

ANALYSIS 7 INDIA MUST SEIZE THE DAY

MONEY 8 'LOCKDOWN TO COST INDIAN ECONOMY \$4.64 BN EVERY DAY'

SPORTS 12 PLAYING TEST CRICKET MADE VIRAT BETTER PERSON

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY APRIL 3, 2020; PAGES 12 & 3



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SARILERU... BEATS BAAHUBALI 2

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## US CHEERS INDIAN ENGINEERS FOR BUILDING LOW-COST VENTILATOR

Cheering the Indian engineers for building a low-cost ventilator, the US hopes that this invention succeeds and can eventually be mass produced as the critical medical equipment can save many lives from the deadly coronavirus that has killed over 5,000 people in America and 40,000 others globally. The United States, which as per latest projections is expecting between 100,000 and 200,000 deaths due to the coronavirus, requires thousands of ventilators in the next few weeks. It has roped in 11 private sector companies, including car manufacturers and plane makers to build ventilators.



## ANOTHER DOCTOR WORKING IN AIIMS, DELHI TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

A resident doctor from Delhi's prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences has tested positive for coronavirus, sources said. Rigorous contact tracing is on after he had attended a farewell ceremony at work. This is the seventh doctor in Delhi to contract the highly contagious virus. The doctor, who belongs to the Physiology Department, has been admitted to the new private ward for further evaluation and multiple testing. His family will also be screened, sources said. Yesterday, three doctors in Delhi had tested positive - two of them were from the Safdarjung hospital, which is located just opposite AIIMS.



## DELHI GOVT TO GIVE RS 5K EACH TO AUTO DRIVERS, OTHERS

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced that those driving public service vehicles will be given Rs 5,000 each to sail through the nationwide lockdown imposed due to coronavirus scare. Kejriwal said that he had got a lot of requests from the drivers of autorickshaws, RTVs and e-rickshaws among other public service vehicles that they are on the verge of starvation due to the lockdown. "Those driving public service vehicles will be given Rs 5,000 each to tide over the lockdown. This may take 7-10 days. We are planning this," Kejriwal said. He said that as the government does not have bank account details of these drivers, this is taking time.



## GOVT LAUNCHES APP TO ASSESS, ALERT PEOPLE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

The government on Thursday launched a mobile app to help people assess themselves the risk of catching coronavirus infection and alert authorities if they have come in close contact with a person infected with the deadly virus. According to a ministry official, the app will detect only fresh cases and will send out alerts to only those who have been nearby the infected person. "The App, called 'AarogyaSetu' joins Digital India for the health and well-being of every Indian. It will enable people to assess themselves the risk of catching the coronavirus infection.



All you need to know about moratorium

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# Staggered lifting of lockdown, PM seeks advice from states

Area-wise, age-wise restrictions may be the norm as country looks to return to normalcy

NAVEENA KAVI HYDERABAD

The country-wide lockdown announced by the Centre won't be lifted in one go, but will end in phases.

This was more or less made clear by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his videoconference with Chief Ministers of various states on Thursday where he said that was important to formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends.

"It is important to formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends," PM Modi emphasised, according to a statement giving details of the interaction. He asked states to send their suggestions for such



an exit strategy. India is under lockdown with citizens forbidden to leave their homes, and restrictions on normal daily life. Even if the lockdown is eased, in the absence of vaccine or cure, every time people venture out, the country would be back to square one of the pandemic.

Until such time a cure or vaccine is found, which the World Health Organisation says it is at least a year away, social distancing would be the norm. Staggered emergence could be based on the kind of work people do or the age bracket. The first thing that was shut — educational insti-

The goal is to ensure minimum loss of life; the global situation is far from satisfactory with speculation of a second wave in some countries. — NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

tutions — could be the last to open as children and senior citizens come in the 'high risk individuals' category. Likewise, movement of high-risk category citizens could be restricted.

An area-wise staggered emergence can also be executed. For instance, area-wise curfew, which the Old City of Hyderabad is familiar with, can be implemented.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu has been referring to such restrictions time and again.

# 154 Covid-19 cases in TS now

PNS HYDERABAD

After a spike of 30 cases on Wednesday, Telangana reported 27 more Covid-19 positive cases on Thursday, taking the total number of positive cases in the state to 154. Most of the fresh Covid-19 patients are from among those who returned after attending the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Nizamuddin, New Delhi during March 13-15 or taking part in their activities thereafter.

Three patients were cured and discharged on Thursday, taking the total count on this front to 17. While the state reported three deaths on Wednesday; thankfully, there were no deaths on Thursday.

Currently 128 patients are undergoing treatment in Telangana. On Wednesday two patients in Gandhi Hospital and one in Yashoda Hospital died, taking the death toll due to corona virus to 9. All of them were attendees of the Nizamuddin religious meeting.

