

OPINION 6 THE INVISIBLE PEOPLE

MONEY 9 STOCK MARKET TUMBLES, SENSEX SETTLES BELOW 28,000

SPORT 12 FIH EXTEND PRO LEAGUE SUSPENSION

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India to go for quicker antibody test

5L kits procured to conduct test in Covid hotspots in urban, rural clusters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Come Saturday and India will introduce a new way of testing that would identify coronavirus infection through detection of antibody in a patient. The rapid antibody tests, also known as serology test, will be carried out first in "hotspot" regions in urban and rural clusters. India has reportedly procured nearly 5 lakh such antibody-based rapid testing kits already.

This is not a confirmatory test but the result will come much quicker and will have to be confirmed by an RTPCR test using throat or nasal swab to detect the presence of genetic material of the coronavirus. In the antibody tests, blood testing is done to trace virus in the human body instead of the traditional testing of nasal



A medic wearing a protective suit as a preventive measure against coronavirus stands outside the building gate of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) hospital in New Delhi on Friday. LNJP is among a few hospitals in Delhi where Covid-19 patients are attended round the clock

throat swab. The outcome will show whether a person had contacted the disease and recovered on his own. The rapid tests will be conducted on symptomatic cases and even those with "milder symptoms". The decision follows concern regarding spread of the disease after the exodus of workers from cities to their villages and the recent spread of the infection through Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi's

Nizamuddin area which the Government has identified as one of the 71 risk hotspots. The Government told the Supreme Court that there is a possibility that 30 per cent of these people are already carrying novel coronavirus infection.

Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal on Friday at a Press briefing said from Saturday antibody rapid tests will be conducted and a guideline in this regard is in the final stage.

Following decision by the empowered group, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had issued an interim advisory on Thursday on the use of the rapid antibody test and has finalised modalities in this regard.

So far, the ICMR has given approval to 12 antibody-based rapid test kits for novel coronavirus detection, which will hit the Indian pharma market soon. Seven of these are from China,

and the other five are from the United States and Singapore. At present, symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel in the last 14 days, symptomatic contacts of positive Covid-19 cases and symptomatic healthcare workers are tested for coronavirus. Apart from this, on March 21, the Government and ICMR revised its strategy to include all hospitalised patients of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) for

testing. Currently, China, South Korea, Japan and the US are manufacturing antibody testing kits to detect Covid-19. An ICMR official said presently there are a total 182 labs, including 52 in private sector that have been approved by the ICMR.

"Widespread antibody testing could also provide key data for efforts to model the course of the pandemic. Current predictions vary so widely, causing some scientists to question the need for severe containment methods such as lockdowns and social distancing. By indicating how much of the population is already immune because of mild infections, antibody data could offer a key to how fast the virus will continue to spread," says write up in the Science magazine.

US embassy staffer in Delhi corona +ve

New Delhi: The US embassy in New Delhi on Friday said one of its employees had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. According to a news report on Friday, the US envoy to India, Kenneth Juster, in an email dated 1 April informed employees of the mission that an American had tested positive and also sought to allay any apprehension of infection spreading by saying that the mission was in the process of "contact tracing" and providing medical support to those who may have been exposed.

Modi: Light lamps to show solidarity in fight against Covid

At 9pm on Sun, the light will show we are together: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After clapping and beating of Aatulsis, now it is time to light up lamps to "show solidarity in the fight against Covid-19". Light candles, diyas and mobile torches at 9 pm this Sunday for nine minutes to energise self and the country to wage a decisive fight against coronavirus, says Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "This Sunday on April 5, we have to challenge coronavirus. I need your nine minutes at 9 pm. Switch off the lights of your house. Light up a candle, lamp or use the mobile torch. This light will show that we are together in this battle," said the Prime Minister in a nationwide address this morning.

He asserted no one must gather on roads. "The only way to break the chain of coronavirus is to maintain social distancing," he said. Modi said amid the nationwide lockdown to fight coronavirus, none should feel alone, the massive collective power of 130 crore people is with everyone. Since the outbreak of coronavirus, Modi has been giving



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation via a video message in New Delhi on Friday

tips to the citizens to cope with the situations emerging from the lockdown, in force since midnight March 25. The PM's message came a day after he held a meeting with the Chief Ministers and asked them to "formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends" on April 14.

Opp slams PM, says expected financial plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Friday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for exhorting people to light candles on Sunday evening, saying they had expected him to announce a second financial package to alleviate the pain and anxieties of the people. Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said he listened to the "Pradhan Showman" where there was nothing about how to ease people's pain, their burdens, their financial anxieties. "While former Finance Minister P Chidambaram advised the PM to listen to the Opposition and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra asked Modi to "get real" and provide a fiscal package to protect poor workers. "Turn out lights and come on balconies," she asked in a tweet.

MARKETS: SENSEX 37,586.95 (474.38) NIFTY 11,882.88 (+179.86) GOLD 43,723.88 (+483.86) SILVER 41,223.86 (+139.09) WEATHER: MAX 30.0 C MIN 12.0 C

Tablighis walk naked before nurses in Gzb hospital, NSA slapped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Six members of the Tablighi Jamaat quarantined at a hospital in Ghaziabad misbehaved with the nurses, making lewd remarks, dropping their pants and walking naked around the wards, provoking the Uttar Pradesh Government to invoke the stringent National Security Act against them. The Chief Medical Officer of MMG Hospital in his letter to the Ghaziabad Police stated, "The members of the Tablighi Jamaat who are kept at the isolation ward of the hospital, have been roaming in their wards naked."

Calling those involved in the indecent behaviour with female members of the nursing staff "enemies of humanity", Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "They will neither accept the law nor follow arrangements. Whatever they did with women health workers is a heinous crime... The NSA is being invoked against them". Yogi directed that no women health worker or police personnel be deployed in service

of Tablighi Jamaat members.

"Women officers and workers should not be deployed to treat and provide security to quarantined Tablighi Jamaat members. Only male health staff and cops will be posted in such wards housing Jamaat members," said a statement issued by the State Government on Friday.

In the complaint, a nurse alleged that the Tablighi members roamed without their trousers in the hospital, sang vulgar songs and made ugly gestures towards female staff.

Tablighi members not cooperating: Docs to Delhi Govt

New Delhi: Doctors from various hospitals in Delhi, where the members of Tablighi Jamaat are admitted, have complained to the Delhi Government that those from the religious organisation undergoing treatment are not cooperating with the medical staff, sources said on Friday.

Cases shoot up to 3,000, toll 70

12 deaths in past 24 hours; 650 positive cases linked to Nizamuddin event of Tablighi Jamaat



A man buys fruits in front of a closed shop during lockdown to prevent the spread of new coronavirus in Hyderabad on Friday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of positive cases in India crossed 3,000-mark on Friday night, reporting major increase in Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Of these cases, nearly 650 are linked to the Nizamuddin event of Tablighi Jamaat. There have been nearly 70 deaths, of which at least 12 have been reported in the past 24 hours. Nearly 9,000 people who attended New Delhi's Tablighi Jamaat congregation between March 10 and 15 have been traced across 14 States in India. While the Ministry of Health confirmed 2,557 cases, the State-wise figure clubbed together placed the number of positive cases to 3,044, registering a massive addition of 500 new cases by 9 pm on Friday. With 67 new cases detected

on Friday, number of coronavirus cases in Maharashtra jumped to 490 and death toll rose to 26. Second place was Tamil Nadu which recorded 102 cases on Friday taking it overall tally to 441, while Delhi stood at the third place with 384 positive cases and Kerala was placed fourth with 295 cases.

Telangana recorded 75 new cases taking the toll to 229 followed by Uttar Pradesh which added 44 new cases to take the total to 172 cases, 34 of which have come from Noida alone. As many as 647 COVID-19 positive cases were found in 14 States in the last two days are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation. Out of the 12 deaths reported in the last 24 hours some are related to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said in a daily media briefing.

The Joint Secretary said in the past few days the cases were coming at a particular level, which showed that lockdown aimed towards social distancing was working effectively. The sudden rise it is due to carelessness by some people, he said in an apparent reference to the Tablighi Jamaat. "We should understand that we are dealing with the infectious disease, he said underlining the importance of ensuring social distancing norms during the lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24, 2020.

Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The Joint Secretary said that in the past few days the cases were coming at a particular level, which showed that lockdown aimed towards social distancing was working effectively. The sudden rise it is due

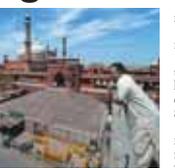
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99 new cases in Delhi, total 384, 3rd highest in country

Delhi Govt launches WhatsApp helpline number: 8800007722

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of coronavirus cases in Delhi has risen to 384 — third highest in India — including 259 who were evacuated from Nizamuddin Markaz, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday. Citing health bulletin report on coronavirus, the CM



Delhi has 384 positive cases, out of which 58 patients have a history of foreign travel while 259 patients are from the Markaz event and 38 cases are of the nature of local transmission from foreign travel.

mission from foreign travel. 91 new positive cases were reported in the last 24 hours. The CM also announced the COVID-19 WhatsApp helpline number to provide credible information at 8800007722.

In Noida, a 55-year-old man and his son tested positive for coronavirus here on Friday, taking the total number of cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar to 50, officials said. "The two new patients are a man (55) and his son (25) from Sector 93B in Noida," a Health official said.

CAPSULE

DIVYANG DONATES ₹2L AWARD TO PM-CARES
Jaipur: In a noble gesture, a 17-year-old differently-abled boy suffering from a fatal disease has donated ₹2 lakh that he had received as prize money for winning two national awards to the PM-CARES fund to assist relief works in the fight against COVID-19.

COVID-19: CENTRE TO GIVE ₹11,092 CRORE TO STATES
New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday approved release of ₹11,092 crore to all States under State Disaster Risk Management Fund for setting up quarantine facilities and arranging facilities for checking the spread of coronavirus. The Home Ministry said the fund has been approved following assurance given by PM Narendra Modi to CMs during his video conference.

3 Dharavi cases raise fear of engulfing Asia's largest slum

TN RAGHUNATH ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports of three persons testing positive for Covid-19 in Mumbai's Dharavi slum, authorities are having sleepless night over a possible explosion of Covid-19 in Asia's largest slum, which is also the most densely populated place in the world. Of the three cases reported from Dharavi, one is a 56-year-old man with no history of international travel — who tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday and passed away. The second one is a 52-year-old sanitation department worker of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The third one is a 35-year-old doctor who practises near the slum. The 56-year-old man who

died on Wednesday night was the first to test positive from the sprawling shanty town in India's financial hub. The incidence of a couple of Covid-19 positive cases in Dharavi should be seen in the light of the fact that it is the largest slum in Mumbai — a largest slum which has been romanticised in Indian films over the years.

A mini-India of sorts where people belonging to different faiths live, Dharavi has 28 temples, 11 mosques, six churches, 50 banks, 60 Government schools, a mobile design museum, several slum tourism outfits, thriving criminal underworld. Dharavi also has a small fort known as the Riwa Fort. Better known as Kala Qilla or Black Fort, it is currently in a dilapidated condition. It was built by the first Governor of Bombay, Gerald Aungier (1669-1677). It was part of the larger Bombay Castle, and marked the northern portion of British-held Bombay in the 17th century. The castle was also used as a watchtower guarding the territory against the Portuguese-held (and later Maratha-held) Salsette Island. At that time, the entire area was a large swamp and primarily inhabited by Koli fishermen who made a living from the waters. As the legend goes, the British built a dam on the Mithi river because of which there was no water to feed the swamp and it dried out. The fishermen and a community of potters moved in here.

60,000 to 70,000 families. The Mithi River slices through a portion of Dharavi into the Mahim Creek and then onto the Arabian Sea. Spread over 240-hectare area, Dharavi has remained an ugly face and a dark underbelly of Mumbai — a largest slum which has been romanticised in Indian films over the years. A mini-India of sorts where people belonging to different faiths live, Dharavi has 28 temples, 11 mosques, six churches, 50 banks, 60 Government schools, a mobile design museum, several slum tourism outfits, thriving criminal underworld. Dharavi also has a small fort known as the Riwa Fort. Better known as Kala Qilla or



Impoverished residents rest by their shanties at Dharavi, Asia's largest slums, during the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in Mumbai on Friday

Power companies contribute to CM relief fund

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Two of Uttarakhand Government's Energy Department public sector undertakings UJVNL and PTCLUC have limited and are contributing to the CM relief fund...

working side by side to fight with the pandemic. UJVNL, PTCLUC and UPCL are not only engaged in the continuous process of generation, transmission and distribution of electricity in the capacity of essential services but are also financially standing with the state...

Uttaranchal University comes to aid of needy

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttaranchal University has also come forward to help the needy people of Dehradun during the ongoing lockdown. Since March 30 food for 500 people is being prepared at the university campus and handed over to the Uttarakhand police for the needy.

University Chancellor Jitendra Joshi, along with his team distributed food packets to 80 families of migrant labourers of Chhattisgarh...

The university chancellor Jitendra Joshi, along with his team distributed food packets to 80 families of migrant labourers of Chhattisgarh, who are staying near Vasant Vihar. Along with this, each family was given 10 kilogrammes of...

Use Cova app to order grocery in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab citizens can now use the State Government's unique COVA App to request for delivery of essential goods and grocery amid the COVID-19 clampdown.

The Government has expanded the App to cover such delivery, thus reaching out more effectively to the people amid complaints that many of the delivery contact numbers were being found unavailable, busy or invalid by many citizens.

Haryana CM announces relief for industrialists and businessmen on power consumption

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday announced relief for industrialists, businessmen, and others using big power connections, under which, if the consumption of 50 kW unit is 50 percent or less, then the fixed charges of last and the present month will be waived off.

Addressing the people of the State here, he showed concern for the continued swing with the State Government contract and also announced that this lockdown period will be considered as 'Zero period' and they will be given a rebate for the same.

Minister said that during this lockdown period, they should make efforts to make their business online and ensure the delivery of all the essential commodities to the doorsteps. He further urged them to shift to digital payment mode, rather than making cash transactions. Khattar assured the people of the State that the State government has made elaborate arrangements to tackle this situation and the dedicated teams of District Administration, Doctors, paramedics, Sanitation workers, NGOs, volunteers, are working 24x7 to ensure the safety and availability of essential commodities to the citizens.

More than 1300 put under home quarantine in Chandigarh

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Amid the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, more than 1300 residents of Chandigarh have been put under home quarantine till Friday evening.

The first positive case of COVID-19 was recorded on March 19 in the city. The number of positive COVID-19 cases stood at 18 in the city till Friday evening while over 1300 people are under home quarantine.

More than 300 residents have been quarantined only in last three days in Sector 26 (Bapu Dham) and in the periphery areas of Manimajra, Mouli Jagran, Maloya, Ram Darbar. The surge in number of those quarantined in the city in the last three days is the outcome of event of Tablighi Jamaat Market Dabli and another religious gathering at Sector 27 here.

Jamaat at Nizamuddin, Delhi. Another resident of Mata Raj Kaur Gurudwara, Manimajra had attended the Jamaat at Mohana (Masji Ramganj), Jajpur, Rajasthan while 15 others residing in premises of Bapu Dham had attended Jamaat at Maharashtra.

As a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the deadly disease, all of them and their primary contacts have been put under home quarantine. This includes more than 150 people in areas including Manimajra, Mouli Jagran, Maloya, Kam Darbar and Bapu Dham.

Starting from this, a large religious gathering was held at a residence here in Sector 27 on March 19, which was attended by Padma Shri awardee, 67-year-old Bhai Nirmal Singh, who had died due to COVID-19 on Thursday. Following this, at least 90 people who attended the religious gathering in Sector 27, 18, 33 and 36 have been put under home quarantine on Thursday and Friday.

who attended religious gathering recently," said a senior officer of UT Administration. He said that in view of Tablighi Jamaat at Delhi and other similar events, which became hotspot of COVID-19 spread in various parts of the country, we have quarantined those who attended such events and people who came in contact with them. Another religious event was held at Sector 27 here which was attended by a COVID-19 patient who died on Thursday.

Considering all this, we have put more than 300 people under home quarantine in the past three days in various parts of the city, he added. He said that border of Faizan district has also been sealed. This was done after a 55-year-old Mohali resident tested positive for COVID-19 died. Notably, a total of 17 city residents, who are COVID-19 positive are under treatment in the hospitals of city.

Admin had decided to track mobile phones of people in home quarantine

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House-to-house search for corona +ve cases in J'Khand

BLOCK-LEVEL TEAMS TO COME UP

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

East Singhbhum district Administration has decided to start house-to-house search to identify Covid-19 positive cases. The administration will form teams at block-level and also in three civic bodies of Jamshedpur, Jugsalai and Mango for house-to-house search within three km radius area for Covid-19 positive cases.

East Singhbhum deputy commissioner Ravi Shankar Shukla informed that separate teams will be formed in Mango, Jamshedpur and Jugsalai and also in remaining 10 blocks of the districts comprising which will help the district surveillance in monitoring those undergoing quarantine at state centres or at homes and who also undertake house-to-house search if there is a positive case.

"We need to keep an eye on those quarantine and also identify fresh suspected cases. There are many people who have returned from abroad and have been quarantined. We want them to follow guidelines," said Shukla. The team will focus on people having travel history. Special attention will be given to the elderly, pregnant women and those with co-morbid conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and low immunity.

Meanwhile, with the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the spread of deadly coronavirus, the police are acting tough against those violating the norms. On Thursday SSP Anoop Bitharai himself took to streets at Sakchi to ensure strict implementation of lockdown. He himself monitored those violating the orders. Along with other senior officials Bitharai was seen sweating out at the streets. "Movement of people has been limited to emergency and essential services to contain the possible spread of the coronavirus. In effect, it means citizens cannot come out of their homes and move around in public places unless they have an emergency to explain. We had been requesting and advising people to stay indoors, with for the first time in years, the entire city is witnessing a lockdown and authorities can prosecute those found violating the order," said an official. City police had deployed a large force of officers at earmarked crossings to check the movement of vehicles. Multiple teams are patrolling the city to ensure people stay indoors. The administration has issued a lockdown notice, barring essential and emergency services. "We are requesting people not to step out of home unless absolutely necessary, otherwise it will not be possible to contain the spread of the contagious virus. Else, be prepared to face the police," an officer said.



