspector Mohammad Ikram Hussain was battling corona infection. He (Hussain) bravely fought the epidemic till his last breath. His contributions to national service and internal security will continue to inspire the countrymen," Shah tweeted.

Facilitate inter-State movement of vehicles with essential goods: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday called for urgent action to facilitate inter-State border movement of trucks and lorries carrying essential goods to ease public life during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari also urged the States/UTs through a video conference meeting with the Chief Ministers to expedite land acquisition and utilise funds worth ₹25,000 crore allocated for the purpose to help regain momentum in road construction through land acquisition.

The Union Minister pulled up State Governments for creating delays in clearance of goods transport adding that nearly 3.5 lakh trucks were stranded at present due to delays in inter-state clearance and screening, officials aware of the development said adding that

there was no discussion on inter-state public transport.

"States also reiterated that decision on public transport will be taken following the Ministry of home affairs' order post May 3," said official.

Gadkari reminded to adhere to health advisories like proper distance, wearing of masks, use of sanitisers, both by the driver/cleaners.

The meeting was also attended by the Chief Ministers of Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh.

"There were several issues on movement of goods and transportation that needed to be resolved. There is delay in supply movement and hence the meeting was called to discuss the hurdles. There was no discussion on public transport yet, that will only take place on May 3," Himachal Pradesh transport minister, Govind Thakur said.

Gadkari also told States to provide transportation for labour to factories and ensure food and shelter for labourers.

Transport associations have demanded an economic relief from the Centre.

"Across segments there is an issue of shortage of drivers, money and load. Lack of labour has already led to shortage of supplies. Movement of vehicles is still a major issue despite MHA advisories. E-pass system is not working properly and movement of staff apart from drivers is still a tedious task. Local restrictions are not helping the transport fraternity as there is no fresh load, no unloading at the factories, go-downs or warehouses and the our vehicles get stuck for days together, apart from harassment by local administration," said All India Motor Transport Congress president Kultaran Singh Atwal.

BJP Govt waived ₹68,607 cr loan of defaulters: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing an RTI reply by the RBI, the Congress on Tuesday alleged the Modi Government has waived off ₹68,607 crore of the top 50 bank loan defaulters, including Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi.

Several leaders, including former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, also alleged that the Government waived off loans worth ₹6.66 lakh crore between 2014 and September 2019.

"I had asked a question in the Parliament the names of the top 50 bank loan defaulters in the country, but the Finance Minister did not answer," Rahul said.

"Now the RBI has given the names of Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and many of BJP's 'friends' in the list of bank frauds.

That is why this truth was held back from Parliament," Rahul said in a tweet in Hindi.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also released the list of the top loan defaulters, as per the RTI reply, and demanded answers from the PM. "This is a classic case of promoting 'dupe, deceive and depart' policy of the Modi Government, which can no longer be accepted and the PM has to answer," he told reporters through video conference. Surjewala also said "this reflects the dishonest intentions of the Modi Government".

He said the entire country is fighting the coronavirus and the Government has no money to pay to States, but has the money to condone and write off ₹68,307 crore of bank loan defaulters.

Record fertiliser sales witnessed during lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Despite lockdown, India has witnessed a record sale of fertilisers even as wheat harvesting too continues briskly. As per the data provided by the Centre, over 10.63 lakh metric tons of fertilisers were sold in April which is 32 percent higher than the last year sale of 8.02 lakh MT.

And as reported by the States, about 98-99% of wheat crop has been harvested in Madhya Pradesh, 92-95% in Rajasthan, 85-88% in Uttar Pradesh, 55-60% in Haryana, 60-65% in Punjab and 87-88% in other States.

The agencies have also procured 102.37 lakh tons of wheat and 15.71 lakh tons of rice so far.



Wheat harvesting too continues briskly

Officials said the record fertilisers' sale will ensure adequate availability of crop nutrients to farmers for the sowing operation of kharif (summer) crops.

On April 17, 41 fertiliser rakes moved from plants and ports. This is the highest movement of fertilisers during lockdown period in a day. One rake carries 3,000 tonnes of load at a time. The

Centre has allowed operation of fertiliser plants in the country.

For his part, Union Consumer Affairs minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Tuesday tweeted that as many as 102.37 lakh tons of wheat and 15.71 lakh tons of rice have been procured so far. The major contributors are Punjab (48.27 lakh metric tons followed by Haryana (19.07 lakh metric tons). The Ministry has targeted to procure 407 lakh metric tons of wheat and 112 lakh metric tons of rice this year.

"Going by the present pace of procurement, the target of 407 LMT kept for the season is likely to be achieved. The procurement exercise is likely to continue till June 30. However, looking at restrictions during lock down, period

may get extended by another 15 days," said a senior food ministry official.

Considering the looming threat of spread of COVID-19 virus, procurement is being undertaken after taking enough pre-cautions and ensuring social distancing in the mandis," officials added.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture has procured 72,415.82 metric tons of Gram (Chana) from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, 1,20,023.29 metric tons Toor Dal has been procured from Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Odisha. 1.83 lakh tons mustard has been procured from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

Need to focus more on providing basic needs like food, water, sanitation: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Government-enforced social isolation may help relatively affluent populations limit the spread of deadly Covid-19, but these steps can be devastating for the nearly 1 billion people around the globe currently dwelling in urban slums, where physical space is scarce, and many rely on daily wage labour for survival, according to a global study.

Published in the Journal of Urban Health, the study emphasised on the need to prioritise providing basic needs such as potable water, sanitation and a moratorium on evictions besides supporting existing community leadership in delivering health care and emergency preparedness to help the poor urban to sail through the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study is important in the Indian context having the densely population which is home to several urban slums like Dharavi in Mumbai where nearly 8.5 lakh people are living in cramped conditions in an area that spans about 0.83 square miles.

The report has been authored by a team of public health experts and epidemiologists working in collaboration with community leaders and

non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from urban slums around the world.

While noting that Covid-19 became a pandemic because of the global spread of the virus by those people who can afford to travel on airplanes and cruise ships, the report noted that the disease has ended up in vulnerable communities of the world.

It has suggested eight urgent recommendations for reducing the impact of the deadly virus on people living in poverty.

These recommendations are crucial not just for people living in urban slums in the global south, but for other vulnerable populations, such as migrant farm workers and those living in refugee camps and homeless encampments and on Native American reservations in the United States, the authors say.

Evidence now suggests that the coronavirus is disproportionately affecting black Americans in some US cities, possibly due to similar structural factors, such as the inability to take time off of work.

"The political and economic shocks and instability that are happening now and are likely to follow from this epidemic will likely kill more and lead to more disability in this population than the coronavirus itself,"

said Jason Corburn, a professor of public health and of city and regional planning at the University of California, Berkeley, and lead author of the paper. "We felt we needed a strategy that recognized the unique needs of the urban poor at the front".

Close living conditions and lack of basic sanitation make urban slum dwellers particularly vulnerable to contracting and spreading the coronavirus, said study's co-author Lee Riley, a professor of epidemiology and infectious diseases at UC Berkeley.

Many also have pre-existing medical conditions and lack access to health care, putting them at high risk of dying or developing serious complications if they do get sick with the virus.

Simply staying home is rarely an option for them, as it often means giving up work and even basic necessities like food, water and sanitation.

"Shelter-in-place is a luxury of the wealthy," Riley said. "In many slums, people need to walk a long distance to collect water to use at home. Most people living in slums also have no choice but to participate in the informal economy, which will disappear under lockdowns."

Govt issues new guidelines for home isolation

Covid patients with mild symptoms can now opt for home isolation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Those who have been clinically declared as a very mild/pre-symptomatic case by the treating medical officer can opt for home isolation provided they have the facili-

ty at their home to do so, the Government said in its home isolation guidelines issued on Tuesday.

But, before opting for such option, the person will have to fill in an undertaking on self-isolation agreement as well as keep the Arogya Setu app, a software that alerts the user about the health status of the user as well as people in his/her vicinity.

As per existing guidelines, during the containment phase, the patients should be identified as very mild, mild, moderate or severe and according-

ly admitted to Covid Care Centre or dedicated Covid hospital.

"However, very mild/presymptomatic patients having the requisite facility at his/her residence for self-isolation will have the option for home isolation," the government said in a statement.

The guidelines say that they should have the required facility for self-isolation at home and also for quarantining the family contacts while a caregiver should be appointed on 24 x 7 basis, who will have to maintain communication

with the hospital for the entire duration of home isolation.

Also, the caregiver and all close contacts of such cases should take Hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis as per protocol. During the self-isolation period, the patient will have to monitor his health and regularly inform the District Surveillance Officer of his health status for further follow up by the surveillance teams.

"Those in home isolation are also advised to seek immediate medical attention if there are serious signs or symptoms

like difficulty in breathing, persistent pain/pressure in the chest, mental confusion or inability to arouse, developing bluish discolorations of lips/face," says the guidelines.

The caregivers are advised to wear a mask, practice hand hygiene rigorously before and after removing gloves and use alcohol based hand rub.

They have also been told to "avoid direct contact with body fluids of the patient, particularly oral or respiratory secretions. Use disposable gloves while handling the patient," it stated.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

HC stays Kerala order on employees' salary cut

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Kerala Government's move to seize/defer a month's salary of its employees to tide over the financial crisis caused by coronavirus pandemic has been stayed for two months by the Kerala High Court on Tuesday.

Justice Bechu Kurian, who heard the petitioners as well that of the Advocate General of the Kerala Government, said that it was not possible to accept the AG's submission that the Government had the power to defer the disbursement of salary by a few months

Justice Bechu Kurian, who heard the petitioners as well that of the Advocate General of the Kerala Government, said that it was not possible to accept the AG's submission that the Government had the power to defer the disbursement of salary by a few months.

Payment of salary is certainly not a matter of bounty. It is a right vested in every individual to receive the salary. Article 300A of the Constitution which confers a right to property will include within its purview "salary" also a property, at least prima facie," the judge said while staying the Government Order and adjourning the petition for further hearing to May 20.

Prasad, argued that the Government was incurring an expenditure of ₹8,000 crore to fight the coronavirus pandemic. "The Government is empowered to defer the salary of its employees as per the Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Diseases Ordinance. The Government has launched community kitchens and is offering free ration to all sections of the society. The social welfare pension for the aged and infirm is also being distributed and this needs money," the AG contended before the Court. But the Judge was not humored by the arguments of the Government and said that financial difficulty is not a ground for the State Government to defer the payment of salary. "Prima facie, I find, the deferment of salary, for whatever purposes it may be, amounts to a denial of property. In such a view of the matter, I stay the operation of the Government Order for a period of 2 months," the Court ruled.

Situation grim in Dharavi as 4 dead, 42 more infected

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The coronavirus situation in Mumbai's Dharavi locality turned grim on Tuesday, as four persons died of Covid-19 and 42 others tested positive in Asia's positive in a single day. With the latest fatalities and infections, the total number of deaths in this densely populated slum rose to 18, while the total infected cases mounted to 330.

Dharavi witnessed four deaths on Tuesday. While two persons - a man and a woman - both aged 60 years succumbed to Covid-19 at LTMG Hospital at Sion in north-central.

Two persons - both male aged 48 years and 55 years - died at the KEM Hospital.

The new infected cases were reported from Social Nagar, Matunga Labour camp, Kunchi Kurve Nagar, Azad Nagar, Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, 90 feet road area, Pivla Bungalow, Mukund Nagar, Muslim Nagar, Kalyanwadi, Indira Nagar, new Municipal chawl, Markendeya Society, Dhobi ghar, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Mochi gully, Shatabdi Nagar, PV Chawl, Agas Wadi and Uday Society.

Those who were diagnosed positive for Coronavirus were aged 13 years and 74 years. Earlier on April 23, one death and 25 cases had been reported from Dharavi in a single day.

Spread over 240 hectare area, Dharavi is one of the Covid-19 hotspots in Mumbai. Ever since first few cases of Coronavirus were reported in the early first week of April, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is closely monitoring the situation in Dharavi where the health authorities have clamped a total lockdown.

The pandemic cases have been reported from most parts of Dharavi, a fact that has triggered considerable anxiety among the health authorities who are taking all measures to ensure against the community spread of the pandemic in this densely populated slum.

On its part, local doctors as well the ones from the BMC have held several fever clinics in this slum. Apart from enforcing strict social distancing norms, the police and health authorities have been using drones to monitor the activities in Dharavi.

Sena, Cong leaders hit back at BJP over 2 UP sadhus' killing

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having been at the receiving end of a fierce criticism from the BJP over Palghar lynching incident, the ruling Shiv Sena and Congress in Maharashtra on Tuesday hit viciously back at the BJP-led Yogi Adityanath Government over the killing of two Sadhus at Anupshahar area of Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh on Monday night.

Not having taken kindly to the manner in which the BJP leaders tried to politicise the Palghar incident—in which two Sadhus and a driver were lynched by a mob of villagers on the night of April 16, chief minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray paid back in the same coin, when he called up his counterpart in Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath, expressed his concern over the Bulandshahr lynching incident and said that he expected that the UP Government would act as sternly as the Maharashtra Government did after the Palghar incident.

It may be recalled that after the Palghar incident on April 22, Yogi Adityanath had

called up Uddhav and expressed concern over the Palghar incident. On that day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also called Uddhav and enquired about the Palghar incident.

On that day, Uddhav - without naming the RSS-BJP leaders RSS-BJP leaders Sambit Patra, Sunil Deodhar and others - had indirectly deploded the BJP leaders' efforts communalise the incident. "I have spoken to both Amit Shah and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. There is absolutely no religious context to the incident. It is wrong for the people to give communal colour to the incident," Uddhav had said.

In one of the two tweets put out reports of the Bulandshahr incident emerged, the Chief Minister's Office in Hindi: "I have spoken to Uttar Pradesh chief minister @myogadiyatanath and expressed concern over the inhuman murder of two sadhus at Bulandshahr. We are all with you against such ghastly murder."

"Like we acted sternly in this kind of incident, we expect

you to initiate legal action against the accused in the Bulandshahr incident and hand them stern punishment to the accused. But, I appeal to you not to give a communal colour to this kind of incidents," the CMO stated in its second tweet.

Shiv Sena's MP and spokesperson Sanjay Raut also minced no words when he described the Bulandshahr incident as most "frightening" and "I appeal to all not make this incident communal like some people in the case of the Palghar incident. In another tweet, Raut said that the Maharashtra chief minister had spoken to Yogi Adityanath. "We should not politicise this kind of incidents but work together to bring the culprits to books.

Senior Congress leader and PWD Minister in the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet Ashok Chavan tweeted: "The killing of two sadhus in a temple in #Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh is highly condemnable. UP Government should take stern action. I urge do not communalise the incident as did during Palghar moblynching.

TN count crosses 2,000 mark, toll at 25

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

It turned out to be a Black Tuesday in Tamil Nadu as 121 persons tested positive for coronavirus on a single day taking the number of Covid-19 patients in the State to 2,058.

The last few days have been showing some kind of fluctuations in the number of persons tested positive for the pandemic which encouraged the Government to loosen the lockdown guidelines and this could have played havoc, according to medical experts. It may be noted that 76 persons had tested positive for coronavirus last Tuesday.