The Telangana government has urged those who had been to Markaz, their family members and those who came in

contact with them to undergo tests without fail, as the virus is spreading through some of the attendees of the congregation that took place there during March 13-15.

According to Health Minister Etela Rajender, nearly 5,000 calls are exchanged between Health Department and those quarantined every

day through 108 service. He also said that the Health Department had established a strong communication network so as to track every international traveller and symptomatic suspects with an SMS system - a simple questionnaire to answer via COVID-19 Monitoring System.

## Villages see spike in cases

PV KONDAL RAO WARANGAL

Rural Telangana seems to be bearing the brunt of Covid-19 positive cases being spread by those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Nizamuddin during March 13-15 or took part in the group's activities thereafter. Many of the attendees tested Covid-19 positive on Thursday in Warangal MGM Hospital. Of the 25 attendees traced for quarantine by the authorities, 19 tested positive in the isolation ward on Thursday itself. Three of them tested negative. The results of three more persons whose samples were obtained



are awaited. According to sources close to the family members of the Markaz attendees, persons in the Subedari area of Hanamkonda city, Pochamma Maidan and Shambhuniapeta area of the Warangal city were admitted in the isolation ward of the MGM Hospital and all of them were tested by the authorities.



Min identifies 20 existing, 22 potential hotspots

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Wanaparthy district Superintendent of Police Apoorva Rao with the 12-year-old boy, whose father was brutally thrashed by the police for violating lockdown rules. Following KT Rama Rao's tweet, the SP suspended the constable. The video clip of a group of policemen beating up the hapless man went viral on social media, with the public seeking action against the cops

## Mercury @ 42°C, but Covid-19 plays it cool!

PNS HYDERABAD

Temperatures have soared to as high as 42 degree Celsius in the State with the highest day temperature recorded in BadrakhilKothagudem at 42.2 degree Celsius; state capital recorded day temperature at 39 degree Celsius.

Several people, including Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu, have suggested that COVID-19 will not survive in India's summer temperatures.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says: "Generally, coronaviruses survive for shorter periods of time at higher temperatures and higher humidity than in cooler or dryer environments."

According to CDC, it is not yet known whether weather and temperature impact the spread of COVID-19. The only way to reduce transmission of coronavirus is social distancing and maintaining hygiene.

# COVID-19 Claps or slaps, these warriors do their job against odds

PNS HYDERABAD

Healthcare staff are the front-line warriors in the raging battle against the coronavirus pandemic and it is hard not to appreciate their sacrifices.

Mostly unsung, they have a lot on their mind and are finding ways to avoid meeting their family members. Some of them are staying in vacant houses, along with other doctors, treating Covid-19 patients.

The Pioneer spoke to doctors serving in Telangana hospitals' Covid-19 wards.

A doctor said, "We are about four doctors staying together in a relative's house, which is currently not being used by anyone else. This way, we need not fear infecting our family members. Further, we also saw how some of my colleagues were asked to vacate houses. In this case, nobody asks us anything and we are often doing video calls with families." Another doctor has sent away his family to his in-laws' place and is connecting with them only through tech-



nology. The doctor said, "Even though my wife is a doctor, I have a 2-year-old and inordinately he ends up touching me. I have anxiety over being asymptomatic carrier, even though I am taking enough precautions. It's been about two weeks since they left and WhatsApp and video calls are what keeps us connected. It is almost like I am living in a hostel." Due to the lockdown several doctors have to do their household chores, apart from attending to patients. A female

doctor said, "The amount of work we do at home has also increased. With maids not allowed in the community, I have to take over the household chores of washing utensils, sweeping, and mopping. I have elderly and kids at home who cannot share the workload. I am sure this is the case at most of the homes, but we are also on duty and don't have the luxury of skipping going to hospital."

## 960 foreigners' visas cancelled

PNS HYDERABAD

As many as 960 foreigners who took part in Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Nizamuddin, New Delhi during March 13-15 or its activities thereafter have been blacklisted and their tourist visas cancelled for violating rules imposed in the wake of the nationwide lockdown to break the chain of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs took the action as part of the Centre's ongoing efforts to identify the contacts of over 9,000 identified Tablighi Jamaat workers who have been to the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Delhi's Nizamuddin area, prompting authorities to intensify efforts to trace them since some of them may be carrying the virus and potentially infecting others. "We are working on identifying the numbers in Telangana. Should have data prepared as soon as possible and strict protocol will be followed in taking action against them," said an official from the state police.



Deadline extended for comments on relaxation in QIP, delisting norms

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## Father lathi-charged in front of son, cop suspended

PNS WANAPARTY

As people are not willing to confine to their homes and coming out ignoring lockdown rules, the frustrated policemen are wielding their lathis on such elements. They register cases against such elements seizing the vehicles.

