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LIGHT AT
THE END OF TUNNEL

WORLD 9
VIRUS TO RETARD INDIA'S
GDP RATE TO 4.8%: UN

SPORT 12
LABBADIA SUCCEEDS
KLINSMANN AT HERTHA

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY APRIL 10, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Biggest spike in corona cases

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

ARCHANA JYOTI/TN
RAGHUNATHA ■
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

Tamil Nadu added 96 new cases on Thursday to reach a

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

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

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

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

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



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

date. Positivity rate ranges between 3-5 per cent in the last 1-1.5 months. It has not increased substantially, said a senior scientist from the ICMR. Meanwhile, the analysis of the death rate showed some interesting findings. Till April 8, Maharashtra reported 72 deaths and 1,135 cases, which worked out to a mortality rate of 6.34 per cent, which incidentally is the third highest in the country, according to an analytical report released by the Medical Education and Drugs Department.

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First death in Gurugram

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

Dharavi 3rd death raises concerns

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAPSULE

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

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

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

After panic, sealed areas come to terms



Police outside a sealed Pandav Nagar J-Block Gali number-9 which has been marked as a hotspot for COVID-19 in New Delhi on Thursday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Operation SHIELD launched in Delhi

CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

"During the exercise,



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

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

Continued on Page 2

Saudi royal family afflicted with corona

AGENCY ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Harvesting problem crops up in lockdown

SHEKHAR SINGH/CHANDAN PRAKASH ■ NEW DELHI

Farmers in Delhi and the neighbouring States are at their wits' end as the lockdown and labour shortage have made it difficult for them to start harvesting the Rabi crop. Exemption for agricultural operation by the State Governments has come to their rescue in this situation.

Farmers in Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh said their crops are ripe to be harvested but there is shortage of labourers, harvesting machines and even there are no adathes (middlemen) in Anaj Mandi. The lockdown also led to an unprecedented exodus of workers from their places of work, to their homes in far-flung villages across the country.

The Pioneer visited villages



in Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh and bordering villages of Delhi, where farmers rued that the shortage of labour and the lockdown has crippled the wholesale market.

Some farmers harvested wheat in March, but most of them harvest their crops by mid-April to May first week.

Continued on Page 2

Here kids invoke Dhanvantari to save mankind

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

While epidemiologists and micro bacterium specialists are working round-the-clock all over the world to develop a medicine for COVID-19, Veda Patha Shalas (schools teaching Vedas and Upanishads) in Tamil Nadu villages echo with recitation of Dhanvantari mantras (shlokas invoking Lord Dhanvantari, believed to be an incarnation of Lord Mahavishnu) to ward off the disease and save mankind.

Children in the age group of 8-15, who study Vedas in Kumbakonam's Veda Patha Shala in Kathira Mangalam village, wake up early morning, finish their morning ablution and commence reciting the Dhanvantari mantra hundreds of thousands times. More than the songs of the cuckoos, what wakes up the villagers each morning is "Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya



Dhanvantarye Amritakalasha Hastaya..." the recitation of the time-tested Dhanvantari mahamantra, the famous shloka from Vedic times.

The shloka is recited by the students of Vedic science and they have only one prayer to make to the Maker: "Save the world and save the lives from

this pandemic."

Not only in Veda Patha Shalas in Tamil Nadu villages but even in far away the United States of America, one can hear the chanting of Dhanvantari mantra. Dr Rekha Sreekanth, paramedical scientist, begins her day reciting the Dhanvantari mantra by joining

the deeparadhana in the temple in her native place through facebook daily. "We have facebook live from our temple at deeparadhana time (doesn't show the sanctum sanctorum) but we have that feeling of visiting the temple and then the priest chants it," she said over telephone from Houston.

Dr R Krishnamurthi Sastry, Mahamahopadhyaya and a scholar who has been honoured by the President of India, told *The Pioneer* that Dhanvantari himself is the embodiment of medicine and has the power to remove all diseases. "If children in the age group of 8-15, which is the period of innocence, collectively recite this shloka, it will have the power to remove not only COVID-19 but any disease. Otherwise this ritual would not have been there. Recitation of Dhanvantari mahamantra and Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra have been

around for centuries," said the Mahamahopadhyaya, widely respected scholar in Tamil Nadu.

Yet another proof of the influence of the movement of stars and planets on the well-being of the world was pointed out by Thantrik and Vedic scholar Parappanangadi Unnikrishna Panikkar. He quoted from Western publications, especially from a book authored by Barbara Tuchman, the Pulitzer prize winning historian who had found that the Bubonic Plague (1346-1353) which had claimed nearly 200 million people in Eurasia was the fallout of the conjunction of the planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the house of the Aquarius.

"This is not the claim of the author but what was found out by the Medical Faculty of the University of Paris in 1348," said Panikkar.

Continued on Page 2

Poll not possible, Maha CM takes nomination route to become MLC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With the Election Commission of India having postponed the impending elections to the Maharashtra Legislative Council from MLA constituency owing to the lockdown, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has taken to the Governor's nomination route to become an MLC before the end of the stipulated six-month deadline for him to get elected to either of the Houses of State Legislature.

Uddhav, who was sworn in as the CM on November 28 last year, will in the normal course have to get elected to either of the Houses on or before April 28.

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Record 25 Covid deaths in Maharashtra in day

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the highest number of deaths recorded in a day since the outbreak of the pandemic, as many as 25 people on Thursday succumbed to Covid-19 in Maharashtra taking the total number of deaths to 97 in the State, while an alarming 229 people tested positive for coronavirus in the State.

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

A 101-year-old woman was among those who died on Thursday. Of the 25 persons whose deaths were reported on Thursday, 12 were above 60 years, while 11 deceased were in the age group of 40 and 60 years. Two of the deceased were aged below 40 years.

Among the deceased, 73 per cent of them were suffering from diabetes, blood pressure, Asthma, heart disease and similar ailments.

With the latest fatalities, the total number of Covid-19 deaths rose from 72 to 97. Of the total deaths, Mumbai accounted for 54, followed by Pune (24). Similarly, there was a sharp jump in the infections



Beneficiaries ignoring social distancing norms wait outside a bank to withdraw COVID-19 relief money from their Jan Dhan accounts during ongoing nationwide lockdown in Solapur, Maharashtra, on Thursday

in the State. In the highest infected cases reported in a day so far, the state recorded 229 positive cases on Thursday.

With the new cases, the total number of positive cases in the state has risen to 1364.

Meanwhile, the medical bulletin put out by the State health department said: "Out of 30766 laboratory samples, 28865 were negative and 1365 have been tested positive for coronavirus until today. Seventy nine patients have been discharged till date after full recovery".

"As many as 36533 people are in home quarantine and 4731 people are in institutional quarantine," the bulletin said.

In a related development, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said in its daily medical bulletin: "Contact tracing and containments activ-

ities are on. As part of contact tracing efforts, the BMC as surveyed more than 15 lakh population through health teams till date. We have identified 2806 high risk contacts which are referred for testing".

"Also 1500 samples were collected by five teams by way of home visits. Because of vigorous action in a containment zone and timely quarantine of contacts, reduction in the cases in these areas is seen," the bulletin said.

"Special screening clinics have been conducted at periphery of containment zones by doctors, nurses and lab technicians. 40 Such clinics conducted up to April 8 in which out of 1588 beneficiaries 442 swabs have been collected from suspected cases," the bulletin added.

Keep operational assets virus free: Navy Chief

Personnel asked to ensure social distancing in submarines, warships

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of more than 100 sailors testing positive onboard a US aircraft carrier, Navy Chief Admiral Kambir Singh on Thursday asked his personnel to ensure social distancing in submarines and warships to avoid coronavirus pandemic.

The captain of the US ship had later resigned.

Asking the rank and file of the Navy to redouble current efforts to ensure that all personnel and their families are safe, the Navy Chief in a video message said the services are the last bastion and "if the care givers become care seekers it will be a big problem." "It is going to be a long battle," he cautioned.

Singh also said "We have to ensure that our operational assets, specifically ships and submarine, remain free from the virus. It is a very difficult task because physical distancing onboard ships and especially submarines is very tough... but physically we will maintain the required distance

of six feet," he said in a video message released to the force.

Stating that the challenge is not over yet and it is only going to intensify in days and weeks ahead, Adm Singh said, "It will require us to augment our preparedness. It can be no longer business as usual. We need to take concrete measures so that we are geared and prepared to tackle the full onslaught of this deadly virus."