There was no media briefing either by the Health Minister or secretary though it was widely believed that the government may make some announcements by the end of the day as Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami held a lengthy meeting at Fort Saint George with the high power committee if IAS, IPS and medical professions to review the status

prevailing in the State.

The medical bulletin issued by the department of health is silent about the number of persons discharged from the hospitals on Tuesday though it has been one of the salient features of the government's release. The number of fatalities reached 25 as one more person succumbed to the pandemic on Tuesday.

Out of the 121 persons tested positive on Tuesday, 103 are from Chennai, said the bulletin. "This is an important point to note and is a sign that the lock down rules and regulations are not being followed in letter and spirit by the Government or by the people," said Dr Sajith Kumar, expert in contagious diseases who works at the Government Medical College, Kottayam. Dr Kumar is closely monitoring the progress of the coronavirus in South India said that time was not yet conducive for making any kind of relaxation in the lockdown.

"We have to be in lockdown mode till we make sure that the virus is completely eliminated from the

State," said the doctor.

Chief Minister Palaniswami told the members of the high power committee to drive home the message that only staying at home and maintaining the social distance would make the State free of the pandemic.

"We have our own experience that the instance of coronavirus coming down when the lockdown regulations were followed stringently. Countries like Italy which were reeling under pressure has subjugated the pandemic by observing lockdown norms and social distance," said the chief minister.

The day began in Chennai with the news that Nungambakkam Police Station has been infected with coronavirus as two cops on duty were tested positive. The building and the area were cordoned off, all policemen on duty were tested and the enter premise was sanitized as per specifications. Throughout the day, the entire staff working in the building sat out in front of the shops and commercial buildings in the area.

J&K death toll reaches 8, total case mounts to 565

PNS ■ JAMMU

The death toll due to Covid-19 in Jammu & Kashmir on Tuesday rose to eight as one more patient, with a history of diabetes and hypertension, failed to recover and died at Chest disease hospital Srinagar. Srinagar district recorded second death while Baramulla has recorded three deaths and one each death was recorded in Bandipora, Anantnag and Udhampur districts so far.

Meanwhile, 19 new cases of coronavirus were detected, all across Kashmir division and 12 patients were discharged from different hospitals after they were fully recovered in Jammu.

According to Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Dr Shahid Choudhary, "an over eighty year old lady died in Srinagar on Tuesday. He said, to break the chain, health

survey teams were visiting door to door to screen the general population. He himself, visited red-zone areas to monitor the survey work. According to official sources, the deceased patient was tested positive on Monday and died after her health condition deteriorated on Tuesday.

According to media bulletin, a total number of 565 cases have tested positive in Jammu & Kashmir so far. Out of these 381 are Active positive. 15 cases are active in Jammu region and 366 in Kashmir division. A total number of 176 cases have recovered so far, 42 across Jammu and 134 in Kashmir region.

On the other hand, Director General of Police J&K Dilbag Singh led the Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel in showing the solidarity with corona warriors across the nation in the lawns of Police headquarters.

Speaking on the occasion of J&K Police personnel, doctors & Paramedical staff of Police hospitals, "I thank and pay solidarity to lakhs of corona warriors of the country".

The DGP said that it is unfortunate that at some places mischievous elements are violating the Government orders, attacking the corona warriors and termed these as shameful acts.

He said that the stern action will be taken against such violators and added that around 60 Police personnel were injured at different places while enforcing the lock down and implementing the orders and advisories of the Government. Similar ceremonies were organised across different district headquarters to show solidarity with the Covid warriors.

Maha to close Secretariat for 2 days after three employees test +ve

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government on Tuesday announced closure of the main and new administrative buildings of Mantralaya (State Secretariat) at Nariman Point in south Mumbai for two days on April 29 and 30 to facilitate the sanitisation of all offices in the two buildings in the wake of three employees testing positive for coronavirus.

Without actually mentioning the reason that prompted the State Government's decision to close down the main and annex buildings, Additional Chief Secretary (General Administration Department) Sitaram Kunte said: "We have Covid-19 situation across the country. The point number one of the Guidelines issued by the Government of India on March 29, 2020 has elaborated on the sanitisation procedure".

"As per the relevant guideline, it has become to essential for us sanitise the Main Mantralaya and new administrative building. Hence we have decided to close down the two buildings on April 29 and 30 to facilitate sanitisation of all the offices in the main and extended building," Kunte said.

Informed official sources said that one computer operator working in the Disaster Management Cell and two contractor-appointed sweepers working in a senior minister's office had tested positive for coronavirus on Monday.

Following the development, as many as 40 State Government employees were quarantined on Monday evening.

Hegde says Twitter stirring anti-national propaganda, writes to PM Modi

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and BJP's MP from Karnataka Anant Kumar Hegde has complained to Prime Minister Narendra Modi against Twitter alleging that it was encouraging anti-national propaganda and demanded an investigation into its activities which he said were harming national interests.

Hegde, whose account was blocked by Twitter on April 24 for allegedly posting "controversial" comments, has, in turn, accused it of "sponsoring" and "accepting" pro-Khalistani comments and not blocking it.

The BJP leader accused Twitter of "discrimination and favouritism" by blocking his account for what he called "exposing Tablighi Jamaat" but, at the same time, taking no action against the account named "Gurupatwant Singh Pannun" promoting the cause of a separate Khalistan. Hegde said he would not delete his posts which Twitter asked him to do and instead sought to know whether the microblogging site is "allowed to collect revenues from anti-nationals".

In his letter to Prime Minister on April 21 with subject "Paid promotion of anti-national propaganda and campaign with support of Twitter India", the BJP Lok Sabha MP from Uttara Kannada said he has received a written complaint from former National co-convenor of BJP's IT cell, Vinit Goenka, about "anti-national" and "paid/promoted campaign by Twitter India" and sought that Twitter be asked to change its policy and prevent anti-India propaganda" on its platform.

Hegde has demanded Twitter should be asked to "declare money/business generated by any/suspected anti-India commercial operation". "As newspaper and television are governed under law of the land, same should be applied here as this is a sponsored activity", the BJP MP claimed in his letter to the Prime Minister.

Stand by people instead looking for scapegoats: WB Gov

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhanekar continued to fire salvos at Mamata Banerjee, asking her to stand by the people in their hour of crisis instead of looking for alibis and scapegoats — receiving in return, a volley of diatribes from senior Trinamool Congress leaders who offered a counter advice and asked him to "join the BJP directly instead of speaking its language".

In his "appeal" to make coordinated action with the Centre to fight the corona outbreak Dhanekar asked the Chief Minister to "change stance from looking for alibis, scapegoats, exit or shifting burden to serving the people" and demanded a "real time earnest action in concert with Centre".

The Governor who had last week pounded a 13-page 'letter-

bomb' on the Chief Minister in retaliation to her 5-page missive followed it up with a twitter reminder saying "State within State approach" was "unconstitutional and inopportune".

Then he followed his advice up saying it was no time to "sharpen knives" against the Governor and the Centre and that the Chief Minister should concentrate more on the suffering of the people than on demagoguery. The Governor's letter is seen as a reaction to what the Chief Minister said on Monday after emerging from Chief Ministers' video meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Failing to get an opportunity to speak in the meeting she later complained that the Centre should instead of giving "Bhashan" lectures provide ration to the people as the state had burnt up its resources in the corona war and that there was no earning for the Government during the lockdown period.

Soon after Dhanekar tweeted Bengal Fire Brigade Minister Sujit Basu fired a salvo at him reminding how "Mamata Banerjee unlike any other Chief Ministers, is working directly at the ground level. She has descended on the streets from distributing relief to preaching social distancing to personally supervising other works ... and here we have a Governor who is acting more like a political person than a constitutional head." He added "the Governor should instead of pursuing the BJP's agenda cooperate with the State Government and most of all follow the Constitutional provisions".

His party colleague and TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee too shot off a letter to Dhanekar in which he said that the Governor was "working on behalf of the BJP" inviting a prompt reply from the former who questioned Banerjee's

"breach of decorum" and said the letter from the TMC leader was in fact a "strategy to cover up monumental failures" of the Government in fighting the corona pandemic. Meanwhile Bengal on Tuesday reported 28 new cases of corona infection taking the total number of active cases to 522, Chief Secretary Rajiva Sinha said adding 10 people were discharged on Tuesday. The death toll also went up by two with total number of patients succumbing to the disease going up to 22 he said.

The State had increased the number of tests he maintained adding "in total 1180 people have been tested today taking the total number of tests to 13,223". Besides he said that 75 per cent of the cases were coming from Kolkata, Howrah and North 24 Parganas while Hooghly and South 24 Parganas accounted for 25 per cent of the cases.

'Corona carriers' attacks corona warriors, cops hurt

Kolkata: Alleged 'corona carriers' continued to attack the much touted corona warriors — this time leaving a number of policemen injured at Tikiapara in Howrah where the men in uniform had gone to impose a total lockdown.

Tikiapara is a containment zone deserving a total lockdown. According to a senior police official "hundreds of people were seen flouting norms and roaming freely and even riding motorbikes in a local market area. Many were not wearing masks. When the local team of policemen challenged them they were first abused and then attacked with stones and sticks," leaving

half a dozen law enforcers injured. Two police vehicles were also damaged, officials said adding the injured policemen had been hospitalized.

The incident occurred late on Tuesday noon, sources said adding a large number of policemen including rapid action force was rushed to the area. "The situation is tense but under control as of now," a senior official said adding the police are looking for the perpetrators of the crime.

Criticising the attack on the policemen Minister and local MLA Rajib Banerjee said "the Government will take strict action against the culprits".

Cancer patients face hardship amid lockdown

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Amid complete lockdown for over last one month, hundreds of immunocompromised cancer patients are risking their lives and facing many hardships, each day, in Jammu & Kashmir to get timely treatment.

Even though the Government had suspended OPD services in Government Medical College and Associated hospitals in Jammu, patients from border areas of RS Pura, Pallanwala, Rajouri, Poonch and hilly districts of Doda and Kishtwar continue to report in the Department of Radiotherapy and Oncology to get a fresh lease of life.

According to rough estimates, an average number of 40-50 patients are reporting in the GMC hospital, Jammu. Some of these patients are going there for their routine followup, chemotherapy/radiotherapy session but large number of fresh cases are also getting registered on daily basis. Some of the outstation patients are camping here in

Jammu for over one month as they cannot afford to organise their travel in the wake of strict restrictions. Those coming from different parts of Jammu and rural pockets face hardships in the absence of public transport.

Speaking to The Pioneer, an attendant of a cancer patient from RS Pura area said, "my father - an ex-serviceman, suffering from cancer, is going through a very tough phase for last one month". He said, he was receiving treatment at a private hospital in Katra but since lockdown they have stopped admitting patients as the hospital has been listed as one of the dedicated Covid-19 hospitals".

Narrating his ordeal, ex-serviceman's son said, "we have to pass through several security check points and show our hospital record. He said recently I shifted my father to GMC, Jammu but due to heavy rush out there I took him to military hospital in Jammu as he immediately needed blood transfusion". He also claimed, no one in the GMC was observing

social distancing and several cancer patients were seated together in the OPD room.

One of the junior doctors in the department, demanding anonymity, told The Pioneer, the cancer patients are finding it difficult to get medicine supplies from AMRIT (Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment) counter in the GMC.

He said, "we had handed over a list of 15-20 regular medicines prescribed to different cancer patients but the same have not been made available for the patients.

The junior doctor also claimed, "We are not getting proper PPE kits and have even organised their face masks and hand sanitisers on their own". The hospital supplies are limited and cannot last long, he added.

Highlighting adverse conditions in which they are forced to work, another junior doctor claimed, "even though large number of cancer patients are turning up in the department, no one is worried to screen



them for Covid-19 symptoms. "What if a cancer patient is a carrier and silently spreading the infection in the OPD unless we test their samples". He said no one is following the guidelines in terms of maintaining social distancing or maintaining basic hygiene even in the OPD. When contacted, Nodal Officer, Government Medical College, Hospital Dr Sanjeev Gupta told The Pioneer, "we are

trying our level best to provide medicines to all the cancer patients enrolled under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). He, however, admitted the fact that all the medicines were not available even at AMRIT counter in GMC. He said, when we approach them, they announce 60 percent medicines are not available in stores. Dr Sanjeev Gupta also claimed, "markets are closed due to

lock down, we cannot purchase medicines from the open market as per the existing guidelines". He said, "we had an arrangement with a local supplier but due to ongoing lockdown even they are facing constraints in maintaining the proper supply chain".

Another patient, from Billawar claimed, they are struggling to get medicines in time. The patient claimed, they are directed to procure the medicines from a private clinic, registered under Ayushman Bharat scheme as the same were not available at the AMRIT counter inside GMC, Jammu.

One of the faculty members, sharing his concern for these cancer patients, claimed, when these patients fail to get medicines in time their treatment protocol is severely affected and it leads to deterioration of patient's health". Attendant of another patient from Pallanwala area of Akhnor told The Pioneer, "In the absence of adequate number of beds, in the Oncology ward, several terminally ill

patients are sent home". Referring to various hardships, he said, "I had to spend huge amount of money at a private diagnostic centre for PET-CT scan.

The same facility is not available in GMC" and old machines and protocols are followed there. Many a times I am not aware whether the correct dose of radiation was administered to treat the patient or hit and trial method is adopted by the technicians on duty.

A retired doctor told The Pioneer, "some of the private hospitals in the region have already refused admissions to these cancer patients. They have no choice but to reach GMC, Jammu. He said, one of the private sector hospital has been converted in to dedicated Covid hospital near Katra and another private hospital with oncology department was closed down after some of the doctors were tested positive. Though they have started providing medical care services but not admitting cancer patients at present".

Costly deal

Why did ICMR go ahead with Chinese rapid test kits when there was enough evidence against their efficacy?



Profitteering during a public health crisis means that we as a species have not learnt lessons from a killer pandemic that has driven home the point why saving lives and humanity should be the only mission. And even if that doesn't work for us, then there is no way we can tackle this war against an unknown enemy. The Government and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) have landed with egg on their faces for importing the much touted COVID-19 antibody test kits from Chinese companies at higher prices and without validating their efficacy. Large batches have been found to be faulty — some kits were found to be only accurate by up to five per cent and failed dismally even in identifying confirmed COVID cases — though the Government claims that these will be returned and that we have not lost money since no advance payment had been made in full. But the damage has been done; testing has slowed down till valid and credible replacements are got from South Korea and other nations. It is known that China dominates the testing kits market at the moment and no matter how much we ramp up production of our home-grown variants, we do not have the economies of scale that our neighbour has. As we go in for intensive testing, we need kits and we need them fast. Besides, by virtue of a longer experience in handling the virus and its factory floors opening up before others, China is better equipped with testing technology and has been exporting kits all around the world. Except that their quality has been uniformly suspect for a while with even the US, Germany, France and Turkey returning consignments. Clearly China's greed in capturing the world market has meant poor quality control. We did have enough time to decide, therefore, before placing the order. Question is why did ICMR, despite knowing all this, still go ahead with the procurement? Has it been hasty in calling this incorrectly, considering there was a burgeoning pressure to arrest the disease spiral at home? And now that it has approached South Korea, too, why didn't it go there in the first place given its proven track record of rapid testing? Not only that, the Indian company that got in the Chinese kits, had put a 140 per cent mark-up on prices and was selling them steep. Why wasn't the ICMR, which works under a unified task force that represents the country's top experts, as vigilant about technical evaluation? It did not consult a technical joint monitoring group formed by the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) and went ahead with the contract nevertheless. Now this includes experts from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) as well as emergency medical relief (EMR) officials and experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO). Is there any reason to doubt them? Yes, ICMR is under pressure but does that mean it follows what other nations are doing just because it is the done thing? It ought to have convinced itself of the efficacy of such kits before anything else. Now this error has proven costly and will doubly delay the arrival of replacements.