There were instances of adamant public at some palces even revolt against the policemen. This has been infuriating the police further.

In an incident that will project the police in bad light, policemen wielded their lathis on a young man who came out of his home on a two-wheeler along with wife and son on

Wednesday ignoring the pleas of the son not to thrash his father. The lathi-charge followed following a heated argument between the police and the motor cycle rider. In spite of warning the youth by the police, he was understood to have entered into an argument with the police on bandobust duty. The infuriated police resorted to lathi-charge in front of his son ignoring the pleas of the son. The accused was made to board the police jeep and was whisked away to the police station causing agony to the boy. The CCTV cameras captured all this. A video posted in Internet became viral.

# Caseload presages community transmission

PNS HYDERABAD

With the number of Covid-19 cases increasing by the day in the country, and with spikes in daily counts reported by many states, there is an uncertainty over the government's repeated claims that there is no community transmission.

As of Thursday evening, India reported 50 deaths, with 1,764 active cases. Telangana reported 9 deaths and 130 cases, while Andhra Pradesh reported 143 cases and 1 death. Initially, the TS government apparently suspected com-



munity transmission and did make preparations to deal with the stage. Towards this end, Health Minister Etela Rajender reviewed the preparedness for Stage-3 as well. Subsequently, once they zeroed in on the fact that the majority of fresh Covid-19

patients are from among those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat's congregation at Markaz, Nizamuddin; the focus shifted to figuring out these patients and their contacts.

At the community transmission stage, also called as Stage-3, a disease spreads in the population in such a way that people don't know how they were exposed to the contagion. They won't have travel history or wouldn't be in contact with someone who contracted the disease.

# States take cue from TS over salary cuts

AP, Odisha, Maha, Rajasthan, Kerala follow TS salary cut policy to raise funds to combat corona

PNS HYDERABAD

Several states in the country are taking a cue from the Telangana state government to impose salary cuts for government staff at all levels to raise funds to combat Coronavirus as well as to overcome the present financial crisis on account of the lockdown. Telangana was the first state in the country to announce salary cuts for government staff on March 30.

Soon after, the governments of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala followed suit.

On Wednesday, Kerala became the latest state to announce salary cuts for its



staff. The Andhra Pradesh government too passed an order deferring salaries of Chief minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy,

The decision was taken because the state's revenue streams dried up due to the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic

the state's legislators and all elected members of local bodies, including of people holding equivalent positions and members of all state corporations. The decision was taken because the state's revenue streams dried up due to the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the order, dated March 31, 60 per cent of the salaries of IAS/IPS/IFS officers

in the state will also be deferred, while all the government employees (except class-IV employees), including work-charged employees and persons engaged through a third party will also have 50 per cent of their salaries/wages/remuneration held back. For class-IV employees, salaries will be cut by 10 per cent.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Chaitra & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam: Tithi: Dashami: 12:57 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Pushya: 06:41 pm

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 10:47 am - 12:19 pm

Yamagandam: 03:22 pm - 04:54 pm

Variyam: NIL

Gulika: 07:44 am - 09:15 am

Goat Time: (to start any important work)

Amritkalam: 12:29 pm - 02:02 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:54 am - 12:43 pm

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**

Forecast: Clear

Temp: 34/26

Humidity: 72%

Sunrise: 06:08

Sunset: 06:29

Current Weather Conditions Updated April 02, 2020 5:00 PM



# Subdued Ram Navmi fete in TS, AP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Subdued celebrations marked Ram Navmi in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on Thursday due to coronavirus-fueled lockdown. With no public congregation allowed and temples remaining shut across both Telugu states, the devout performed puja and conducted other rituals at home.

No devotees were allowed for Kalyanotsavam or the annual customary celebrations at the Lord Sree Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Bhadrachalam in Telangana. The low-key ceremony saw participation by a couple of state ministers and officials besides a few priests. On behalf of the state government, Endowments Minister P. Indrakaran Reddy, Transport Minister P. Ajay Kumar, gov-



ernment advisor K.V. Ramanachari made the offerings to the temple.

About 40 people, some of them wearing face masks, attended the ceremony conducted by the priests in the temple premises. Every year thousands of people from both

the Telugu states travel to Bhadrachalam to attend the celestial wedding of Lord Rama with his consort Sita. Kalyanotsavam, which is traditionally held at Mithila Stadium, was shifted to the temple this time.

Several devotees had booked

**No devotees were allowed for Kalyanotsavam or the annual customary celebrations at the Lord Sree Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple in Bhadrachalam**

the temple tickets online but the authorities cancelled them and returned their money. Ajay Kumar said this was done to prevent gathering of devotees in view of the lockdown. Authorities in both the states had also appealed to people not to visit any temple on the occasion of Ram Navmi.