He outlined three priorities to all personnel. First is to redouble the current efforts to ensure that our personnel and our families are safe, ensure operational assets, specifically ships and submarine, remain free from the virus. Second is how can we support the overall national effort which the Navy is already contributing in a big way across all stations, he observed. He also said the spirit of innovation over the last two weeks has been very heartening referring to various developments like the hand held thermal scanner, assisted respiratory devices among others that were adapted for usage. Looking ahead, Singh said

everyone should keep our guard up and "retain our sights on being combat ready." "Operational readiness must remain an imp priority. We should hope for the best and plan for the worst. We need to be ready for the worst case scenario. It is going to be a long battle."

Once the lockdown is lifted, he said movement by personnel will be done in a deliberate and coordinated fashion. It might be delayed but there should be no rush, he stated.

In case situation worsens, he said the Navy should scale up facilities to handle people, facilitate cross state movement from one coastal state to another, assist local authorities in law and order, prepare make short vehicles for movement and intensity efforts for community kitchens and support groups among other measures. "All this while ensuring that perimeter security and overall security, access control, surveillance and response to asymmetric threat should never go down," he added.

Chhattisgarh records highest single-day spike in virus cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Gloom shrouds Chhattisgarh as the highest single-day spike in the Covid-19 cases was recorded on Thursday, with seven people tested positive at Katghora area in Korba district, taking the number of coronavirus active cases to nine in the State.

State's Health Minister TS Singhdeo told newsmen that all the seven new cases are linked to Tablighi Jamaat and are suspected to have been infected by a boy, who had earlier tested positive for the virus after he returned from the religious congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin.

The seven new people who tested positive for the virus in the State on Thursday include six men and a woman, the Minister said. Earlier, there were 10 positive Covid-19 cases in the State and after nine of them recovered and were discharged, only one person—a youngster from Katghora linked to Tablighi Jamaat—was still undergoing treatment.

One more person, a 52-year-old man from Katghora, has tested positive on Wednesday. The case is different from the others as the person who tested positive, did not have any travel history abroad or to any other State, although he had come in contact with the youngster, who returned from Tablighi Jamaat Markaz in Nizamuddin, official sources in AIIMS, Raipur said.

TOUGH TIME AHEAD: HEALTH MINISTER

Raipur: State Health Minister TS Singhdeo in a statement has appealed the people of the state to be alert over the contagious disease. "Proper care must be taken while maintaining distance from the persons who have returned from outside the state and who were in quarantine or in home isolation," he said. "A tough time is ahead in form of community transmission and people should be extra cautious over the matter in order to prevent themselves from the pandemic," he added. **SR**

₹15,841 crore released for farmers under PM-KISAN scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Agriculture on Thursday said that an amount of ₹15,841 crore has been released to 7.92 crore farmer families under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme in view of the coronavirus outbreak and the nationwide lockdown. The money has been transferred to those farmers whose bank account is linked with the

Adhaar.

The Central Government has advanced the first installment of PM-KISAN payout for the April-June quarter. There are 14.5 crore farmers in the country. Officials said that this will enable growers to somewhat tide over the difficult financial position due to closure of mandis and difficulties in selling their harvested produce.

So far in 2019-20, the Centre has distributed almost

₹54,000 crore through PM-KISAN, a scheme under which it gives ₹2,000 per quarter to growers to meet their input cost requirement.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, the Centre transfers an amount of ₹6,000 per year, in three equal instalments, directly into the bank accounts of the farmers, subject to certain exclusion criteria relating to higher income status.

TN, U'khand emerge as hotspots for pangolin trafficking, researchers warn

NEW DELHI: As pangolins come under the scanner as potential intermediate hosts of the novel coronavirus transferred from bats to humans, Indian wildlife conservationists warn that the States of Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand are emerging as the hotspots for the poaching of the endangered scaly anteater mammal.

A recent study, published in the journal Cell, had placed pangolins as a natural reservoir of coronaviruses similar to SARS-CoV-2, the one behind the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another recent study had identified the presence of SARS-CoV-2 like viruses in Malayan pangolins smuggled into China to be sold in wet markets.

In these markets, pangolins find demand both in food and traditional medicine, making

them the most-commonly trafficked mammal.

"The discovery of multiple lineages of pangolin coronavirus and their similarity to SARS-CoV-2 suggests that pangolins should be considered as possible hosts in the emergence of novel coronaviruses and should be removed from wet markets to prevent zoonotic transmission," said Ved Kumar, a former wildlife conservationist with Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and founder of Maaty Biodiversity Conservation & Societal Research Organisation in Uttarakhand.

Kumar told PTI that over the last decade, the demand for pangolin biological parts in China and other Southern Asian markets has increased due to their perceived medicinal properties, and value as a delicacy.

Biggest spike in corona...

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On the other hand, Gujarat with 19 death and 179 infected cases has topped the list with a mortality rate of 8.94 per cent, while Punjab ranks second with eight deaths and 101 infected cases has a mortality rate of 7.92 per cent.

Kerala with just two deaths and 345 infected cases recorded the lowest mortality rate of 0.57 per cent, while Rajasthan with three deaths and 381 infected cases has emerged second lowest in terms of mortality rate which is just 0.78 per cent.

Tamil Nadu with eight deaths 737 infected cases has also fared well by emerging as a State with third lowest mortality rate of 1.10 per cent. Surprisingly, Uttar Pradesh with four deaths and four infected

cases has done well by coming out as a State with fourth lowest mortality figure of 1.10 per cent.

The relatively low mortality rates in other States include: Andhra Pradesh - 1.14 per cent (4 deaths, 348 infected cases), Delhi - 1.34 per cent (nine deaths, 669 infected cases),

Telangana - 1.67 per cent (7 deaths, 427 infected cases) and Haryana - 2.04 per cent (three deaths, 147 infected cases).

In the high mortality list, Madhya Pradesh with 13 deaths and 229 cases has emerged as the fourth -- 5.68 per cent. Himachal Pradesh with just one death and 18 positive cases has a mortality rate of 5.55 per cent -- followed by West Bengal with five deaths and 103 positive cases which has notched a mortality rate of 4.85 per cent.

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir with four deaths and 158 infected cases has passed the muster by settling for a mortality rate of 2.53 per

cent. Karnataka with five deaths and 181 positive cases (mortality rate 2.76 per cent) has done better than West Bengal with five death and 103 infected cases has notched sixth highest mortality rate of 4.85 per cent.

Bihar with one death and 38 infected cases and Odisha with one death and 42 infected cases have recorded mortality rates of 2.63 per cent and 2.38 per cent respectively.

In significant finding, northeastern States with collective 32 infected cases -- Assam (28) and one each in Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura - have recorded zero mortality rate.

The other States like Uttarakhand with 33 infected cases, Chandigarh with 18, Union Territory of Ladakh with 14, Andabar & Nicobar Islands with 11, Chhattisgarh with 10, Goa with 7, Puducherry with 5, Jharkhand with 4 cases have not reported any death and their mortality rate zero.

After panic, sealed areas come to terms

From Page 1

The CM appealed to people living in containment areas to cooperate in implementing "Operation SHIELD" and said these are strict measures but are necessary to protect them and others from COVID-19.

During the day, police teams through public announcement (PA) system urged people to stay indoors and follow the orders.

When contacted, the residents said they were looking forward to a relaxation of the lockdown next week but were taken by surprise when they came to know that their localities have been completely sealed.

Many people having pets could not even take them out for walks. Rajesh, who has a Labrador, said his pet has been restless since morning. "At most, I can allow him to go till the balcony but that is not enough for him," he said.

"People queued up outside the store inside the society to buy milk. Initially, while standing in the queue, they maintained a safe distance but later it all went for a toss. Seeing the situation, it was later announced that the essential products will be delivered at their doorstep but that

too was delayed," said a resident of Gandhi Park in Malviya Nagar.

As panic gripped, residents of apartment buildings in Mayur Vihar extension where Vardhman apartment was sealed, said they have now stocked essentials for two days but if it extends they will be not able to cope with the situation as several residents in the society complained about delay in delivery of essentials for 5 to 6 hours.

Elaborating the operation during an online briefing, Kejriwal said under the first 'S' of the operation, the Government seals the area immediately and its surroundings after geographical marking following positive cases there.