There is no denying that China, which anyway dominates the pharmaceutical market worldwide, is looking to colonise the post-COVID medical economy globally. And in that attempt it is overselling itself, overlooking checks and balances in its assembly line. Wondfo Biotech, from where we got the kits, of course, insists that its equipment is fine and claimed it had been validated by the Indian medical research body itself at the time of issuing an import licence. It also laid the blame on the door of Indian operators for faulty handling and storage that led to erroneous results and accused India of perpetuating a bias at a time when nations should cooperate. China, while hyperventilating against us and using the fiasco to mount diplomatic pressure, should consider that India still went ahead with the contract despite existing adverse reports. The UK Government is facing criticism for having bought two million test kits for \$20 million from Chinese companies that reportedly didn't work. While China may use this as a reason for straining diplomatic ties, upset as it is by the Government's decision to step up scrutiny of investments from neighbouring countries and avoid ambush-like takeovers, India must stand firm on devising its own COVID protocol that works in our context. We have reliable experts who should be consulted for the best way out even as building self-sufficiencies in healthcare will span many budgets and implementation going forward.

Open the vends

It will not be surprising if at the end of the lockdown we discover that more people died from alcohol-related issues



As State Governments stare at their balance sheets, it would not give them a good feeling. For, all across the country, with the exception of Bihar and Gujarat, their coffers are dry. This is because the sale of two golden elixirs have come to a grinding halt ever since the lockdown came into force. Well, not exactly. Petrol pumps are open, albeit with very few vehicles on the road; fuel sales are a mere fraction of what it used to be in normal times. And while bootleggers are making merry, charging obscene rates for alcohol, Governments are earning nothing as liquor vends stand shuttered across the country. According to the International Spirits & Wine Association of India, the alcoholic beverage industry accounts for 15-30 per cent of liquor selling States' earnings. Unlike the West, where liquor sales are not banned despite the lockdown, India ranks one among a handful of countries that has stopped alcohol sales. In the first few weeks of the lockdown, this newspaper had argued that a short-term forced deaddiction camp, which the nationwide lockdown actually is, was not a bad idea. However, as more and more stories emerged, of alcoholics committing suicide and the inevitability of illicit hooch tragedies that are bound to follow, maybe it is time for the State Governments to think of a new strategy for both alcohol and tobacco sales, one that can restrict crowding and yet ensure that it is the Government and not the profiteers who make some money.

There is a genuine fear among State Governments that intense crowding around liquor vends, if sales are allowed, will defeat the very purpose of the lockdown. But crowding will anyhow take place whenever the vends open. Even those who had sufficient personal stock at home at the start of the lockdown are running dry now. Police forces are worried that making alcohol available among a frustrated population could lead to a huge spike in domestic violence among other issues such as physical abuse. Yet, both of these need to be balanced against the need for States to make some money. The Central exchequer is not wealthy enough to pay the bills forever. For this to happen, a well-calibrated approach is needed to make liquor available than ban its sale altogether. The possibility of using e-commerce deliveries in restricted areas, making use of secure vehicles, is one that could be explored. Maybe this can be run on a pilot basis in one urban centre. States can share best practices among themselves. Because right now, the lack of doing anything is hurting the public and the Government.

opinion

New order in the making

In a post-COVID world, how the US and China respond and engage with each other will not only influence the future of their great power competition but determine the emerging global scenario



VIVEK MISHRA MONISH TOURANGBAM

The number of COVID-19 positive cases in the US just hit a staggering one million while the number of deaths crossed 56,000. The country has, perhaps, passed its peak, unless there is a second wave, like in the pandemic of the last century. As cases mount, the number of Americans who will succumb to the deadly virus is astonishingly reaching closer to the combined death toll in the Korean and the Vietnam wars.

The world has grown up on the narrative that America cares about the lives of its people — whether in combat or civilians — than most countries. While the validity of this argument can be debated, there is no denying that there's a sense of pride about the American way of life and the approach of its Government, which drives a superiority-riden revenge in the aftermath of every externally induced attack/setbacks. Not for nothing, the death of four American soldiers in the deserts of Niger and three soldiers in the Manda Bay, Kenya, in 2018 churned a domestic debate about the need for assessment in American troop deployments in Africa and the world over. The humiliation that America suffered in Tehran in the 1979 hostage crisis still fuels its regime, toppling compulsions in Tehran. The severity of the US' response has also historically depended on the political affiliation of the incumbent President, with the Republicans going for a whole hog response. That America is mired in an election cycle with Joe Biden, the likely Democratic presidential candidate, catching up fast with President Donald Trump's ratings is sure to shape a response that is intended to reassure the domestic electoral base that the US will avenge the loss of lives. So, how will it respond?

While it is too early to predict the American response in shaping a post-COVID-19 global order, portents of a recalibrated relationship with China are already emerging. Mutual blame-game over the origin of the virus, expulsion of each other's prominent media organisations and an investigation into the origin of the virus are already being undertaken by the US. While this may not fundamentally transform the broader trends of the Sino-US relationship, historically predictable trends in the latter's response after national crises and the vectors emerging from the COVID-19 epidemic, along with its toll on American lives, point to substantive overhaul in its policies once it emerges out of the reeling pandemic that has brought the country to a screeching halt.

The 9/11 attacks saw it undertake immediate response in the form of unprecedented tightening of homeland security and global compulsive lobbying for "war on terror" leading to the invasion of Iraq on the pretext of "weapons of mass destruction." The impact of these global changes in America's foreign policy was so intense that they are being experienced even now in varied forms: Tougher airport screening protocols, reduc-



tion in the number of visas issued, surveillance and tightening of immigration norms. With the Trump administration reinforcing American foreign policy conservatism, these impacts are being felt even more, especially by the non-citizens in the US than ever before. His announcement of a new visa section norm must be seen in the same light.

The rapidity with which the COVID-19 epidemic is sweeping across cities in the US, having broken the back of one of the most populous and iconic cities, New York, there cannot be much doubt that Washington is planning an overall recalibration of foreign relations with China. One of it is health infrastructure, perhaps an ongoing analysis to assess intelligence failure apropos COVID-19, improving the use of technologies in predicting and fighting future crises like the current Coronavirus outbreak, enhancing robustness for better defence preparedness and commensurate response to crises like this pandemic.

In the historic \$2 trillion stimulus package that has been signed by Trump to bring the American economy back on track, an emergency fund of \$8.3 billion has been put forth by the Trump administration for the defence department. Clearly, there is a defence component of the American response to COVID-19 from the Pentagon in

waiting. Whether it will be too China-specific or a general uplifting of America's preparedness remains to be seen.

That the US could not see the virus coming and ravaging American lives on an unprecedented scale has catapulted COVID-19 high on the list of its historical intelligence failure — perhaps in the same line as Pearl Harbour, the Iranian hostage crisis and the 9/11 attacks. While that is a conventional national security consideration, China has also launched a "propaganda war" through "wolf warrior" diplomacy upon the US and elsewhere by ramping up the narrative that the American military might be to blame for the Coronavirus outbreak in China. As such, what COVID-19 has done is that it has further flared up the already tense and uncertain atmospherics in the US-China relationship, coming close on the heels of an ongoing trade war between the two largest economies of the world.

As the US-led liberal international order is perceived to be under severe strain in the face of an unapologetic claim for a peer-competitor status by China, COVID-19 and the tit-for-tat responses from both sides is bound to turn the US-China strategic rivalry more combustible. In more recent US military and diplomatic documents, China has begun to occupy a

much starker place as a "revisionist power", a strategic competitor and challenger to the US global primacy "that needs to be countered and contained."

As China's increasing economic and security engagements with countries across the globe rattle America's strategic minds, the US, despite President Trump's uncertain ways, has been doubling down on its alliances and strategic partners to manage the consequences of China's rise. America's approach to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the latter's approach to the US Indo-Pacific strategy has brought forth a complex set of perceptions and misperceptions about the global order. The new face of US-China competition and confrontation, seen through the wrangling over 5G technologies, China's heft with leading US universities and national security concerns, is adding further acrimony amid the COVID-19 saga.

Amid anger and suspicion within the global community regarding China's response to the virus outbreak, Beijing is increasingly projecting itself as a country that has successfully fought COVID-19 and is ready to help other nations now. To be sure, China's response amid the ongoing COVID-19 crisis globally has positioned it ahead of America in the "scramble for

Europe" 2.0. On the other hand, the US occupies the limelight for President Trump's arguably "incompetent" and "unpopular" leadership and for becoming the ground zero of COVID-19 infections. How the two most powerful militaries and the largest economies in the world respond and engage with each other will not only influence the future of their great power competition but also the multiple platforms of global governance and multilateral agencies, cutting across the political and economic apparatuses that will determine the emerging global order.

Once America emerges out of this pandemic, it is sure to undertake vigorous domestic and foreign policy recalibration. Perhaps, for the first time, the world will see an offensive concoction of America's health imperatives domestically and its national security objectives abroad. This strategy is likely to pivot itself on three components — emerging technologies (particularly AI), enhanced surveillance and a historically unmatched upping the ante on building new and expansive health infrastructure. Airports globally, particularly in the US, could see the end of any "touch", even as facial recognition machines will likely replace any physical contact that carries the risk of infection. Facial recognition would in turn mean vast databases of people online. Many of these technologies are already functional at Chinese airports, about which democracies all over the world, led by the US, have depicted discomfort.

For many in the US, as in the world, this would mean a conflicting question of "consent" and a more constricted democratic space. Enhanced State control, surveillance and personal data storage could change the very nature of democracies and for many people a costly bargain. However, given the emerging nature of threats, it appears that most political systems will opt for that bargain, particularly in line with the fact that the fundamental tenets of liberal democracies have historically shared an inversely proportional relationship with national security.

In the case of the US, these changes would mean that the perils of fighting this one-upmanship battle with China could shift the credentials of its political system towards those that it seeks to fight.

(Vivek Mishra is deputy director, KIIPS, Bhubaneswar, and research fellow, ICWA, New Delhi. Monish Tourangbam is assistant professor Manipal University, Karnataka)

SOUNDBITE

The condition in China is such and considering people's anger against it, I'm sure opportunity for India is going to come. State Governments must treat Covid-19 as an opportunity

Union Minister —Ravi Shankar Prasad



It's better to have a life than dying because of the virus. To those flouting rule, I want to ask them, has God given you immortality?

Actor —Asha Parekh



The risk of radicalisation can increase as extremist groups seek to exploit the anger and despair of the young. The world cannot afford a lost generation due to the Covid crisis.

UN Secretary-General —Antonio Guterres



I never even thought of changing the date of the election due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Why would I do that? November 3, it's a good number.

US President —Donald Trump



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bihar must take a cue

Sir — It is important to note that due to the sudden imposition of lockdown due to the spread of Coronavirus, thousands of students were stranded in various parts of the country and abroad as well. They were unable to return home due to travel restrictions. Students, stuck in several parts of India, want to get back home. In many cases, they are facing financial distress.

Days after the lockdown was announced, the Uttar Pradesh Government sent 250 buses to pick up about 9,000 stranded students from Kota in Rajasthan. Several other States have also either brought back students or are planning to do so.

However, it is regretful that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has been opposing the easing of lockdown rules and has even refused to bring back students stranded in Kota. Kumar must not abdicate his responsibility of ensuring safe passage to the students and coordinate with State Governments to ensure hassle-free return of the students.

AMS Nadwi Lucknow

Measure of a national failing

According to data by a travel company in China, Chinese tourists booked trips to 419 cities in over 100 countries for the seven-day holiday beginning January 24, 2020. So Chinese tourists made 6.3 million outbound trips during the Spring Festival holiday in 2019, up by 12.48 per cent year on year. But Wuhan, the epicentre of Coronavirus, was sealed on January 11. Clearly, the virus had already begun to migrate from here. It has been reported that Australia and New Zealand are among the most popular destinations for the Chinese, all thanks to the warm weather. Trips to Italy, Britain, Spain, Russia, France and the United Arab Emirates are also bestsellers. These nations, which, too, were going through a phase of subdued economy, became increasingly dependent on tourism to generate revenue and ended up paying a disproportionate price. New York, the commercial capital of global eminence, had to bear the brunt of Coronavirus carriers from all across the world, including China. This is why it has taken the largest hit of all. As of today, the city has seen 291,996 cases and 22,668 deaths.

India though does not come in the Chinese



tourist's itinerary. Mumbai and Delhi thus got no more than normal exposure. But given the total lack of attention and the insufficient budget to healthcare, isolation was the only cure. It is not surprising that people were as much aware of this national failing as the Government and, thus, there was ready compliance. Hereon, it should not be left to the next health emergency to measure the extent of our healthcare upgrade.

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

Safety net needed

Sir — Ever since the lockdown came into effect, it has been more than clear that the entire country is suffering. The unprecedented lockdown has unsettled lives, halted the economy and put

India Inc into deeper crisis. The devastation faced by millions of migrant workers and labourers, who had little economic buffer or safety net, was heart-wrenching.

But what about the plight of pregnant women? There have been a number of incidents where doctors have refused to admit

pregnant women due to the lack of a COVID-19 test report. Many women have been forced to deliver babies at the roadside.

The Government needs to act on this to prevent a second COVID-19-related crisis — a wave of premature births and poor outcomes, especially among

our most vulnerable populations. Ensuring institutional delivery must be the first responsibility of every State Government.

AA Hafiz Kerala

Inculcate change

Sir — Post the lockdown, work culture is definitely going to undergo a sea-change. The benefits of this are many. We save hours of commute time, work-life balance improves and there's a drastic change in the atmosphere. This form of an arrangement has indeed worked and many companies will be able to adopt it with ease for long-term.

While many companies will be able to adapt to this new kind of work culture, there are others for whom getting back to the office is crucial and unavoidable. More and more will test positive, need isolation, quarantine, treatment, even hospitalisation. But we have to take the bull by the horns.

Niharika Singh Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Points to ponder

Is the Coronavirus paving the way for China to 'peacefully' acquire and procure strategic world assets without a fight?



ABHIJIT BHATTACHARYYA

Of all the nations in the world, only 164 countries have a navy and just 18 of them manufacture warships (above 3,000 deadweight tonnage) for their own use or export. While the sea has historically played an important role in a country's trade, industry, technology, economics, diplomacy, expansion and colonisation, it was World War-I which signalled a paradigm shift pertaining to its enhanced role in the definition of a superpower. The 20th century war enlarged the scenario with enhanced combat capability of the vessels and versatile use thereof, by belligerents. It took a five-year World War to transform and tilt a land power into an actual, visible, ship-operating sea State. Sea replaced land. And that happened in the Pacific Ocean as the traditional naval balance shifted from the West (Atlantic Ocean) to the Far East, spanning from the US to Japan and to the Chinese coastline. In real terms, for the first time on the naval canvas, two powerful navies emerged in the Pacific Ocean: From the mighty US and the tiny Japan.