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Punjab CM reviews Rabi season arrangements

seeks detailed proposal for door step procurement mechanism

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To check overcrowding during the Rabi season in view of COVID-19 restrictions, Punjab Government is considering the doorstep wheat procurement mechanism.

For the same, the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Friday asked the State Agriculture and Food Departments to work out the ways to procure wheat grain from within the villages that are located more than one to two kilometers from the mandis.

The Chief Minister, reviewing the Rabi harvesting and marketing arrangements through video conferencing with officials of Agriculture and Food Departments, directed them to minimize the exposure of the farmers during this critical procurement period. Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India has conceded Punjab Government's request for release of Rs 22,936 crore against the cash credit limit (CCL) for April 2020.

While an Uber-type system of mobilizing farmers to the distant mandis, on the line, the suggestion made by the Prime Minister, could be considered, I am open to accepting the Chief Secretary's proposal to arrange for doorstep kind of procurement mechanism, where preventive modalities could be worked out to ensure feasibility," said the Chief Minister during the meeting.

While around 50 per cent of the villages in the State are located in close proximity to the mandis, and curfew passes could be issued to the farmers to go to the mandis in a jumble at a time, for the villages in distant areas, the Chief Secretary suggested sending officials to handle the procurement. Arhtiyas, who currently undertake bagging of the grain of farmers, are to be entrusted with the task of handling it in the villages itself, he added.

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The Chief Minister asked the Chief Secretary to submit a detailed proposal so that a final decision in this regard could be taken in the next couple of days. He also directed increase in the number of purchase centres and the total procurement days to ensure that the farmers do not overcrowd the mandis. The minister also emphasized that the procurement should fully comply with COVID-19 preventive measures. He said the arrangements will again be reviewed in the Cabinet meeting scheduled on Saturday.

The state Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Viswajeet Khanna said that incentives for staggered marketing, which the State Government had already signed, will be implemented in a long way in checking crowds at the mandis and purchase centres, as that would encourage farmers to delay bringing in their produce.

A total of 1.8 lakh metric tonnes of wheat is expected to be marketed this year, he added. Combine machines would be allowed to operate in the fields from April 15 onwards.

PAY THROUGH ARHTIYAS THIS SEASON INSTEAD OF DBT

Capt Amarinder also directed his Chief Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar to get the rules amended to provide for payment to farmers through arhtiyas (commission agents), instead of direct bank transfers (DBT), should be put in abeyance in the current circumstances. The system of direct transfer to farmers was to be continued from this season, as pointed out by Food and Civil Supplies secretary KAP Sinha.

ACT AGAINST HOARDERS: CM TO DGP

Taking note of reports of hoarding and shortage of critical supplies, the Chief Minister has set up a committee of senior officers to monitor essential supplies on a day-to-day basis. He directed the DGP Dinkar Gupta to take strict action against those found guilty of hoarding of material.

Chief Secretary Karan Avtar Singh informed the meeting that supply of essentials was being ensured through strength truck movement, with 35-40 per cent of the usual trucks strength still operational. The process would be further streamlined as more and more trucks would be permitted to bring supplies into the state and across districts in the coming days, he added.

SHORTAGE OF BALES TO BE MET THROUGH PP BAGS

The bales would also be kept at a distance, he said, adding that during peak season, 626 bales would be accepted only from farmers carrying tokens issued by the administration or police. As many as 1498 clusters of the migrant labour had been formed in all the districts, in addition to 626 shelters or relief centres. To cope with any labour shortage, MGNREGA workers would also be hired, said the Agriculture secretary.

Updating the Chief Minister about the other logistics being put in place for the season, Khanna said that in case the government had to close down, which had ordered the closure of jute mills till April 6, does not open the same, the shortage of bales in Punjab would be met through PP (Polypropylene) bags, which had already been ordered. Of the five lakh bales needed, 2.5 lakh had been received so far, he added.

Khanna further said that orders had also been placed for tarpaulin and net as most procurement would be stored in the open. The department was also in the process of arranging for the six lakh wooden crates needed, he said, adding that contracts for labour and transportation had already been finalized, and area for stocking had been earmarked already. All arrangements were in place for sanitation and distribution of masks to procurement agency staff and farmers (Kharab arhtiyas), said Khanna, adding that segregation and marking were being done at the mandis for social distance.

Himachal Cabinet reviews COVID-19 situation in State

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The Himachal Cabinet on Friday reviewed the situation of COVID-19 in the State and it was decided that appointments on different posts of medical and paramedical staff would be made as per requirement of officials of Health Department. The meeting held here under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, was apprised about the preparedness done by the Health and Family Welfare Department and its present scenario.

The Cabinet directed to purchase necessary equipments as per need for the protection of officers and officials of Health Department. It also gave its approval for making Shri Lal Bhadur Shastri Government Medical College

Ner Chowk Mandi as dedicated hospital for COVID-19. The Cabinet decided to run the active case finding campaign and gave necessary directions in this regard to the Health Department, besides leading its role for launching this campaign.

To boost industrialization in the State, revive its economy and facilitate the entrepreneurs, the Cabinet decided to provide incentives and concession/reduction in stamp duty as well as registration fee under H.P. Industrial Investment Policy, 2019.

Now the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises having investment up to Rs. 5 crore in equipment in case of specified category of service enterprises would be charged concessional rate of stamp duty and registration fee at 50 percent, 30 percent and 10 percent respectively in category 'A', 'B' and 'C' areas respectively on instrument of conveyance deed or lease deed. Similarly the enterprises having investments above Rs. 10 crore in plant and machinery in case of manufacturing enterprises or having investment above Rs. Five crore in equipment in case of service enterprises would be provided concessional rate of stamp duty and registration fee at the rate of 50 percent, 30 percent and 20 percent of applicable rates in category 'A', 'B' and 'C' areas respectively on instrument of conveyance deed or lease deed. The Cabinet also decided that the Anchor Enterprises set up in an industrial area with the Fixed Capital Investment of more than Rs. 200 crore and employing more than 200 bonafide Himachalis on regu-

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CM CALLS FOR GENEROUS DONATIONS TOWARDS COVID-19 FUND

by the state government to deposit the dues of DA to its employees and pensioners in their General Provident Fund in March 2020.

Thakur appealed to all the employees and pensioners of the state to voluntarily donate towards 'Prime Minister's COVID-19 Fund'.

He said that the amount collected in this Fund would be helpful in tackling the Coronavirus epidemic in the country and the state. FAKE NEWS MONITORING UNIT CONSTITUTED Himachal Government has constituted 'Fake News Monitoring Unit' for checking and curbing the spread of fake news related to Coronavirus and taking appropriate measures in the wake of the orders of the Supreme Court of India.

AN official spokesperson said the 'Fake News Monitoring Unit' would advise and check the circulation of fake, false and incorrect news besides sharing of anonymous data related to Coronavirus in Print, Electronic and Digital/Social Media. The Unit will recommend for corrective measures and appropriate action as per provision of the Law to the concerned Authorities. The Fake News Monitoring Unit would start functioning with immediate effect, said the spokesperson.

The Fake News Monitoring Unit would be chaired by Director Information and Public Relations, Harbans Singh Brar. The members will be S.P. Cyber Crime Sandeep Dhalwal, Joint Director Health Vinod Sharma, Joint Director IT Anil Semwal, Joint Director,

Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Pradeep Kumar and Harish Pathak. Deputy Director I&PR Dharmender Singh, Deputy Director Technical, I&PR U.C. Kandaal and Manager IT, Himachal Pradesh Secretariat Kishore Sharma.

It was decided as per the provision of Information Technology Act, 2000 all Social Media platforms were required to inform their users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that may affect public order and unlawful in any way.

The spokesperson said social media platforms should take immediate action to disable or remove such content hosted on their platforms on priority basis and promote dissemination of authentic information related to coronavirus as far as possible.

Jamaat attendees cause sudden spike in COVID-19 in U'khand

NINE CASES OF THE DISEASE REPORTED IN TWO DAYS; ALL ARE TABLIGHI JAMAAT FOLLOWERS

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Like in other parts of the country, the members of the Tablighi Jamaat who had attended the Jamaat congregations at its headquarters located in Nizamuddin area of Delhi have created a sudden spike in the cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Uttarakhand. On Friday six followers of Jamaat, residents of Dehradun and Brijpur in Udham Singh Nagar district, were found positive for the disease. A day earlier three Jamaat followers were

found suffering from the disease. With their number of COVID-19 patients in Uttarakhand jumped to 16 on Friday. Out of these 16 cases in the State, nine are Jamaat followers. Two patients of the disease (IFS trainees) have recovered and been discharged from hospital.

The Health Ministry on Friday confirmed that 647 cases of COVID-19 in 14 states of the country are linked with the Tablighi Jamaat. In Uttarakhand the authorities have put 296 Jamaat followers under institutional quarantine in different hospitals.

The director general (DG) of state health services, Dr Amita Upreti said that test reports of 98 suspected patients were received by the department on Friday and out of them six were found positive for the disease while 92 were negative for the disease. The department collected samples

243 Jamaatis under quarantine in Haridwar

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

People from Haridwar district who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat during different time periods have created cause for concern for the authorities here.

On Thursday, the arrival of 98 Jamaatis at Gujjar Basti at Gaidikhata under Shyampr police station area stirred the authorities into action. Health Department personnel along with chief medical officer Dr Saroj

of 144 suspected patients on the day for test of COVID-19. On Thursday, 58 samples were collected from Nainital and 33

Naithani and the police reached the village and sealed the entire village, quarantining everyone. There is a complete ban on the movement of anyone in the area. After quarantining them, the Health department has started preparing for proper medical tests among the patients.

Dr Naithani informed that till now 243 Jamaatis have been quarantined in Haridwar district. Of these, 98 were quarantined on Thursday night at quarantine centres in

hotels in Kalyar area while about 100 Jamaatis were quarantined on Friday. District Magistrate C Ravishankar said that total 531 people had attended the Tablighi Jamaat but after March 1, 378 people had returned to Haridwar district of whom 377 have been verified and one is in Haryana. Out of the 377 Jamaatis 243 are under facility quarantine, 129 are under home quarantine and five are in isolation ward.

The department has so far collected samples of 825 suspected patients and out of

GDMC staff complain about Tablighi patients

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The members of the now infamous Tablighi Jamaat hospitalised in the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital here are creating problems for the doctors and other medical staff involved in their treatment. After the Union Government issued an advisory to the states to keep all the members of the Jamaat who had attended the congregations at

Nizamuddin centre into quarantine, large number of members of Jamaat were put into institutional quarantine in Uttarakhand. In the GDMC hospital, 16 members of Jamaat are hospitalised. On Friday the hospital staff complained that the Jamaat followers are complaining about food and making demands. One person was also seen spitting on the floor of the ward.

The deputy superintendent of the GDMC hospital and coordinator of the COVID-19, Dr N S Khatri told The Pioneer that the Jamaat followers created ruckus when the morning breakfast was being given, besides one of them was spitting on the floor. The principal of the GDMC, Dr Ashutosh Sayana said that a formal complaint has been lodged on the issue. On the complaint police personnel visited the ward and warned the trouble makers.

pected patients are in hospital isolation in the state. The authorities have sent 857 people under home and institu-

Cooperate with doctors & other frontline personnel, appeals CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The citizens should fully cooperate with doctors, medical staff, police, sanitation workers and others working on the frontline in efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, said Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat. Addressing the public on Facebook live on Friday, Rawat said that doctors, police and others are working round the clock to serve the public. "We should also be concerned about them because they are facing risks for you and me. The Prime Minister has repeatedly stressed on maintaining social distancing failing which all the efforts will come to naught. By observing social distancing as a cardinal principle, we will be able to prevent COVID-19 and save our state and nation," said Rawat.

State Govt has also started depositing money in accounts of labourers

torches or mobile phone flashlights for nine minutes at 9 PM on April 5 in a show of unity. Amount under the Garib Kalyan package announced by the PM for the poor has started reaching accounts. The state government has also started depositing money in the accounts of labourers. However, it is vital to maintain social distancing in banks too, he stressed. Rawat also appealed economists and members of the intelligentsia to suggest measures for overcoming the economic loss after the lockdown is lifted. He also invited suggestions on how to raise public awareness and plan activities to prevent crowding after the lockdown is lifted.

₹85 crore released from SDRF fund

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

On the directions of the Chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, ₹85 crore has been released from the SDRF fund for efforts to tackle COVID-19. Each district has been provided ₹5 crore for containment of COVID-19 while Medical Education department has been issued ₹20 crore for strengthening of COVID-19 notified hospitals and facilitation of required equipment. Apart from this, ₹20 crore has been released to the Uttarakhand transport corporation for salaries of employees and other expenses.

Four-fold penalty for damaging Govt property: CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Strict action will be taken under the Disaster Management Act 2005 against those opposing the Governmental actions being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, said CM Rawat. If those quarantined go into hiding, they and those providing shelter to them will face strict action. "Information is being received about some persons having attempted to damage Govt property. Such people are warned that damaging Govt property will invite four-fold penalty. People have also been influenced by rumours in some places. All are requested to ignore rumours and believe only certified information provided by the Govt.

Guidelines issued by the Health dept from time to time is being communicated to the public through the media," said Rawat.

OPDs of Pvt hospitals, clinics still closed

WE DON'T HAVE PROTECTIVE GEAR AND N-95 MASKS, COMPLAIN DOCTORS

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The fear of spreading the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) along with lack of protective gear has prevented the private clinics and small hospitals from seeing the patients.

With most of the Government hospitals concentrating on treating the suspected patients and patients of the COVID-19, the State Government had requested the private hospitals to open their Out Patients Departments (OPD).

The Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat had met the representatives of many



private hospitals and office bearers of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and appealed that the OPDs of private hospitals should start functioning. The decision was taken with an objective of ensuring that people don't face problem in getting treatment. However barring big private hospitals none of the hospitals and clinics are treating patients due to which general

them 16 have been so far found positive for COVID-19 and the results of 138 samples are awaited. The health department

CM himself met representatives of many private hospitals and office bearers of IMA

emergency of the hospital open. Opening OPDs in all private hospitals would defeat the actual purpose of the lockdown," he said.

The general secretary of the Uttarakhand Chapter of IMA, Dr DD Chaudhary said that personal protective equipment (PPE) and N-95 masks are not available in market and under such circumstances the small hospitals and clinics cannot take the chance of opening the OPD.

"We are ready to purchase the PPE and N-95 masks if the government provides us.

The N-95 masks are not available in market and where they are, the shopkeepers are demanding prices which are four times high," he said. More than 2400 doctors are the members of the Uttarakhand chapter of IMA. In Dehradun alone there are more than 175 clinics and small hospitals.

MCD completes special sanitisation drive in city

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) completed its last phase of sanitising the city by disinfecting seven wards on Friday.

A special sanitisation drive was commenced by the municipal corporation from April 1 in order to reduce the risk of community infection of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) among the residents of Dehradun. In its first and second phase, 36 and 45 wards were sanitised respectively with more than one lakh litre of disinfectant. In the third phase on Friday, the MCD disinfected seven wards spraying 45,400 litres of one percent hypochlorite solution with the help of three tanks, 40 spray machines and 20 motorised machines.

The task of sanitisation was completed in the morning shift under the appointed nodal officers.



Till now, the MCD has thoroughly sanitised total 88 wards out of 100. According to Dehradun deputy municipal commissioner Rohitash Sharma, the remaining 12 wards had been sanitised just before the commencement of

THR to be home delivered, but Anganwadi workers refuse

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Take Home Ration (THR) will be delivered to the beneficiaries at home under the monitoring of districts' administration, said the director of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Jharna Kamthan. On the other hand, the State president of Anganwadi workers association Rekha Negi opposed this decision of the Government stating it to be risky for Anganwadi workers.

Every month the THR is distributed to several beneficiaries across the State including lactating mothers, children up to 6 years besides pregnant and abandoned women under Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) of ICDS. This month, due to novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Anganwadi workers are instructed to deliver the THR at the doorstep of every

beneficiary instead of distributing it through the respective centres. According to Kamthan, "The State Government has instructed to manage the distribution of THR. While talking to The Pioneer, Dehradun Chief Development Officer (CDO) Nitika Kamthan said, "We have done a tie up with the Self Help Groups (SHGs) who pack and send the THR to Anganwadi centers for making the kits too that include masks, gloves and sanitiser."

These kits will be provided to the Anganwadi workers to use while delivering the ration." She further added that the THR will be delivered from April 5 to 10. However, the state president of Anganwadi workers association Rekha Negi said that workers will not home deliver the THR amid the risk of COVID-19 infection. Talking about the health insurance

approved for Anganwadi workers, she said that they had not received any such information from the government and they will believe it only after it's provided in writing.

"The State Government also promised us about the formation of committee for Anganwadi workers after our two-month strike but I have not even heard about its discussion from the administration.

I do not trust this government anymore. We will distribute THR but only from the centers, not deliver it at homes." However, ICDS director Jharna Kamthan confirmed that among the frontline workers, Anganwadi workers are also being provided insurance cover by the State Government. About the Anganwadi workers refusing to deliver the THR, CDO said that workers cannot reject orders and will have to follow the instructions of the administration.

CS holds meet for coordination with armed forces

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief secretary Utpal Kumar Singh chaired a meeting for coordination between the State Government and, army and paramilitary forces in order to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Assessing the resources available with army institutions, discussions were held on how these can be used in the situation resulting from spread of the virus. Disaster management secretary Amit Negi said that inter-departmental coordination and proper mobilisation of all resources is vital. All agencies should provide details of their estates especially hospitals, quarantine facilities, ambulances, ventilators and trained human resource so that these can be used effectively when required. A nodal officer

should be appointed in each agency, he stressed. National Cadet Corps officers approved the training of NCC cadets for utilisation of their services in crowd control, ensuring observance of home quarantine, facilitation of shelter and in the event of a lockdown. Officials attending the meeting also stressed on identifying retired medical staff with army background and Nehru Yuva Kendra volunteers for utilising their services in efforts to tackle COVID-19.

The director general of police Anil Raturi, director General (Law and Order) Ashok Kumar, USDMA additional CEO Riddhim Agrawal, its executive director Piyosh Rautela along with officers of ITBP, BSF, SDRF and Uttarakhand sub-area were among those present in the meeting.