"In the next stage, we put people of sealed areas under home quarantine and then in the third stage, the process begins to isolate those who have symptoms of COVID-19 and trace their contacts," he said.

About 'E' character of 'Operation SHIELD', Kejriwal explained that the Government ensures home-delivery of essential items.

"After this stage, the Government sanitises such areas where one or two positive cases have been found.

"Under 'D', checking of door-to-door houses is conducted to ascertain whether anybody in containment has cough or any other symptoms of

COVID-19," the Chief Minister also said. Talking about the incident of assault on two women resident doctors of Safdarjung Hospital in Gautam Nagar area, he said the Government will not tolerate such incidents.

"These days, doctors and nurses have been putting their lives in danger by treating COVID-19 patients.

"We will take strictest action against those misbehaving with healthcare personnel," Kejriwal said.

The warning comes a day after two women resident doctors of Safdarjung Hospital were allegedly assaulted by a 42-year-old man who accused them of "spreading" COVID-19 in Gautam Nagar area.

The CM said on Wednesday, the Government made it compulsory for people to wear masks while stepping out of their houses.

"We understand that people are facing problems, but measures taken by authorities are necessary to contain coronavirus," he said.

The Government has also cut expenses as tax collection is almost stopped, Kejriwal said, adding that everyone will also have to cut their expenses of their level in view of the current situation.

According to him, the Delhi Government was giving free rations to 71 lakh people in the

city. Meanwhile, South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) carried out a "massive" disinfection drive at various hotspots identified in areas such as Gandhi Park, Malviya Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Shahajahanabad society, Sector-11 Dwarka, Dinpur Village, Markaz Masjid, Nizamuddin, Basti, Nizamuddin West.

A senior SDMC official said the civic body has deployed 10 tankers, eight jetting machines, two fire tenders and 50 sanitation workers are deployed for spraying the disinfectants in these areas. "Nearly 50 kilogram disinfectants solution was sprayed in these areas. All the sanitation workers with power sprayers wearing full body PPE (Hazmat suit) sanitised the identified hotspots," he said.

"As Nizamuddin Markaz is biggest hotspot, special disinfection drives are being conducted on regular basis. The special squad of 11 sanitation workers are deputed to clean and sanitise the Markaz building and its surrounding areas," he said, adding that the team included sweeping personal, disinfectant personal, garbage disposal squad and transportation staff.

The official said the Markaz building was also cleaned thoroughly and 200 kg of untreated garbage was collected and dispatched for incineration to waste to energy plant.

35 workers...

From Page 1

As per the direction of District Magistrate (New Delhi) the two persons from Bengali Market who showed "influenza-like illness" (ILI) symptoms were taken to RML Hospital for Covid-19 testing on Thursday. "Taking precautionary measures, they have been shifted to one of the quarantine centre," the official said.

The NDMC has carried out an extensive disinfection drive in areas of Bengali Market, Babar Road and adjoining lanes, sub-lanes, residential complexes, parks of the area keeping in view the importance of disinfection and sanitation in this time. The civic body used 6,000 liters of 1 per cent solution of hypochlorite to disinfect the area.

A team of more than 20 persons led by Chief Medical Officer (projects), Dr Shakuntala Srivastava and director of horticulture S Chellaiah. The move came a day after the Delhi Government sealed Bengali Market area of New Delhi after it was found to be one of the hotspots for COVID-19 transmission.

Apart from that, the daily sanitation and door-to-door garbage collection remained undisturbed, it said, adding that regular announcement through (public announcement) PA system has been made in the area by deputed police officials for maintaining social distancing, regular hand wash and adhering to mandate of use of mask for containment of Covid 19 infection.

Poll not possible...

From Page 1

The State Cabinet, at a meeting presided over by deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, on Thursday decided to recommend to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari to nominate Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray as a Member of Legislative Council, from one of the two vacant slots.

"Given the current lockdown situation, there is little likelihood of elections to the State Legislature being held now. There are two vacant slots for which the Governor can nominate members. The State Cabinet today

decided to recommend to the Governor to nominate Uddhav Thackeray for one of these two vacant slots," an official release said here.

There are nine MLCs who will be retiring on April 24 from Upper House. In the normal course, the Election Commission was to hold the elections to fill these posts and Uddhav was to contest these elections. However, the EC has postponed these elections. Faced with a piquant situation which meant that Uddhav would have had to resign from his post as the chief minister leading to the dissolution of his Cabinet-- in the event of his not getting elected to the Upper House on or before April 28, Uddhav has chosen to seek nomination from the Governor's quota.

Odisha 1st State...

From page 1

The CM said Odisha reported the first COVID-19 case on March 15 and the number went up to 42 till Wednesday which was not an exponential rise. It was made possible because of the discipline and sacrifice of the

people of the state, he said.

Though lockdown period has been extended, Patnaik said activities related to agriculture, animal husbandry and MGNREGS will be facilitated. However, social distancing norms will be followed in all spheres. Food security, he said, was a major priority for the state and transportation of essential supplies will continue unhindered.

Harvesting...

From Page 1

Pushpendra Chaudhary, the president of Kisan Shakti Sangh said despite good Rabi crop, farmers have been left in the lurch as they are facing issues while delivering harvested fruits, vegetables, milk and other food products due to lack of transportation.

"Somehow if they manage to send the produce in the market, they have to face blockades at several points which had also led to steep rise in agriculture products across the states despite being availability of products. The Government should initiate some steps to allow free passage to farmers so that they can send their products without hassle," said Chaudhary.

"Labourers who used to harvest our fields have now returned to their homes. Who are staying back are ready to work but now issue is that man power is less and there are no tools and equipment to harvest crops available in market," said Ravi Khatri, a villager in Haryana's Ismaila village near Rohtak.

"If somehow both machines and labourers manage to harvest the crop, there will be no takers as grain markets are closed. Despite being in essential services farmers have also developed fear of coronavirus and they are also avoiding going out. Same issue is with the labourers. We are left with no

other option as crop has ripened and has started to fall in fields, which is a loss to farmer," Khatri added.

Kishan Singh of Bawana village was ruing the lockdown as he happily sits at his home but can't go to his field where wheat is ready to be harvested. There are hundreds of others like him who are faced with bleak times ahead and are praying for the lockdown to be lifted by the Government.

The agriculture contributes some 16 per cent to the country's GDP. India is one of the world's largest producers of crops like rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton, vegetables and milk. Now there are concerns that stopping farm activity will not only end up hurting farmers and labourers but also affect food security. Expressing concern, Ajay Bhalla (Home Secretary, Government of India) has written to Chief Secretaries to all States on April 3, stating that however exceptions have been allowed for farming operation for farmers, farm workers, procurement of agricultural productions, operation of mandis, movement of harvesting and sowing related machineries but as per information received these exceptions have not been percolated at ground level. It may be noted that the winter crop - wheat, rice and pulses - and fruits are harvested and sold during month of April and June. After that the fields are prepared for the sowing of summer rain-fed crop, comprising paddy, pulses, cotton and sugarcane.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi					
TENDER NOTICE Date: 10.04.2020					
BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd., Delhi intends to invite tenders from all bidders in two envelope system for following jobs.					
NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/AR/849	AWARD OF WORK FOR CARRYING OUT DT CLEANING/ REVAMPING WORK FOR TWO (02) DIVISIONS IN BRPL	2.08 Crore	4.16 Lacs	30.04.2020 15:30 HRS.	30.04.2020 15:45 HRS.
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/AR/AN/850	"Hiring of Intermediaries for Bill Collection through Kiosk via Cash/ Cheque/Card Transactions in BRPL"	55.00 Lacs	1.10 Lacs	30.04.2020 15:30 HRS.	30.04.2020 15:45 HRS.
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/AR/AN/851	"Hiring of Intermediaries for Bill Collection through Gateway/Online/Cheque/Cash Transaction in BRPL"	45.00 Lacs	0.90 Lacs	30.04.2020 15:30 HRS.	30.04.2020 15:45 HRS.
Cost of each Tender Document : ₹1180/					
For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submition of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com Head (Contracts & Materials)					
Regd. Off.: BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 Corporate Identification No.: U40106DL2001PLC111527 Telephone No.: +91 11 3999 9444 E-mail: brpl.auction@refinancesda.com Website: www.bsesdelhi.com					

Here kids invoke Dhanwantari to...