Governors and chief ministers of both the states greeted people on Ram Navmi. Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan and his Telangana counterpart Tamilisai Soundararajan con-

veyed their greetings to people. Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao Ram Navmi conveyed his greetings to the people. He prayed to God to bestow blessings to people in the state to be happy, healthy, and prosperous with longevity. While extending his greetings, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy appealed to people to celebrate the festival in their homes in view of the coronavirus threat. He prayed for the wellbeing and prosperity of the people.

# 225 paddy procurement centres set up in Mahbubnagar: Minister

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud on Thursday said that the state government had set up 225 paddy procurement centres across Mahbubnagar district. He said that the district administration has made all necessary arrangements in this regard.

The Minister reviewed the measures initiated by the authorities with the officials concerned at the Sudarshan Convention hall in the city. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the administration was taking steps to identify and establish procurement centres in all gram panchayaths of the district.

The Minister advised the beneficiaries of Rythu Bandhu, committees of village and mandal level to offer support to the farmers in this regard. Further, the Minister called upon the PACS directors, chairpersons and members to offer support.

The Minister said that a total



Excise Minister Srinivas Goud and others at a programme in Mahbubnagar on Thursday

of 676 harvesters were put for the farmers service in the district. Meanwhile, in Warangal, Agriculture Minister Singireddi Niranjan Reddy visited the maize procurement-cum-purchase centres along with Minister Errabelli Dayakar rao and Narsampet MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy on Thursday. The Minister visited Nekonda, Ameenabad and Muththojipet villages.

He advised the farmers of these villages to take maize crop in the third crop of this year and added that the maize

produce would be bumper and it would yield 35 to 40 quintals per acre. The Minister said the Narsampet segment was ahead of others in the state with a crop coverage of 53 thousand acres of maize.

He said that the present season maize produce in the state is likely to yield 14 lakh tonnes and about Rs 3,243 crore were allocated for procurement by the authorities. Minister Errabelli Dayakar rao also spoke at the villages and added that the government was keen on helping the farmers.



The volunteers of Free Food Centres, set up by former MP K Kavitha

# Kavitha sets up three more free food centres

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Former MP Kalvakuntla Kavitha has set up three more free food centres in the district. The new food centres has come up at Nizamabad, Jagtial Government hospital, Metpally Government hospital. The free food centres aim to provide hygienic and healthy food to students, patients and their attendants at government hospitals and migrant workers in Nizamabad and Jagtial districts.

Adequate measures are being taken to ensure sanitation and social distancing in the queue lines at the food centres. The free meal distribution scheme was launched by TRS leader and former Nizamabad MP K Kavitha in 2017. With special passes issued by the State Government, volunteers deliver food at the centres. Nizamabad Mayor Nithu Kiran opened free food centre at Nizamabad, to ensure no

one goes hungry, especially the daily wage workers and Migrant labours in Nizamabad.

Nizamabad Urban Development Authority (NUDA) chairman Prabhakar Reddy, Telangana Jagruthi Nizamabad district President Avanthi Kumar, corporates and local leaders participated in the programme. Jagtial ZP Chairperson Dhavaa Vasantha Suresh, MLA Sanjay Kumar and hospital superintendent Sudhakshina Devi, RMO Ramakrishna participated in the launching ceremony of free food centre at Jagtial government hospital.

Free food centre at Metpally Government hospital was started by Telangana Jagruthi leaders. The free meals programme at government hospitals for the benefit of patients' attendants, migrant workers has come as a sigh of relief to the people of Nizamabad and Jagtial districts.

# Caseload presages...

Continued from Page 1

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said: "We can consider that we are in the community transmission stage only when there are about 20 to 30 per cent cases with no clue on how they got the virus."

**Levels of community transmission**

None to Minimal - Evidence of isolated cases or limited community transmission, case investigations underway, no

evidence of exposure in large communal setting, e.g., health-care facility, school, mass gathering. Minimal to Moderate - Widespread and/or sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings with potential for rapid increase in suspected cases.

Substantial - Large scale community transmission, healthcare staffing significantly impacted, multiple cases within communal settings like healthcare facilities, schools, mass gatherings etc.

# In 3 days, Telangana Police received over 6.41 lakh calls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana police has received more than 6.41 lakh distress calls to Dial 100 service in the last three days of the ongoing coronavirus lockdown. A stress management session was held for the Dial 100 staff on Wednesday to help keep their spirits up, Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) M Mahendar Reddy said.

"Imagine the stress levels the #Dial100 staff hv undergone, who received 6,41,955 calls in just 3days during this #LockDownInTelangana. In this regard, a #StressManagement session held by #BOURGEON to reinforce them to keep their spirit up & enabling them to take up even more beyond," the DGP tweeted.