Guv informs Prez about COVID-19 status in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Governor Baby Rani Maurya attended the video conference presided over by President Ram Nath Kovind regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation on Friday. In the meeting, she informed that the lockdown is being implemented strictly in Uttarakhand. Maurya said that she had appealed to all the religious heads, gurus and saints to spread awareness among the people and motivate people to observe religious rituals and prayers at home. All universities in the state have been instructed to promote online course material during the lockdown. They have also been asked to develop necessary technical and expert assistance in their respective areas. The governor informed that she will soon hold a video conference with all the vice chancellors in



this regard. The State Government is also attending to the farmers with all district magistrates having been given directions to purchase the produce of farmers.

The governor further said that Red Cross Society in the state has been instructed to be active during the novel coronavirus crisis. She asked the state Red Cross unit to present

details of efforts taken till date by the society in the state along with future working plan. Maurya said that any misbehavior with the doctors, health workers and sanitation

workers would not be accepted in the state.

Necessary directions have been given to all the DMs and SPs in this regard. Supply of necessary items, ration, medicine and other essential commodities is being ensured also in the mountainous area of the state. Sanitation and cleanliness campaigns are being organised by municipal bodies. The governor said that she would review the ground situation through the video conferencing with all the district magistrates next week.

She informed that five camps with all facilities have been set up in Pithoragarh for the 957 citizens of Nepal. Till now 10 positive cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the state, among them two persons have been cured completely. People coming from outside have been quarantined.

PCC President questions decision of sudden lockdown

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The line of its national President Sonia Gandhi, the Uttarakhand Congress which hitherto was seen supporting the government in its anti COVID-19 measures raised question on the manner in which the lockdown was enforced. Talking to the media persons at the state headquarters of the Congress party, the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president, Pritam Singh said on Friday that the Congress President Sonia Gandhi is right in accusing the government of imposing a sudden lockdown. He said that the lockdown was imposed without any notice which created huge chaos in the country. Singh opined that at least one day should have been given to the people so that they could reach to their homes. He

Says that during this hour of national calamity, the workers of the Congress party stand shoulder to shoulder with the poor people and the labourers

added that the government should have made necessary preparation before imposing lockdown of 21 days. Objecting to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal switch off the lights on April 5 and lighting Diyas Singh said that the oil used in lighting lamps should be given to the poor. He said that in this hour of national calamity, the workers of the Congress party stand shoulder to shoulder with the poor people and the labourers. He appealed the Congress party workers to provide food and other necessary help to the poor.

The PCC president also chaired over a meeting of the senior party leaders on the day. In the meeting he reviewed the progress of the campaign undertaken by the party to help the poor and needy. Singh also held telephonic conversation with the district magistrate of Dehradun to take stock of the preparation made by the administration. The meeting was attended by the general secretary (organisation) Vijay Saraswati, general secretary Rajendra Shah, Ajay Singh, Mahanagar president Lalchand Sharma, spokesperson Garima Dasuni and others.

All medical devices brought under DCA

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

From April 1, 2020, all medical devices used to treat a patient — be it syringes, needles, cardiac stents, knee implant, digital thermometers, CT scan, MRIs, dialysis machines — have been brought under the ambit of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act (DCA). In simple words, these will be regulated by the Government as drugs for quality control and price monitoring.



The 24 classes of medical devices have been notified/regulated as drugs under Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940 and Drugs & Cosmetics Rules 1945

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), a government regulatory agency, issued a notification recently in this regard.

The NPPA's move follows the Union Health Ministry's notification that brought the medical equipment used on humans as drugs under Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act with effect from April 1, 2020. The Ministry, through a gazette notification, also released the Medical Devices Amendment Rules, 2020, for mandatory registration of medical devices.

Aimed at ensuring that all medical devices meet certain standards of quality and effi-

ciency, the notification will also make medical device companies accountable for quality and safety of their products, noted a senior NPPA official.

Also, the manufacturers cannot raise price as per their whims and fancies. "The objective is to ensure that no manufacturer or importer increases the price of a drug more than ten per cent of MRP during preceding twelve months" she said.

The 24 classes of medical devices have been notified/regulated as drugs under Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940 and Drugs & Cosmetics Rules 1945.

Following this order, all medical devices used to treat a patient - be it syringes, needles, cardiac stents, knee implant,

digital thermometers, CT scan, MRIs, dialysis machines - will be regulated under the DCA. As per the notification, four medical devices, cardiac stents, drug eluting stents, condoms and intra uterine devices (IUD) are scheduled medical devices for which prices have been fixed. These four medical devices are under price control.

The NPPA is monitoring Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) remaining non-scheduled medical devices, which have been regulated as drugs. The objective is to ensure that no manufacturer or importer increases the price of a drug more than ten per cent of MRP during preceding twelve months.

Further, with the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the manufacturer/importer will also be liable to deposit the overcharged amount along with interest thereon from the date of increase in price. In addition to penalty, the official added.

Armed Forces deploy warships, aircraft, helicopters as standby

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up their efforts to fight coronavirus pandemic, the armed forces have deployed six warships and 50 aircraft and helicopters as standby for relief and rescue operations within the country and in neighbouring nations. Moreover, five viral testing laboratories of the Services capable of COVID-19 test are now part of the national grid against the disease.

Giving this update here on Friday, defence ministry officials said the five laboratories include Army Hospital (Research & Referral), Delhi Cantonment, Air Force Command Hospital, Bangalore, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, Command Hospital (Central Command), Lucknow and Command Hospital (Northern Command), Udhampur. In a bid to augment the six more armed forces hospitals are being equipped shortly with the resources to begin COVID-19 testing, they said.

As regards rescue and relief efforts, officials said six warships and as many more helicopters are now on standby to assist neighbouring countries including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan when required. The ships with medical teams and humanitarian assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) bricks onboard are on standby for assistance at Visakhapatnam, Kochi and Mumbai.

Moreover, 28 fixed wing aircraft and 21 helicopters of the Indian Air Force are on standby at various locations across the country for

transporting essential supplies, officials said. Transport fleet of the IAF is being used to assist in transportation of essential supplies, medicines and medical equipment and so far, approximately 60 tonnes of stores have been airlifted to various parts of the country.

An IAF C-130J Super Hercules aircraft has airlifted 6.2 tonnes of medicines to Maldives on Thursday. Earlier, between March 13-21 an Army Medical Corps team consisting of five doctors, two nursing officers and seven paramedics was deployed in Maldives for "capacity building measures and assist in setting up their own testing, treatment and quarantine facilities". An Army medical team is likely to leave for Nepal for the same purpose shortly.

Besides this, the Armed Forces are running six quarantine camps in Jaipur, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Hindon, Manesar and Chennai. These centres have so far catered to 1,70,377 of which 403 have been released so far. Three positive COVID cases — two in Himachal Pradesh and one in Madhya Pradesh — were referred to Safdarjung Hospital in the national capital for further treatment. In addition, 15 other facilities are being kept ready as standby for use, if required.

Designated COVID-19 facilities including High Dependency Units, Intensive Care Unit beds are being prepared in 51 hospitals of the Armed Forces across the country. Some of these facilities are located at Kolkata, Visakhapatnam, Kochi, Dundigal near

CRPF orders 14 days' home quarantine for its personnel living in and around Nizamuddin

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has directed its personnel residing in Nizamuddin or nearby areas to remain in home quarantine for 14 days following the role of the Tableghh Jamaat in spreading the Covid-19 after it held its markaz in the area last month.



The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has directed its personnel residing in Nizamuddin or nearby areas to remain in home quarantine for 14 days following the role of the Tableghh Jamaat in spreading the Covid-19 after it held its markaz in the area last month.

"Keeping in view of the prevailing emergent situation in the country and in the wake of Delhi-Nizamuddin Markaz case, as approved by the competent authority, following orders are hereby issued: Personnel of Directorate General residing in and around Nizamuddin area should be directed to remain 'at home' with immediate effect," reads an internal circular.

It further said, "A close watch over these personnel may be kept by concerned authorities and they may be briefed personally regarding precautions/care from Coronavirus. They may also be directed for self isolation/home quarantine for next 14 days."

If any symptom occurred to any of these personnel, the same may be informed to all

concerned immediately and all precautionary measures be taken, the circular underscored.

Three CRPF Inspectors, one Sub Inspector and two Assistant Sub Inspectors besides five Head Constables and 25 constables have been identified to be living in the Nizamuddin or nearby area. The list of these 36 personnel has been marked as appendix A of the circular and they have been asked to undergo home quarantine/isolation for two weeks.

Another list of 10 personnel of CRPF who were staying at Nizamuddin area and presently on leave at their

home town are also being contacted to be advised on Covid-19 prevention and briefed accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry has extended the deployment of 100 companies (10,000 personnel) of Central paramilitary forces in the national capital till April 15 for maintenance of law and order during the ongoing lockdown period across the country including Delhi.

Thousands of Tableghh Jamaat members who have been assembling at the outfit's markaz (headquarters) for the jamaat have been major carriers of coronavirus.

III has made another journey, this time to Iran and brought back 58 stranded Indians that included 31 women and two children.

The aircraft has also brought 529 samples for COVID-19 investigation.

Centre releases ₹11,092 crore to States for Covid-19 related rehabilitation works

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday released ₹11,092 crore to States for Covid-19 related rehabilitation works after many Chief Ministers raised the issue of immediate release of the money from State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) during their video-conferencing session with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

Earlier in the morning, the Group of Ministers headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and comprising Home Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar carried out a detailed review of the overall healthcare delivery system as well as situation arising out of the 21-day nation-wide lockdown.

Government sources said the Ministers deliberated on various arrangements being made by the different ministries and organisations to deal with increasing cases of coronavirus cases as well as to ensure adequate supplies of medicine and essential commodities during the lockdown. India has recorded over 2,300 positive cases of coronavirus and at least 56

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deaths so far.

The Home Ministry also asked the States to ensure smooth harvesting and sowing operations, saying agricultural activities were exempted from the 21-day lockdown ordered to combat coronavirus. In a communication to all states and UTs, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said the Home Ministry has allowed agricultural operations, keeping in view the harvesting and sowing.

"The Centre has allowed for agricultural operations keeping in view the harvesting and sowing season. Though exception have been allowed for farming operation by farmers and farm workers, procurement of agricultural productions, operation of mandis, movement of harvesting and sowing related machinery," Bhalla said.

Harvesting of rabi (winter) crops such as wheat, mustard, corn and pulses has begun in some places and will pick up in the coming

months. Millions of farmers across the country can work in their farms throughout the nationwide lockdown put in place over the coronavirus pandemic.

States will decide how to implement this order in a safe manner given the pandemic, the officials said.

States told to issue passes to representatives of Insurance companies

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Agriculture Ministry has asked the States to issue passes to representatives of concerned Insurance companies for co-witnessing Crop Cutting Experiments and to relax the norms for conducting field level survey for anti-mouldy disease. The Harvest crop losses due to unseasonal rainfall and hailstorm.

Prez airs concern over incidents of attacks on doctors, health workers and police personnel

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday expressed concern over the incidents of attacks on doctors, health workers and police personnel in some parts of the country and the gathering of migrant workers in Anand Vihar and congregation of Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin in Delhi even as Vice President Venkaiah Naidu called upon the Governors and Union Territories to persuade leaders from different walks to life to come forward and support the most vulnerable sections of society, particularly farmers, as the lockdown coincides with the harvest season in many states.

The President laid emphasis on roping in volunteers of the Indian Red Cross Society, social organisations and private sector to mitigate the plight of the poor. He urged the Governors, Ministers and Administrators to persuade leaders from different walks to life to come forward and support the most vulnerable sections of society, particularly farmers, as the lockdown coincides with the harvest season in many states.

Naidu pointed out that though the Central Government and the State Governments were taking adequate measures to alleviate the plight of the poor, it was the responsibility of the social elites to come forward and support the poor and most vulnerable sections in this crisis.

In the conference there was unanimity that there is no party in the Government agency in fighting the invisible enemy, a Rashtrapati Bhawan communique stated.

nationwide lockdown. Taking note of the problems faced by the homeless, the unemployed and the weaker sections of society during this crisis, Kovind said, "We will have to be extra sensitive towards their needs."

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HRD Ministry writes to UGC, AICTE, NCTE, NIOS, NCERT, KVS enlisting how to stay safe

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Union HRD Ministry on Friday wrote to its higher and secondary education regulators like UGC, AICTE, NCTE, NIOS, NCERT and KVS enlisting how to stay safe during this tough period.

In a letter to these organisations, HRD Secretary Amit Khare informed them about AarogyaSetu app developed by Government of India in public-private partnership to fight COVID-19.

"The app will enable people to assess themselves the

risk for their catching the Corona Virus infection. It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using carried medical supplies, technology algorithms and artificial intelligence.

This app will be helpful to students, faculty/ teachers and their family members" said a statement from the Ministry.

The app can be downloaded from the various links and software platforms like Apple and Androids.

Further, it has also been informed that Ministry of Ayush has developed a protocol for immunisation measures for self-care; it will

be beneficial for our students, faculty members, teachers and their family members.

In the letter, it has also been requested that as requested by Prime Minister in his address on April 3, 2020, students may light a candle, Diya or torch on their mobile for nine minutes at 9:00 pm on Sunday to realise the power of light and to highlight the objective for which the entire nation are fighting together.

"However, no one should assemble in colonies or on road or anywhere outside their houses," cautioned the Ministry.

Left urges Centre to address concerns of migrant labourers, agriculture, food sectors

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

The Left parties on Friday urged the Centre to come up with immediate remedial measures to address the concerns of migrant labour, agriculture and food sectors, urban problems and the economy due to the lockdown.

In a statement, the five Left parties also pointed out that many of the measures announced have not yet materialized and asked the Centre to increase the limit of bor-

rowing capacity of the States.

"The country has entered the second week of the 21-day lockdown to contain the continuing spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Many problems have surfaced in a sharp manner which needs to be resolved urgently. Many of these were anticipated but unfortunately no remedial action was taken before the announcement of the lockdown. There is an urgent need to stop the growth of widespread hunger and malnutrition. The COVID-19 pan-

demc feeds on such conditions of the people.

"The promised ₹5,000 to all Jandhan, BPL and unorganised workers must be transferred immediately. The central government must provide 35kgs per family to all migrant workers and poor, with or without ration cards, from the 7.5 crore of stock of food-grains, all across the country. Proper facilities for housing of the migrant workers and others who have travelled from various parts must be put in place.

'Gangta' can cure coronavirus: Team of Indian Army veterans

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

A team of Indian Army veterans have come together on a platform 'Atulya Ganga' and claimed that there are evidences that 'Gangta' can cure coronavirus.

The team of 100 army veterans have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Shekhawat to give a presentation in this regard and further conduct research on Ganga Jal's irrefragable power amid the grave threat posed by the pandemic.

"Atulya Ganga finds reference that shows Gangta can treat the deadly virus," said the letter.

called Gangta (Bacteria that feeds on the virus), the hallmark of our great civilization on the river. There was a time when those bacteriophages were present in four of the world's main rivers. The remaining three rivers and their civilizations were struck by rapid industrialization and developments. Now Ganga exists as the only one that has this nectar element."

"In various studies, it has been shown that even bacteria from serious diseases such as cholera, dysentery, meningitis and tuberculosis do not thrive in the water of the Ganges. We assume in the current corona

crisis the Gangta of Ganga is capable of defending against this virus," the group said in the letter.

The team has now demanded that the Prime Minister pursue a detailed research to see if the Ganga water can combat a "biological attack" like coronavirus.

Atulya Ganga is a team of ex-military officers who earlier announced a walk along the banks of the Ganges from Gomukh, the origin of the Ganges, to the Bay of Bengal, in what they claim was world's first ever Mundanam Parikrama. The walk is expected to begin in August this year. Organisations like Google and premium education institutes like IIT Delhi are also partners of the Army veterans in the journey.

'CoroFlu', all set to take on deadly Covid-19

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

A unique intranasal vaccine for coronavirus, 'CoroFlu', is all set to take on the deadly Covid-19.

An international collaboration of virologists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the vaccine companies FluGen and Bharat Biotech has begun the manufacturing process of the unique vaccine named 'CoroFlu' against the COVID-19 that has infected over one million people and claimed over 54,000 lives.

Bharat Biotech has till date commercialised 16 vaccines, including a vaccine developed against the H1N1 flu that caused the 2009 pandemic.

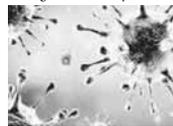
Head of Business Development, Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech, Dr Rakesh Ealla explained that, CoroFlu will be built on the backbone of FluGen's flu vaccine candidate known as

M2SR. Based on an invention by UW-Madison virologists and FluGen co-founders Yoshihiro Kawako and Gabriele Neumann, M2SR is a self-limiting version of the influenza virus that induces an immune response against the flu.

"Kawako's lab will insert gene sequences from SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19, into M2SR so that the new vaccine will also induce immunity against the coronavirus," Dr Ealla said, sharing further details.

He said, "Bharat Biotech will manufacture the vaccine, conduct clinical trials, and prepare to produce almost 300 million doses of vaccine for global distribution. Under the collaboration agreement, FluGen will transfer its existing manufacturing process to Bharat Biotech to enable the company to scale up production and produce the vaccine for clinical trials."

Refinement of the CoroFlu vaccine concept and testing in laboratory animal



models at UW-Madison is expected to take three to six months. Bharat Biotech will then begin production scale-up for safety and efficacy testing in humans. CoroFlu could be in human clinical trials by the fall of 2020.

Four Phase I and Phase II clinical trials involving hundreds of subjects have shown the M2SR flu vaccine to be safe and well tolerated. This safety profile, M2SR's ability to induce a strong immune response, and the ability of influenza viruses to carry sequences of other viruses

make M2SR an attractive option for rapidly developing CoroFlu as a safe and effective SARS-CoV-2 vaccine.

"We are going to modify the genetic code of the coding region for the coronavirus spike protein that the virus uses to latch onto cells and begin infection," said Gabriele Neumann, a senior research scientist at Kawako's lab and co-founder of FluGen. "CoroFlu will also express the influenza virus hemagglutinin protein, which is the major influenza virus antigen, so we should get immune responses to both coronavirus and influenza."