From Page 1

"In the year of 1345, on March 20, there was a conjunction of the planets Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the house of Aquarius. The conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter portends death and disaster. The conjunction of Mars and Jupiter portends pestilence in the air. For Jupiter is evil and humid and draws up vapours from earth

and water; Mars is hot and dry and kindles the evil into an ineffective fire. We must therefore expect a terrible calamity," Barbara Tuchman quotes the findings of the medical faculty which probed the reasons for the pandemic in her book A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century. The book bagged the 1980 National Book Award in History.

FOR HOTSPOTS

Operation SHIELD to contain virus spread

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Thursday launched its operation "SHIELD" to contain corona spread and protect citizens from the deadly virus.

At initial stage, operation "SHIELD" will be implemented in those 21 locations which have been sealed on Wednesday due to escalation in corona positive cases.

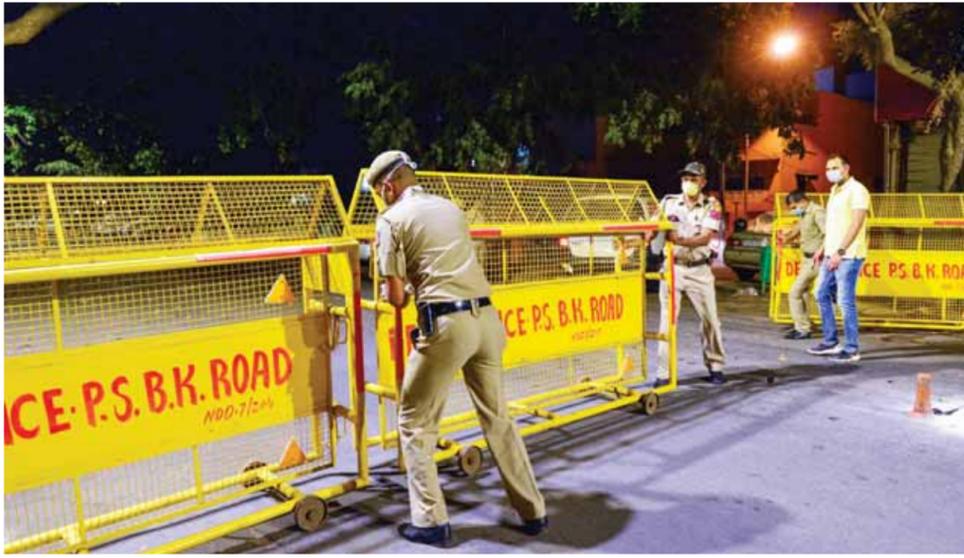
Announcing the launch of operation, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said these are strict measure but are necessary to protect everyone from COVID-19.

The administration officials, along with National Disaster Management officials under the supervision of Kejriwal and Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal, have taken the lead to contain the spread.

Announcing the operation, CM Kejriwal said SHIELD stands for strict measure to contain the virus spread.

"In our operation SHIELD - S stands for sealing, this means that to seal those localities which are marked with Corona zone," said Kejriwal.

Keeping in mind to stop the virus from further spread, Kejriwal administration on



Police officials seal the Bengali Market area after a case of coronavirus was reported during the lockdown in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

Wednesday sealed 21 localities where corona cases were registered high in number.

Elaborating further, Kejriwal said next letter is H. "The letter H here stands for Home Quarantine (HQ), this means whosoever is corona

positive will have to remain under quarantine as per Government orders."

Adding further, Kejriwal said next letter in SHIELD is L. "L stands for Isolation and tracing. Corona positive cases will have to isolate themselves,

the Government will trace his/her contacts in order to stop virus transmission chain."

With blanket sealing in 21 hotspots, the Delhi Government will provide essential items to people to encourage them to stay indoors. And for this, next

in operation SHIELD is E. "E stands for door to door supply of essential items, for instance - Milk, Vegetables and Medicines," Kejriwal said while interacting online.

As cleanliness is major mantra in order to keep people

healthy and to kill virus droplets in condensed form, the Government has decided to run local sanitation drive. Thus, L stands for - Local Sanitisation.

The last letter D stands for door to door testing.

While testing is the only way to detect the virus, Kejriwal Government will do door to door checking of people for timely identification of positive cases.

"I appeal to all living in the containment areas to cooperate with the Govt's operation SHIELD. These are strict measures but are necessary to protect you and others from COVID-19," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal also mentioned that Government will cut all expenditures and will focus on ration distribution.

Citing incidents of misbehaviour with doctors and other health workers, Kejriwal warned people of stringent action if found harassing doctors/ medical staff.

He referred to the incident in which two women resident doctors of Safdarjung Hospital were allegedly assaulted by a 42-year-old man who accused them of "spreading" COVID-19 in Gautam Nagar area although the man was arrested after the complaint was lodged.

75-year-old Italian dies in Gurugram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram district witnessed its first coronavirus death on Thursday as a 75-year-old Italian national died during treatment at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugram.

This is the first death of a foreign national in the city due to COVID-19. With this, the number of deaths due to coronavirus in Haryana has increased to 2.

VS Kundu, additional chief secretary and nodal officer of COVID-19 of Gurugram said that the district administration is investigating the cause of death of the woman.

He said that 14 people from Italy were admitted to Medanta Hospital on the request of the Government of India on March 5. 11 of these people have recovered and returned.

However, 2 others were being treated at Medanta Hospital while one woman died.

According to the government health bulletins, the number of corona patients has reached 156 in the state. Of these, 2 people have died and 18 people have recovered and returned their homes.

The maximum number of 38 cases were reported from the Muslim-dominated Nuh district, followed by Gurugram (32), Palwal and Faridabad (28 each), Karnal (five) and Panipat (four).

According to the state health department, till Tuesday there were 129 cases of Covid-19 in the state, but on Thursday the figure has reached 156.

Nearly 80 per cent of the coronavirus cases in Haryana belonged to the Tablighi Jamaat, said a senior health official on Thursday.

"Of the 156 coronavirus patients in the state, 106 belonged to the Tablighi Jamaat," he said.

Earlier, the city recorded 10 new cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, the highest in a single day so far. Health official had said all the new patients are Tablighi Jamaat members and hail from Una and Solan districts in Himachal Pradesh.

With the addition of these new positive patients, the total number of coronavirus cases in Gurugram rose to 32. Nearly 14 of these are Jamaat members, who returned from the event in Delhi's Nizamuddin Markaz in March.

L-G, Kejriwal review medical preparedness

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday in a meeting with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with his Deputy, Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendra Jain, took stock of the situation across the national Capital in wake of coronavirus outbreak.

The L-G reviewed medical preparedness, enforcement of lockdown, social distancing, welfare measures for vulnerable sections and perimeter control measures to contain Covid-19.

At the outset, Joint Secretary (Health), Centre Government made a detailed presentation on COVID-19 management in Delhi with focus on status of medical preparedness and scenario planning for health infrastructure including quarantine and isolation facilities in the country.

Secretary Health, Delhi Government gave detailed presentation about medical preparedness of Delhi considering possible scenarios. "At present 3,734 beds are available for COVID-19 patients at LNJP, GTB, DDU and other private hospitals (including Max Super Specialty Hospital, Sir Gangaram Hospital and Apollo Hospital), Delhi Government has secured supply of 3,500 Personal Protective Equipments per day and 28,000 N95 Masks per week for front-line health workers and health professionals," said official.

"Mass mechanized disinfection is being carried out by local bodies using 1 per cent hypochlorite solution spray in public, residential areas, bus stops, public toilets, markets, Mother Dairy booths and taxi stands," said official.

"The DUSIB is taking measures for the case of homeless people in DUSIB Shelter Homes. Adequate arrangement of soaps, hand sanitisers, protective masks and medical screening is being made in all shelter homes," said official.

Provide cooked food to needy: Chief Secy to DMs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev has ordered the District Magistrates to make necessary arrangements for providing cooked food to poor, distressed, homeless and deprived persons at appropriate locations and make the national Capital hunger free.

The Delhi Government has already opened 1617 food centres or hunger relief camps and feeding 7.90 lakh persons with lunch and 8.06 lakh persons with dinner as on April 8, according to statement.

To assist the people of Dev in its order on April 1 had ordered to open a Covid-19 helpline 1031 to share information on the food centers, hunger relief camps, fair price shops, ration shops, public distribution outlets, it reads.