The number of calls to Dial 100 rose after Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had recently said that people can



use the service for assistance relating to health emergencies and following his instructions to officials that no person should be allowed to go without a meal in the state.

After Rao's announcement, police personnel in coordination with volunteers have been distributing food and essential items to the needy people across the state. Besides, scores

of migrant workers found moving on foot from parts of Telangana to their native places were stopped and convinced to remain in the state by providing food, shelter and essential commodities to them.

Anyone in need of essential commodities can Dial 100 or approach any police station or patrolling vehicle for help, police said.

# Claps or...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the attack on doctors is causing panic among some families. A PG doctor said, "As if corona scare was not enough, now my parents are worried about my well-being. They have seen the news of resident doctor being beaten up and they even thought about options of me returning home. The lockdown has clutched them off and I explained to them about mob psychology and also that these incidents keep happening. Medicine is a humanitarian profession; we just can't run away because someone beat us or we might catch the disease."

Doctors and nurses are also trying to postpone functions at their home. A doctor said, "My sister is supposed to be engaged on April 24, even though the lockdown is until 14. I don't think it is practically feasible to attend the engagement. Moreover, my family is thinking of postponing the engagement itself, considering the chaos the pandemic is creating."

# Rural TS sees spike in Covid-19 cases

Continued from Page 1

One more person who had attended the congregation from the Veldanda village of Jangaon district and one person from Mahabubabad district also proved to be coronavirus carriers.

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) authorities have quarantined and blocked the entire Mandibazar area for a comprehensive sanitisation process. Even the areas like Badi Masjid in Hanamkonda were under surveillance subsequent to the surfacing of Covid-19 positive cases.

The entire Veldanda village was closed for outsiders and people have been quarantined by the authorities of Jangaon district.

The person from Veldandawho had attended the congregation is a mutton vendor. Upon his return, he resumed his routine of selling mutton. About 50 families were among the list of purchasers of mutton from his shop. Similarly,

in the Bhupalpalligase, the person who attended the congregation runs a grocery shop in his locality. Purchasers from his shop have been advised to remain quarantined as a precautionary measure. In Sangareddi district of erstwhile Medak, a total of six persons who attended the congregation tested positive as per reports reaching here. They include one from Sangareddi town, two from Angadipet village of Sangareddimandal, one from Zaheerabad and one from Kondapur village. Finance Minister Harish Rao on Thursday visited the colony of Gajwelfrom where corona cases were registered. He advised officials concerned to take necessary precautions and sanitisethe region. The increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in the Warangal tricity limits has created panic among citizens of the second major city in the state. The normal grocery shopping pattern, which was seen during the past 10 days of lockdown, was affected on Thursday.

# Modi hints at staggered lifting of lockdown...

Continued from Page 1

States as a whole can be categorised into high, medium and low risk zones and places where COVID-19 cases were detected in large numbers can be locked down for some more time.

The criteria for geographical opening can also be based on the presence of public gathering spots. Currently, a person can move about in a 3 km radius; this can be extended to 5 km and eventually 10 km.

The Prime Minister asked States to "work on foot footing, identify virus hotspots and encircle them" to contain the infection. The focus for the next few weeks must be testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine, Modi told states.

Wuhan, the fountainhead of the virus, lifted its lockdown partially last week and people there are allowed to enter but not leave, the city. Cinemas

were opened, but shut again. Wuhan imposed limits on how many people could enter and shopkeepers set up dispensers for hand sanitiser and checked customers for signs of fever.

Mette Frederiksen, the Prime Minister of Denmark, had earlier said that her country's government might have to control when people go to work and school in order to prevent people from getting too close to one another on public transport.

While allowing people to come out, governments across the world are looking at preventing too many people from gathering in one place at the same time.

In Shanghai, indoor tourist attractions have again been suspended. Even in Italy, the government said that work restrictions would probably be lifted on a sector-by-sector basis, rather than on a geographical basis.

# Mercury @ 42°C, but Covid-19 plays it cool!

Continued from Page 1

According to TSDPS, the highest maximum temperature 39.4 degree C was recorded at Madhapur. If not for the lockdown, the state would be busy preparing for the upcoming heat wave conditions.

BadradriKothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda and Suryapet witnessed temperatures of around 41 degrees. Most of the state will be witnessing temperatures in the range of 39-40degrees.

According to the forecast, maximum temperatures are expected to be in the range of 37 degree to 40 degree Celsius, while the minimum temperatures would be in the range of 24 degree to 26 degree Celsius.

# Father lathi-charged...

Continued from Page 1

Several have been posting their comments finding fault with the police behaviour. The Netizens have expressed indignation at the behaviour of the police who did not think twice on the possible impact on young minds if they resorted to lathi charge on the father in front of the child. The irated Netizens have been demanding the police authorities to suspend all those who have indulged in the incident.