CoroFlu, like M2SR, will be delivered intranasally. This route of administration mimics the natural route of infection by coronavirus and influenza. Several modes of the immune system. Intranasal delivery is more effective at inducing

Validity of CGHS cards extended till April 30

New Delhi: In view of the lockdown, the Union Health Ministry has extended by one month to April 30, 2020, the validity of CGHS cards that expired on March 31, 2020 in respect of CGHS pensioner beneficiaries.

multiple types of immune responses than the intramuscular shots that deliver most flu vaccines. "Ninety per cent of our vaccines are sold in lower middle-income countries with affordable pricing being core to our business model. We will fervently work toward the successful development of an efficacious COVID-19 vaccine," said Dr Ealla.

Tablighi-corona bond gets stronger

Seven more +ve in Agra

Agra: The connection between coronavirus and those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi is getting stronger by the hour...

stat that 42 persons who had attended the Jamaat event have tested positive.

With reports from Agra, the Jamaat toll has gone up to 49 and if sources are to be believed, the number is bound to shoot up since more than 100 samples of this group are under testing.

Villagers refuse to let officials quarantine 20 jamaat followers

Faridabad: Amid a spike in coronavirus positive cases in India after the evacuation of hundreds of people from Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Delhi, residents of a Haryana village forced authorities to not quarantine 20 Jamaat followers from abroad at a nearby college premises...



After the drama went on for three-four hours, the officials decided to shift the 20 Jamaat followers to a temporary quarantine centre set up in an engineering college in Dhauj village.

Efforts to contact Faridabad Police Commissioner KK Rao for comments did not succeed.

Police attacked in Kannauj

Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh): A police team was attacked in Kannauj district of Uttar Pradesh on Friday afternoon when they tried to stop a jam of people offering 'namaz' collectively.

SIX MORE DEAD IN MAHA, TOTAL CASES JUMP TO 490

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In a disturbing development, the coronavirus claimed six more lives in Maharashtra taking the total number of patients to 26 in the State, even as 67 persons tested positive for Covid-19 in various hospitals and laboratories in the State.

a woman from Badlapur, 63-year-old man from Jalgaon, 50-year-old woman from Pune, 65-year-old man from Mumbai and 62-year-old man, also from Mumbai. All these persons had no history of international travel and they are said to have contracted the epidemic through 'contact'.

ed positive for Coronavirus on Friday, five Jawans had tested positive on Thursday...

Telangana CM backs PM's call to light lamps

HYDRABAD

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu on Friday urged the people in the State to light lamps on April 5 at 9 pm, as desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Kerala CM welcomes PM's call to light lamps

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to light lamps on Sunday at 9 pm.

Yogi prepares for post lockdown scenario in UP

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday held a meeting with top officials to discuss ways and means to meet the challenges after the lockdown is lifted.

Addressing a meeting of Team 11, set up to combat the coronavirus pandemic in the state, Yogi said the doorstep delivery of food will have to continue even after the lockdown is lifted since people may not return to work immediately.

On phone. He said that the state government has decided to set up a Corona Care Fund of Rs 1,000 crores which will be used to purchase ventilators, personal protective equipment and other medical equipment.

Lamps may lead us to knowledge: Scholars

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

The nine minute long video message to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi aired at 9 am on Friday has evoked mixed reactions ranging from taunts to appreciation.

virulent critics of the PM took to the social media. The party cadre went to town making a mockery of the PM's return to Ram Bharese. In a message in Twitter, the controversial MP from Thiruvananthapuram said "This is no accident, the PM spoke on Ram Navami at 9 am for 9 minutes, asked us to light diyas and candles on April 5 at 9 pm for 9 minutes. He is invoking all the auspicious elements of the Hinduism with number 9. Back to Ram Bharese! #COVID19 must be more serious than we thought!"

may which means lead us from darkness to light. It is a prayer to lead us from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge," said the scholar.

He said this is the way to make people understand the seriousness of a complex medical situation and the PM has done it in his own style. "Don't judge at this better than the Chumbana Samaram (agitation of kiss) and human wall organised by political parties under the pretext of ushering in renaissance," asked Panikkar.

PM Gopala Menon, Thiruvananthapuram, and his son Prof MG Gireeshan a physicist, preferred to ignore the April 5 lighting of lamps through the eyes of astrology. "Sunday begins with the star Makam which lasts upto 3pm. The coming of the light of Makam and Sunday begins with two Yogams (phases), Mithruva Yogam and Visha Yogam (Death and Poison). The Makam phase gives way to Visha Mukthi Yogam (phase free of poison) after 3pm and the choice of lighting of lamps on Sunday is an apt move. It is after the period of Visha Mukthi Yogam, the lamps are being lighted. As per Indian philosophy, God is in the form of Virat and hence the offering of prayers in the form of lamp is similar to praying to the almighty to light up the world from darkness," said Menon.

Taj Group salutes medical group

Mumbai

The Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL), which runs the Taj group of hotels, has thrown open its doors for the medical staff combating the Covid-19 pandemic, an official spokesperson said here on Friday.

of Jammu Medical college hospital and 54 others in different parts of the state. According to the hospital authorities, "all the patients are responding to the treatment and are stable. Currently, no patient is on the ventilator support, the hospital authorities confirmed."

CORONA: 4 NEW CASES, 9 MORE CURED IN BENGAL

PM's candlelight appeal: Didi leaves it on people

SAUGAR SENGUPTA

Even as her senior minister-charge, the Chief Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to switch off electric lights and light up candles on April 5 to express solidarity for the nation's fight against corona virus Bengal Chief Minister Manana Banerjee refused to get drawn into politics saying she was nobody to issue advisories on the Prime Minister's appeal and said it was upon the people to consider as to what they would do on Sunday.

ing but taking all the credits." She alleged that "these people are saying that the Centre is responsible for the problem there is in this hour of crisis... In fact they have not even given a mask. It is the State Government which is bearing the huge costs of providing free ration to the people".

Attacking the Prime Minister for "playing politics and seeking to extract political mileage in this hour of crisis" former CPI(M) MP and State Minister in the People's Party Leena Sujar Chakrabarty said "last time he make people beat thalis. This time he is telling them to light up candles and tal lamp... What additional purpose will it serve besides uniting the saffron people or identifying another set of faces of suffering following in the entire country."

Manhunt on to track down 1,000 identified contacts of +ve cases in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI

Running out of time, the J&K Government has now launched a massive manhunt to track down over 1,000 identified contact people of coronavirus positive cases.

persons of majority of coronavirus positive cases. Majority of those, who are still at large, are believed to have come in contact with the positive cases and pose a grave risk of spreading the virus among large sections of people in their neighbourhood.

coronavirus to further prevent spread of the pandemic in Jammu and Kashmir. He said, we have identified 34 Red zones, 24 in Kashmir valley and 10 in Jammu division, where the entire government machinery is focusing all its energies to locate each one of the identified 2000 contact persons and put them to test.

them had come in contact with the already tested positive cases. One in March, which could have raised the water level."

of Jammu Medical college hospital and 54 others in different parts of the state. According to the hospital authorities, "all the patients are responding to the treatment and are stable. Currently, no patient is on the ventilator support, the hospital authorities confirmed."

For a change, Yamuna flows cleaner & full

Agra

After a long while, river Yamuna is flowing full and cleaner than it has been for a long time. "When US president Donald Trump visited Agra on February 24, water was released by upstream barrages, but it did not reach Agra. Trump, however, did not go to the rear side of the Taj Mahal, otherwise the polluted and dry Yamuna would have disturbed him. But for the last 25 days or so, we are enjoying a rare view of Yamuna at the Etmauddaula View Point park. The river bed is under water and birds have returned," said River Connect Campaign member Jugal Kishore Shrivastya who conducts a daily arti of Yamuna to mobilise

locals to keep the river clean. River activist Devavish Bhattacharya said, "Perhaps

due to the lockdown due to COVID-19, industries in Haryana and Delhi are not

drawing water from the river. We have had several spells of lockdown, the Taj Mahal, could have raised the water level."

has come alive, offering a breathtaking view. Due to the lockdown, the Taj Mahal, for the first time in its history, is relaxed and breathing freely, deprived of the daily human load, as all monuments have been shut down in Agra for visitors. The Archaeological Survey of India is utilising the opportunity to clean up and carry out repairs long overdue.

ing but taking all the credits." She alleged that "these people are saying that the Centre is responsible for the problem there is in this hour of crisis... In fact they have not even given a mask. It is the State Government which is bearing the huge costs of providing free ration to the people".

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Meanwhile, Bengal's total number of active corona related cases went up to 38 with 9 people getting cured and released on Friday.

The food challenge

While we have enough stocks, the supply chain breakdowns and curfew protocols to choke the virus point to a crisis



The country may have sufficient foodgrain stocks in Central and State warehouses as reserves to tide out an emergency but the breakage of supply chain management due to the lockdown has also meant that they are not reaching beneficiaries. The Government claims that we have nearly 10 times the emergency reserve needed for this time of the year and the fair price shops can go on an overdrive to meet our nutritional requirements. But these are just dry rations, such as rice, wheat, sugar and pulses. Farm supplies have been

badly hit because of sudden closure. Even if there are vegetables waiting to be loaded, varying curfew protocols by different States and the still patchy system of curfew passes for truckers mean that there is no movement. Police harassment has only complicated transit. States like Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Delhi, Maharashtra and West Bengal have issued curfew passes promptly and set up police task forces to facilitate smooth movement. But virus hotspot States like Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan have totally closed their borders and even sealed their drop point depots. Although the Government is contemplating a staggered release from lockdown, mainly to ensure the April harvest from the fields, the exodus of daily labourers has meant that there are far fewer hands available to manage field work. There are also reports of truck drivers joining the migrants. The second biggest bottleneck is of manufactured, processed and packaged food items. With consumers hoarding anything with a shelf life, the sudden gush of demand, the flight of labour at units rolling them out and the supply chain gaps have meant that our breakfast platters are beginning to look different. Fast-moving consumer good (FMCG) companies are already registering an upswing in demand from urban centres, indicating the hoarding spiral. The retail network has completely collapsed, its earnings now down to 15 per cent. A longer lockdown would mean that sector players would have to shut down and let go their staff by June. It is, of course, the neighbourhood stores and grocers, who are back in business, having just enough capacity to serve their ecosystem and, therefore, able to smoothen some shocks given their scale. The online delivery platforms have already collapsed with the supply chain breakdown, running out of stocks, delaying deliveries and some of them not signing up new customers at all. The less said about the poultry sector the better; eggs are still available though chicken and meat are mostly off the shelves because of the zoonotic virus. Even dairy products could be affected as a report said that the Aarey dairy has just enough fodder for the cattle to last a week or so.

In the end, what is needed is enabling bulk supplies and that, too, at a time of isolation protocols that demand there is no over-crowding at procurement sites. Most agricultural produce market committees, where every business sources supplies, have been shut for a while. Some of them have negotiated limited trading hours to minimise numbers. Respecting protocol and enforcing it with precision is a big challenge as is the enormous time lag. Besides, it is the high heat of summer and perishables, without fast movement, run the real risk of being wasted. At least for a month or so, a risk-free procurement will have to be evolved in consultation with Central and State representatives. If the situation prolongs, then the Government may have to look for other alternatives. For example, the Food Corporation of India has both operational and food security stocks. At a stretch, the Centre can offer them to States and then perhaps to select retail chains should the market so demand. Wheat and rice godowns are already overflowing but the holding capacity of fair price shops will have to be ramped up. Of course, we will also have to deal with the possibility of reduced food imports with what export restrictions in place. And while we might be able to ensure emergency food needs of vulnerable populations, pricing interventions just might be required. As for civil society, it can be incentivised to donate to food banks, the amount exempted from taxes, for the vast numbers of homeless and jobless. Saving lives is not just about treating the infected but nurturing a whole nation back to life from a calamitous disruption that had neither been foreseen nor imagined. Call it social welfare but innovation and enterprise can only come when a nation is well-fed.

Business unusual

Whenever we emerge from the viral attack on the global economic system, business will never be the same again



Where will businesses stand in a post-Coronavirus world? Even as countries make plans to extend their lockdowns, both Government officials and citizens have no clue when the world will return to normalcy. There are those who are looking into the aspects as to where things may stand once everything settles down. However, one thing is certain: Things will not be the same as they were before the Wuhan contagion swept the world. Of course, there will be a lot of families and individuals who will be devastated by the fallout. Every passing day, it appears more and more likely that several businesses, which were swimming fine until the outbreak of the virus, will now sink into the depths of bankruptcy, with or without Government intervention. And those that survive will be fundamentally different. One of those differences will be driven from the "work from home" culture that has begun in many industries.

Work from home is a luxury that not every sector can avail. Even in the media industry, while online portals may have been able to spin their stories from a dark basement somewhere, that isn't a change for most such news parasites. Newspapers can survive on limited staff in offices but the printing presses need to be manned. Television channels need to have fully-crewed output desks and editors even if the anchors can be isolated. Nevertheless, working from home is a reality in many sectors and this will lead to some interesting changes in demand for commercial real estate and transportation requirements. Maybe there will be less demand for shared cabs. More companies might invest in "hot desking", having shared stations for employees where anyone can log in and work. Collaboration applications such as Zoom, which has become extremely popular, and Microsoft's Teams will begin to rule the roost. And as tele-commuting becomes standard, will companies use the opportunity to cut costs as employees spend more time at home? That is extremely likely, salaries are certain to face a reality check. But this may not be the case across the world and in every sector. Whatever happens, it might be too soon to make a prediction of how things will play out in the coming months. There will be some interesting new developments and some puzzling trends that will play out. It is clear that this generation, which has become accustomed to social distancing and wearing masks, will be traumatised for years to come and handshakes might go extinct. But what will business as usual look like in 2021? It is too soon to say but rest assured it will not be the same as it was on February 1, 2020.

The invisible people

The long march undertaken by migrant workers has reminded India of its poor but how long will this awareness last?



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

One can argue that this is not the time to discuss the view, however credible, that the 21-day lockdown has been imposed without adequate thought to its consequences, particularly on the poor. The emphasis now, the argument may continue, should be exclusively on repulsing the COVID-19 invasion which has brought India to a standstill and threatens to play havoc with its life. There is a point in this, as there is equally a point in the contention that the subject needs to be discussed threadbare both from the viewpoint of ensuring accountability on the part of the authorities and the need to avoid in future the mistakes that have been made.

While leaving such a discussion for a post-Corona time — which, one hopes, is not far away — one needs to focus on a related question: How is it that few could anticipate the post-lockdown trudge of hundreds and thousands of migrant daily wage workers, often with their entire families including women and children in tow, to their village homes hundreds of miles away? Anyone familiar with the Indian tradition of family and community support, which survives in a great measure in rural areas despite erosion in urban societies, should have known that the first instinct of starving labourers, without work and shelter and facing uncertain futures, would be to go back to their village homes, with which most of them retain close ties.

The reason is simple: The poor have vanished as an active presence in the consciousness of those who now set the agenda for discourse in India. This was not always so. Mahatma Gandhi's abiding concern for the poor and his making of the well-being the touchstone for all action has been reflected in his iconic observation, "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him." He also stated, "Poverty is the worst form of violence." Equally well-known is his theory of trusteeship, the essence of which he expressed succinctly when he said, "Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth — either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry — I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community."

The presence of a socialist influence in the Indian National Congress as early as the 1930s was reflected in the formation of the All-India Congress Socialist Party in 1934 under the chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva with Jayaprakash Narayan as secretary. The Congress had a number of important socialist leaders like Sampurnanand, Achyut Patwardhan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Minoo Masani. After



Independence, the socialists left the Congress and established the Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party and the Samyukta Socialist Party respectively and their leaders like SM Joshi, NG Goray, Madhu Limaye and George Fernandes played important roles in the country's politics. Anger over exploitation and the suffering of the poor was, perhaps, the most powerful driving force behind Karl Marx's intellectual and political excursions and the programmes of the Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the various Naxalite groups.

For a long time after Independence, the Congress remained oriented towards a moderate, albeit nebulous, form of the ideology. After Parliament had accepted in 1954 the establishment of a "socialist pattern of society" as the aim of economic development, the 47th session of the Congress, adopted, in January, 1955, a resolution calling for the "establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production are under social ownership or control" and there is "equitable distribution of the national wealth." Later, Indira Gandhi, who nationalised banks, insurance, coal mines and abolished the privy purses of the princes, rode to a massive victory in the 1971 mid-term elec-

“
THE POOR AND THE ALLEVIATION OF THEIR POVERTY NO LONGER OCCUPY THE CENTRESTAGE OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN INDIA. THEY HAVE NOW BEEN TAKEN OVER BY ISSUES LIKE THE TERRORIST THREAT TO THE COUNTRY, THE RAM TEMPLE, CAA, NPR AND NRC. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS, OF COURSE, THE ADVENT OF HINDUTVA POLITICS AND ITS CONCOMITANTS
 ”

“... on the slogan of *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty).”

The shift towards a change in the party's political and economic trajectory, however, became manifest from the early 1980s. The launch of the "economic reforms" in 1991 saw, in effect, the *defenestration* of all talk of socialism. The emphasis was now on the market economy and unleashing the animal instinct of Indian entrepreneurs. As in most cases, economic change had its cultural and social consequences. Poverty has ceased to be of concern to the middle class, which enjoys unprecedented purchasing power and which sets the agenda for discourse in the country, constituting over 30 per cent of the population.

The instinctive tendency to look away has been reinforced in its case by the dynamics of a market economy where the driving force is sales, the volume of which is critically linked to revenue and the quantum of profit. Its cutting edge advertising seeks to boost sales by projecting products as not only covetable in themselves but their possession as a measure of a person's worth. With advertising dominating media, particularly television, the latter shaping people's mindsets as never before, conspicuous consumption as a means of showing off, has assumed an unprecedented

universality. It is almost a new religion that worships wealth and possession and not the character of a person. There is no time for the poor who are reduced to invisibility and are often looked down with contempt as failures.

There have been other changes. The poor and the alleviation of their poverty no longer occupy the centrestage of the political discourse in India. They have been taken over by issues like the terrorist threat to the country, the Ram temple, the Citizenship Amendment Act, the National Population Register and the National Register of Citizens. One reason for this is, of course, the advent of *Hindutva* politics and its concomitants. Another is the Congress's new orientation. It does refer to the poor from time to time but that is mostly en passant. Even otherwise, the decline in its political fortunes gives a cry-in-the-wilderness dimension to its pronouncements. Equally a factor has been the decline in Marxism's political appeal given its abandonment in Russia and China and the decline of Left politics in general in India. The result: Loss of visibility by poor. The long march and its horrors have made them visible again. But for how long?