Since the war left Japan the dominant power in the Pacific, especially owing to the eclipse of the Russian army and simultaneous destruction of Berlin and Moscow navies, the traditional naval powers of the West could not take kindly to the rise of (Asia's) Nippon navy. This resulted in the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 which concluded three treaties — the Four-Power Pacific Treaty; the Naval Treaty; the Nine-Power Treaty on China — essentially all regarding the Pacific. As a result Japan was checkmated and its navy drastically cut its size and strength.

Interestingly, a big country like China was never a naval power or maritime nation during its 4,000 year history. Its so-called Silk Route essentially ran through the great Euro-Asian landmass, for trade, terror, tourism. Thus China saw with awe the unprecedented December 1941 blow inflicted by the Japanese aircraft carrier force on the US naval base Pearl Harbour. The budding leaders of the Communist Party of China, who took control of the State in 1949, after a prolonged civil war deep inside their own land, saw it all in the post-Second World War era. The importance of sea power of the State was not lost on them.

Thus, after a slow and somewhat lethargic start, the Chinese went full steam from the 1990s when they established themselves as credible trade partners of dual use, high quality military technology. With an ability to access technology, through fair or foul means, and reverse engineering, Beijing gradually built a navy to compete with and challenge, the US in the sea, hitherto the sole supreme operator across the vast Pacific since the end of the World War-II. As China always looked at its bitter and traditional foe Japan's military with a tinge of envy and admiration, Beijing emulated Tokyo. Its navy, aka the PLA Navy, today is constantly challenging the smaller neighbours and harassing the US in the western fringe of the Pacific Ocean.

It is claiming areas of several seas as if it's something like Alsace, Lorraine; Eupen, Malmédy, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia; Schleswig-Holstein and Silesia, all of which were causes for major wars in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. But, the gravest of threats posed by China to her maritime neighbours today can be found in its ceaseless attempts to forcibly acquire numerous islands spread across the South China Sea, East China and the Sea of Japan. China threatens kinetic action against smaller neighbours from Manila to Cambodia, Tokyo to Thailand and Laos to Vietnam.

Beijing very well understands the quality and numerical superiority of the US Navy and the contemporary Chinese focus is on an indigenous carrier fleet and intimidation, leading to area-denial to the US carrier battle group in the Pacific Ocean. Little wonder, no sooner did the US-China trade spat begin in June 2018, there took place in December 2018 the Military Industry List Summit, where Chinese Rear Admiral Lou Yuan, deputy head of Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, thundered: "What the US fears the most is taking casualties....sinking one aircraft carrier could kill 5,000 US service members." Then, one fine morning comes the news that one of the mammoth 75,160 tonne US Navy carriers, *Theodore Roosevelt*, with 5,750 sailors aboard, has been hit by the Coronavirus; thereby aborting its mission for an indefinite period and putting almost 1,000 sailors in quarantine. The fight for the Pacific is over in one stroke. China trumps the mighty US without a single shot. Soon, comes, another shocker. More than 1,000 of the 1,862 sailors of the French Navy's sole 43,182 tonne aircraft carrier *Charles De Gaulle*, too, hospitalised owing to COVID-19. The best possible news for China, however, comes from India. At least 25 Indian Navy men from the Mumbai-based shore establishment *Angre* are afflicted by the virus, sending the Western Naval Command into a tizzy.

Is the writing on the wall visible? Is the COVID-19 paving the way for China to "peacefully" acquire and procure strategic world assets without a fight? Making the enemy surrender before and not after a fight. War in accordance with the art of war of Sun Tzu, Mao Zedong and now Xi? It is time to ponder.

Are we so dependent and helpless that we cannot look after national interests except through dubious foreign investment, unaccounted money and poorly-finished, cheap Chinese goods? Are we, thereby, torpedoing our sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom for globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation? Are we heading towards imminent financial disaster? It is time for some deep introspection.

(The writer is the author of 'China in India')

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHILE THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS FIGHTING THE PANDEMIC TOGETHER, KERALA CM'S ABSENCE FROM PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED.

—KERALA BJP CHIEF
K SURENDRAN



THE CABINET SECRETARY HAD INFORMED US THAT ONLY A FEW CHIEF MINISTERS WILL GET A CHANCE TO SPEAK DURING THE CONFERENCE.

—KERALA CHIEF MINISTER
PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Bridge the North-South gap

As we grapple with the pandemic, one wonders what happened to the world health watchdog and global governance structures that were built in order to counter this sort of crisis



VEER MAYANK



NIDHI SAXENA

In the months during which the Coronavirus outbreak has been afoot, it has laid bare the vulnerability and helplessness of an interdependent and interlinked world to the ravages that can be unleashed by a rapidly spreading novel communicable disease. The question one asks at this moment is, why is this so?

What happened to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the global governance structures that were built in order to counter this sort of crisis? Didn't the world learn anything from the earlier outbreaks of communicable diseases like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Swine flu (H1N1) and so on? The entire healthcare governance at the global level simply crumbled like a house of cards. There is complete disarray and confusion around the world, when ideally global protocols should have been in place to control the spread of the disease.

What has been witnessed during the pandemic is that countries have tended to act independently. More in tune with their domestic requirements (cultural pride, market demands and so on) rather than in a coordinated fashion as part of a global governance network.

On the one hand, the Chinese authorities had sought to suppress information regarding the appearance of the new virus (by some accounts the Chinese are still hiding the real numbers), while on the other hand a unified response to the disease, which was expected from the world and international institutions like the WHO (once its gravity became evident) was completely absent and is absent even today.

Nothing highlights the lack of coordination between countries better than the testing regime for the Coronavirus initiated by South Korea and the US. While South Korea made the testing of COVID-19 free for its citizens, in the US testing was a paid endeavour in the initial days, which resulted in delayed identification of infected individuals and led to the rapid spread of the disease.

While the Chinese may be at fault in their failure to warn the world about the outbreak of the highly infectious disease right at its onset, their propaganda is correct to an extent that the developed world, with all its technological prowess, has surrendered before the Coronavirus. This begs the question, what has caused the failure of global healthcare governance?

The WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared COVID-19 as a pandemic (rather late in the day) and asked countries to undertake preventive and protective public health measures that "strike a fine balance between protecting health, preventing economic and social disruption and respecting human rights."

The WHO, while rightly emphasising the need to respect human rights, appears to have simply laid the responsibility of containing the pandemic along with the responsibility of preventing social and economic disruption, on national healthcare systems, which are patchy and inefficient in most of the developing countries.

Ideally it should have been at the forefront of the Corona war, advising countries on the protocols that needed to be followed. Instead its response was slow, confused and inconsistent. It doesn't take a genius to imagine what the situation in developing countries would be when developed countries with better healthcare systems were unable to contain the virus.

As the pandemic has shown us, the spread



“DILUTION OF POLITICAL BORDERS IS A REALITY AND NOT JUST IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS, FINANCE AND CYBERWORLD BUT IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INTEGRATION. THE PROBLEMS OF COUNTRIES, STARTING WITH BASIC HEALTHCARE, HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED AT A GLOBAL LEVEL. THE EARLIER THE WORLD, BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH, REALISES THIS, THE BETTER IT WOULD BE FOR EVERYONE AROUND”

of a contagion in any major economy will have reverberating effects on the entire global economy. Thus it cannot be the job of national governments alone to halt the spread of disease. It has to be a joint effort between the countries with the global health watchdog leading from the front.

However, the statement of the Director-General, which came out rather belatedly, was in the form of a recommendation rather than a concrete plan of action for nations to follow. It indicated a complete lack of power to effectively engage in governance of healthcare around the world and adopt a leadership role in the hour of crisis.

The reason behind the incapacity of the WHO to effectively engage in global healthcare governance appears to be the North-South divide that permeates international relations. This invisible line has divided the world into the global developing South, which comprises the underdeveloped and developing countries and the wealthy, industrialised North.

The countries of the global South are plagued with problems, in differing measure, of poverty, lack of respect for human rights, absence of democratic governance and so on, along with a deep distrust of the industrialised countries, who are perceived to be ready to use every instrument to control policy-making of the developing nations, for their own economic gains.

The developed countries, in the industrialised North on the other hand, have either left the global South to its devices or are attempting to provide strait-jacketed solutions to problems, instead of sharing the global governance space with them, in which an acceptable solution to the problems of the global South could be arrived at.

This exclusion of the South from participation has further fuelled the per-

ception that developed countries are only interested in subverting governance of developing nations for their own economic gains. COVID-19 has rudely awakened the world to the fact that the dividing line between the global North and South is not so wide as it appears to be and the North cannot ignore the problems of the South — be it human rights violations or poor healthcare — as something alien to them.

What is the solution then? The existing global governance architecture has fallen woefully short in managing the interdependencies and integration between countries. This is partly due to the speed of globalisation which accentuates these interdependencies and partly due to the Westphalian principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

What is required at this juncture is a novel governance model which is based on international cooperation. This governance model should respect sovereignty but only to the extent that it does not cause hindrance in addressing transnational challenges that may require a global coordinated response.

Global governance implicitly mandates a certain level of international intervention which is contrary to the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention in each other's affairs. In addition, this governance model would also have to address the asymmetries existing in the present structure of governance which lead to a participation deficit of developing countries in global norm creation, thereby accentuating inequalities between nations.

This new model should genuinely attempt to fulfill the mandate of Article III of the United Nations Charter which provides that there should be "international cooperation in solving international problems of an econom-

ic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

In the case of the present pandemic, while it is obvious that China is squarely to be blamed for the mayhem around the globe, the immediate requirement is that the WHO as an international organisation should be reformed as has been stated by the US, India and Australia.

The need for global healthcare governance has to be realised and the WHO should be vested with this responsibility.

For discharging this duty, the WHO should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources to address the issue of governance of healthcare around the world. The administration of the WHO should be made more broad-based and representative of global realities by increasing the participation of the global South in the organisation.

At a political level, it may be provided with similar administrative powers as are available to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) where it can direct a proper course of action instead of merely making recommendations that the countries may or may not follow.

Dilution of political borders is a reality and not just in the field of politics, finance and cyberworld but in the field of social and physical integration. The problems of countries, starting with basic healthcare, have to be addressed at a global level.

The earlier the world, both the North and South, realises this, the better it would be for everyone around. (The writers are Assistant Professors, Department of Law, Sikkim University)

Rural India hunkers down to avoid COVID

It is clear that a successful strategy for rural India will go a long way in dealing with the pandemic. However, the solutions have to be organic and community-based for them to work. And the war should be fought on two fronts – healthcare as well as on the economic front



KALYANI SHANKAR

but if the virus spreads to rural India, can our public healthcare system manage to deal with it? Is there a contingency plan for such a situation?

Right now the Government seems to be banking on the COVID-19 not reaching rural India. It is hoping that the million migrant labourers who went back home to their villages soon after the nationwide lockdown began on March 25 might not be infected or vectors.

This is for two reasons, Dr Vardhan says. "Personally I feel that these migrant labourers would never have come in contact with the carriers of the disease. The Coronavirus arrived in India with international travellers and, therefore, most cases so far have been in the cities. The second is that they have already covered the two-week quarantine period. Had they

been infected it would have been detected by this time," he explains to this columnist.

Also, the rural folks have become alert and do not allow strangers into their villages. They are keeping constant vigil. Awareness about the virus and how it spreads has increased because there are 117 crore phone subscribers who get information through their mobile phones.

State officials have told village councils to prevent labourers returning from the cities from entering the village or meeting people due to the fear that they might be infected with the Coronavirus. In view of all these precautions, the Minister is confident of meeting the challenge if it reaches rural India.

"Money is not an issue. We have given ₹4,000 crore to the States. We are supplying them test kits. We can

do much more," he assures.

However, data show that though urban residents are more at risk due to proximity to international travellers and cheek by jowl housing, the rural folk are not off the hook as they face several challenges including inadequate access to proper healthcare, low insurance penetration and a growing chronic disease burden.

With two-thirds of the population living in rural India, we need a different strategy to take care of their healthcare needs, particularly as the pandemic looms over us. As a priority, the quality of rural healthcare needs to be stepped up.

The health infrastructure data published in the National Health Profile, 2019, found that Government hospitals would run out of beds in rural India even if the virus hits 0.03 per cent of the pop-

ulation in the villages. The pressure of handling patients in rural India is twice as much as the national average. While for every 10,000 people in the country, there is one doctor available; in rural India one doctor is available for every 26,000 people.

There are also practical difficulties in implementing Government guidelines on health and hygiene. For instance, rural folks wonder how they can follow social distancing in a limited space? Or wash their hands often when they are in the fields or even at home because there is no running water or soap? They wonder how they will be able to afford masks when they don't have money to buy them? Or how could they get proper healthcare in the event of an outbreak when there are not enough Government hospitals in the vicinity?

The widening urban-rural divide is also evident in the inequalities in consumption, quality of life and availability of physical and social infrastructure.

The Union Government announced a ₹1.7 trillion financial package on March 26 for direct cash transfers and free food and the second one is to follow soon. But this barely amounts to one per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

What is needed is a strategy suited to rural India. For an inclusive economic growth, there is a need to focus on the agrarian economy. Second, the panchayats should be utilised in the fight against COVID-19 and also for economic recovery.

Realising the need for this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself addressed the gram pan-

chayats and sought their help last week. Similarly, realising their importance, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has pragmatically vested on sarpanches the powers of District Collectors.

In Kerala, its network of local bodies and the women empowerment programme 'Kutumbashree' has taken the battle against the Coronavirus to the community level. Gram panchayats could be the engine to deal with the problems unique to the villages. It is clear that a successful strategy for rural India will go a long way in dealing with the pandemic. However, the solutions have to be organic and community-based for them to work. And the war should be fought on two fronts — healthcare as well as on the economic front.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Around the Globe

BRICS should 'do right thing' amid outbreak: China

South Korea has repeated calls for joint efforts with North Korea to stem the spread of the coronavirus...

China on Tuesday called on all countries of the five-member BRICS bloc to unite and 'do the right thing' in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic...

While US President Donald Trump has stepped up calls for a probe into the origin of coronavirus, which emerged first from Wuhan, Britain, Australia and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have called for more transparency from Beijing on Covid-19 origins...

China said the origin of the virus is a matter of science and should be studied by scientists and professionals. Wang said as representatives of major emerging countries with global influence, the BRICS countries must act in the interest of the well-being of humankind...

US 400 million funding for the World Health Organisation (WHO), accusing it of backing China in 'cover-up and under-reporting' of coronavirus cases. For its part, China which has announced USD 30 million additional funding to the WHO has staunchly defended its role and the health agency's Director General Dr General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus...

Wang said. He called on BRICS countries to safeguard through the joint efforts the legitimate rights and interests and space for development 'not just for ourselves but also for all other emerging market and developing countries.'

Wang asked the countries to enhance coordination on macroeconomic policies to curb recession, create jobs, protect livelihoods and stabilise the global economy. He also called for sustaining coordination to keep up the secure and smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains.