Child rights association severely condemned the incident. It is justified to prevent the people coming on to the roads because of the severe threat from Corona Virus. However, on that pretext the police cannot take the law into their hands, opines Atchuta Rao, child rights activist.

# States take cue...

Continued from Page 1

On March 30, the Telangana government decided to cut salaries of all its employees, in varying degrees depending on their rank ranging from 10 per cent to 70 per cent. On Tuesday Odisha and Rajasthan also announced a cut in salaries, from 10 per cent to 100 per cent, again depending on the ranks. Maharashtra has announced payment of salaries in instalments.

All these states have cited the financial crisis in the wake of COVID-19 forced lockdowns as the main reason behind the move. In Karnataka, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa has announced he will renounce one year's salary and donate it to the COVID-19 fight.

The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday decided that salaries for April will be cut. On Tuesday, state Chief

Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had said the government was considering asking officers to do a repeat of the 'salary challenge', a phrase popularised during the catastrophic 2018 floods when officers volunteered donations to the relief fund.

Telangana's main opposition Congress has come out strongly against the mandatory salary cut. In Maharashtra, the government had initially planned mandatory salary cuts but revised it to payments in instalment fearing a backlash. In post-floods Kerala, about 40 per cent of government employees, mostly from unions linked to opposition Congress, had abstained from taking part in the 'salary challenge'. The government tried to make it mandatory then but the Supreme Court turned down the move, citing the government cannot insist its workers donate for charity.

## CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

# Attacks on docs, social workers, cops worrisome

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As India battles the coronavirus outbreak, sporadic attacks on doctors, social workers and police personnel have come to the fore raising concerns over their safety and prompting warnings by authorities.

In a related incident, police said on Thursday that an Army jawan allegedly shot dead a woman after her relative included his family's name in a list of people who had returned to their village in Mainpuri district in Uttar Pradesh following the outbreak of coronavirus.

Two women doctors were injured in Indore when a 5-member team of health officials was pelted with stones in



Taatpatti Bakhal area on Wednesday while they were trying to trace a person who had come into contact with a COVID-19 patient, police said. A case has been registered and seven people were arrested,

police said, as Indore collector Manish Singh warned that the district administration will not tolerate such incidents and misbehaviour.

Relatives of a 49-year-old coronavirus patient who died

**In Bihar, Police and medical personnel were attacked by locals in Munger town when they visited a locality to collect samples from people suspected to have contracted coronavirus**

at a government hospital in Hyderabad assaulted the duty doctor and the staff alleging negligence, police said. Telangana Director General of Police M Mahendar Reddy asserted that strong action will be taken against the culprits and necessary measures will be put in place to provide protection to all the doctors and paramedics treating COVID-19 patients.

In Bihar, Police and medical

personnel were attacked by locals in Munger town when they visited a locality to collect samples from people suspected to have contracted coronavirus. Stones were thrown at the quick response team (QRT), comprising policemen and an ambulance carrying medical personnel, when they visited the Hazratganj locality late on Wednesday, said the SHO of Qasim Bazar police station Shailesh Kumar.

The stone-pelting left a police jeep badly damaged and the situation was brought under control by use of force, he added. Female social workers in Bengaluru and a man in Mumbai were gheraoed and assaulted in separate incidents linked to the survey of people who attended the recent Nizamuddin Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi, the biggest COVID-19 hotspot in India, said police officials from the two cities. According to reports from state capitals, there also have been cases of policemen being attacked while trying to enforce the 21-day lockdown which entered the ninth day on Thursday and while keeping a surveillance on people under home quarantine.

# 960 foreigners' visas cancelled

Continued from Page 1

Home Minister Amit Shah took to Twitter and posted, "A total of 960 foreigners have been blacklisted and their Indian visas have also been canceled as the Ministry of Home Affairs found their involvement in Tablighi activities here on tourist visas." (sic)

The Home Ministry has also directed the Directors-General of Police of all concerned States and Union Territories (UTs) and Delhi Commissioner of Police to take necessary legal action against all such violators, on priority, under relevant sec-

tions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

The 960 foreigners are among the 1,306 who had come here from different countries on tourist visas and took part in the congregation organised by the Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin.

Scores of the attendees (from among thousands who attended the gathering from various parts of the country, including nearly 2,000 from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) subsequently tested Covid-19 positive, resulting almost in nationwide scare.

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**CRIME CORNER**

**INTER GRADUATE IMMOLATES SELF**

A recently graduated intermediate student committed suicide by immolating himself at his residence in Chevela on Thursday. The victim was identified as 18-year-old Vamsi Goud. Both the parents of the victim are labourers. The family was residing at Devuni Erravalli village of Chevela in Rangareddy. According to the Chevela Police, on Wednesday, Goud doused himself in petrol and set himself ablaze. On hearing his screams, his family members rushed him to the Osmania General hospital. Doctors there said that the condition of Goud, who suffered 75 per cent burns, was critical. However, he passed away while undergoing treatment in the early hours of Thursday. The police said efforts were on to know the reasons behind the incident, while preliminary investigation suggested that Goud, who was suffering from stomach pain since the past six months, took the extreme step unable to bear the constant pain.