(The writer is Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*, and an author)

SOUNDBITE

Dear @narendramodi, we will listen to you and light diyas on April 6. But in return, please listen to us and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists.

Congress leader
—P Chidambaram



Don't let this wretched Corona get the better of us. No, no, you are not getting what I am trying to say. Please lead Corona in reverse, it becomes *na ro ko*.

Megastar
—Amिताभ Bachchan



Listened to the Pradhan Showman. Nothing about how to ease people's pain, their burdens, their financial anxieties. Just a feel-good moment curated by India's Photo-Op PM!

Congress leader
—Shashi Tharoor



The military dictum is prepare or perish but in these times of Covid, we have refined it to ensure 100 per cent lockdown and social distancing.

Chief of Defence Staff
—Gen Bipin Rawat



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Relief in times of crisis

Sir — It was pleasing to know that the Punjab and Chandigarh High Court has allowed farmers to work in the field for harvesting crops. The court further said that industries and factories can function as long as workers are provided with accommodation, food and medication. In addition, markets will remain open from 10 am to 6 pm. These rulings bring a big relief for farmers, daily workers, poor and needy people as they can earn their livelihood for survival. It will also boost the declining economy of the State. However, it is also a bit challenging for the State to maintain social distancing among the people in such situations. Thus, the Government must ensure the safety of people at work.

Strengthen ties

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is quite active on social media, posted a video link on Twitter and claimed that he practises the Yoga Nidra *asana* once

Learn from Kerala's preparedness

His refers to the article, "Hope in Kerala model," (April 1) by Amit Sen Gupta. Kerala's current efforts to keep the deadly Coronavirus at bay need to be mapped with the struggle it went through for two consecutive years. Normally, the southwest monsoon ebbs to facilitate harvest and welcome the festival of Onam when the month of August progresses. But in 2018, torrential rains poured the State for days and all its 44 watersheds in spate. Kerala turned into a large green pool of water. The double curvature Idukki Dam, built across the River Periyar with a reservoir capacity of 2,403 feet, was filled to the brim. The State had to open the spillways and that raised the water level in the overflowing river. Floods devastated the State. In 2019, too, heavy rains caused flooding to wreak havoc. In 2018, a few months before the worst deluge, the dreaded Nipah virus (NIV) that descended on Kozhikode from fruit bats, threatened to send life haywire.

The ruling Central Government compounded the State's misery by rationing its financial support. Certain quarters worked overtime to discourage personal contributions. A noisy pretender in a national television channel called the people of the State "shameless" during a debate on the UAE Government's offer to provide finan-



cial aid. Literally, Kerala waged a battle for survival. Proferring that "Kerala is a beacon to the world," Vijay Prashad and Subin Dennis, writing for "GlobeTrotter," a project of the Independent Media Institute, concluded, "The fight against COVID-19 is not over. Vigilance is necessary. Vaccines need to be tested and authorised; better cures need to be studied and shared. But even as one is vigilant, the lessons from places like Kerala should be absorbed." With lessons learnt from its struggles, Kerala is now positioned to fight COVID-19 from the front.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

Address food problems

Sir — Besides bringing the entire nation into lockdown, the spread of Coronavirus has created a problem of plenty, which needs to be tackled. With States undertaking large-scale distribution of food grains, the onus is on the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to ensure sufficient supply to meet the enhanced requirement of all States. Thankfully, India has sufficient foodgrain stocks to feed its poor for at least a year-and-a-half. But it is now up to the respective States to ensure no genuine beneficiary is left out. Foodgrain wastage and misappropriation must be avoided. Staples must reach the needy without any delay or leakage.

Side by side, the FCI must utilise this opportunity to take control of the many empty warehouses which need to be cleaned. With the harvesting season approaching, fresh stocks would soon arrive and would have to be stored.

Ashok Pal
New Delhi
Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The social media pandemic

During this lockdown we need to keep our spirits up and not be bogged down by the fake news being spread by scaremongers



PRAKRITI PODDAR

The Coronavirus outbreak has put the entire world under lockdown with the total number of cases rising to a whopping 10,16,395 globally and the death toll reaching 53,238. On January 30, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Coronavirus outbreak as a Global Public Health Emergency. As more and more new hotspots emerge daily, experts are anticipating that the onslaught of this pandemic will continue for a few more months before we see the end of it. In the meantime, it has wreaked havoc on the world economy and every social activity known to man. Many countries, including India, have asked people to self-isolate themselves and set a 14-day quarantine period for citizens returning home from abroad.

Almost all global and national sports events have been indefinitely postponed, TV shows and film productions have been suspended, schools, colleges, malls, restaurants and cinemas have been closed. Foreign and domestic tourism is at a standstill due to closure of borders and aviation activity has been suspended in most parts of the world as well as India. People are working from home as inter-State borders have been sealed, so much so that transportation of goods across borders in the country has become difficult. Now, with the 21-day lockdown imposed by the Government, people are confined to their homes.

Naturally, anxiety due to the Coronavirus outbreak around the world is at an all time high, with people sporting social distancing discs that limit contact with others, using hand sanitisers as well as wearing masks to protect themselves against this epidemic. Governments around the world have also scaled up their respective healthcare systems and enhanced their capacity to provide timely screenings as well as treatment to people.

Nonetheless, there are various fake news portals as well as social media posts that are being circulated to spread misinformation about the Coronavirus, which is adding to the already-prevalent anxiety. Some myths like cow urine can prevent Coronavirus, spraying alcohol and chlorine on oneself can keep it at bay, mosquitoes can transmit the virus, eating garlic can prevent it, drinking lots of water will flush out the virus as well taking antibiotics will prevent the virus are doing the rounds of social media. People are unthinkingly passing such posts around despite leading scientists and healthcare professionals debunking these myths.

The nature of social media is such that anyone can share any fake or unverified information on their timeline which can cause anxiety among the people who see it. This has led to deterioration of their mental health as they are living in perpetual fear of the disease and resorting to measures which will certainly not prevent the Coronavirus but can potentially harm their health. Thankfully, Governments are cracking down on such irresponsible behaviour and imposing fines as well as punishment for people spreading misinformation. The Indian Government has written to top social media companies, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, ShareChat and Twitter, to control the spread of misinformation on COVID-19. In an advisory the Government asked social media platforms to start awareness campaigns, remove misinformation from the platform and promote authentic information on the Coronavirus so that wrong information does not add to the people's stress. So what can we really do to protect ourselves from this dreaded virus? Healthcare professionals have recommended several precautionary and hygienic measures, which include avoiding hospitals unless there is an emergency and as far as possible avoiding direct contact with healthcare professionals. They also advocate washing of hands regularly especially after direct contact with sick people and their surroundings. People must also stay clear of farm as well as wild animals.

Incidents surfaced where the people in contact with others and cover their mouth while sneezing or coughing. If they develop a number of symptoms of the Coronavirus, they must report to the nearest hospital and not panic unnecessarily. We must also clean everything around the house and workplace with disinfectant as when infected droplets from a person land on a surface it survives for days on end.

Use hand sanitizer regularly and avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose, especially if you have just been outside. Now when India is in a 21-day lockdown, we also need to keep our spirits up and not be bogged down by boredom or give in to fake news being spread by scaremongers on social media.

If you are not working from home and hence have a lot of empty time on your hands, use it productively to finish chores that have been pending for long. Take up a hobby that you never had time for earlier. Pray and meditate. Spend time with family. Play board games, read, watch movies. Do whatever it takes to protect your sanity by keeping negative thoughts in check and escape the pandemic called social media.

The writer is a mental health expert and Director of a wellness company

THE 21-DAY LOCKDOWN WAS NECESSARY BUT UNPLANNED. IT CAUSED HARASSMENT TO LAKHS OF MIGRANT WORKERS.
—CONGRESS PRESIDENT SONIA GANDHI

POINT COUNTERPOINT



BARUN DEB PAL



SANJIB POHIT

INDIA'S EFFORTS TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS ARE BEING LAUDED DOMESTICALLY AND GLOBALLY. BUT CONGRESS IS PLAYING PETTY POLITICS.
—HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH

Economic cost of the lockdown

The Indian economy will face an income loss of ₹1.7 lakh crore per week or a total of ₹5.1 lakh crore during the three-week-long shutdown called by the Govt



BARUN DEB PAL SANJIB POHIT

The pandemic COVID-19 has already affected over 10,16,395 people across the world and there have been 53,238 deaths worldwide. Out of this, over 20,000 people died in the last three months alone. Health experts across the world are yet to discover a vaccine for this deadly virus that can be applied for human use worldwide. This is despite the fact that about 35 companies and academic institutions are racing to create an anti-Coronavirus vaccine. There are at least four candidates, which are being tested on animals now. The first firm to conduct a human trial, Boston-based biotechnology firm Moderna, will enter Phase-II of trials, which means widespread human application by early summer. But this is not fast enough. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is expecting an exponential spike in the number of Coronavirus cases across the world in the coming days and is providing necessary information to vulnerable countries. As a result, national and local governments across the world are encouraging social distancing among the people and more and more nations are going into a lockdown mode.

India is already in the second week of its 21-day lockdown that was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 in a televised address to the nation. Despite its size and the density of the population, the entire country, that includes 28 States and eight Union Territories, has gone into a lockdown, making it the largest such exercise in the world.

The country, which has a poor healthcare infrastructure has no option but to do this, as social distancing is probably the surest way of stopping the spread of the Coronavirus among the 1.3 billion Indians. However, health experts say that nothing can prevent the country from going into stage-II of the outbreak and the lockdown, just delaying our entry into it. It is giving us more time to prepare for stage-III and increasing the chances of us taking advantage of any medical breakthrough that takes place.

But, the big question is, for how long can India afford to shut itself down? As it is the Indian economy was in a shambles before the outbreak. Now, it also has to bear the huge economic loss of the three-week-long complete shutdown and the burden of the financial relief package of ₹1.75 lakh crore that was announced by the Government for the country.

Once this nightmare is behind us, it will become really hard for the Finance Ministry to prepare an effective package for a quick revival of the economy. Here are some estimates of the direct economic loss to the nation and some possible interventions for quick recovery.

The third advance estimate of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) revealed that India's estimated GDP for 2019-2020 stood at ₹47 lakh crore, which turns out to be ₹3.6 lakh crore per week, of which 17 per cent is earned by casual labour, 21 per cent by regular wage employees and 62 per cent by self-employed workers. The lockdown will affect all these workers on a different magnitude. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data for 2017, a whopping 25 per cent of total workers in India are casual labourers (i.e. almost 93 million people) earning about ₹1,754 per week. Another 23 per cent of the total are regular wage earners who get an average ₹4,063 per week. The rest, 52 per cent workers, are self-employed ones that include own account workers, self-employed and helpers in household enterprises.

“ THIS ESTIMATE IS ONLY FOR THE DIRECT IMPACT ON INCOME FOR A PERIOD OF 21 DAYS. THE ECONOMIC LOSS WILL BE MUCH HIGHER IF TIMELY RECOVERY DOES NOT TAKE PLACE AND IF WE ARE FORCED TO GO IN FOR AN EXTENDED LOCKDOWN GOING FORWARD ”



According to the PLFS' estimates, a self-employed person earns about ₹3,460 per week. The complete shutdown will affect casual labourers the most as their income depends on working days available in a week.

The situation is, of course, marginally better for regular wage employees. But nearly 46 per cent of the total regular wage earners in India do not have the benefit of paid leave. Therefore, if their salary is not protected during the lockdown period, they will lose their income. On the other hand, self-employed people will lose profit earning from their enterprises/firms due to close of operations.

The lockdown will affect various sectors differently. As Modi's speech indicated, only production and distribution of essential commodities and services have been allowed to be operational. That includes food supply, goods transport, manufacturing of medical equipment, pharmaceutical, medical facilities, communication and financial services.

Therefore, workers will definitely suffer income loss if they are engaged in the locked down sectors.

Another 40 per cent casual labourers are engaged in the construction sector, which will surely be closed for 21 days leading to income loss to the respective workers. A further 10 per cent of casual workers are engaged in manufacturing industries, where almost 90 per cent of economic activities are closed for now.

The assumption of 90 per cent shut down of manufacturing is based on the output share of food and medical equipment sectors in total product. The estimate is based on the 2016 Supply Use Table (SUT) of the CSO, which indicates that foodgrain processing and medical equipment contribute to about 10 per cent of the total GDP of the manufacturing sector. Thus, about 45 million casual workers (i.e. 50 per cent of total casual workers) will be vulnerable, provided agriculture and allied sectors continue to provide job opportunities to the rest of the workers. This is a reasonable assumption for the agriculture sector as harvesting of Rabi crops usually starts in most of the States in late March/early April, coinciding with the complete lockdown period in the country. Hence, the aggregate income loss of the casual workers will be ₹0.3 lakh crore per week during the lockdown period if we consider their per week income earning to be of the same amount as in the third quarter (October-December 2019) of 2019-20.

Additionally, as 46 per cent of regular employees do not have the benefit of paid leave, it is estimated that almost 15 per cent of total regular wage employees will lose their income due to the shutting down of economic activities. Thus, it is estimated that the regular salaried group will lose ₹0.35 lakh crore per week as compared to their weekly income obtained during the third quarter of the Financial Year 2019-20.

Since 53 per cent of self-employed people are engaged in agriculture, we assume, there will be no direct impact on their income during this time. However, the income of the rest of the 47 per cent of self-employed people will be affected if they are engaged in locked down sectors. Based on calculations of the sector-specific impact, almost ₹1.05 lakh crore income of the self-employed people will be lost per week.

In effect, the Indian economy will face an income loss of ₹1.7 lakh crore per week or a total of ₹5.1 lakh crore during the three-week-long lockdown.

Considering that almost 95 million workers/entrepreneurs will be hit and if we consider that each of them supports on an average four people, nearly 380 million people will face severe welfare threats. This estimate is only for the direct impact on income for a period of 21 days. The economic loss will be much higher if timely recoveries do not take place and if we are forced to go in for an extended

lockdown going forward. So what should the Government do to improve the situation?

As per estimates, the shutdown will cause a loss of ₹3,261 per casual worker, which is nearly equivalent to the income support given by the Government to the farmers through the PM-KISAN scheme (i.e. ₹6,000 annual income support to farmers). It makes sense to extend this scheme to the casual labourers engaged in the non-agricultural sector.

Regular wage employees without entitlement of paid leave are highly vulnerable during this period. Therefore, firms can be encouraged to compensate wage loss to those employees and a tax benefit package for the firms may be thought of.

Self-employed people will also face a severe loss due to the economic downturn. Boosting effective demand in the economy can encourage investment and in this context the first two measures will play a key role. So far, an amount of ₹15,000 crore has been allocated for the health sector for improving healthcare facilities.

The Finance Minister's recent announcement of a ₹1.75 lakh crore package to help the economically-weaker sections survive the loss of jobs and income would be the inevitable fallout of the Coronavirus outbreak is not adequate.

As indicated above, this is only one-third of the loss of income estimated during the shutdown. Of course, the Government has issued instructions exempting workers and labourers from paying rent for a month and assured wages for them during the lockdown period. This may no doubt lessen the burden. However, foolproof implementation would not be an easy proposition despite the Government's best intention.

(Deb is with IFFRI and Pohit works for the NCAER. The views expressed are personal)

Police excesses during shutdown not justified

Fines coupled with clarifications regarding the extent of the restrictions and positive propaganda like the 'Corona Warrior' videos shared by the Prime Minister are most effective and humane ways of ensuring that people understand the need for social distancing

of the threat of COVID-19?

In order to understand the legality of the incidents of police action, we must first distinguish between a "lockdown" and "curfew." A curfew is a short-term measure, where essential services are also disrupted, to keep people off the streets in times of riot or terror activities.

On the other hand, a lockdown is a relatively long-term measure, requiring the closure of public and private establishments, schools and religious places in order to restrict the large-scale movement of people. As essential services continue to operate, a lockdown is less restrictive than a curfew. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines, issued under Section 10(2)(I) of the Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005, despite having the effect of a lockdown, do not use the term curfew or lockdown. Moreover, the guidelines do not specifically state that people cannot venture out of their houses. Even in States which have

invoked Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), no order has been issued which explicitly makes it criminal to step out of the house. This is less so if one is rendering an essential service or has ventured out to buy essential items.

However, given the Coronavirus outbreak, it is our duty as responsible citizens to ensure that we don't leave our homes. But in the event that we do have to, there is no justification for the police subjecting people to the appalling treatment that we have witnessed over the last few days. We live in a country plagued by illiteracy and poverty. There has been widespread confusion regarding what can and cannot be done during the lockdown. The plight of the migrant workers, who were compelled by their poverty to walk thousands of kilometres back home as they could not afford to live in the city without work, is a glaring instance of why we must exercise compassion and not violence in this hour

of crisis. The majority of the police force must be commended for their remarkable efforts in maintaining order in a situation of extreme panic and for putting their personal safety at risk during a pandemic. However, some errant policemen have chosen to pursue the law and strict action must be taken against them. Voluntarily causing hurt to a person is a non-cognisable offence under Section 323 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and provides for imprisonment of up to one year. Victims of police violence should not succumb to such blatant misuse of authority. Instead they must record such incidents, subject themselves to immediate medical examination, if possible, and file a complaint before the nearest Magistrate under Section 190(1) of the CrPC. If this is difficult to pursue during the lockdown, it must be followed up once the restrictions are eased.

The MHA guidelines clearly state that a person found violating stipula-

tions can be charged under Section 188 of the IPC and Sections 51 to 60 of the DMA, 2005. Section 188 of the IPC provides for a fine and an imprisonment term for one month for the violation of an order of a public servant. Further, the DMA also prescribes penalties which can attract fines as well as imprisonment up to two years for violating orders issued under it.

However, these penal provisions must be invoked cautiously, with due application of mind. Consideration must be given to the fact that it is difficult for people to approach the courts, which are functioning on an extremely limited basis. The State must also take care to ensure that the punishment is proportionate to the offence in question, as held by the Supreme Court in the Vikram Singh vs Union of India case, especially when the Government has not expressly clarified whether a single person walking on the street amounts to an offence.

Yascha Mounk, a professor at John Hopkins University, in his book *The People vs. Democracy*, argues that a liberal democracy strikes a balance between two fundamental principles, the "will of the majority" and the "rule of law", which gives primacy to individual rights.