'The sudden onslaught of COVID-19 reminds us once again that our interests are closely entwined and so are our futures,' Wang said. A challenge that respects no border and makes no distinction of ethnicity has only made global governance more important, not less, he said. In response to some arguments that the world will never be the same again after the Covid-19, Wang said China's strategic assessment was that the pandemic will not change the theme of the times which remains peace and development.

President Donald Trump said states should 'seriously consider' reopening their public schools before the end of the academic year, even though dozens already have said it would be unsafe for students to return until the summer or fall.

UN: \$90 bn could protect 700 mn poor in pandemic

The UN humanitarian chief said USD 90 billion could provide income support, food and a health response to the coronavirus pandemic for 700 million of the world's most vulnerable people — a price tag just 1 per cent of the USD 8 trillion stimulus package the 20 richest countries put in place to safeguard the global economy.

And for something like USD 30 billion, he said, people facing the threat of starvation can get food, and the health response to Covid-19 can be financed. Lowcock said probably two-thirds of the USD 90 billion could come from international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

France aims for 7,00,000 tests each week in May

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has outlined a plan to fight the coronavirus by testing everyone who has come in contact with an infected person. Philippe announced the plan while addressing lawmakers at the National Assembly. He said when a person tests positive, individuals that have been close contact with that person — regardless of whether they have any symptoms or not — will be tested.

DEATH TOLL CROSS 2,10,000 US cases approach 1mn



AFP ■ PARIS

Washington: US cases of the novel coronavirus were approaching 1 million on Tuesday, having doubled in 18 days, and made up one-third of all infections in the world, according to a Reuters tally. More than 56,000 Americans have died of the highly contagious respiratory illness COVID-19 caused by the virus, an average of about 2,000 a day this month, according to the tally.

have occurred in New York state, the epicenter of the US outbreak, followed by New Jersey, Massachusetts, California and Pennsylvania. Globally, coronavirus cases top 3 million since the outbreak began in China late last year. The United States, with the world's third-largest population, has five times as many cases as the next hardest-hit countries of Italy, Spain and France.

Unprecedented stay-at-home orders to try to curb the spread of the virus have hampered the economy, with the number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits over the last five weeks soaring to 26.5 million. About a dozen states are beginning to relax the stay-at-home restrictions despite the warning of health experts that premature actions could cause a surge in new cases.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has again dismissed Australia's call for an independent inquiry into the coronavirus, saying a senior Australian diplomat agrees that it is not the time for such an investigation. Australia's call for an international inquiry independent of the World Health Organization into where the respiratory virus came from and the United Nations agency's handling of the emerging pandemic is placing increasing strain on Australia-China relations.

Mark Lowcock told a video briefing most experts agree that the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic hasn't reached the poorest parts of the world, but may peak in the next three to six months. He said about 700 million people — 10 per cent of the world's population — are most vulnerable and concentrated in about 30 to 40 countries which already receive humanitarian assistance and will see a big drop in incomes as the virus spreads and governments impose restrictive measures and lock downs.

Lowcock said the remaining one-third could be financed by a one-time increase in Government development assistance. He said the argument he's making is that a one-off 20 per cent increase "will save you having to deal with a 10-year problem." "USD 90 billion is a lot of money but it is an affordable sum of money," he said.

Table with 3 columns: COUNTRY, TOTAL CASES, TOTAL DEATHS. Rows include USA, Spain, Italy, France, UK, Germany, Iran, Turkey.

More than 2,10,000 people have died worldwide in the coronavirus pandemic, 85 per cent of them in Europe and the United States. A total of 2,13,437 deaths have been recorded among 3,094,964 cases since the outbreak began in China late last year. Total 9,38,497 have been recovered so far.

About 30% of the cases are thought to be higher, with state public health officials cautioning that shortages of trained workers and materials have limited testing capacity.

US coronavirus deaths, the highest in the world, now exceed the total number of Americans killed in the 1950-53 Korean War — 36,516. Coronavirus deaths total just below the 58,220 Americans killed during the Vietnam War that ended in 1975. The coronavirus has killed more people in the United States

than the seasonal flu in recent years, except for the 2017-2018 season, according to the US. Flu deaths range from a low of 12,000 in the 2011-2012 season to a high of 61,000 during 2017-2018. Coronavirus deaths in the United States fall far short of the Spanish flu, which began in 1918 and killed 675,000 Americans, according to the CDC.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES

Authorities in Poland said a 100-year-old World War I veteran and former fire fighter has recovered from Covid-19. Iwona Soltys, a spokeswoman for a government hospital in Warsaw, tweeted that Stanislaw Bigos has recovered. She wished him plenty of health, positive thinking and energy in the future.



A health worker collects sample for coronavirus from a worker at a locked down wet market as one of its traders tested positive for COVID-19 in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, on Tuesday. The Malaysian government issued a restricted movement order to the public till April 28, to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus. AP

Authorities in Ukraine have started to ease lockdown restrictions enacted since March 12 to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Ukraine has reported 9,410 coronavirus cases and 239 deaths.



Medical staff of the Polizu maternity hospital hold European Union and Romanian flags while standing in a window to listen to a violinist playing to entertain them and the patients in Bucharest, Romania, on Tuesday. AP

The Japanese Government has been forced to halt its free mask distribution programme, after the initiative received a barrage of mockery and criticism. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced two masks would be sent to each home in the country due to its shortage amid a growing number of coronavirus cases.



Parliament members presents his plan to exit from the lockdown at the National Assembly in Paris, on Tuesday. AP

Some 4,000 Sri Lankan Navy personnel and their families have been quarantined after at least 185 military members tested positive for the novel coronavirus, officials said on Tuesday. Some 181 of the virus-positive military personnel are from the Navy who were among the first responders in the island-nation's battle against the disease that has infected 588 people and claimed the lives of seven others.

US doing 'very serious' probe against China: Trump

The US is carrying out a "very serious" investigation against China, President Donald Trump has said, indicating that his administration is looking at a bigger compensation from Beijing than the USD 140 billion being sought by Germany over the coronavirus pandemic. The deadly contagion, which originated in China in mid-November, has so far killed more than two lakh people and infected over three million globally. The largest number of them are in the US; more than 56,000 deaths and over one million infections.

and Germany increasingly believe that the unfortunate deaths of so many people and destruction of the global economy could have been avoided, if China had shown transparency and shared the information about the virus in its early phases. Many countries have started talking about claiming compensation from China. Trump, during the Rose Garden press conference on Monday, was asked about Germany planning to send a bill to China for euro 130 billion (USD 140 billion) for the damages. "Would your administration look at doing the same?" "Well, we can do something much easier than that.

We have ways of doing things a lot easier than that," the President replied. "Germany is looking at things and we're looking at things and we're talking about a lot more money than Germany is talking about. "We haven't determined the final amount yet," but "it is very substantial," Trump said. After the US, Europe has been the worst hit by the virus. In India, mainly because of the early and aggressive preventive measures, the fatalities have remained low at 886 and infections at 28,000. "If you look at the world, I mean, this is a worldwide damage. This is a damage to the US but this is a damage to the world," said the President.

Trump said there are "a lot of ways" one can hold China accountable for the spread of the virus. "We're doing very serious investigations, as you probably know. We are not happy with China," he said. "We are not happy with that whole situation because we believe it could've been stopped at the source. It could've been stopped quickly and it wouldn't have spread all over the world. And we think that should have happened. So, we'll let you know at the appropriate time, but we are doing serious investigations," Trump said. In recent weeks, there has been an increasing support towards the move to hold China accountable.

Indians still in Wuhan say asymptomatic cases raise fears of 2nd wave of corona

Beijing/Wuhan: A few gutsy Indians who stayed put in Wuhan are back at work after a strict 76-day lockdown, but are still worried about the possibility of a second wave of attack by the vicious coronavirus, going by the growing number of asymptomatic cases in the country. Wuhan, the central Chinese city at the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic, made global headlines on Sunday as the last COVID-19 patient was discharged, marking an important milestone in the city's fight against the invisible enemy, while India and several other countries are still under strict lockdown to curb the spread of the disease that has claimed over 2,10,000 lives worldwide.

With 50,333 confirmed cases and 3,869 deaths, Wuhan bore the brunt of the highly-infectious virus which first emerged there in December last year and spread like wildfire in the city of 11 million people before turning into a global pandemic, virtually bringing the world to a grinding halt.

Wuhan, which became famous in India for the historic first informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018, is a major international educational centre and industrial hub with some of China's famous scientific research centres and laboratories, attracting students from India and abroad. PTI

Putin extends Russia's shutdown to May 11

Russian President Vladimir Putin has extended the nation's partial economic shutdown through May 11, saying the coronavirus outbreak is yet to reach a peak. Speaking in a conference call with top officials on Tuesday, Putin says the shutdown that began at the end of March and was to expire on April 30 has slowed contagion. Lockdowns imposed by Russian regions have kept most people, except those working in vital industries, at home.

S Korean Minister rejects reports on Kim's health as 'fake news'

South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul on Tuesday rejected unconfirmed reports of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's health as "fake news" and "infodemic", insisting he can say confidently there have been no unusual signs in Pyongyang. Speculation about Kim's health spiked after he skipped an annual visit to the mausoleum of his grandfather Kim Il-sung on the late national founder's April 15 birth anniversary, the North's most important national holiday, reports Yonhap News Agency.

Media reports have since speculated that Kim Jong-un might be seriously ill, but South Korean officials have disputed the reports, repeatedly saying there were no unusual signs found in North Korea and that the leader was believed to be staying in the country's eastern coastal town of Wonsan. "It can be seen as a phenomenon of infodemic," the Unification Minister said during a parliamentary foreign affairs committee meeting, referring to a recent deluge of unfounded rumours about the leader's health. "We have intelligence capacity that allows us to say

confidently that there are no unusual signs." In a report last week, CNN said that the US was looking into intelligence that Kim Jong-un was in "grave danger" after a surgery. That came after a report by Daily NK, a South Korea-based news outlet specializing in North Korea issues, that Kim Jong-un was receiving medical treatment outside Pyongyang following a cardiovascular procedure, said the Yonhap News Agency. The Minister during Tuesday's briefing called those reports "fake news" based on unconfirmed information.

Trump: Have a very good idea about status of Kim

Washington: US President Donald Trump said he has a "very good idea" about the status of Kim Jong Un but he can't talk about it now, amid rumours about the ill health of the North Korean leader. "I can't tell you exactly — yes, I do have a very good idea but I can't talk about it now. I just wish him well," Trump told reporters at a White House news conference. There have been unconfirmed reports that Kim is not in good health. The rumours began after he missed the April 15 commemoration of the 108th birthday of his grandfather, North Korea founder Kim

Il Sung. North Korea has not dispelled the rumours of ill health of its ruler. "I have had a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un. If I weren't president you would be... You would have been in war with Korea. You would have been in war with North Korea if I wasn't president that I can tell you. He expected that. That I can tell you," he said. "I hope he's fine. I do know how he's doing relatively speaking. We will see... You will probably be hearing in the not-too-distant future," Trump, who met Kim at least twice to persuade him to give up his nuclear weapons, said. IANS

Pentagon releases 3 UFO videos to clear up misconceptions

New York: The US Department of Defense has released three short videos showing what appears to be unidentified flying objects. The videos showing "unidentified aerial phenomena", the term used by the Pentagon, were taken by US Navy pilots, one in November 2004 and the other two in January 2015. Even before the US Department of Defense decided to authorise the release of the videos, they were circulating in the public domain after unauthorised releases in 2007 and 2017. The US Navy previously



admitted that these videos circulating in the public domain were not fakes. "After a thorough review, the department has determined that the authorised release of these unclassified videos does not reveal any sensitive capabilities or systems, and does not impinge on any subsequent investigations of military air space incursions by unidentified aerial phenomena," the US Department of Defense said in a statement on Monday. "DOD is releasing the videos in order to clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real, or whether or not there is more to the videos," said the statement, adding that the aerial phenomena observed in the videos remain characterised as "unidentified."

Two airmen documented the 2004 incident in the New York Times three years ago. They estimated the unidentified object to be 12.19-metre long and oval in shape. IANS

Equity benchmarks surge to near 7-week high on stimulus hopes

Indian equities remained on the front foot for the second consecutive session on Tuesday, with benchmarks settling at a near seven-week high amid hopes of more stimulus measures to cushion the coronavirus-induced economic shock.

higher at 32,114.52. It hit an intra-day high of 32,199.91 and a low of 31,661.34. Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 98.60 points, or 1.06 per cent, to close at 9,380.90 - its highest closing level since March 13.

IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, rallying over 15 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, HDFC, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank.

broader market, midcap and smallcap indices rose up to 0.80 per cent. Other than hopes of another stimulus by the government, positive cues from the global arena about easing coronavirus-induced curbs also enthused investors in the domestic market.

specific news reactions are happening based on the results and management commentary," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

₹ settles 7 paise higher at 76.18 against US \$

Mumbai: The Indian rupee rose by 7 paise to close at 76.18 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking positive domestic equities and a weak American currency in the overseas market.

By 28 paise. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 76.33. During the session it touched an intra-day high of 76.14 and a low of 76.44.

EASTERN RAILWAY

Abridged Tender Notice No. : EL-ASN-CON-GENL-80-2020-NIT, Dated 27.04.2020. Open tender is invited through E-tendering procedure by Chief Electrical Engineer (Con), Eastern Railway, Kolkata from experienced Electrical Contractors, Partnership firms etc.

'India is a resilient market' | Hyundai India's Tarun Garg is preparing for start-up

KUSHAN MITRA ■ NEW DELHI Tarun Garg is an old automotive hand in the Indian market, having been in the industry for almost three decades.

and as such, few industries could ask for preferential treatment. "We are working with the government through our industry body SIAM (Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers) and making our representations on various issues."

The government is considering relief for the Medium and Small enterprises and most dealers fall in that category. It is also critical that consumer finance continues strong, since 80 percent of car sales continue to be financed."

How the government gives tax relief is up to them, whether it is a cut on excise duties to reduce prices or relief on personal taxes that leave more money in the consumers hand to spend.

take delivery, all of them are looking forward to drive home their new cars. The story is the same with all our new models."

vice front by ensuring that cars returned to customers after service are highly sanitised, "everything from the exteriors to the steering wheel have to meet high standards of cleanliness."

But the two years following that we saw double-digit growth, so when I say India is resilient, that is because India has been resilient in the past as well.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-(REPS) TENDER NOTICE NO. 02 UBL 2020-21 dt. 24.04.2020 The undersigned on behalf of President of India invites tenders for the following works:

Moody's slashes India growth forecast to 0.2% for 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday slashed India's growth forecast to 0.2 per cent for the 2020 calendar year from the earlier projection of 2.5 per cent released in March.

Report: Auto sales may remain muted even after lockdown

PTI ■ MUMBAI Auto sales are likely to remain muted as consumers may not flock to dealerships and even avoid shopping malls and markets due to the fear of coronavirus infection for an extended period post lockdown, a report said on Tuesday.

Axis Bank reports ₹1,388 cr net loss for Q4 on higher provisions

Axis Bank on Tuesday reported a net loss of ₹1,388 crore for the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2019-20 due to higher provisions.