On an average 1000 to 1200 hungry call are attended

to provide food to people in distress, it said, adding that an order of Chief Secretary is already put in place a robust mechanism of feedbacks system from food centre, hunger relief camp by way of Google forms to be filled by the centre in-charge on real time basis.

Facility for issuance of e-passes during the lockdown period for providing for essential goods and services, medical emergencies and other personal exigencies etc. is being done on e-portal e-pass.jantasamvad.org, it added.

The Department is also using technology to leverage their efforts for identification of hotspots and cordoning off of the area, it said, adding that a dedicated survey App has been developed which helps in "containment survey" of a pre-defined hotspots which are identified and cordoned.

Youth suspected to be corona carrier lynched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man was brutally beaten by three men after they suspected him of being coronavirus positive. Police said the incident occurred in Delhi's Bawana area and all the three accused have been arrested.

The accused who thrashed Dilshad Ali, a resident of Harveli village in Bawana area, have been identified as Naveen, Prashant and Pramod of the same locality. Earlier several report were published which claimed that Dilshad has been lynched and clarifying the facts the Delhi Police on Thursday said that he is fine and is being kept in corona isolation centre.

"Dilshad is still admitted in Lok Nayak jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital as Corona



suspect. He is fine and being kept in Corona isolation centre. As per information, there are no Corona symptoms till date," said a senior police official.

"All the three accused namely Naveen, Prashant and Pramod have already been arrested in the case of wrongful restraint, beating and threatening. A case under

section 341/323/506/34 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Bawana police station," said the senior police official.

"The Investigation Officer (IO) of the case had telephonic conversation with Dilshad on Thursday morning in which he stated that he is fine," the officer added.

Earlier, a video of Dilshad being thrashed went viral on social media. In the video, Dilshad can be seen bleeding from his leg and pleading that he had no plan to spread the virus. He was just returning to his village. However, the attackers abused him while asking him to tell them the truth.

"Please do not hit me. It was not my plan. They were others who were planning to spread the virus," Dilshad says in the video.

Man held for assaulting 2 docs of Safdarjung Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police arrested a 42-year-old man late on Wednesday evening for allegedly assaulting, molesting and threatening two women resident doctors of Safdarjung Hospital following an altercation over maintaining social distance at a fruit shop in south Delhi's Gautam Nagar area.

According to police, a complaint was received by 29-year-old resident doctor, a Gautam Nagar area resident, who had stepped out with her sister to buy fruits and vegetables in her neighbourhood market on Wednesday.

"A case under section 341, 323, 354, 506 and 509 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at the Hauz Khas police station and the accused has been arrested," said Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district.

According to Dr Manish, President, Safdarjung Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) the incident happened around 9.30 pm on Wednesday when the two had stepped out of their house to buy fruits in the area.

"The two doctors of the central government hospital are not on Covid-19 duty. A local resident, who was in the vicinity, asked them to stay away from the fruit stall, saying you doctors bring infection from the hospital and spread it here," said Dr Manish.

"When the doctors sought to reason with him, the man allegedly twisted their hands and pushed them back and fled," said Dr Manish.

"When the two women were about to leave following the spat, the man assaulted them and even touched the 29-year-old woman her inappropriately," said another resident doctor

NDMC extends pick-drop service to its employees

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to provide pick and drop facility to its employees deployed to carry out essential services in this lockdown period, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has extended facilities of six buses of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) during lockdown period.

A senior NDMC official said that the civic body operated these buses on trial initially and now it was decided to continue it after successful implementation.

The official said that these buses will be start on same previous time 6.30 am for the offices and but now return back to destination at 7.30 pm in reverse order of the route. "The employees of essential services should be carrying valid ID cards along with curfew passes issued by designated authority and all employees also should follow the norms of social distancing," he said.

The movement of these buses will be supervised by the transport department with the coordination of director (coordination) of NDMC.



Firefighters spray disinfectants at a locality near Nizamuddin during the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus at Bhogal on Thursday

PTI

Railways distributes food to 8.5 lakh people in 12 days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has distributed food to more than 8.5 lakh people in 12 days through IRCTC base kitchens, Railway Protection Force (RPF) resources and the contribution of NGOs, in keeping with its social service commitment.

The Railway Ministry said that it continues to provide bulk cooked food with paper plates for lunch and food packets for dinner to the people who are stranded at different locations across the country after the 21-day nationwide lockdown announced to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19).

"Indian railways has so far distributed over 8.5 lakh meals to the poor and the needy since March 28 with the active cooperation of IRCTC base kitchens



in New Delhi, Bengaluru, Hubli, Mumbai Central, Ahmedabad, Bhusaval, Howrah, Patna, Gaya, Ranchi, Katihar, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar, Balasore, Vijaywada, Khurda, Katpadi, Tiruchirapalli, Dhanbad, Guwahati, Samastipur, Prayagraj, Itarsi, Visakhapatnam, Chengalpatu, Pune, Hajipur, Raipur and Tatanagar spread over various

zones such as Northern, Western, Eastern, Southern and South Central," the railway ministry said in a statement.

The food distribution is being done to the poor, destitute, beggars, children, coolies, migrant labourers and those in need of it. The move is taken following the suggestion of Minister of Railways and Commerce and Industry

Piyush Goyal who instructed officials to widen outreach of their efforts and go beyond the proximities of railways stations to deeper areas in consultation with district authorities and NGOs etc in providing food and other assistance to the needy people.

The ministry said that food distribution is being done with the help of RPF, GRP, commercial departments of zones, State Governments and NGOs.

General Manager and Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of concerned zone and division are also in continuous touch with IRCTC officials to enhance the outreach of these efforts of IRCTC even beyond the station vicinity to cater to the food requirements of needy people in areas surrounding the railway stations with the help of

district administrations and NGOs, it said.

"Over six lakh cooked meals have been provided by IRCTC and about 2 lacs meals have been provided by RPF from its own resources. Nearly 1.5 lakh meals have been donated by NGOs working with the railway organizations," it reads.

"IRCTC has also deposited ₹20 crore in PM care fund - ₹1.5 crore from (Corporate Social Responsibility) CSR fund of 2019-20, ₹6.5 crore from CSR fund of 2020-21 and ₹12 crore donation.

Indian Railways remains fully prepared to provide food to the needy during the lockdown, which has been imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it said, adding that adequate stocks of food grains and other raw material are being maintained.

NMC receives 4,953 stress calls during lockdown

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) has received 4,953 calls related to various disorders from public till Thursday. The callers, mostly women, are dialing helpline numbers provided by the corporation and seeking counseling to handle stress amid lockdown.

Dr Chandra Ketu, Director of Ayush department of north Corporation said that a proper counseling is provided to people calling the team. "We are motivating people to tackle the situation bravely by adopting healthy lifestyle, practicing Yoga through online support started by us," he said.

"We keep guiding people



with some of the immunity booster medicines besides suggesting some of the Vedic mantra to tackle stress. Keeping the situation in mind, our team of doctors also motivates them," he added.

Dr Ketu further said "We generally suggest ways to deal with the problem by providing free telephonic counseling Yoga, Ayurveda, Naturopathy, stress management, immunity boosting and diet.

The department is also spreading awareness to school

children and parents in collaboration with school and other institutions through video conferencing using Microsoft team, Zoom and Google-meet software programs, he said, adding that besides the department is also conducting webinars to spread awareness and enhance immunity.

The civic body had launched a helpline number for mental health and wellness counseling; a day after nationwide lockdown was announced. The Corporation has also started a helpline for persons with disabilities (divyangjan) to extend support in arranging logistical help, food, emotional support and any special needs that they may have.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Modi assures help to all countries in crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Sources said keeping control of the activities that

emerged from Modi's video conference of March 15 has helped India move much faster and without any hindrances. India had described these activities as being stand-alone and outside the "SAARC calendar of approved activities", they said.

"We regard the present activities as events under extraordinary Covid-19 circumstances focussed only to jointly dealing with the challenge in the SAARC region in a result-oriented way, without being bound by any procedural formalities that could prove to be constraints," a source said. Pakistan on Wednesday did not take part in SAARC trade officials discussion saying such activities could only be effective if spearheaded by the SAARC Secretariat.

supply and, on March 25, banned export until domestic reserves are considered sufficient.

The ban was lifted with the Indian government saying it will allow the export "in view of the humanitarian aspects of the pandemic".

Trump responded on Wednesday: "Thank you India and the Indian people... Will not be forgotten".