India's constitutional framework may allow for individual rights to be curtailed but they cannot be completely sacrificed at the altar of the "will of the majority." In the face of a public health challenge, it is all the more necessary to be vigilant about human rights, as history teaches us that the greatest human rights violations have taken place during wars, emergencies and disruptive situations. The "majority" should be careful before applying or normalising police excesses in the name of public interest when alternate and proportionate penalties exist.

The ideal approach in this case would be for the police to fine people

who are found violating a Section 144 order or the MHA guidelines on the lockdown. This can be done by the President or the Governor by promulgating an Ordinance under Articles 123 and 213 of the Constitution respectively, empowering local authorities to impose fines to violators. Such fines must be based on a differential system, accounting for the socio-economic background of the violators.

Fines are being used effectively as a deterrent in the UK, the UAE and Canada. In the UK, police officers have the power to issue on-the-spot fines of £60 for people found violating the lockdown rules. Such fines, coupled with clarifications regarding the extent of the restrictions and positive propaganda like the "Corona Warrior" videos shared by the Prime Minister, are most effective and humane ways of ensuring that people understand the need for social distancing.

(The writer is a lawyer in the Bombay High Court)



ISHA SINGH

In the aftermath of the commencement of the lockdown, various incidents surfaced where the police lathicharged ambulance drivers, stranded migrant workers and other people for venturing out of their homes to buy essential items like milk and groceries. These incidents have been recorded and circulated on social media by onlookers. However, this has resulted in not just physical but also mental trauma for the victims. So, are such police excesses justified, even if they have been committed in the face

Around the Globe

US President Donald Trump has tested negative for the novel coronavirus for a second time and is "healthy" and not displaying any symptoms for the deadly disease, the White House physician has said.

Just when Americans need it most, a US newspaper industry already under stress is facing an unprecedented new challenge. Readers desperate for information are more reliant than ever on local media as the coronavirus spreads across the US.

China will observe a national day of mourning on Saturday for martyrs, including the "whistleblower" Dr Li Wenliang, who sacrificed their lives in the fight against the coronavirus outbreak and the over 3,300 people who died of the infection in the country.

Researchers have created a web application that provides an overview of the coronavirus pandemic across the globe, in a way that is more interactive than other maps and statistics.

Iran on Friday announced 134 more deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the officially confirmed total to 3,294.

US, UK AND SPAIN DEATHS MOUNT

Virus threatens war zones, world toll above 56,000; more than 1 million cases globally, 2.3 lakh recovered from coronavirus



Makeshiti hospital in Spain AP

Experts warn that the more than one million cases of COVID-19 confirmed globally are probably just a small proportion of total infections, as testing is not widely available.

The US, Spain and Britain grappled with their highest tolls yet and the world economy took a massive hit.

Italian PM tells EU to 'show more ambition, unity, courage'

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on Friday extended his feud about coronavirus money with EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in the pages of a Roman newspaper.

At issue is billions of euros that Italy wants from the European Union to help fight the novel coronavirus pandemic, the crisis has killed nearly 14,000 people in Italy and shattered the country's economy.

Trump, Macron discuss convening P5 meeting

Washington: US President Donald Trump and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Friday discussed having a meeting of five permanent members of the UN Security Council on a collective fight against coronavirus, the White House said.

Corona beer producer halts brewing over virus

The Mexican brewer of Corona beer said Thursday it was suspending production because of the health emergency in the country over the COVID-19 pandemic.

adding it would complete the suspension in the following days. Mexico's government has said that only key sectors such as agribusiness will be able to continue to function.

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



been pumelled by the virus and the associated lockdowns, with more than half the population of the planet under some kind of stay-at-home order.

China's central bank became the latest to announce special stimulus measures Friday when it cut reserve requirements for smaller banks in order to release around 400 billion yuan (\$56 billion) in liquidity.

UN chief: Ceasefire appeal backed by parties in 11 nations

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday that warring parties in 11 countries have responded positively to his appeal for a global cease-fire to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

AI can predict corona patients risk if they need ventilators

As companies the world over commit to make ventilators to meet the demand, researchers are now turning to computer models based on artificial intelligence (AI) that calculate the risk of an individual patient's need for a ventilator or intensive care.

best possible way," said Mads Nielsen from University of Copenhagen in Denmark. According to the researchers, algorithms will harvest vast amounts of data from multiple sources.

Poor nations need COVID-19 research to avoid system 'breakdown'

Research on the prevention of treatment of COVID-19 in poor and developing nations is urgently needed to avert a "complete breakdown" of health services, a coalition of more than 70 scientific bodies said on Friday.

The show can't go on: Virus halts circus in Netherlands

Sarina Renz kisses one of the eight Siberian Steppes camels, of the stranded Renz Circus in Drachten, northern Netherlands. The circus fleet of blue, red and yellow trucks have had a fresh lick of paint over the winter.



Virus deals end to US hiring; Europe's hospitals buckle

AP ■ NEW YORK

The coronavirus outbreak finally snapped the United States' record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years, while US and European medical workers struggling to save ailing patients Friday watched supplies of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines dwindle by the hour.

Worldwide, confirmed infections surged past 1 million and deaths topped 54,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both numbers are seriously undercounted because of the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the extent of the crisis.

Among buyers from Europe, the US and elsewhere. A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to find masks a "worldwide treasure hunt." G.W. Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of ventilators in six days.

Hydroxychloroquine azithromycin mix dangerous for heart

IAN S ■ NEW YORK

As the combined use of anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine and the antibiotic azithromycin to treat coronavirus patients gains momentum, cardiologists are advising caution because both medications can increase the risk for dangerous abnormal heart rhythms.

There are hundreds of drugs that can increase the risk for cardiac arrest, but using two together in patients who are already at risk or critically ill could increase that risk further, the authors warned.

In guidance published in the journal Circulation, a journal of Cardiology publication titled 'Cardiology Magazine', cardiologists from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and Indiana University recommended clinicians who treat COVID-19 patients with anti-malaria-antibiotic drug combination to also consider monitoring those patients for "ventricular arrhythmia," which

Doctors forced to attend coronavirus patients without PPE, stipend in Pak

PTI ■ KARACHI

Doctors and post graduate trainees at several hospitals in Pakistan's Sindh province are forced to attend coronavirus positive patients without personal protective equipment, and some of them have not even received their stipend, according to a media report.

The worst affected health facilities include the state-run hospitals in Sukkur and Larkana, the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH) and the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) in Karachi and the two teaching hospitals, one in Hyderabad and the other in Jamshoro, attached with the Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Dawn reported.

Trump-Pelosi relationship remains broken in time of crisis

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Two of the most powerful people in Washington have not spoken in five months at a time when the nation is battling its worst health crisis in a century, one that has already killed more than 5,000 Americans and put 10 million others out of work.

Now, there are worries the broken relationship could hinder the federal government's ability to respond to the growing coronavirus crisis, the extent of the damage reflected in Thursday's report that a record 6.6 million people filed for unemployment, adding to more than 3 million from two weeks earlier.

President Donald Trump and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last talked on Oct. 16, when Pelosi pointed her finger at the seated president during a heated exchange in a White House meeting that was captured in a widely shared photograph.

The relationship between Trump and Pelosi never warmed beyond repair after the president's impeachment, according to allies of both leaders.

Stock market tumbles, Sensex settles below 28,000

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices spilled lower for yet another session on Friday, pressured by heavy selling in bank stocks, as the steady rise in Covid-19 cases fuelled uncertainty over the economic impact of the pandemic. Unabated foreign fund outflows and a depreciating rupee, which skidded below the 76-mark against the dollar, further kept investors on the sidelines, traders said.

After hitting a low of 27,500.79 during the day, the 30-share BSE benchmark ended 67.36 points or 2.39 per cent lower at 27,590.95. The NSE Nifty shed 170 points, or 0.66 per cent, to finish at 8,833.80. During the holiday-trun-

ated week, the Sensex lost 2,224.64 points or 7.46 per cent, while the Nifty sank 576.45 points or 6.65 per cent. Bank stocks came under heavy selling pressure on Friday after Moody's Investors Service changed the outlook for Indian banking sector to negative from stable due to the coronavirus crisis.

Axis Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, cracking 9.16 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Titan, SBI, Maruti, HDFC and Asian Paints. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, ITC, ONGC, M&M and Tech Mahindra were among the gainers.

RBI reduces trading hours for debt, currency markets from April 7

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI has reduced the trading hours of debt as well as currency markets from Tuesday in view of the lockdown following the outbreak of coronavirus. The revised market timings will be effective during April 7-17, 2020, the central bank said in a circular on Friday.

financial markets, the RBI said. The market timings have been revised in order to "minimise these risks" and to ensure that market participants maintain adequate checks and supervisory controls while optimising thin resources and ensuring safety of personnel, it said. As per the circular, timing of the Government Securities (Central Government Securities, State Development Loans and Treasury Bills) market has been revised from 9 am to 2 pm from the existing 9 am to 5 pm.

Rupee slides 53 p to settle above 76 mark amid meltdown in equities

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled 53 paise lower at 76.13 against the US dollar on Friday amid a significant rise in coronavirus cases in the country and weak domestic equities. Forex traders said heavy selling in domestic equities dragged the local unit amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 75.97. During the day, it lost further ground and finally settled at 76.13, down 53 paise over its previous close. The rupee had settled at 75.60 against the greenback on Tuesday. Forex markets in India were closed on April 1 for the annual closing of banks and on April 2 on account of Ram Navami.

India, China trade declines by 12.4 in first two months amid coronavirus outbreak

PTI ■ BEIJING

The trade between China and India fell 12.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 12 billion in the first two months amid the coronavirus outbreak, according to the latest data from Chinese customs. From January to February, China's exports to India were 67.1 billion yuan (USD 9.5 billion), down 12.6 per cent on a yearly basis and imports from India dropped 11.6 per cent to 18 billion yuan (USD 2.5 billion), the state-run Global Times reported on Friday.

months, the report quoted Chinese Customs data. The declines in both the countries due to Covid-19 is expected to badly affect the bilateral trade which declined by three billion billion dollar last year to USD 92.68 billion from USD 95.7 billion in 2018. The declining trade was largely attributed to the slowdown of the economies of the two countries. The trade deficit for India continued to be high amounting to USD 56.77 billion in 2019. The trade deficit has become a major irritant in India-China bilateral relations, figuring high in the bilateral discourse.

Fitch sees India GDP growth in FY21 at 2%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India may post in 2020-21 a GDP growth of 2 per cent, the lowest since the economy was liberalised 30 years back, Fitch Ratings said on Friday, as it joined a chorus of international agencies that have made a similar cut in growth estimates in recent days on concerns about the fallout of COVID-19 outbreak. Asian Development Bank (ADB) sees India's economic growth slipping to 4 per cent in the current fiscal (April 2020 to March 2021), while S&P Global Ratings earlier this week further slashed its GDP growth forecast for the country to 3.5 per cent from a previous down-

grade of 5.2 per cent. India Ratings & Research took its FY21 forecast down to 3.6 per cent from 5.5 per cent earlier. Moody's Investors Service last week slashed its estimate of India's GDP growth during 2020 calendar year to 2.5 per cent, from an earlier estimate of 5.3 per cent and said the coronavirus pandemic will cause unprecedented shock to the global economy. These growth estimates compare to an estimated 5 per cent growth rate in 2019-20 fiscal that ended on March 31. Indian economy also grew by 5 per cent in the 2019 calendar year.

India's share in world market cap below historic average: Report

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

As the Indian stocks markets reeds under the coronavirus crisis, a report by Motilal Oswal said India's share in the global market capitalisation is below the historic average. Currently, it is at 2.2 per cent below its historic average of 2.5 per cent. The 'Bull & Bears' report also noted that India's market cap has declined more, compared to the fall in the world market cap in the past 12 months. "Over the last 12 months, the world's market cap has decreased 12.3 per cent (\$9.6 trillion), while India's market

cap is down 31 per cent," it said. The report also noted that the market cap-to-GDP ratio of India has declined swiftly from 79 per cent on FY19 to 54 per cent (FY20EGDP), much below its long-term average of 75 per cent and closer to the levels last seen during FY05 and FY09. On the market performance in the FY 2019-20, it said: "The Nifty could not have had a worse finish to FY20. As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic spread across the world, the Nifty nosived 23 per cent in Mar 20 to close at 8,598 (-26 per cent YoY), the worst since Oct'08."

NAFED contributes ₹5 crore to PM-CARES fund

PIS ■ NEW DELHI

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) contributed Rs 5 crore to PM-Cares Fund to fight the situation arising out of Covid-19. Sanjiv Kumar Chada, Managing Director, handed over the cheque to Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, The Government of India has acknowledged the generous contribution for the welfare of

of pulses to poor household of the country under PM Garib Kalyan Yojna. Necessary preparations have been carried out and very soon the deliveries will be made to the States for its distribution. Unmindful of the ground challenges, the procurement of Pulses and Oilseeds are being made, through affected by Govt-19, but State Governments' agencies are being requested to streamline it so that farmers stock continue to be procured at MSP.

POWERGRID commits ₹200 crore to PM-CARES Fund

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic is a cause of great concern while the whole nation is locked down, POWERGRID, the Central Transmission Utility of India, has been ensuring uninterrupted 24x7 power supply. As a Responsible Corporate Citizen, POWERGRID has contributed Rs 130 crore to Prime Minister's

POWERGRID commits ₹200 crore to PM-CARES Fund

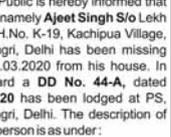
Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund to support India's fight against coronavirus. To help fight the pandemic, it has committed another contribution of Rs 70 crore in next FY. This makes POWERGRID's total contribution commitment as Rs 200 crore. POWERGRID employees are also contributing a part of their salary towards the

cause. POWERGRID has also distributed food packets in slum areas to help the needy in such difficult times. The laborers and contractual workers at transmission/construction sites are also being provided with masks, soaps, sanitizers, packed food items, grocery items and medical support in all POWERGRID Sub-stations in the country.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a person named Ajeet Singh S/o Lekh Raj R/o H.No. K-19, Kachipua Village, Nand Nagri, Delhi has been missing since 02.03.2020 from his house. In this regard a DD No. 44-A, dated 02.03.2020 has been lodged at PS, Nand Nagri, Delhi. The description of missing person is as under:



Name : Ajeet Singh, Father's Name : Lekh Raj, Age : 28 years, Height : 5'1", Face : Long, Complexion : Sallow, Built : Thin, Wearing : Green Colour T-Shirt, Blue Colour Jeans and shoes in feet. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Appeal For Identification



General public is hereby informed that this child Name : Unknown S/o : Unknown, R/o : Unknown, Age : 1 Day, Sex : Male, Height : 1 Ft. 5 Inch, Complexion : Fair, Face : Round, Built : Medium, Wearing : Naked, has been found on 21.03.2020 at Dhauva Kuan Bus Stand, Delhi and declared dead by the Dr. of Safdarjung Hospital and dead body preserved in Mortuary of Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi. In this regard a FIR No. 7/2020 dated on 03.03.2020 u/s 318 IPC has been registered at PS, Delhi Cantt., Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this child but no clue has come to light so far.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF PERSON ACCUSED

See Section 82 Cr. PC Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person named Naim S/o Islam Khan, R/o 24, Gali No. 14, Phase-6, Shiv Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the Offence FIR No. 337/14 u/s 279/3381 IPC at PS, Karawal Nagar, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Naim cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Naim has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant), Proclamation u/s 82 CrPC is hereby made that the said Naim accused of FIR No. 337/14 u/s 279/3381 IPC is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 05.05.2020.

By Order Sh. Pawan Singh Rajawat Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Karkardooma Court, Shahdara, Delhi

Metro Railway, Kolkata advertisement with table of tender details.

SEARCH FOR MISSING advertisement for Naveen Kumar.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement.

SHORT CIRCUITS



TAMANNAAH BHATIA
The pandemic is not just restricted to a particular industry. It's global and we all need to be responsible citizens and help the government and medical bodies to fight this battle and come out undefeated. We need to keep our anxiety and depression under check as these are trying times, and we need to be there for another.



VIR DAS
My character Hasmukh is super awkward, soft spoken and always mild, until he murders or gets on stage. Stand-up comedians will relate to Hasmukh's journey — well, most of it at least. We're all looking for innovative ways to make people laugh but this guy takes it to the next level. The trailer should give you a sneak peek into this.



DARSHAN RAVAL
I am a self-taught musician. I never joined any music institute or did any course. So it feels more great to look back at my journey so far. I come from a small town. People there generally consider singing a hobby. Coming from a small town and making a name for myself in this profession is a big thing for me.



SRUTI JHA
While I am not shooting for *Kumkum Bhagya* due to the COVID-19 lockdown, I am making the most of my time and reading a lot of novels at home. Good books are my zone, so I am enjoying it. I have completed reading several books and I am currently reading *The Rules of Contagion* by Adam Kucharski.



DJ DIPLO
Charli XCX's personality is just so exciting, she's got so much charisma. She actually had to borrow headphones to do her DJ mix and she made me actually throw them out the window, she's so in that quarantine life. She lives really close to me. We're neighbours.

IMMERSIVE 30 MINUTES

Founder and director of Teamwork Arts SANJOY K ROY tells SAIMI SATTAR that in times of social distancing, it is imperative that entertainment and cultural events shift to the online space

If you ask even a non-reader to guess the name of a literary festival which takes place every year at the Digg Palace at Jaipur, the prompt answer would be Jaipur Literary Festival. That is the kind of traction the JLF, with its celebrity writers, impressive backdrop and culture spread and large crowds invites. But then the last is certainly an anathema in current times of social distancing. So then Teamwork Arts, the group behind JLF, which is known to keep abreast with changing times, has decided to evolve and announced a virtual edition of the series. Called the *Brave New World*, it is perhaps the answer to testing times. But then literature also has the power to instill hope when the bleak world doesn't seem to hold out any.

The aim of the virtual initiative is to celebrate the power and positivity of books and rather than the backdrop of the Digg Palace, it is powered by the borderless Internet. Scheduled to kick off from April 4 which will see eminent author and advocate Abhinav Chandrachud and journalist Pragna Tiwari, in conversation on the devastating Bombay bubonic plague epidemic of 1896 and its repercussions today.