Govt extends deadline to bid for AI by 2 months till June 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI The Government has extended the deadline to bid for Air India by two months till June 30, as the Covid-19 fallout has disrupted economic activity globally.

SRM distributes relief materials

New Delhi: SRM group of Institutions, under the patronage of its Founder Chancellor and Perambalur MP Dr TR Paarivendhar distributed 1,000 packets of relief materials containing rice, wheat, dhal and other groceries worth ₹5 lakh to the needy people of its 8 UBA adopted villages through the Chengalpattu district administration.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Pooja, D/o Manraj, R/o Jhuggi No. F-86, Jailerwala Bagh, Ashok Vihar, Phase-II, Delhi, Age: 18 years, Height: 4'10", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Normal, wearing Red colour T-Shirt, Jeans and Shoes in feet, has been missing/kidnapped from her house since 21.03.2020 at 02:00 PM.

High time a package for traders is announced: CAIT

Reiterating its demand for an economic package for the trading community, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Tuesday said that it is high time for the announcement of relief measures for them.

N Rly civil defence members voluntarily rendering invaluable service to society

New Delhi: At the times of the global Pandemic caused by the spread of the highly contagious Covid-19 virus Northern Railway under the guidance and overall supervision of Rajiv Chaudhry, General Manager, North Central & Northern Railway, is striving in every way to strengthen the efforts being put in by the Government to contain the spread of the virus and to make the life of the people easier in the lock down.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified male namely Ram Vilash S/o Kashi R/o Vegabond ABC Block, New Subzi Mandi, Azadpur, Delhi Age: 50-55 years, Complexion: Sallow, Height : 5'2", Face : Long, Build : Thin, wearing white colour shirt and yellow colour T-shirt, was found unconscious on 09.03.2020.

बिहार सरकार

अधीक्षक का कार्यालय नालन्दा मेडिकल कॉलेज अस्पताल, पटना-7 निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

बिहार सरकार

वित्तीय वर्ष 2020-21 में नालन्दा मेडिकल कॉलेज अस्पताल, पटना में रेडियोलॉजी विभाग के वास्ते विभिन्न साईज के एक्स-रे फिल्म, डी0आर0 एक्स-रे फिल्म, डेबलपर केमिकल आदि की आपूर्ति हेतु वस्तु एवं सेवाकर (GST) अधिनियम 2017 के अन्तर्गत बिहार राज्य में निबंधित सरकारी / गैर सरकारी निर्माता, फर्म या प्राधिकृत आपूर्तिकर्ताओं से निबंधित डाक / स्पीड पोस्ट द्वारा निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

Special Works: 14] Hubballi Division: [Rs. 19,16,954/- Collection of Hydro-Meteorological data during and after Monsoon for the year 2020-21 & 2021-22 at (1) Br. No. 44 @ Km. 583/ 700-900 of Span 10 x 6.10 m + 3 x 9.10m between Gunji-Khanapur and (2) Br.No.184 @ km.716/000-900 of span 14 x 45.72m between Kudachi-Ugar Khurd in Londa-Miraj Section.

SHO : P.S. Mahendra Park, New Delhi Tel. No. : 011-27632501, 27632502

अधीक्षक, नालन्दा मेडिकल कॉलेज अस्पताल, पटना-7 PR. No. 000470 (Health) 2020-21

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com E - TENDER NOTICE



QUOTE OF THE DAY
It is a thousand times better to have common sense without education than to have education without common sense.
— Robert Green Ingersoll

Diploma course

The Indian School of Hospitality is introducing new postgraduate diploma in Service Operations Management, tailor-made for both recent and working graduates who wish to become human resource, marketing, customer service managers in the services sector.

Duration: Six months of on-campus teaching supplemented with online classes and digital learning, followed by five months of industry immersion.

Eligibility: Candidates should have successfully completed their Bachelor's degree of a minimum three or four-year duration with its equivalent (10+2+3 or 10+2+4). The bachelor's or master's degree should be from a university which is recognised by the UGC of India.

The candidate needs to have a minimum of 55 per cent aggregate at graduation level.

Before applying, candidates studying three-year degree programme will have needed to pass all subjects from the first to fourth semester, while applicants who pursued a four-year course should have passed in all subjects from the first to sixth semester.

Certification: Postgraduate Diploma in Service Operations in Management.

How to apply: Log on to <https://ish.nopaperforms.com/>.

Last date to apply: July 2020.

IMS invites applications

The Institute of Management Studies (IMS) offered degree programmes affiliated to CCS University Meerut invites application for different courses for its 2020 batch.

IMS Noida offers undergraduate and post graduate programmes in business management, law, mass communication, and information technology.

How to apply: Applicants seeking admission are required to fill a separate application form for the same. Applicants can collect the application form, from the institute by paying ₹1,000 for UG courses & ₹1,400/ for PGDM programme.

It can also be obtained by post, through online or demand draft facility of ₹1,050/- for UG courses & ₹1,450/- for PGDM in favor of IMS — NOIDA payable at Noida/Delhi.

Admission process: The applications for academic year 2020-21 is open to applicants who have passed or will appear for the qualifying examinations under the higher secondary from any recognised Board of Education such as AISSCE/IB/ICSE, or equivalents.

All eligible candidates will have to undergo Entrance Exam Campus at Noida which comprises of a written test and personal interview.

All qualifying candidates will be required to carry their portfolio.

Admission is based on the marks obtained in qualifying examination and the performance in written test and personal interview.

Last date to apply: July, 2020.

How to apply: Log on to <http://imsnoida.com/> or <http://imsnoida.in>.

Or contact: 18001039383, +91-9911550000/0120-4798800-02.

Strategise smartly

During these testing times, entrepreneurs hold key as their clarity, approach and vision towards understanding the market will define how the economy will emerge from the present crisis, says DR VIVEK BINDRA

RATHER THAN SIGHING WITH RELIEF AND RETURNING TO NORMAL ROUTINE WHEN THE CRISIS SUBSIDES, EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE NOT TO SQUANDER VALUABLE LEARNING WHICH ONE MIGHT HAVE GAINED DURING CRISIS SITUATION

break where many places have been locked down. In such a situation online tutorials, web-based informational courses and apps that offer assistance with just a few taps is the best way to enhance your learning.

Reflect on what you've learnt: Rather than breathing a sigh of relief and returning to a normal routine when the crisis subsides, efforts should be made not to squander a valuable learning which you might have gained during crisis situation. Documentation of responses, events during COVID-19 should be made which can be reviewed later. Rapidly evolving situations expose existing organisational weaknesses, like an inability to make hard decisions or an excessive bias towards consensus which constitute opportunities for improvement.

Prepare now for the next crisis: Coronavirus is not a one-off challenge. There is a high possibility to expect additional phases to the current epi-

dem and additional epidemics in the future. Your research on the effectiveness of organisational responses to dynamic crises indicates that there is one variable which is most predictive of eventual success — preparation and pre-emption. Preparing for the next crisis (or the next phase of the current crisis) now is likely to be much more effective than ad hoc reactive decisions that are taken when the crisis actually hits.

And finally, smart entrepreneurs must also prepare themselves for a changed world. We should expect that the Coronavirus or any pandemic crisis will change the businesses and society in important ways. It is likely to fuel certain areas such as online shopping, e-education and public health investments. Companies need to consider the changes this crisis has made in the way they operate, use that learning and reflect it in their strategic plans.

The writer is Founder & CEO, Bada Business Pvt Ltd

travel policies are clear in terms of where employees can travel to, for what reasons, what authorisations are required and when the policy will be reviewed. Also, adopting flexible working options such as remote work become important. Lay clear guidelines on how they will work and when they will be reviewed. Communicate policies promptly, clearly and in a balanced manner to all employees to get the same effective outcome as it was there during regular office hours.

Self-learning: Learning is a continuous process and shouldn't stop at any level. In fact the most successful people in the world are the ones who make a commitment to never stop learning. Success often means nurturing the love for learning and if you want to be successful always try and learn something new. A strong desire of learning new things can help increase personal and business productivity especially during a situation like the corona virus outbreak.

Online classes to the rescue

Online learning platforms are ensuring that students can continue with their classes from the safety of their homes. Educators and ed-tech solution providers are joining hands to help tide over this crisis, says AAKASH CHAUDHRY



Schools, educational institutes and institutions are closed for regular teaching as a precautionary measure in light of COVID-19 pandemic. Students are at home, as are their parents. Everyone is trying to make the best of this period of lockdown. While parents are trying to balance work-from-home with family time, a challenge that most parents are also facing is that of keeping their school going children meaningfully engaged and ensuring that their studies do not suffer. Technology is playing an important role here.

Online learning platforms are ensuring that students can continue with their classes from the safety of their homes. Educators and Ed Tech solution providers are joining hands to help tide over this crisis. From providing platform access to schools to conduct their own live classes to organising free live classes for students of all grades — all solutions are geared towards ensuring that students can continue their learning.

For most students across India, April is typically the start of the new academic session. Particularly, for students in Class X and XII who will be appearing for their Board Exams in 2021, attending classes online is the only way they can continue to keep up with their syllabus. Online classes are a saviour too for all those students appearing for competitive exams over the next few months.

Some of the highlights of a powerful online learning experience include:

- ◆ Live interactive classes with teachers who are thoroughly trained and experienced
- ◆ Comprehensive study content in the form of videos and animations to explain a concept
- ◆ Powerful assessments in the form of a variety of tests and smart reports
- ◆ All India Test Series (for JEE/NEET aspirants) that help benchmark their performance against other aspirants
- ◆ An interactive 'classroom' experience through the use of chat, in-class quizzes and polls

◆ Forums and dedicated platforms for immediate doubt resolution where students can connect with their teachers

◆ The freedom and flexibility to access these classes across devices - mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop

◆ The option to continue learning at your own pace - recorded lectures, video lessons and more.

Online learning does call for a sense of discipline. For students to be able to muster that, it is important that they are encouraged to balance their online studies with other activities for leisure. While studying, remember to take adequate breaks. Needless to say, a good diet and adequate rest and exercise will go a long way to ensure that students can make the most of their online classes.

Parents too can consider taking it easy with their restrictions related to screen times during this period. Let them watch their favourite series or play a game or two if they wish to. It is indeed a difficult period for all and our children too must be trying hard to cope with this new reality in light of the virus. Thank God for technology and the world wide web!

The writer is Director and CEO, Aakash Educational Services Limited

Boost creativity & productivity

As an entrepreneur, if you choose to work in a shared office space, you can expect certain perks, says PARAS ARORA

Are you an entrepreneur? Does working from home leave you isolated or subject to distractions, in turn impacting your productivity? Or you can't afford traditional private office space; perhaps it is time to dig the concept of coworking.

Even traditionalists have been bidding the office goodbye in favour of a work-from-anywhere lifestyle. Where coworking has become the digital age's answer to 50 years of the cubicle, and the hype is only getting louder.

Coworking spaces are now more than just a hot trend, but due to every facility which they offer, they are likely to be around for many years. So as an entrepreneur, if you choose to work in a shared office space, you can expect to enjoy some of the following perks.

Productivity boosting setting: Coworking spaces have been intricately designed to boost creativity, productivity, and collaboration. Being part of a shared environment allows individuals to collaborate, get exposure to new ideas, different ways of working with a sense of togetherness. The positivity that emanated from those environments is what made coworking such a unique, enriching, and charming experience.



The open space is a juxtaposition of office settings as well as a home environment that provides flexibility to every worker. The presence of strategically based items like plants, design of chairs as well as colours of the walls plays an essential role that helps in extracting great professional results.

Working and more: Coworking spaces are becoming not just a place to work, but also a place to learn and grow. Many shared workspaces conduct different activities like yoga classes, meditation sessions, and social mixers.

Liberty to grow: Coworking spaces are the best choice for all kinds of corporate firms and businesses. The flexibility of plug & play and absence of lockdown period offers liberty for every occupant to enter and exit the booked office as per their demand

and need.

While one needs to think of the future of their company's size in terms of members as they acquire a traditional workspace, such details are quite often unconsidered when booking a coworking space.

Attracting and retaining talent: Finding work-life balance is becoming more and more vital, especially for the ever-progressive millennial generation. The upliftment of coworking spaces is allowing the business owners to have complete ownership of their work schedules, and a greater sense of autonomy over their lives. They offer an option for entrepreneurs to work where they live, which helps to spur creativity, collaboration, and engagement in their passions to create even greater and more sustainable growth.

From the freelance writer to the software engineer, and to the traveling mogul, coworking spaces are rapidly becoming the entrepreneur's trend of the future. So, after given benefits coworking spaces offer, it is no surprise that the shared working ecosystem is growing exponentially with no signs of slowing down anytime soon.

The writer is CEO & Founder, Qdesq

Free bridge course

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Deeksha has initiated a free 21-day online bridge course which helps students who have completed their Class X to transition smoothly into Science streams of PUC. The course focuses on important concepts, problem-solving and formulae in the core subjects of Math, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

The course will have four hour classes for six days a week. Post registration, students will be given a login id and password to the Impartus platform where lectures are taught and uploaded later for access, along with live doubt clarification and homework.

"The PU syllabus is in-depth, and students must have a strong hold over core concepts which are taught in the 9th and 10th grades in order to make the most of their PU years. The Bridge Course has been designed to help students become self-dependent, strengthen their foundation and have more control over their learning. This course has been developed entirely for the online platform and is an opportunity for students and teachers to adjust to the new online teaching paradigm, before the start of the semester," said Dr Sridhar G, founder, Deeksha.

The 21 day online bridge course starts from May 4.

Online live classes by Meritnation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 outbreak and the resultant uncertainty has impacted schools and educational institutes across India. Rising to the occasion, Indian Edtech major Meritnation, a subsidiary of test preparation leader Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), is conducting special free live classes for students during the lockdown helping them continue their studies.

Meritnation has opened up its live classes and entire range of study resources for students of Class VI to Class XII at no cost, until the lockdown is lifted. The premium study resources provided by Meritnation include:

- ◆ Videos, animations explaining concepts
- ◆ Variety of tests and smart reports that give students valuable insights
- ◆ Access to a data bank of over 40 lakh questions answered by experts
- ◆ Supporting text and

downloadable Revision Notes for easy reference

◆ Solutions for NCERT and other textbooks

Meritnation is also conducting Live Classes for students appearing for JEE/NEET, at no charge. Additionally, more details about the Free Live Classes by Meritnation can be viewed here — www.meritnation.com/liveclass.

Pavan Chauhan, Founder and CEO of Meritnation believes that the ability to adapt is important for success. "Students across India are coming online to study in huge numbers. The popularity of our live classes with thousands of students joining in every day clearly shows that students are increasingly getting used to the concept of online learning. Meritnation will continue to offer free live classes on its platform till the lockdown is called off, and will be there to ensure that the students get all the help to study," he says.

Pledge to support

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The FORE School of Management has committed an amount of ₹10 lakh towards the PM-CARES fund. The institute's decision has come in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak that is currently being fought by the nation.

The institute pledged this support in this extraordinary time and severe crisis. This is in addition to the Corporate Social Responsibility and philanthropic activities FORE undertakes regularly.