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

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

ia drug and more than 30 countries including the US were urging New Delhi to ease the restrictions imposed on March 25 on its export.

The US's Food and Drug Administration has identified this drug as a treatment option against the COVID-19 virus.

Bolsonaro, who was the chief guest for India's Republic Day celebrations this year, January, spoke to Modi last week to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister assured all possible support to the people of Brazil.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Centre asks States to look into farmers' grievances

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, who held a video con-

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

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



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

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

The video conference assumes importance as quick and effective policy responses

which continues through mid-July, harvesting of crops begins by October.

Besides holding the kharif conference, Tomar in the meeting asked State Governments to sensitise field agencies about exemptions given to the farm-related activities and allow movement of farm produce, farming products, fertilisers and farm implements and machinery.

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

it is very necessary to enhance the technology and connectivity in the Union Territory.

He said that the virtual classes of students, whose schools are shut due to the lockdown, can only be done through enhancement of technology and better connectivity.

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO HELP COMBAT SCOURGE OF CORONA Govt allows makers of industrial oxygen to manufacture oxygen for medical use

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The expert said that during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ventilator support will be required for about 5-8 per cent of patients with symptoms whereas a large number would require Oxygen support. The existing facilities are not adequate to cater for such large requirements.

Revised version of Swachchhata App launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



ed 90 employees and M/s Timken and M/s Classlap India Pvt Ltd invoked a 50% salary cut while not paying the March salary to all the employees yet.

"In M/s Erevmax Technologies, 80 per cent employees were sent on forced unpaid leave which tantamount to wage cut. M/s Soumak, PICON, EEMDEE Digitronics Pvt Ltd and Pace Computer Service have invoked wage cut on all the employees," said Sen asking the Ministry to take strict action against these companies for violating the orders issued by the Government. He said certain IT companies in Chennai are also terminating employees through forced resignations.

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

TN CM warns of community transmission possibility

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI/CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

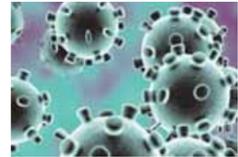
with 4,000 people on job in these zones. We have to ensure that there is no leakage from the red zones. 800-900 people who hid their travel history had been traced by control room through crowd-sourcing of information and were quarantined or put under isolation," Choudhary said. He urged people to cooperate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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

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

Father, son shot in UP

Lakhimpur: A 48-year-old man and his 25-year-old son were shot dead on Wednesday when they were on way to purchase grain in Mankipura village under Fardana police station of the district. According to the police, Ramesh Shukla, his son Bholu Shukla, along with a friend were on way to purchase grain in Mankipura village when unidentified persons shot at them. The assailants also stabbed Bholu with sharp object after opening fire. Bholu died on the spot. The father succumbed to injuries at a hospital. Station House Officer of Fardana police station Vimal Gautam said, "The deceased had enmity with someone and the family is suspecting their role. Ramesh was also accused of murder some years ago, but he was acquitted." Four days ago a man was shot dead in Allahabad. IANS

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

K'taka favours lockdown for 2 more weeks: CM

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

"All the Ministers are in favour of continuing the lockdown for two more weeks to contain Covid-19 spread in the State, which has recorded 191 positive cases and 6 deaths till date," Yediyurappa told reporters after an emergent Cabinet meeting here. "A final decision on the lockdown will be taken on Sunday or Monday after our videoconference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and as per his advice for the welfare of all," added Yediyurappa. Modi had advised the states to suggest if the nationwide lockdown should be extended beyond April 14 or eased with curbs in areas that were free from the infection so far. Though the 21-day lockdown was clamped on March 24 midnight across the country, nine districts of Karnataka have been under shutdown since March 14 on the panel's advice to contain the virus fallout. In a related development, the Cabinet decided to deduct 30 per cent from salaries and allowances of all legislators, amounting to Rs 15.3 crore, for fiscal 2020-21 through an ordinance, as the Assembly is not in session. Governor Vajubhai Vala and Yediyurappa have already pledged their salaries for this year to the CM relief fund for spending on tackling coronavirus. IANS

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

Gujarat has highest mortality rate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

Howrah Govt Hosp chief among 11 new cases SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Howrah Govt Hosp chief among 11 new cases

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

BENGAL FIRMS TOLD TO PRODUCE MORE HCQ DRUG

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

All the Ministers are in favour of continuing the lockdown for two more weeks to contain Covid-19 spread in the State, which has recorded 191 positive cases and 6 deaths till date

Though a panel of eminent doctors on Wednesday recommended continuing the lockdown -- set to end on April 14 - till April 30 only in hotspots like Bengaluru and Mysuru, the Cabinet did not want to take any chance by lifting the lockdown in districts not affected by the virus. "The lockdown should continue for two more weeks to ensure that the number of coronavirus cases do not spike as was the case in some states and to prevent community spread," said Yediyurappa. The panel, headed by eminent doctor Devi Shetty, and C.N. Manjunath, Nagaraj, Ravi and Sudarshan as members, was

COVID testing: Patna hospital microbiology HoD suspended

IANS ■ PATNA

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

Goa refuses to let cruise liner enter Mormugao port

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

Russian rescued from flooding beach cave by Goa lifeguards

Panaji: Lifeguards in Goa on Thursday rescued a middle-aged Russian from a beach cave near Keri beach, amid the 21-day lockdown imposed in the State in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a statement issued by Drishti Marine, a private lifeguard agency appointed by the State Government to man Goa's beaches, the Russian named Valenti (last name not known yet), is believed to have been living in the cave for the last several weeks. "During a routine patrol by the lifeguard stationed at the Keri beach area, lifeguard Girish Talkar spotted a man in a small narrow cave along the shoreline. He seemed to be in obvious distress as the cave was flooding rapidly due to the high tide. The man also appeared to be physically challenged as he was unable to walk," the statement said. He was eventually rescued with the help of a spine board and brought out by the lifeguards. Valenti is currently in shock and is being treated at the Public Health Centre in Mapusa. Ever since the lockdown nearly 20,000 foreigners, including hundreds of Russians, have been repatriated from Goa to their home countries. IANS

Ear to the ground

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



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

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

E-commerce to rescue

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



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

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

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

Light at the end of tunnel

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



AJOY KUMAR

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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



BSF Director-General —SS Deswal

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



Actor —Kay Kay Menon

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



US President —Donald Trump

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



Union Minister —Narendra Singh Tomar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Take the call soon

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

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

Varun Dambal
Bengaluru

Locking India is the safest option

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

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

Make a phased exit plan

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



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

G David Milton
Maruthancode

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

of situation many Western countries are facing.

AL Nadwi
Bengaluru

Putting heads together

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

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

Bal Govind
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A Catch-22 situation

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



MARKANDEY KATJU
DHRUVI KAPADIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—US SECRETARY OF STATE
MIKE POMPEO

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



SOLIDARITY AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL AND LEADERSHIP FROM THE US AND CHINA. THE MOST POWERFUL SHOULD LEAD THE WAY. QUARANTINE COVID POLITICS.
—WHO DIRECTOR GENERAL
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

Locked down with a predator

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



SIMI MEHTA
BALWANT MEHTA
ARJUN KUMAR

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

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

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

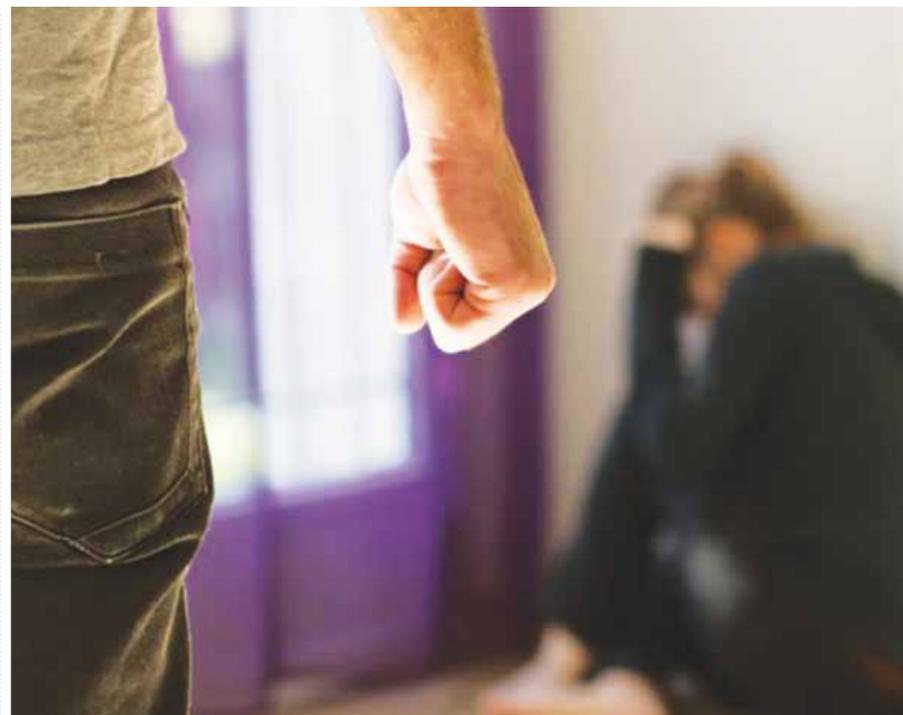
For instance, countries like China, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Brazil, Tunisia, France, Australia and many others have reported cases of increased DV/IPV. India is also showing symmetrical trends, especially when it is infamous for being the fourth-worst country (after the United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

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

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

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

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



pandemic and the lockdown.