**THREE STUDENTS INJURED AS TRUCK RAMS JOGGERS**

Three students who had come out for a jog on Thursday sustained serious injuries when a milk van crashed into them in the outskirts of Mekaguda village. The injured persons were identified as K Sandeep Reddy, 20, a 3rd year B-tech student at Malla Reddy Engineering College, K Santosh Reddy, 13, studying 9th standard at Chaitanya Techno school in Hayathnagar and C Bhargav Reddy, 20, a BBA 2nd year student. All the three are residents of Mekaguda village. Police said that the milk van without headlights was coming from Mahabubnagar to Mekaguda. While reaching NATCO Pharma, the driver of the van drove his vehicle in a negligent manner and hit the three pedestrians from behind. The three youngsters were jogging on the road. The driver of the milk van left the vehicle at the spot and fled away. They were shifted to hospital through 108 ambulance.

**Hypervigilance over Covid-19 lead to disorder: Psychiatrists**

In the backdrop of coronavirus ruling the roost in the country, people of the city are shivering that they might be carriers of the virus at the slightest incidence of cold or cough or fever. A woman residing in Himayat Nagar plunged into depression out of fear of contracting the virus. She used to wash hands and legs at hourly intervals, clean the house, windows and doors thoroughly apprehensive of coronavirus. Her family members showed her to a psychiatrist two days ago. Similarly, a teenager belonging to Secunderabad has running temperature and has had no symptoms of common cold or cough. But his family plunged into turmoil. The boys anxiety cannot be explained. They consulted a physician who declared it as a normal fever leading to the family heaving a huge sigh of relief.

**Virus disrupts pregnancy plans, escalates anxiety**

NAVEEN KUMAR ■ HYDERABAD

The coronavirus outbreak has made many people nervous of its effect, suffering more are the pregnant women who have a lot more to worry about, especially in a country like India. Expectant mothers are increasingly anxious about avoiding hospitals to give birth, with no clear guidance issued by health chiefs on maternity during the coronavirus pandemic.

For the period between 2018-19, of the total number of deliveries in Telangana was 3,80,278, including 2,22,588 in government hospitals and 1,57,690 in private, according to government data.

Right now, you may be feeling anxious about contracting the virus, nervous about changes to your birth plan and scared about the possibility of labouring without your birthing partner, opined doctors.

So far scientists have found no evidence that mothers who test positive for Covid-19 can



transmit it to their fetus in utero. Pregnancy and childbirth do not seem to aggravate the typical course of symptoms. Once the baby is born, the CDC recommends a temporary mother-infant separation for mothers who have Covid-19, and offers guidance on breastfeeding precautions. "You should be extra neurotic and extra overprotective and extra hygienic with your hand-washing and face-washing," said Dr Sonali Rao, a paediatrician. "You have to plan

for all contingencies. Covid-19 is definitely making isolation for new parents worse right now, especially when people can't have their own family members come over and help them," she said.

"Pregnant women are still no more likely to contract coronavirus than the general population. What we do know is that pregnancy in a small proportion of women can alter how your body handles severe viral infections. This is something that midwives and obstre-

**Expectant mothers are anxious about avoiding hospitals to give birth, with no clear guidance issued by health officials on maternity during the virus pandemic**

tricians have known for many years and are used to dealing with. As yet, there is no evidence that pregnant women who get coronavirus are more at risk of serious complications than any other healthy individuals. What has driven the decisions made by officials to place pregnant women in the vulnerable category is caution. We know that some viral infections are worse in pregnant women. At the moment, there's no evidence that this is the case for coronavirus infection, but the amount of evidence available is still quite limited" said another paediatric professional.

**Belt shops mushroom in city as bars remain shut**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the wake of lockdown clamped on the state, belt shops mushroomed all over the state. Liquor is being delivered at the door steps of the consumer on demand collecting hefty prices for each bottle in Ranga Reddy district.

A bottle of beer is being sold at Rs 300, while branded liquor is being sold at Rs 2,500 a bottle.

Liquor is being sold all over Telangana clandestinely through belt shops with no differentiation between a village and a town. The flooding of liquor to villages and towns in spite of the lockdown is going unchecked.

The excise officials have sealed the bars and wine shops, yet the flow of liquor is continuing unabated.

Belt shop operators tripled liquor prices as liquor is not available across the state for the past 11 days. However, the excise police as a matter of routine conducted raids and seized liquor bottles at seven or eight places in Ranga Reddy district.