Through this contribution FORE expresses its solidarity with the nation in its fight against this unprecedented and cataclysmic situation affecting the wellbeing of the people of India. It is good to see that even while widening economic slowdown, the B School is happily lending the helping hand.

The institute is playing a key role in ensuring community welfare through its engaging, creative and resourceful team in assuaging any life-threatening crisis.

The prevalence of digital and social media in our lives has made blended learning more of a necessity than an upcoming trend, says **AMOL ARORA**



'It's time to re-learn the new'

Professors have to completely rethink their courses and their pedagogy to suit the new normal as they can't teach an offline course in an online mode, says **DWARIKA PRASAD UNIYAL**

The world as we knew it has changed forever and we did not even realise it. It changed as if Thanos has snapped his finger in order to restore balance. Very scary thought indeed. But look at the positive side of it. We realised that it is possible to be productive with a Zoom/MS Team/Slack/G-Meet meeting than a physical one. We realised that the countless hours we spent travelling was indeed not needed. We realised that it is possible to teach our students sitting miles away, be effective and engage with them.



Dwarka Prasad Uniyal
Dean, FLAME University

Teachers world over have learnt a new lesson that they are not the all and end all of knowledge. They are facilitators in the learning process of a student and hence it is important for them to realise their limitations. Teaching is not important, making students learn is.

At a time when universities have locked down and dorms are empty; at a time when the whole world is fighting this grim battle with a contagion called COVID-19, higher education is at a point of serious disruption. Universities have not changed themselves since the first one started in Bologna, Italy in 1088.

They had a similar model the world over — a large campus, huge infrastructure, big lecture halls, a large pool of research focused faculty, tenure track system, large endowments for more buildings and labs and a talented student body who was paying through their nose to get expensive degrees.

In all of this, one thing was missing, actual research on how teaching-learning is happening in the classroom. Is it teacher to learner, or is it peer-to-peer or is it the internet in post Google world.

Universities had started their online ventures couple of decades ago but it remained mostly for executive education or short term certificate programmes. It was blasphemous to even think of doing away with large lecture theatres. MOOCs by prestigious universities led the way to slowly challenge this notion, with new private players and experiments in the west and in India becoming popular. However, they still remained niche.

Higher education in the post COVID world is ready for a drastic change in the way it had operated. Increasingly, with the success of mass online teaching of all kinds of courses, students will start

demanding more blended/online classes. Hence cost structure will have to be aligned with new forms of learning.

Universities have to invest huge amount of money in completely revamping their IT infrastructure to facilitate online learning. Both synchronous and asynchronous learning methods have to be adopted by the teachers. Current platforms are not meant for teaching; they are good for conference calls and e-meetings. Hence technology companies have to create a complete different technological platform which will enable mass teaching from remote locations, enable attendance, assignments, group discussions, online proctored examinations and multiple other features which will mimic a real classroom.

Professors have to completely rethink their courses and its pedagogy to suit the new normal as they can't teach an offline course in an online mode without thinking through it. A lot of learning has to be curated and not just converted into online submission.

There would be huge learning curve for faculty as students are more tuned with the reality of connected world. Professors like me have to completely unlearn old ways and re-learn the new.

CREATE NEW VISION

The use of the Internet and other technologies in imparting education has exploded in the recent years. With digitisation making its way into the education sector, blended learning has found its space in the classrooms, and is on its way to become the new norm.

Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is nothing but a union of online and face-to-face instructions for better learning outcomes. It is a combination of classroom based learning and web based content. Online resources, together with in-person instructions create a more personalised learning environment for students. The prevalence of digital and social media in our lives has made blended learning more of a necessity than an upcoming trend. It is a flexible concept that empowers both students and facilitators, and should be adapted in every school.

Blended teaching methodologies offer students a wider perspective and an enhanced learning experience that goes beyond what face-to-face or online modes

can do alone. In this article we will explore what teachers are doing to introduce online components in their teaching practice, and things to keep in mind for ensuring the effectiveness of those strategies for improved student engagement.

There are a few things to be kept in mind while implementing blended learning

There is no standard approach to it: We need to decide on how our blend looks like. What all face-to-face components are substituted with online instructions widely varies depending upon course instructional goals, teacher experience, teaching style, learner characteristics, developmental level, and resources available online.

You need a good chunk of time to switch to hybrid: Redesigning a traditional course into a hybrid one takes time - sometimes up to 6 months. It takes time and commitment to merge the blended learning processes in the existing courses effectively and to achieve the goals of the course with appro-

Blended learning has increased rapidly, driven by evidence of its advantages over either online or classroom teaching. There is enough evidence to suggest the potential of this. All that is required is the adequate professional development of the teachers

appropriate teaching methods.

Just start small and keep it simple: New learning technologies, for example podcasting, internet-based audio and video communication, e-portfolios, web-annotation and social networking tools including blogs, websites and wikis are creating new blending potentials. Out of these many possible learning technologies available, teachers need to choose wisely to come up with their personalised blended course.

Give students time to grasp the hybrid concept: It is important for teachers to communicate their intentions behind the approach at the onset of the academic term.

Students need to be made aware of the technologies in use, their responsibility for personal learning as well as time management requirements.

Some of the key challenges of teaching in a blended format from the faculty perspective are the time commitment, lack of support for course redesign, difficulty in acquiring new teaching

and technology skills, and the risk factors associated with this type of course. Blended learning will not fulfill its promise of improved learning unless teachers are encouraged to re-think and redesign courses that offer students varied and better learning experiences than those offered by either online or classroom teaching alone.

Despite all the above challenges, blended learning has increased rapidly, driven by evidence of its advantages over either online or classroom teaching. There is enough evidence to suggest the enormous potential blended learning has — all that is required is the adequate professional development of the teachers.

Opportunities need to be provided to the teachers to incorporate online learning components into their classrooms. Institutions and teachers together can make the most of the opportunities presented by blended learning.

The writer is Vice-chairman & MD, Shemford Group of Futuristic School

The pharmaceutical industry is one of the most dynamic in the world. There is life-changing research and discovery, speedy advances in technology, nonstop innovation, and an ongoing focus on developing health for all of us which is at the core of the industry.

Medical care is driven by the advancement of pharmaceuticals and the industry is constantly pushing boundaries of medical innovation.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry is estimated to be worth \$4.5 billion, growing at about eight to nine per cent annually. It ranks high amongst the world's big pharma industry, regarding technology, the range and quality of medicines

that are manufactured. India is the largest provider of generic drugs globally and accounts for 60 per cent of all vaccines produced worldwide. The range includes basic headache tablets, sophisticated antibiotics and complex heart medicines; in Indian pharmaceutical industry almost any form of medication is currently being made.

Pharmaceutical engineers tend to be focused on medicinal products. They test, develop research and produce many drugs for us all to use. They learn about the science and application of products and oral drug delivery, the production of medicines and new technologies used in the pharmaceutical and bio-pharmaceutical processes.

MINDIT

However, skills gained in pharmaceutical engineering will also be of direct and practical relevance in related sectors such as food, cosmetics and consumer goods.

Chemical and biotechnology engineers will often work on the development of drugs and medicines, so a background in those fields is perfect to consider becoming a pharmaceutical engineer.

Exact job duties will depend on the industry, individuals can work for a variety of industries including universities, laboratories or global pharmaceutical companies.

The best route into the industry and profession is to study an engineering degree that is relevant such as chemical engineering, bio-chemistry, chemistry or related field.

However, there are other various work based routes like an engineering apprenticeship. Although if you study an MSc in pharmaceutical engineering your entry into the sector will likely be at a higher level.

The pharmaceutical industry is in great need of graduates with extensive knowledge

of drug development, especially when it comes to drugs based on biological molecules, which is a global growth area in the pharmaceutical industry-e.g. in connection with age-related diseases, cancer, complex lifestyle diseases, autoimmune diseases, and certain infectious diseases.

With the current climate of the threat of Coronavirus it could not be a more pressing time to study pharmaceutical engineering. Essentially, your responsibility is to make a pill and scale it up. Governments around the world could be requesting huge volumes of drugs to stop a pandemic.

It is a truly worthwhile profession to develop new approaches, strategies and goods to improve our health and prevent

disease. Nothing is more important than our wellbeing. There are so many opportunities to work in the pharma industry where you can have a direct impact on the lives of people, it is truly a unique field of work.

The issue of saving people's lives makes this sector a lot more significant. When we're talking about medical and pharmaceutical innovation, it's all about designing, creating and manufacturing various medical products that seek to improve millions of people's lives across the world.

The writer is Professor Agba Saliman, Course Director MSc Pharmaceutical Engineering, University of Sheffield, UK



postgraduatetaught/ or contact hass-pg-enquiries@strath.ac.uk
Application deadline:
May 31, 2020

To recognise academic achievement, **University of Strathclyde Dean's International Excellence Award offers international students a merit based scholarship** towards the first year of tuition fees of a full-time Masters, EDD Education or one year MRes programme in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Number of scholarships: 50
Value: Up to £4,000
Subject: Education, English, History, Law, Modern languages, Physical activity for health, Politics, Psychology, Social work and social policy, Speech and language therapy, Journalism, Creative writing
Eligibility: Candidates must be available to commence their academic studies in the UK by the start of the academic year in September/October 2020.

Have an offer of study for a full time, postgraduate, Humanities and Social Sciences programme at the university.

For more information: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/scholarships/humanitiesandsocialsciences/deansinternationalexcellenceaward/>

Internshala has announced free access to trainings, its e-learning platform, for academically bright students from the economically weaker sections. The scholarship aims to encourage the student community to continue learning and help them beat the odds of financial constraints.

All the students currently enrolled in a school or college (including distance education) with a history of good academic performance, i.e., with a score of 75 per cent and above in Classes X and XII and college and whose annual family income is less than ₹2.4 lakh would be eligible for the scholarship.

The students can learn varied skills including programming, data science, business, design, creative writing on Internshala Trainings through its short duration online training programmes.

Students can choose from any one of the 19 online trainings. For more details visit: bit.ly/Internshala-Scholarship
Application deadline:
The last date apply is May 15, 2020.

CONTENT WRITING AT KNIGHT FINTECH RESEARCH

Location: Work From Home
Stipend: ₹7,000-₹12,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317842
Application deadline: May 23, 2020

HUMAN RESOURCES AT TRICOLITE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Location: Gurugram
Stipend: ₹6,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317833
Application deadline: May, 19 2020

WEB DEVELOPMENT AT SILOP SMART AUTOMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Location: Delhi
Stipend: ₹4,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317834
Application deadline: May 29, 2020

LAW/LEGAL AT SARTHI FOUNDATION TRUST

Location: Lucknow, Jaipur, Pune
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹7,500 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317836
Application deadline: May 19, 2020

WEB DESIGN AT BUSIBUD

Location: Chandigarh, Mohali, Panchkula
Stipend: ₹8,000-₹9,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317837
Application deadline: May 23, 2020

TELE SALES AT KALAM ACADEMY

Location: Ranchi
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹9,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317839
Application deadline: May 15, 2020

MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT AT ORETES CONSULTING

Location: Bhubaneswar
Stipend: ₹2,000 per month
Link: internshala.com/i/3317840
Application deadline: June 7, 2020

STUDY ABROAD

'Accept the waitlist of preferred college'

These are uncertain times for those who have applied to the US colleges. ADARSH KHANDELWAL tells you what one can do to clear doubts

Students are presently receiving their much awaited acceptances from the US colleges.

However, with universities sending back students in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, there is uncertainty.

The acceptance decisions are being taken and informed on time by the colleges. It is noteworthy that several students are reporting being placed on the waitlist. This is understandable because colleges want to secure their enrolments, and in the prospect of cancellations by students who are unable to travel, more waitlists are ensured conversion. It is advisable for the students to accept the waitlist at their preferred colleges.

International travel stands frozen presently, and in the advent of extension of these travel restrictions, the colleges are preparing to conduct classes online for the 2020-21 batch till the students can join their colleges.

Based on their individual circumstances, some students may

even defer their admissions by a year to join next year.

Often, international students and their parents travel to the colleges they have gained acceptances from- before finalising their preference. This year such campus visits have been cancelled. Though it is not quite the same, but virtual tours can be a substitute; links for the same are present on the college websites.

Check- <https://campustours.com/> or <https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch/>. Some colleges will facilitate a guided virtual tour for those who sign in at a pre-decided time.

Significantly, many colleges have extended the admission reply date by a month. For those students who intended to take the AP exams in May for college credits, it would be a relief to know that the exams may not be cancelled and students may be permitted to take the exams online. This needs to be monitored for any changes. Conventionally, the deadline for students to assent to their offer of acceptance to a college is May 1. This deadline has been extended to June 1 by most colleges.

The writer is co-founder, Collegify



IN BRIEF

WORKFORCE RECOVERY INITIATIVE FOR GOVTS

The Coursera, has announced the Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative to help Governments worldwide provide unemployed workers with free access to 3,800 online courses. The aim is to help impacted workers develop the knowledge and skills to become re-employed. National, State and local Governments can sign up until September 30, 2020, and learners enrolled by then will have until the end of the year to complete the courses.

The Governments of Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Malaysia, Panama, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan as well as the U.S. states of Illinois, Arizona, and

Oklahoma, will be the first to make the initiative available.

As businesses across sectors lay off workers due to an abrupt economic slowdown, the world faces the biggest unemployment crisis in the modern era. The pandemic has affected the livelihoods of 2.7 billion workers globally, with millions at risk in India.

Through the initiative, Governments will be able to provide unemployed workers, many of whom lack financial resources, with job-relevant online learning. The initiative also includes professional certificates designed specifically to train people for high-demand jobs.

DOUBT-SOLVING BECOMES MUCH EASIER

To make learning easy, Instasolv has launched an app. The main objective is to provide quick solutions to every student's academic doubts. Students of Classes VI to XII can find answers to their questions in subjects like Maths, Science, Social Science, English, etc.

A student just has to post the question on the app, and they will get a detailed solution of the same within seconds. The App also aims to help IIT JEE and NEET aspirants in the same way by providing step-by-step solutions to

their academic doubts. The highlights of the App are the small amount of time it takes to provide correct solutions to the students and the quality of the solutions.

How to download and use app: Downloaded from the Google Play Store. It is free of cost.

Once you open the app, the camera opens up with which you can click the picture of the question. Upload only one question on the app at a time.

Post the question and you will get its solution in seconds.

FREE ONLINE ENGLISH PROGRAMME

The National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) and EnglishBolo have come together and announced free online spoken English programme. As a special offer to registered NEAT users, EnglishBolo offers the first 25 days of English learning free of cost. The 25 days of English learning includes 25 self-learning modules and three live online classes with teachers.

Learners can register themselves on <https://neat.aicte-india.org/>, choose EnglishBolo and select buy now option. After clicking, learner will receive a coupon code through email/SMS. Go to website/mobile app and login using the credentials. Once a learner is on the payment page, select the installment plan and enter the unique code to avail the offer.