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

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

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

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

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

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16 highlighted that 30 per cent of women/girls in India in the age group of 15-49 experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Among married women experiencing physical, sexual or emotional violence, an alarming 83 per cent claimed that their husbands were the main perpetrators of such forms of abuse, followed by abuse from the mothers (56 per cent), fathers (33 per cent) and siblings of the husbands (27 per cent). The major crimes reported by women in India are — cruelty by husband or relatives (32.6 per cent), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (25 per cent), kidnapping and abductions (19 per cent) and rape (11.5 per cent).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Big Brother is watching behind COVID mask

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



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GLOBAL DEATH TOLL ABOVE 92K

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

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



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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

One hundred Italian doctors have died of virus: Medics

AFP ■ ROME

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Around the Globe

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AFP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

number of deaths across the country.

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

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

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

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

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



CANADA, the Government projected on Thursday. It said the country could see between 934,000 and 1.9 million cases of COVID-19 by the time the pandemic ends, assuming Canadians observe strict social distancing and other safety measures over the next few months. These are the federal Government's first projections on the pandemic's possible toll in Canada. As of Thursday morning the virus had killed 476 people in Canada, according to figures provided by provincial authorities.

IRAN'S Health Ministry on Thursday said 117 new deaths from the novel coronavirus took the total to 4,110 in one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic. But ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said the latest figures showed there was a downward trend in the number of new coronavirus infections. "Today we are clearly seeing a decline in the number of new cases," Jahanpour said in a televised news conference. "We have identified 1,634 new cases, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 66,220."

Khamenei: Mass Ramadan events may stop over virus

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

Trump quietly shuts down asylum at US borders to fight virus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Countries start thinking about easing up restrictions

AP ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

"We are flattening the



curve because we are rigorous about social distancing," New

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

AFP ■ ALMATY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IAN ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

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

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

Report: COVID-19 to have adverse economic impact globally

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

16.8 mn Americans thrown out of work as economic toll rises

AP ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

Numbers released by the

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

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

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

And still more job cuts are expected. The US unemployment rate could hit 15 per cent — a number last seen at the tail end of the Depression — when the figures for April come out.

IMF anticipates sharply negative economic growth fallout since the Great Depression

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Coronavirus ceasefire' in Yemen's long conflict begins

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

ing were directed at boosting domestic demand more generally.

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

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

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

₹ recovers from record lows on forex inflows, firm stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CEO of Millwood Kane International.

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPEC puts heads together over oil output cuts

PTI ■ LONDON

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

The teleconference sched-

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

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

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. PC

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

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

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

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



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

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.
SHO
E-mail : c/c@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
P.S. Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27811933,
27811934
DPI/138/ON/2020

Appeal for Identification



General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Rajesh, S/o Pappu, R/o: ISBT Kashmere Gate, Age: about 30 years, Height: 5'5", Complexion: Shallow, Sex: Male, Built: Thin, Face: Round, Wearing : Hospital Clothes, was found dead at RML Hospital, Delhi. In this regard, a DD No. 13-A, U/s 174 CrPC dated 05.04.2020 has been lodged at PS Kashmere, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.
SHO
P.S., Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23967889, 8750870123
DP/169/N/2020

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

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

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

By Order
Sh. Vaibhav Mehta,
Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North),
Room No. 114, First Floor,
Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/176/ON/2020(Court Matter)

Trend Slazer

HRITHIK advises fans to keep going

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

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

He wrote, "To the Kabir in all of us. Don't forget to thrive while you survive. Enjoy it all. The good, the bad. Juice everything out."

Amidst this lockdown, nothing can be more inspiring than this powerful video that imparts a efficacious message of "keep going."



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

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

—Chandan Roy Sanyal

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

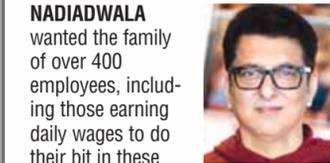
Empowering them with assistance to mark their donations, each and every employee of Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, working at various levels, has pledged to donate to the PM-Cares Fund and the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The employees took to their social media to express their gratitude.

Gwyneth gets moral support from kids

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

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

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



A sliver of silver

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Mending clothes. Cutting hair. Fixing a squeaky door or a dripping faucet. Baking bread.

A generation or two ago, household skills like these were common, learned at home and at school. Then it became easier to toss things out rather than fix them, quicker to call the professionals.

Now, in an unsettling era of staying at home and not knowing what will be available tomorrow, the old ways are being dusted off and relearned.

Since the Coronavirus has shuttered many small businesses that do our work and supply our things, millions of people trying to stay home are driven by necessity — or boredom — to do more cooking, cleaning, fixing, grooming and other practical skills themselves.

"It's during uncertain times like these when we take stock of all the basic life skills we've forgotten or never learned in the first place, because they sure could come in handy right about now," says Erin Bried, a magazine editor in Brooklyn and author of *How to Sew a Button: And Other Nifty Things Your Grandmother Knew*.

In a dark and difficult time, it can be an emotional lift to find that you're more capable around the house than you thought. "I accomplished something real today!" Maria Kernahan, a real estate agent and children's book author, said after installing a new thermostat herself in her Castle Park, Michigan, house. She followed online advice to figure out the wiring in the old house. Her husband, meanwhile, has begun chopping wood. "We're making this up as we go along," she said.

Bill Hughes, a business consultant in University Place, Washington, had to wash some shirts and didn't want to put them away wrinkled. "When I was a graduate student, I would iron my own shirts to save some money. It was tedious and I looked forward to the day when I could afford to drop off my shirts to be cleaned," says Hughes, 59. He added: "Since my dry cleaners is closed, I dusted off the iron and ironing board, turned on some Huey Lewis and the News and went at it."

Back to basics

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



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

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

Especially sourdough. Lots of sourdough. YouTube has seen a spike of more than 100 per cent in average daily views of videos with *Cook with Me* in the title since March 15 compared to the rest of the year, said spokeswoman Veronica Navarrete. "We're seeing this trend across several verticals," including cleaning, she said.

For her book, Bried interviewed women who had lived through the Great Depression and imparted lessons on how to make do and get by. "I feel a new, closer connection to all of their stories now," she says and adds: "It was a difficult time, and it left its mark on all of them. I think this pandemic, too, will leave its mark on us much in the same way. It's caused us all to halt our lives and reevaluate, maybe for the first time, what is truly important and what we're equipped to handle."



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

distance, even if it is a family member.

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

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

Our elderly care platform has launched three initiatives keeping social distancing and hygiene factors in mind. Dare to Care: a no contact grocery and medicine delivery service at home.