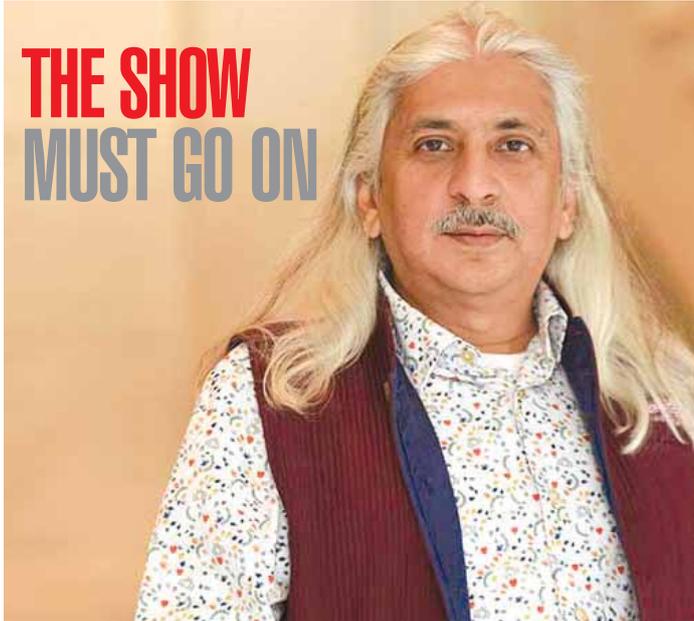
However, it is not just this particular session but the others as well that are relevant to current times. When we are constantly hooked on to our phones all the time, another conversation is relevant where writer and broadcaster Bee Rowlett will explore the need to protect the "forum internum" — our private mental space — from the incursions of digital technology — at a session titled *Freedom of Thought* with Baroness Helena Kennedy.

Similarly, there are writer, politician and public intellectual Shashi Tharoor and President of Observer Research Foundation Samir Saran, co-authors of the recent *The New World Disorder and the India Imperative*, in conversation and will share their views on the current crisis the world is going through.

JLF is known to be a forum open to discussion, debate and dissent. *Walls and Bridges* will be a session on dystopian fiction and its increasingly real and uncanny presence in our lives in which Prayag Akbar, author of *Leila* (which was adapted into a Netflix series), and Amrita Tripathi, author of *The Sibius Knot* will share their views.

One wonders if it was easy getting the authors on board for such an exercise where they conduct the session online. "The lucky thing is that nothing is happening these days as everything has been cancelled worldwide. JLF is not a new kid on the block and people know what we do. We have a fairly robust advantage to be able to reach out to a fairly large audience quickly and make these interactions fun, interactive and allow the authors to get out there," says founder and director of Teamwork Arts Sanjoy K Roy.

When we connect over a phone call to



understand more of the move, he is his erudite self. He enquires how newspapers continue to publish in current times and goes on to quote examples from his understanding of the situation. "A report that the financial losses of this on sports, arts and more has been gauged at one trillion. And you are looking at events like Dubai Expo, Olympics and more. By the way, this calculation is just for May-June! So there is no way we would be able to compensate this through online business. But every crisis ensures that Man tries to paddle furiously to stay alive and afloat like newspapers are doing by going online and what we are also doing," he says. The change naturally would bring about drastic transformation in the world the way we know it. "The consequences would be two or three-fold in the Indian scenario where social distancing norms will be in place till October," says Roy who is at pains to point out that, "We fail to see the pandemic outbreak as primarily a

health crisis and focus on the economic aspect. So you need to address the former, first. We need isolation, aggressive testing like Japan and South Korea and try to control the spread by focussing on science and technology to find a vaccine or a medicine to control this. The virus or flu won't disappear on April 14 when the lockdown ends."

Coming to the economy, Roy says that in order to ensure a resurgence of the need of the hour is ensuring safe places. "There has been a flight of labour which is not coming back in a hurry so supply and production chains will be disrupted. Kickstarting the economy will take another three to six months after the situation has become normal. But by that time everyone would be so used to eating and buying local that any demand would be kicked out of the window. These things certainly do not bode well for the recessionary economic situation that we were coming out of. This has further increased gloom and doom."

However, Roy besides being pragmatic and well-read also has a tendency to find a silver lining in the situation. He points out that, "The only good thing mentioned in the Boston Consultancy Report is that entertainment will be consumed at a greater level and will go online. And so will the media. In the recovery, entertainment would recover faster but media won't as it is dependent on advertising, which is disappearing." However, with social distancing and the fear of infection having been inbuilt into the social conscience, entertainment will naturally not be on the lines of huge jamborees where success is measured in terms of the number of footfalls. "We are looking more at online products and those that are online. It is certainly not a rehashing of what we had earlier. But really new stuff which is tailor made for this platform," he says.

Naturally there arises the question of financial viability. "Subscription, online payment and all that will have to be put into place. We cannot do the same old as



THE LUCKY THING IS THAT NOTHING IS HAPPENING THESE DAYS AS EVERYTHING HAS BEEN CANCELLED. JLF IS NOT A NEW KID ON THE BLOCK AND PEOPLE KNOW WHAT WE DO. WE HAVE A FAIRLY ROBUST ADVANTAGE TO BE ABLE TO REACH OUT TO A LARGE AUDIENCE QUICKLY AND MAKE THESE INTERACTIONS FUN, INTERACTIVE AND ALLOW THE AUTHORS TO GET OUT THERE

it will not work," says Roy and adds, "So much has gone online so quickly as there are a plethora of options including music, programme, talkshow and more. These have to be looked at differently and given a more of 360 degree look and feel."

He says that this has become essential since entertainment, as we know it, has changed for a long time to come. "An American survey of about a thousand people had 49 per cent of the respondents saying that they would not go back to a film theatre again. We know that they are more careful but the reality is that we aren't getting a situation anytime soon when people are rushing off to the Kumbh Melas of the world," he says.

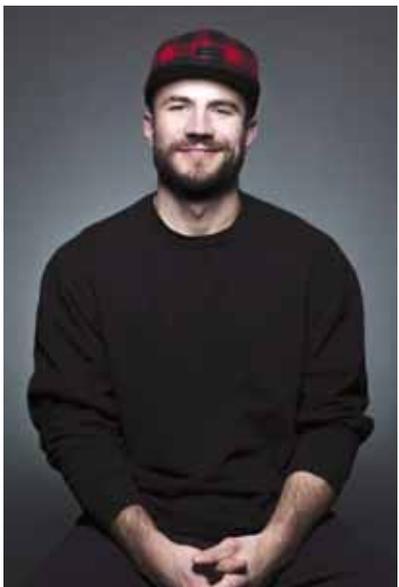
Incidentally, Teamwork Arts has several other successful cultural festival including Ishaara Puppet Theatre, Mahindra Kabira Festival, The Sacred Pushkar and many other national and international ones under its ever-expanding belt.

Not just entertainment, but even travel for business, entertainment and destination weddings will change. He says, "The information coming out of aviation ministry is that we would consider case by case basis where we can fly. We would not have into place a system that would allow business as usual even after the lockdown, or the peak of infection disappears."

However, since human beings are essentially social animals, the need to be in touch and connected with others remains. "Every evening there is either a Zoom party or Houseparty that I am attending. These video chats would be the need of the hour. Offline, people would come together but in much smaller numbers. When the virus began to spread two Teamwork colleagues were getting married and there was a grand celebration across cities but they had a quick court wedding with a lunch where there were just the immediate family members," says he.

Yes, entertainment will remain but the platform are all set to change in this new world.

STUDIO CHAT 15 MINUTES



Sam Hunt's sophomore album *Southern* opens and closes with two of the most personal songs he's ever written, as he draws from his own life to paint candid portraits for listeners.

But the country star admits he wavers when it comes to spilling his own tea in song form. "I'm torn at times about how much of my own life I want to put out there," he said.

Southern, the 35-year-old's sophomore album out Friday, opens with 2016, a remorseful, rueful song that recounts a variety of misdeeds, including chasing other women. It evokes classic country with lyrics like: *Put the tears back in your eyes/Cause all my lies could still come true*. The album closes with *Drinkin' Too Much*, a confessional apology where he namedrops his wife, Hunt, who apologised last November after he was arrested for driving under the influence, released the song on SoundCloud in 2017, a couple months before they were married.

"Sometimes you hear a song or a lyric and you say, 'Okay, this person couldn't have made that up,' that has to be really about them," he said. "The whole honesty is the best policy approach is what I end up circling back to, especially in this genre of music that has always been described as three chords and the truth."

But not all of the 11-track *Southern* is a first-person narrative: "It's definitely not autobiographical." In an interview, Hunt — whose

TO SHARE OR NOT

American singer-songwriter SAM HUNT says that he doesn't know how much of his life should he put out there



pop and rap producers like Diplo and Murda Beatz, who worked on Drake's massive hit *Nice for What*.

2016 is a poignant story. Was it hard to write?

Yes, that one is the closest thing to a more honest reflection on my own life experience over the past two years. It touches on a story that I talked about publicly, in terms of what I had going on between putting out the last record and putting out this record, especially year three and four. This song touches on that a little bit and kind of closes the chapter I think more than anything.

Drinkin' Too Much reminds me of Usher's Confession from 2004. Did you purposely put it at the end of the album?

I think it's the only place on the record where it felt appropriate. It just didn't feel right to put it anywhere else.

The biggest conflict I ever had was about putting that song out. Now that I have put that song out, it's a lot easier to put out songs that are more honest. That was about as honest of a song as I'll ever put out

or I could ever put out.

Your wife is playing the piano on the song?

I didn't want to make a big deal out of it but I wanted her to. I wanted the song to have her blessing. Just her playing that part. I felt like brought an energy of healing to the song — more than anything, her approval of it. I wanted to end the song on a hopeful note. I didn't want it to be a complete down-and-out. I wanted the listener to hear the redemption in the song and not just... the dark place that the guy's in as he's singing it.

It's also nice to somehow involve the person you're singing about in the song.

Yes. Feels like it could be exploitative. That's the main thing I wanted to avoid is doing that or it even feeling like that.

What was it like trying out recording sessions with pop and hip-hop producers?
I wanted to branch out and find some new inspiration. One of the beauties of writing with the same two people for a long period of time

is that you really get to know each other and there's a level of comfort in the room. There's a certain understanding of what I would say and how we should approach writing the song. At the same time, you can get too comfortable with your co-writers, so it's nice to experiment with bringing new people in, writing with new producers to find some new inspiration.

That's what I was attempting to do for a time there. I wrote with some great writers and wrote with some great producers. (But) I never found that click the way I did with Zach (Crowell).

Who were some of the people you worked with?

I worked with Diplo a little bit, trying to find the right song or the right sound. Another guy, Sasha (Sasha C. Cabello)... Sasha is one of the best writers I've written with in the past, or ever, really. A guy named Charlie Handsome (Post Malone, Kanye West) was in town for a few weeks, somebody introduced me to him.

Your wedding anniversary is this month — how will you celebrate since we'll still be stuck at home?

I haven't thought about it. I don't have a plan yet. I'm sure it'll have to be something creative. We both do pretty well at the house. At least we have each other to keep each other company.

CONVERSATION 60 MINUTES

FOR FUN, LAUGHTER AND RELIEF

Actor RAHUL DEV tells SAKSHI SHARMA that his character in *Who's Your Daddy?* goes a notch higher with each episode as he explores himself



Given that the Coronavirus pandemic doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon, the promotions of new series and shows, especially the smaller ones, are suffering a major setback. But for actor Rahul Dev, the issues of the world are of a larger concern than his recently released series. "A lot of people find it tough to afford two meals a day. They struggle for their basic needs. We need to be conscious of that and try to help the vulnerable around us. There are bigger world issues at stake. The show is definitely getting affected in terms of its publicity. But we also need to pay attention to the fact that since everyone is at home, watching shows, it is bound to do better. We all have more extra time now than what we did in our normal work days. So the show's fortune might only benefit from it," says he.

The actor's web series *Who's Your Daddy?* revolves around his son Soggy (played by Harsh Beniwal) and him, a retired Major Subedar, Prem Singh Barnala. It showcases the day-to-day adventures of the father-son duo. Based in *'Dilwalon ki Dilli'* they are the coolest family in town. Soggy runs a DVD rental shop and earns a sizeable chunk by renting blue films to boisterous lunching ladies of Delhi's posh societies. Prem becomes an overnight star with the women patrons of the DVD world and the duo runs a successful business until their world turns upside down.

The actor usually plays negative characters, way different from this one which is predominantly comedy and fun. "Yes, this one is very different. I thought it would be nice to know this character as the Subedar is simple, naive, humorous and straightforward — certainly a package," says he.

It is a situational comedy. Things happen in a way that they appear funny. "If you play the role sincerely, you don't have to push yourself to do comedy, it will automatically look comic. You just have to react. For instance, if you look and play a certain way, it becomes comic. Imagine a six feet tall person being scolded by his mother, 'Ja kaam kar gadhe, kaam kyu nahi karta?' and he says, 'Biji main toh retire hoke aa gaya hoon,'" adds he.

Though the role is quite different, emotional, instinctive and funny, it was not tough for Rahul to play the character. He says, "It's very easy because there's nothing deep and intense in it. It is not that kind of a subject. If I tell you that yes I worked on it, you'll feel 'what is he talking about?' if you ever see the show. I just



followed a line — 'Just be. You just have to be yourself and play it simple'.

As the series revolves around the DVD rental shop, one wonders why DVDs as these are outdated in the current scenario. The actor tells us that the show is a flashback story set in 2000s.

With each episode, the actor goes a notch higher as he explores himself. He starts out as somebody naive and simple who is self-absorbed. But as he deals with a variety of situations, he gets better. He says, "It was an exploration of various characters because of the journey that the character goes through. He evolves as the show goes on. In the first six episodes, he's finding himself and later he goes on to form a relationship and understanding with his son and mother. There's a new start in life. There are beautiful emotional scenes with his mother which often give rise to a lump in the throat."

As the show explores the father-son relationship, there is something in common with the actor's personal life. He went through a tough phase when he lost his wife in 2009. Since then he has been a single parent, the experiences of which he shared. So did he relate to the character as it deals with the same? "Except for the fact that I am a single parent, there's nothing in common. My journey

'EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT I AM A SINGLE PARENT, THERE'S NOTHING IN COMMON. MY JOURNEY IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT. IN TERMS OF THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP, I DO RELATE TO IT A BIT BUT ALTOGETHER IT ISN'T THE SAME. WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR PARTNER IT'S VERY TRAGIC BUT THIS SHOW DOESN'T EXPLORE THOSE LINES'

is totally different. In terms of the father-son relationship, I do relate to it a bit but altogether it isn't the same. When you lose your partner it's very tragic but this show doesn't explore those lines," says Rahul.

Another genre which Rahul really wants to explore is thriller as it is intriguing and engrossing. He finds dark and suspense-driven stories fascinating. "I finished watching the film *Heat* at 3:30 in the morning. It's a legendary film. I loved one sequence of six minutes and 16 seconds where two enemies sit in a cafe and have a conversation. Though they both know about each other but there's mutual respect. No raised voices, banging fists on the table or threats. It's just a conversation and that's interesting," says he. It was interesting to note that the actor who is usually seen doing larger-than-life characters and beating up people, finds two enemies having a conversation interesting. It strikes us that the kind of person is at complete variance with the roles that Rahul has done. "Those characters are not written by me. For example, you might be not interested in this story. Your heart might be in reporting something else. But you get

stuck and you have to choose the best out of what comes your way. So I believe destiny plays a role in this," says Rahul, raising a thousand questions in our mind.

The actor believes that the platform belongs to the writer and the director primarily. They weave something first and then want you to be a part of it. You might try to play it in your style but it is ultimately their call. For instance, for the Subedar's character, in two scenes the director wanted him to react in an over the top manner and shout. However, he wanted it a bit subtle because a retired Army personnel would not behave that way, Rahul says. "One can show their disappointment in many ways. You can not talk to your son or just emotionally pour it out. I wanted it to be more expressive."

He draws life lessons from the role. "My character teaches the audience to go with the flow of life, irrespective of its pace. But I don't know if people will be able to draw that message out. They will watch it mostly for fun, laughter and relief," adds he.

(The show is streaming on ALTBalaji and ZEE5).

WRITER'S BLOG 30 MINUTES

When hope is her decision

Author ANWESA CHAUDHURY tells AYUSHI SHARMA that even as the world seems to be engulfed by negativity, the existence of hope cannot be denied

We are living in a world where hope seems to be dwindling each day and very soon we may find ourselves without it. There was no agenda to publish my feelings but when I had finished writing about 40 to 45 poems during the last three years, my parents said, 'why not publish them?' They encouraged me to do so because I wanted to reach other kids of my age. I wanted them to feel that they are not going through the roller coaster ride of emotions alone. Publishing my thoughts was the only way

out.

□How did you first conceptualise the book? What was the idea behind it?

I have always loved reading poetry. I started penning my thoughts when I saw how disturbing these real life situations have become. Today, it is easy to call teenagers oversensitive, entitled and babied. Though, to some extent, this criticism is not wrong, however, if looked at closely, they face challenges that could be difficult for anyone. They are living in a completely different world, as compared to few decades ago. There was no agenda to publish my feelings but when I had finished writing about 40 to 45 poems during the last three years, my parents said, 'why not publish them?' They encouraged me to do so because I wanted to reach other kids of my age. I wanted them to feel that they are not going through the roller coaster ride of emotions alone. Publishing my thoughts was the only way out.

□Are there any real life incidents that you can share with the reference to the book?

I started writing after experiencing some unusual incidents in our society. I wanted to express them in my way. That Night was my first poem, which delves into the life of children who beg for a living. We all have come across such kids but rarely have



we paused and thought about their situation. The poem presents a contrast between my life and theirs as it's a dream that I saw lying on my comfortable bed.

On The Streets was about the homelessness in California. The Unwanted was written after reading the news that Algeria expels refugees and asks them to walk through the Sahara. Real Men Don't Hurt is all about violence against women.

All these are inspired from real life incidents.

□On one hand there are deaths and suffering, wars and destruction, rapid degeneration of the environment and child abuse while on the other there are glimmer of hope and feeling of love. How did you try to keep a balance between two extreme situations?

A coin has two sides. One part of world shows and throws negativity at us, whereas the other end makes us experience kindness

and existence of humanity. I believe in positive affirmations. Though I read and see a lot of negativity, I always feel that there is room for positivity where people help one another, a world of love and kindness. I have seen people going out of their way to help others. I feel in my heart that there are silver linings.