MS India comeback not dependent on IPL: Chopra

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the most awaited parts of this year's Indian Premier League (IPL), which currently stands suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak, was the return of Mahendra Singh Dhoni to the cricket field. Dhoni last played in the World Cup 2019 semi-final against New Zealand and since then has been on a sabbatical. It was believed that Dhoni's performance in the IPL would decide if he will be a part of India's T20 squad. But cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra begs to differ. The former India opener said that he believes it's a huge misconception people had that Dhoni's comeback into the Indian team would be based on his performance in the IPL. "It's a huge misconception that Dhoni's comeback to the Indian team was dependent on his performance in the IPL," Chopra said. "If that is how we will view Dhoni as a player and his



Mahendra Singh Dhoni bats during Chennai Super Kings nets session PTI

career and what he has achieved as a player, then I think we are just knocking at the wrong door because it's not right."

Chopra feels that if Dhoni wants to play for the Indian team again and if the team management also wants the same, it will happen.

"See, if the team wants him to play, all that will happen. But if the IPL doesn't take place this year, the T20 World Cup doesn't happen this year, of course he will be a year older and with him out of the cricket for more than 18 months, you can assume that you might not see him play again for India," he pointed.

The former India batsman, however, said that looking at the present scenario, organising the T20 World Cup looks "difficult" in October-November which in turn can open a window for the 13th IPL edition and the tournament can be held even behind closed doors.

"It's still a long shot

because we don't know how the world is going to operate. This Covid-19 pandemic is a developing story. For a tournament like the IPL, you have to ensure players' safety. It's being contemplated to have the IPL behind closed doors and I think it's better to have the tournament with empty stands rather than not having the tournament at all.

"To be honest, the T20 World Cup looks very, very difficult because Australia has already put a travel ban till September. The T20 World Cup is slated to be played in October. So, October-November might just turn out to be the window to open up suddenly because moving the entire world to one place and then playing the tournament is a lot tougher than playing, say the IPL, in one country where most of the players are Indians and only a handful of players have to fly in. From a commentator and a cricket lover's point of view, I would want the IPL to happen," he added.

'Pant as dominant as Sehwaq, Yuvraj'

NEW DELHI: Out-of-favour India cricketer Suresh Raina has jumped into the defense of Rishabh Pant, stating that when the young wicket-keeper-batsman is on song, he could be as dominant as Virender Sehwaq and Yuvraj Singh.

Raina feels Pant can go on to become a top cricketer for the country as he possesses all the natural talent that a cricketer should.

"He is a top cricketer, when he plays well, you become happy and he reminds of Yuvraj and Sehwaq, he is as dominant as them, when he plays the flick, it reminds you of Dravid as well," Raina said during a Live video session with Yuzvendra Chahal.

Before cricket was stopped due to coronavirus, Pant had lost his place in the team in white-ball cricket to KL Rahul. **IANS**



Tendulkar toyed with Warne, says Lee

NEW DELHI: Former Australia pacer Brett Lee believes batting legend Sachin Tendulkar used to play "cat and mouse" with legendary spinner Shane Warne during their playing days.

Speaking on *Star Sports'* show *Cricket Connected*, Lee said that Tendulkar was very comfortable batting against Warne and in fact on his days, the Master Blaster just toyed with the Australian leggie, which was a rare sight.

"He (Sachin) used to advance down the wicket a few times & invited Warne to bowl a fraction too short. Sometimes, he would wait patiently on the back foot and play those beautiful shots," said Lee.

"It was almost like he was playing cat and mouse with Warne and not many batsmen can play cat and mouse with Shane Warne because he's so talented. But on days, Sachin Tendulkar was toying with Warne and that does not happen often," he added.

Tendulkar and Warne had an epic duel whenever they faced each other on the field. Lee further revealed that Warne hated the way Tendulkar batted against him and would express anger after being unable to get the Indian batter out.

"The way Sachin used to read bowlers out of their hand, the different technique he used

to play different balls was pure class.

"There were times when Warne would try and get the trajectory a bit different through the air and sometimes, he would try and get a few balls to drop. Every time he would try the subtle variations, there was only Sachin who would pick them up.

"Warne would bamboozle other batsmen around the world, but Sachin would watch the hand much better than most of the other batsmen.

"Warne hated it, he would come back and say that he tried everything to get Sachin out, but he couldn't," Lee said.

Tendulkar made his debut against Pakistan at Karachi in 1989 as a 16-year-old. The master batsman went on to play 200 Tests for India, scoring 100 centuries across Tests and ODIs. In 463 ODIs, Sachin scored 18,426 runs including 49 tons and in Tests, he has 15,921 runs to his name including 51 centuries.

"I was 22 years when I got my first opportunity to play against the Little Master," Lee, who played 76 Tests, 221 ODIs and 25 T20Is for Australia, said while recalling the first time he played against Tendulkar.

"I nicked him off and I thought I'm done. I didn't care about a Test match since I was so happy to get Sachin Tendulkar out," he added. **PNS**

Laxman starts online sessions with Bengal batters

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former India player VVS Laxman on Tuesday conducted his first online session for batsmen of Ranji Trophy runners-up, Bengal, and to start with, he focussed only on the mental aspect.

During his two separate 45-minute sessions with Abhishek Raman and Kazi Junaid Saifi, Laxman also had in attendance Bengal coach Arun Lal, cricket operations manager Joydeep Mukherjee, and state U-23 coach Sourasish Lahiri.

Bengal opener Raman, who frittered away a bright start last season, was given lessons on how to deal with failures and ways to regain confidence.

"We talked about our last season. What were my mindset through the season. A session with lot to learn from and how to

prepare the mindset during ups and downs of the season," Raman said in a statement issued by the CAB.

Raman started the season with successive hundreds, against Kerala and Andhra, but eventually aggregated 406 runs at 25.37 from 10 outings.

Laxman talked about how to control the mind in order to avoid playing loose shots, importance of batting in the first one hour of play on bowling friendly pitches.

Rookie batsman Kazi, who made his debut and went on to play two matches, was told about how to ensure a seamless transition from age-group to senior cricket.

The CAB will continue with its online classes with focus being on their top-order batsmen, their biggest letdown in an otherwise eventful season when they reached their first Ranji Trophy final in 13 years.



Chris Gayle in action for CPL side Jamaica Tallawahs CPL/Twitter

You are worse than coronavirus: Gayle blasts Sarwan

PTI ■ JAMAICA

Flamboyant West Indies opener Chris Gayle has called his former teammate Ramnaresh Sarwan "worse than coronavirus", accusing the Guyanese of plotting his exit from Caribbean Premier League outfit Jamaica Tallawahs.

The big-hitting Gayle, who has since moved to St Lucia Zouks, blamed Sarwan for an alleged fall-out with Tallawahs franchise, which did not retain him for the 2020 season after playing for them as a marquee player last year.

The opener claimed that Sarwan was behind his ouster as the former

middle-order batsman wanted to take control of the franchise.

"Sarwan, you are worse than the coronavirus right now," Gayle said in a video uploaded on his YouTube channel.

"What transpired with the Tallawahs, you have a big part to play because you and the owner are like this (very close). You were the one at my last birthday party here in Jamaica, giving big speech about how far we have come."

Sarwan is the assistant coach of Jamaica Tallawahs.

Continuing his ballistic attack on his former West Indies teammate,

Gayle went on, "Sarwan, you are a snake. You are so vindictive. You are so immature. You still stabbing people in the back."

"When are you planning to change? Don't even consider seeing the *Universe Boss* and saying 'Yo Chris' because I am telling you this straight up, that's it."

Gayle played his first four CPL seasons with Tallawahs before turning out for St Kitts and Nevis Patriots in the next two seasons respectively.

He returned to Tallawahs the previous season as a marquee player before his alleged fall-out with the franchise.

Premier League's Project Restart gathers pace

AFP ■ LONDON

Tottenham became the latest Premier League club to open their doors to players on Tuesday as part of the "Project Restart" plan to finish the English top-flight season.

The Premier League has been suspended since March 13 but there is growing belief the campaign can be concluded over the summer months.

Resuming matches on June 8 is reportedly among the ideas set to be discussed when the Premier League's key stakeholders meet on Friday.

That would require full training to begin by May 18 and Premier League clubs are starting to work towards that date by giving players the option of using their training grounds.

Tottenham have followed Arsenal, West Ham and Brighton in allowing players to use facilities for individual sessions that conform to social-distancing guidelines.

"No more than one player per pitch will be permitted at any one time to undertake on-pitch exercise, with only a restricted number of the squad coming to the training centre each day," a Tottenham statement said.

"Each player will travel independently and arrive at the facilities already dressed in training wear before returning home immediately after they have concluded their session."

After weeks of lockdown in Britain, ministers believe the return of football would boost morale. Culture secretary Oliver Dowden who is responsible for sport, said he had been in talks with the Premier League "with a view to getting football up and running as soon as possible" but stressed any moves would have to be consistent with public health guidance.

The clubs remain committed to ending the 2019/20 campaign and there are compelling financial and legal reasons to play the remaining 92 games.

BAI ready to host India Open in Dec-Jan

NEW DELHI: Badminton Association of India is ready to host the \$400,000 India Open, an Olympic qualifier, in December this year or January next year, provided the Covid-19 pandemic subsides and the Government gives its approval.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) had last week sent a letter to BAI, asking it for a slot to conduct the BWF World Tour Super 500 tournament, which was suspended last month along with the other Tokyo Games qualifiers due to the virus outbreak.

In reply, BAI has given BWF two slots, saying it is ready to host the event either in December or January, pending government approval, said Ajay K Singhania, General Secretary, BAI.

"...We told them we are ready to conduct the India Open in December or January but it all depends on how this global health crisis comes under control and if we get the Government approval," Singhania said.

"We received the mail (from BWF) last week, asking us if we can host the event in September but gauging the uncertainties around, we have given December as first option and January as the second alternate.

"But it depends on a lot of factors. Right now, international travel is also banned, so let's see."

The India Open Super 500 event was scheduled to be held in New Delhi from March 24 to 29.

Meanwhile, the Badminton World Federation on Tuesday suspended the US Open World Tour Super 300 tournament to be held in June due to the fast-spreading Covid-19 pandemic.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) can confirm the suspension of the YONEX US Open 2020 set to be held 23-28 June in Fullerton, California," the BWF said in a release.

"This decision was made in close consultation and consensus with USA Badminton. **PTI**

Bundesliga could resume in 'mid to late May'

AFP ■ BERLIN

The Bundesliga could return by "the middle or end of May", Germany's sports ministers have said, as the league awaits the go-ahead from Angela Merkel's government to resume the season.

The sports ministers of Germany's 16 states met on Monday and announced in a statement that it is "justifiable" for the league to resume "in empty stadiums" from "the middle or end of May".



Manuel Neuer in training session

"The German Football League must create and enforce the strictest hygienic and medical conditions, and monitor them with appropriate measures," added the statement.

German Chancellor Merkel will meet state leaders in Berlin on Thursday, when it is hoped the Bundesliga will get the green light to resume.

All football in Germany ground to a halt in mid March due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Last week, the German Football League (DFL) announced it is ready to resume from May 9, albeit behind closed doors with tight hygiene measures and players tested regularly.

A return in May would make the Bundesliga the first top league in Europe to resume as Germany cautiously eases lockdown measures.

Key politicians, including health minister Jens Spahn, have backed the league's return plans.

Ligue 1 off until Sept

AFP ■ PARIS

French professional sports leagues including football and rugby cannot restart before September because of coronavirus restrictions, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Tuesday.

Philippe made the announcement as part of a gradual plan to lift the lockdown in France. He said no event where more than 5,000 people gather would be allowed until at least September.

The news is also likely to affect the Tour de France, due to embark from Nice on August 29 and where huge crowds would be expected to

gather at the start and finish lines.

"The 2019-2020 professional sports leagues, notably football, cannot yet restart," Philippe told a televised address to French parliament at the National Assembly.

"I would like to be precise here, no large sports gathering or any gathering of 5,000 people or more, needing the permission of the local police and long prior arrangements, will be allowed before September," Philippe said.

The announcement appears to scupper the plans of French football's top division Ligue 1 to start again in June with players being recalled as of May 11.

India loses hosting rights of 2021 men's World Boxing C'ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday lost the hosting rights of the 2021 men's world boxing c'ship to Serbia after the International Boxing association alleged non-payment of host fee by the national federation, which claimed that AIBA "acted in haste".

The Boxing Federation of India acknowledged the delay but blamed it on "procedural complications" arising out of the AIBA's failure to resolve "issues" with regards to the account in which the money was to be transferred.

The payment of what is estimated to be \$4 million was due to be made on December 2 last year.

"After New Delhi didn't fulfill its obligations to pay host fee as mentioned in the Host City Agreement terms, AIBA has terminated the contract. Therefore, India would have to pay a cancellation penalty of \$500," the AIBA said in a statement.

The elite competition, which would have happened for the first time in the Serbian city of Belgrade.

"Serbia has everything to organize a great event for athletes, coaches, officials, and, of course, for our boxing fans," AIBA Interim President Mohamed Moustahsane stated.

Olympics will be cancelled if pandemic not over: Games chief

AFP ■ TOKYO

The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year, the organising committee's president warned, ruling out further delays.

The comments, in an interview with a Japanese sports daily published on Tuesday, come as medical experts doubted whether the pandemic could be sufficiently contained by next year to hold an event drawing participants and spectators from around the world.

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now sched-



Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee President Yoshiro Mori speaks in teleconference with John Coates, chairman of IOC's Coordination Commission for Tokyo 2020 Olympics

uled to open on July 23, 2021.

But Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori was categorical when asked by the *Nikkan Sports* daily whether the Games could be delayed until 2022 if the pandemic remains a threat next year, replying: "No."

"In that case, it's cancelled," Mori said.

Mori noted the Games had been cancelled previously only during wartime, and compared the battle against coronavirus to "fighting an invisible enemy". If the virus is successfully

contained, "we'll hold the Olympics in peace next summer," he added. "Mankind is betting on it."

Masa Takaya, a Tokyo 2020 spokesman, declined to comment on a possible cancellation of the Games and told reporters that Mori's remarks were based on "the chairman's own thoughts".

But the comments will add to growing questions about the postponement, decided last month after heavy pressure on the organisers and the International Olympic Committee from athletes and sports federations.

On Tuesday, the head of Japan Medical Association warned it would be "exceeding-

ly difficult" to hold the Games next year if a vaccine has not been found.

"I would not say that they should not be held, but it would be exceedingly difficult," Yoshitake Yokokura told reporters.

'VERY PESSIMISTIC'

And last week a Japanese medical expert who has criticised the country's response to the coronavirus warned that he was "very pessimistic" that the postponed Olympics can be held in 2021.

But Tokyo 2020 spokesman Takaya countered that even medical experts said it was too early to make a judgement on such a possibility.



lewisHamilton I miss racing everyday. This is the first time since I was 8 that I haven't started a season. When you live and breath something you love, when it's gone there's definitely a big void. But there's always positives to take from these times. Right now, we all have time in the world to reflect on life, our decisions, our goals, the people we have around us, our careers. Today, we see clearer skies all over the world, less animals being slaughtered for our pleasure simply because our demands are much lower and everyone staying in. Let's not come back the same as we went into this tough time, let's come out of it with better knowledge of our world, changing our personal choices and habits. Let's come out of this as a new us, a new reinvigorated you, fitter, healthier and more focused but above all, kinder, more generous and gracious and caring for our world and the people in it. I hope we all do. #wecandothisth #together #oneworld #wewinandwelosetogether