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

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

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

Bhumi learns hydroponics farming

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

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

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

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

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





GO THE HEALTHY WAY

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

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

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

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

THE SUSTAINABLE WAY — ONE-POT MEALS

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

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

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



The bar comes home

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

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

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

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

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

Maritime and Mercantile International, a subsidiary of the government-owned Emirates airline known as MMI, and African & Eastern, partnered to create the website offering home delivery. Its products range from a \$530 bottle of Don Julio 1942 Tequila to a \$430 bottle of Indian blended whiskey, with beers and wines in between.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—AP

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

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

COOK WISELY

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

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

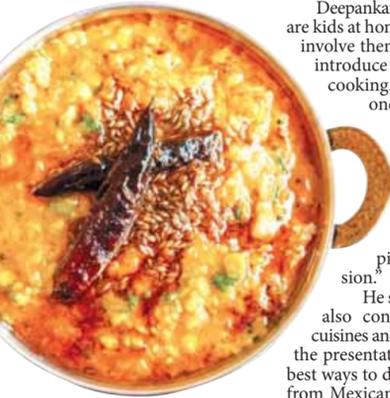
Heal thyself

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

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

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

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



LEARN NEWER TECHNIQUES

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

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

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

R E C I P E S

CAESAR SALAD

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



Del Monte mayonnaise, garlic, sauce, mustard paste and lemon juice in a bowl.

- Whisk nicely until well combined. Now slowly pour the Del Monte olive oil while continuously whisking. Season with salt and pepper.
- Arrange lettuce leaves in a salad bowl. Add bread croutons and cheese cubes.
- Pour dressing over the salad. Sprinkle some parmesan shavings if you like.
- Serve the Caesar salad with toasted bread on the side.

Courtesy: Del Monte.

LEMON & WALNUT DRIZZLE CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



then whisk in the eggs, one at a time.

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

Courtesy: Chef Sabayasachi Gorai.

IMMUNE BOOSTER JUICE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



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

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

Courtesy: Chef Anshu Raj, Caterspoint.

PAPRIKA & WALNUT SCRAMBLED EGG BAGEL

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



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

Courtesy: Chef Sabayasachi Gorai.

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

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

PTI ■ HOBART

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kapil rejects Akhtar's proposal for India-Pak series

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



World Cup-winning former captain.

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

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

Dev said the focus, at the moment, should only be on saving lives and taking care of the poor who are struggling to make ends meet in a lockdown situation.

"Cricket will resume when things get normal. The game can't be bigger than the country. The pressing issue is to look after the poor, the hospital workers, the police and all other people who are on the frontline of this war," said the 61-year-old.

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

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

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

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

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

The fallout of the Newlands Test was huge.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"When the director said, 'He's put something down the

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

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

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

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

Gloucestershire call off Pujara deal



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

COVID-19 pandemic. The 32-year-old Indian, who has scored 5840 runs at an average of 48.66 in 77 Tests, was supposed to play six County C'ship matches for the club at the start of the county's first season back in Division One.

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

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



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

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

AFP ■ MILAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Tennis needs unity, Paris acted out of fear, making a mistake. But they have recognised this." All this will depend on the virus which has infected over 1.5 million with the United States and Europe hit hard.

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

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

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

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

Gaudenzi said the options were being examined in conjunction with the ATP Player Council including Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic. He stressed it was hoped to maintain the ATP Finals, scheduled for London in November 15-22.

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

Rangers blast plans to end Scottish season early

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

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

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

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

Steven Gerrard's second-placed Gers, 13 points behind Celtic, said in a statement they would oppose "in the strongest possible terms" any attempt to railroad changes to existing rules.

They said they would immediately propose a member's resolution that would release prize money to be distributed to all clubs throughout Scotland urgently.

Rangers said forcing through change "without due care and attention" would have severe consequences for the Scottish game.

Partick, bottom of the Championship, said they would not accept the proposal as it stood, adding it needed more scrutiny and debate.

Dundee United would be promoted to the Premiership if the resolution passed, while Raith Rovers would move up to the Championship and Cove Rangers would join League One. **AFP**



Boucher optimistic about rebuilding strong SA side

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's ODI series victory over Australia was the "light at the end of the tunnel" for Team Director Mark Boucher, who remains optimistic about rebuilding a strong Proteas side despite a tough summer.

The former wicketkeeper-batsman took over in mid-December ahead of the England tour which saw South Africa lose a Test and T20 series while drawing a rain-affected ODI series.

The Proteas then suffered a home T20 series defeat to Australia before a young Quinton de-Kock-led side registered a 3-0 win over Aaron Finch's men in the ODIs.



"If I look back over the summer and reflect on the team's performances and progress, especially against England and Australia, I think it was quite disappointing

to be honest," Boucher told *Cricketer South Africa*.

"Especially against England, we didn't perform like we wanted to perform. In saying that I think we, as a new coaching staff, asked some questions and I think we got some answers. Some were good and some were bad."

The 43-year-old is delighted with the team's performance in the shorter formats of the game but reckons the Test side needs rebuilding.

"The nice thing for me about the whole summer was the light at the end of tunnel, especially in our short formats. I think we have a lot of work to do with our Test cricket still, there's probably a lot of rebuilding in that respect."

Tour de France racing against time, and losing

PARIS: For the Tour de France, one of the last of the summer's major sports events still standing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the stop-watch is ticking.

While the Tokyo Olympics, the Euros, tennis and golf majors and the Giro d'Italia have already been postponed or even cancelled, the Tour is still scheduled to start on June 27.

Christian Prudhomme, the Tour director, made clear that before the race he wants "two months of exposure for the riders."

That means training rides and races and with most prospective competitors confined, the chances of their getting back on the road by

late April look slim.

The race also needs France to end its lockdown, not just so the riders can ride but because the Tour attracts 10 to 12 million spectators who stand by the roads to watch.

Last week, when he announced the postponement of the Dauphine, an eight-day Tour warm-up stage race in the southeast of France due to start on May 31, Prudhomme said: "The most important word in Tour de France is France, and health concerns come first."

The situation across Europe suggests that a postponement is increasingly likely.

Prudhomme is not prepared to discuss alternative plans in public,



but said: "As of today, the dates of the Tour de France are maintained. But it would be a lie to say that we are not studying other hypotheses."

Behind the scenes, it is learnt, the organisers have sounded out

cycling teams as well as French politicians and broadcasters about a postponement to August.

Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu talked of banning spectators. But the idea seems to have died.

The Tour is fuelled by its fans and it would be hard to prevent people coming out of their houses when the race passes by.

Welshman Geraint Thomas, the winner in 2018, and Julian Alaphilippe, France's hero of the 2019 Tour after wearing the leader's jersey for 14 days, used almost identical words. "Without the fans, it wouldn't be the Tour de France," was how Thomas put it. **AFP**

Mid-May possibility for League clubs to resume training: EFL

LONDON: Clubs outside the Premier League cannot resume training till "May 16 at the earliest" due to the coronavirus pandemic but the season can be completed in "56 days" English Football League chairman Rick Parry informed them in a letter.

The 72 clubs have been kicking their heels since the EFL suspended the campaign in the Championship, League One and Two on March 13.

All 24 sides in the Championship still had nine matches to play.

Some clubs in League One have 12 games remaining, while in League Two, teams have either nine or 10 matches remaining to complete the regular season.

However, Parry said following a EFL board meeting on Thursday they were confident



once there was a resumption of the league fixtures and the promotion play-offs could be completed within two months.

"The EFL Board determined that to provide a level of certain-

ty, clubs should not recommence any training activity with players until May 16 at the earliest," Parry wrote.

"Whenever the decision is taken that it is safe to resume, we

currently estimate that the League will require 56 days approximately to complete the outstanding matches in the season (including Play-Offs)."

Parry said it is probable the matches will be played behind closed doors due to the British Government's social distancing measures.

"It is our working assumption at this stage that matches will be played behind closed doors when we eventually return," he said.

His letter also suggested the delayed resumption of the present season could impact on the start of the 2020/21 campaign.

"We will ensure there is a suitable break between the two, so as to allow clubs and staff sufficient time to regroup and prepare accordingly," he said. **AFP**

Labbadia succeeds Klinsmann at Hertha

AFP ■ BERLIN

Bruno Labbadia will succeed Jürgen Klinsmann as head coach of Hertha Berlin, the Bundesliga club announced on Thursday, confirming earlier reports in the German media.

"With Bruno, we have someone who knows the Bundesliga well from his many years as a player and a coach and has shown that he can stabilise teams and lead them back up the table," sporting director Michael Preetz said.

According to newspaper *Bild* and football magazine *Kicker*, 52-year-old Labbadia will sign a contract until 2022 to oversee preparations should the German league resume next month after being halt-



ed on March 13.

The former Wolfsburg and Hamburg coach will be the fourth different person to occupy the Hertha dugout this season, and will be charged with saving a miserable season for the capital city club.

Hertha, who are backed by a wealthy investor, are 14th in the table, six points from the relegation places with nine games left.