My poems express the despair and despondency that shrouds and suffocates us, speak of that glimmer of hope, the feeling of love and the chance for new beginnings. These poems stand tall as a witness to the hope that struggles to thrive, fights to breathe and accomplishes to thrive in the midst of all the gloominess.

□As the book explores the lines: Even as the world seems to be engulfed in the wave of negativity, the existence of hope cannot be denied. What keeps you motivated?

Though the world is going through a lot of darkness, I still think that there is still hope in humanity and in the beauty of nature and that keeps me motivated. The existence of human, world and nature is mere proof of

positivity and ray of hope.

□We often feel a plethora of emotions looking at the harsh realities of the world. But how difficult is it to make an emotion come alive through words?

For me it is not difficult because when I feel a particular emotion, words come naturally to my mind. I feel I am blessed with the ability to express. Not everybody has that kind of power.

□Which authors have influenced you?

Right from Rabindranath Tagore, Robert Frost, PB Shelley and John Keats to modern poets like Rupri Kaur are my source of inspiration.

□What does the future of written word look like since we are swamped by digital entertainment?

Things have moved rapidly into a digital world. It's true that ebooks save space on bookshelves and provide convenience, selection and portability. However, there are some things that will always be valued in their original form. There is something about the smell of a new book and physically turning a page, allowing the reader to have an experience that involves all of the senses. Nothing can replace that impact. A right balance is necessary.

Writers must 'document' pandemic: *Lost Children* author

Cooped up at her Bronx home with her daughter and a niece because of the coronavirus pandemic, Mexican writer Valeria Luiselli says she has lowered the "volume and speed" of her life. She is arranging books in alphabetical order, planting legumes on her balcony and listening to old recordings from Argentinian author Julio Cortázar. Her rhythm has slowed but not the accolades and awards for her latest novel, *Lost Children Archive*, which last week was honored with the British Rathbone Folio Prize.

The book, Luiselli's third novel, is part fiction part documentary: a family's American road trip mixed with the stories of migrant children along the Mexico-US border.

Luiselli accepted the prize at a ceremony held online because of Coronavirus pandemic. The 36-year-old writer said she had that she could not be in London to receive it in person but grateful to see people keeping the faith in books.

The fact that the literary community is still in full swing, even from their homes, and behind their screens, is moving and encouraging," she said, speaking in Spanish. "I think it is my duty, and the duty of every writer, whether it is a science-fiction writer, a journalist, a poet, each at their own pace and within their own capacities, to document this moment," she said.

Lost Children Archive has also won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, and a Vilecek Prize for Creative Promise in Literature. It is a finalist for The National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction.

Luiselli's inspiration came from the immigration crisis of 2014, when thousands of children were trying to enter the US in search of asylum, fleeing



poverty and violence in Central America. The author said she started paying attention to how the story was being told, both in the media or at casual conversations in diners in Arizona. "I started asking myself how (the migrant) children of this generation were going to eventually tell their story, what were they going to say about this reality — that on one hand was very real but on the other seemingly implausible — about thousands of children in a migratory limbo," she said.

In New York, she started volunteering with nonprofits as an interpreter in immigration court, writing down the interviews she did with migrant children so attorneys could help them out. "That experience led to an essay about immigration, *Tell Me How It Ends*, in 2017. *Lost Children Archive* came in February 2019.

Born in Mexico City, Luiselli grew up in South Korea and South Africa, among others. She speaks both English and Spanish and can write in either language. In addition to writing during her seclusion, she's reading out loud to her family and taking photos. "We are going to need this narrative fabric, some sort of fabric for us to lay down once we overcome this." —AP

PM seeks support of India's sports heroes to battle COVID-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday turned to India's sporting heroes for support in the herculean battle to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 40 accomplished champions such as Virat Kohli and P V Sindhu responded by vowing to raise awareness and spirits amid a national lockdown.

The athletes, along with sports minister Kiren Rijju, participated in nearly an hour-long video call which started at 11am.

From Sachin Tendulkar stressing on the need to keep the light even after the lockdown ends on April 14, to sprinter Hima Das expressing sadness at the recent attacks on frontline warriors such as health care workers and police officers, to others sharing their experience of being in a lockdown, the sportspersons had lots to offer during the interaction. All these athletes have been generous donors to the funds being raised to fight the crisis.

The Prime Minister, on his part, sought their support to raise awareness about the need for social distancing and personal hygiene at a time

when the total number of COVID-19 positive cases in India has crossed 2,000.

"Your suggestions will be taken note of. We are fighting this pandemic like Team India. I am confident that India will be rejuvenated by the inspiration provided by you," the Prime Minister can be seen telling athletes in a clip shared by shuttler B Sai Praneeth, a world champion Bronze-medallist, who also attended the call.

All sporting activities are currently shut in the country and it is still not clear when normalcy will resume.

When Ganguly was asked about the development this morning, he said, "Yes, I will be joining our Honourable PM via video call." But he refused to go into the details of major chunks of the participating list.

Apart from Tendulkar, Ganguly and Kohli, others in the call included top batsman Rohit Sharma, former pacer Zaheer Khan, Yuvraj Singh.

The names of World Cup-winning former captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and K L Rahul were in the list of participants but it learnt that they could not attend the call. Olympic Silver-medallist



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chats with Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli via video conferencing. MIB_Hindi/Twitter

shuttler Sindhu, javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, chess wizard Viswanathan Anand, sprinter Hima Das, boxing star Amit Panghal, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, and teenage shooting sensation Manu Bhaker were among the other accomplished athletes who took part in the video call.

"Of these, 12 have been given three minutes each to speak and present their views," a ministry source said with-

out revealing the names of the chosen athletes.

It was later learnt that Tendulkar, Ganguly, M C Mary Kom and Kohli were among those who were to speak during the interaction.

"I suggested that as much as possible, I will use our way of greeting — saying Namaste instead of shaking hands, even if we have to meet to speak and present their views," a ministry source said with-

"I told him that it is sad that health care workers and police have been attacked," said Asian Games medallist Hima Das, who is employed with Assam Police as a DSP.

However, six-time world champion Mary Kom could not connect to the call due to network issues.

Among those who managed to, former world champion weightlifter Mirabai Chanu said the PM urged

everyone to be united in the fight to combat the pandemic. "The PM asked us to spread awareness on social distancing and hygiene. He spoke about how we need Virat's (Kohli) fighting spirit to win this battle," added veteran table tennis player Sharath Kamal.

World championship Silver-winning shooter Abhishek Verma said the PM urged athletes "to be positive and spread positivity".

He said athletes should highlight the work of frontline workers. Take good care of yourself and family at home. He asked us to e-mail any suggestions we have on how to handle the situation better,"

Verma said. The Prime Minister said the ability to face challenges,

self-discipline, positivity and self-belief, which are essential to sports, are crucial tools to combat the spread of the virus as well.

Olympic-bound archer Deepika Kumari said the PM advised the athletes to keep their immunity levels high during a time when they are not getting enough training exposure.

"PM Sir urged us to post videos about the awareness campaign. He gave us a few pointers like *Laxman Rekha* (Don't cross the line while maintaining social distancing), *Sankalp Lena* (Taking a pledge not to step out)"

He said *Dhairyra Rakhtina* (don't press the panic button). He also advised us to boost our immune system and stay fit by doing daily exercises," she revealed.

Tennis player Anika Raina said the PM equated the virus to an unknown opposition.

"(He) told us that athletes are stronger mentally and have the quality to adapt to different conditions and in unknown territories. So he wanted us to spread the positive and encouraging message

since this is also an unknown territory (fight against coronavirus)," she said.



UEFA Champions League trophy. UCL/Twitter

Clubs risk CL axe if seasons not completed: UEFA

AFP ■ PARIS

UEFA and Europe's top clubs have stated their determination that the current football season should be played to a conclusion and threatened that teams may be excluded from the next Champions League if their domestic competitions are ended prematurely.

In a joint letter released late on Thursday, UEFA, the European Club Association (ECA), and the European Leagues body representing nearly a thousand clubs in 29 countries, said that they were working on the possibility of playing on into July and August if need be.

The Champions League and Europa League — both sporting titles awarded on the basis of seasons are finished, and "stopping competitions should really be the last resort after acknowledging that no calendar alternative would allow to conclude the season."

The joint response came after the Belgian Pro League announced on Thursday that it recommended declaring the season over with the present table accepted as final.

It is the first European league to take such a measure, although more could follow.

That means Club Brugge would in theory go straight into the next Champions League group stage, but UEFA, the ECA and the European Leagues indicated that they may be barred from continental competition if the Belgian league decision is finalised.

"It is of paramount importance that even a disruptive event like this epidemic does not prevent our competitions from being decided on the field, in accordance with their rules and the European treaties are awarded on the basis of results," the joint letter said.

"We are confident that football can restart in the months to come — with conditions that will be dictated by public authorities — and believe that any decision of abandoning domestic competitions is, at this stage, premature and not justified."

"Since participation in UEFA club competitions is determined by the sporting result achieved at the end of a full domestic competition, a premature termination would cast doubts about the fulfilment of such condition."

The letter concluded: "UEFA reserves the right to assess television deals and who could be admitted to the 2020/21 UEFA club competitions."

There have been calls in other countries for this season to be declared null and void, but any option which rules out completing this season could have serious consequences for leagues reliant on television deals and who could find themselves having to reimburse broadcasters if remaining matches are not played.

SA cricketers symptom-free after returning from India

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

All the South African players, who returned from their incomplete ODI tour of India, were found to be symptom-free of coronavirus and those who underwent tests returned negative results, according to the team's chief medical officer Shuaib Manjra.

The Proteas, who returned from India on March 18, completed a 14-day period of self-isolation on Thursday, but will remain in lockdown for the next two weeks just like the rest of the country.

"All the players were symptom-free and those who opted to per-



form the tests returned negative results," Manjra was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

The first match in Dharamsala on March 12 was washed out while the second and third games to be played in Lucknow and Kolkata — on March 15 and 18 respectively — were called off indefinitely.

South Africa is in the midst of a 21-day nationwide lockdown, which prohibits leaving home except to buy food or medicine and does not allow for any outdoor activities.

CSA's focus now is on maintaining the players' fitness and trainer Tumi Masekela has sent all

the players their training programmes.

"We've got time now to work with players in terms of addressing the small niggles that they may have. They have got time to rest and also to do the strength work," he said.

"But the one big thing is the running volume, the aerobic capacity base, which I am going to try and build up in the next two weeks, so that means lot of cycling, or a lot of cardio work, running or swimming."

The South African team doesn't have any international match lined up until June.

Life is most important now, IPL can wait: Raina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The IPL can wait till millions of lives, which are at risk due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, are saved, veteran India batsman Suresh Raina.

Raina has already done his bit in this fight against the deadly virus by donating ₹52 lakh. "Ask about the IPL, which has been postponed to April 15 but is unlikely to take place in the near future, Raina says "it is all about life" at the moment.

"Life is most important at this point of time, can't we wait. We all need to follow the government guidelines on lockdown else we all face the consequences. When life gets better, we can think about the IPL. So many people are dying at the moment, we need to save lives," Raina said.

Raina, whose last competitive game was the IPL final last year, was busy preparing for the 2020 edition in Chennai before the nationwide lockdown was announced. His tour of England was also supposed to be M S Dhoni's comeback event.



Suresh Raina waits for his turn to bat during CSK training session. CSK/Twitter

Indian badminton goes online



Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in action. BWF/Twitter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"Gopi sir sends us program schedule every day on WhatsApp. It involves mainly meditation, wall practice where I hit the shuttle on the wall, play my strokes and drives, which helps to strengthen the forearm," Chirag said.

"We are also doing at least an hour of training in the evening with a trainer. Dinaz does a video-call through Zoom app and everybody joins in and then we practice together."

Talking about the program, Satwik said, "Gopi sir's program is a combination of a lot of things like wall practice, skipping, small exercises, breathing exercises, it is more like simulating the actions whatever is possible at home to stay sharp."

"Every alternate day, we also have Dinaz taking our fitness classes. She gives us very interesting and different fitness programs, so it is fun. Almost everyone is there, Sikki (Reddy), Ashwini (Ponnappa), Sai (B Sai Praneeth), Guru (RMV Gurusaidutt), Kashyap (Parupalli) and (HS) Pranshu," Satwik said.

"While online sessions can keep the shuttlers fit mentally and physically for the time being, to get back to being match ready might be challenging once BWF restarts the international calendar."

However, Gopichand assured that players will get at least six weeks to prepare for tournaments once there is resumption.

"We don't know when the badminton circuit will start but whenever it starts, they will give you 6-8 weeks of headstart," he said.

The men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who were assured of a place in the Olympics, is also part of the group which is following the tips.

Everyone keen for IPL to go ahead: Cummins

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The costliest foreign player in Indian Premier League, Pat Cummins says everyone, including the Australian cricket board, is keen for the 2020 edition of the T20 event to go ahead sometime later.

The Australian, however, conceded that the priority now is to minimise the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

"Everyone is still really keen for (IPL) to go ahead, but the

priority is to minimise risk of it spreading," Cummins was quoted as saying by the Australian Associated Press.

The 26-year-old Australian has been in constant contact with the Kolkata Knight Riders team which bought him for a whopping ₹15.5 crore last December at the auction, as everyone waits for the league's fate.

"It's a holding pattern... The last I spoke to them, they were still really confident and hopeful it'll be on at some stage," he said.



Pat Cummins. AP

IOC announce new deadline for Oly qualification period

IANAS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Friday that the new deadline for the qualification period for the postponed Tokyo Olympics has been set to June 29, 2021. It further stated that International Federations (IF) of each sport retain full discretion in defining their own respective deadlines and pathways.

"The new qualification period deadline is June 29, 2021 and IFs can define their own qualification period in their respective pathways prior to this date," said the IOC in a letter addressed to the National Olympic Committees (NOC).

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The IOC said that it aims to finalise the qualification systems "by mid-April" with details on specific events to follow when available.

"The priority remains to reflect, where possible, the allocation method/pathway of the original qualification systems for each sport. This principle encourages IFs to follow a like-for-like approach by replacing those lost opportunities that were allocating

quota with the same number of events," it said.

Importantly, the IOC said that in case of sports with age group-based limits, it is willing to extend the criteria in the case of those athletes who had qualified for the 2020 Olympics.

"The only exception will be if the IF establishes that the one-year relaxation of the upper age limit represents a safety and/or medical risk for athletes. Regarding the eligibility criteria for the lower age limit, if any, the IOC recognises the full authority of IFs to assess the eligibility of those athletes who are not eligible in July 2020 but meet the lower age limit in 2021," said the IOC.

FIH extend Pro League suspension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The International Hockey Federation has been forced to extend the suspension of FIH Pro League's second edition to July 2021.

The FIH was forced to suspend the Pro League twice earlier due to the pandemic. The world hockey body first had postponed all matches scheduled before April 15 and later extended the deferment till May 17.

"Now, following the uncertainty of the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, FIH and the participating National Associations (NAs) have decided to consider the month of July and the beginning of August 2020 to play matches of the FIH Hockey Pro League if the health situation improves," FIH CEO Thierry Weil said.

"At present, all matches planned in the current schedule are on hold until further notice."

Ancelotti wants fair play on season restart date

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti is capable of being physically ready within a fortnight.

Ancelotti, who took over at Everton in December, has won the Champions League as a player and coach and has led teams to league titles in Italy, Germany, France and England.



Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti. PL

"One of the important things is that all the clubs resume training at the same time. There are no disparities, that no one has an advantage over the others," the 60-year-old Italian told L'Espresso. "Players nowadays

are capable of being physically ready within a fortnight."

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Wimbledon chief fears 'no more tennis this year'

AFP ■ LONDON

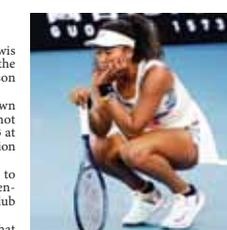
Wimbledon chief Richard Lewis admitted on Wednesday that he fears the remainder of the 2020 tennis season could be wiped out.

Tennis has been in lockdown since early last month and is not scheduled to return until July 13 at the earliest following the cancellation of Wimbledon on Wednesday.

"I don't think it's unrealistic to say that there may be no more tennis this year," said All England Club chief executive Lewis.

"But I would like to think that things will settle down so that tournaments can be played sooner rather than later. Who knows what will happen?"

Lewis told the Guardian that, despite his fears, he hoped that the



Wimbledon chief Richard Lewis. AFP

season's next Grand Slam, the US Open in August-September could take place.

"Let's hope the US Open and Roland Garros (rescheduled to start

in Paris a week after the final of the US Open in New York) can take place," he added.

"The optimist in me — and I am often not optimistic — still hopes the American hard-court season, the big tournaments, the Masters and the Premiers, will take place: Montreal, Toronto and then Cincinnati."

"But we all know that's probably tenuous at the moment."

Earlier, the president of the Spanish tennis federation, Miguel Diaz, said he hoped the sport could return to the courts "in the last quarter of the year."

"I think that in the last quarter of the season we will be able to see tennis again, we don't know if it will be with fans in attendance or without, but I think our sport will return to the courts," said Diaz.

Farah has no qualms over Tokyo delay

LONDON

British distance great Mo Farah has insisted he still intends to compete at the Tokyo Olympics even though they have been delayed a year by the coronavirus.

Farah will have celebrated his 38th birthday by the time of the rescheduled Games and there are concerns that athletes who had planned to be in peak form this year may not reach the same heights in 12 months' time.

But the four-time Olympic Gold medallist backed the postponement and was adamant it would not affect his ability to compete.

"The Olympics was about the last thing to get cancelled. In a way obviously it's disappointing it has been cancelled but I am glad it has been cancelled," Farah told TalkSport radio on Friday.

Farah, who won Olympics Gold in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres at both the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Games, added

a delay was preferable to trying to fit in an Olympics without sufficient training time and warm-up races.

"It is a way that could have been in a far worse situation, there are no races leading up to it, athletes can't test themselves," he said.

"I would probably need about six, seven, eight races beforehand to see what kind of shape I am in," explained Farah. "It is what it is and it gives us another year of preparation."

"At the moment, nobody is thinking about that. I am still running every day, just trying to get through this crisis time."

"It is not just sport, it is affecting everything we do. It is a difficult situation for everyone and particularly for the older people, the more vulnerable."

"We just have to stay together, stay strong. We just have to get through this. It is a test for everyone in the world and it is growing." AFP