Unless the people complain, the excise officials are not jumping into action, it is being alleged.

It is being criticised that the liquor sales are going on locally with the collusion of the civil and excise police personnel.

The Rangareddy district has 195 liquor shops, but the number of belt shops is thrice the number of wine shops.

By the time the government introduced clamp down on the state, the belt shops have



already have enough stocks of liquor.

The closure of bars and wines benefited the belt shops. Some are accused of smuggling liquor from other districts as well.

A liquor bottle that costs Rs 1,080 is being sold up to Rs 3,000 each. Similarly, a bottle that costs Rs 700 is being sold at Rs 1,500 each. A quarter bottle that is sold at Rs 140 is being sold at Rs 300. Premium

brand beer that costs Rs 120 is being sold at Rs 300 while the strong beer is being sold at Rs 350 a bottle.

The belt shop operators are stocking up the bottles near agricultural wells and friends' houses. The belt shops are selling the stocks to persons premier with those who operate belt shops. Habitual tipplers are buying them at exorbitant rates and burning a hole in their pockets.

**104 bottles of illegal liquor seized, 2 held**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Kandukur Police of Rachakonda apprehended two persons who were found transporting liquor bottles in a car with an intention to sell them for higher prices in villages on Thursday. The arrested persons have been identified as Ande Mahendar and Ande Srinivas, both residents of Agariyaguda Village of Kandukur.

According to the Kandukur Police, the duo were transporting 104 liquor bottles in a TATA Safari in order to sell



them for higher prices in nearby villages, thereby violating lockdown rules duly promulgated by the government. Based on a tip off, officials apprehended the duo and seized the bottles. A case has been registered, said the police officials.

**Blood donation camp to help Thalassemia patients**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In these trying times of complete lockdown of Hyderabad city, Military College of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (MCEME) Secunderabad has undertaken a blood donation camp, on the request of Red Cross Society through Governor of Telangana to sustain Thalassemia affected children. As many as 200 blood units were collected by all ranks of MCEME to help the cause. The blood donation camp commenced on March 30 and is planned to be continued for the next 10 days.

The volunteers are screened on a daily basis in the Medical Inspection (MI) room of MCEME before they are deemed fit for the blood donation and again checked post blood donation.

**Cops feed poor amid lockdown**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In accordance with their goal to be for the people at all times, especially in times of chaos, the Telangana Police have stepped up their social responsibility mantles. On Thursday, the Rachakonda Police along with Prajwala foundation handed over a month's supply of food grains to 400 migrant laborers families from Maharashtra and other areas at Ramanthapur in Uppal.

Ibrahimpatnam's ACP, the Adibatla Police along with the help of a donor, Suresh Chowdary of Turkayamjal, distributed 100 packets which had 12 commodities enough for two weeks to migrant labour and watchman families near TCS of Adibatla. Malkajigiri Police distributed vegetables to about 500 needy persons with the help of donors.

The Ibrahimpatnam Police distributed 10 quintals of rice and groceries to migrated



labour at a brick kiln in Kurmaguda of Ibrahimpatnam. Meerpet Police distributed Three kgs rice packets along with vegetables to 50 members of Bhupesh Gupta nagar in Meerpet. The Hayathnagar Police distributed 250 dinner packets to orphans and out of state workers in the limits of Hayathnagar PS.

The Rachakonda Police, as of Thursday, verified 2,136 suspect persons out of a total of 2,403 suspect persons. Of these 5 are positive cases and 2,020 are

home quarantined. Meanwhile, the Cyberabad Police along with SCS traffic volunteers distributed 1,800 grocery bags and 12,000 food packets, water bottles, butter milk packets, vegetables and other essential items to the poor, needy and destitute people.

Cyberabad CP VC Sajjanar, Madhapur DCP, Venkateswara Rao and DCP Traffic SM Vijay Kumar distributed ration to 25 families living in Indira Nagar and Tellapur areas under RC Puram Police Station limits on Thursday.

**Drones help cops enforce lockdown**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The drones have come in handy for the effective implementation of the lockdown and enforce curfew in all lanes and bylanes in various parts of the city.

Cyient, a global engineering and technology solutions company, on Thursday announced that it has been providing Telangana State Police with drone-based surveillance technology to help implement the Covid-19 related lockdown in Hyderabad. The technology is enabling the police make lockdown-related announcements and organise their ground forces to monitor the situation in congested areas of the city.

Equipped with surveillance cameras, thermal imaging payloads and sky speaker for public announcements, Cyient's drone-based aerial inspection capability is positively aug-

menting the police's ability to combat the spread of the pandemic. By providing situational awareness on a real-time basis, the technology gives Police the means to understand and deploy resources very quickly to manage evolving situations.

Recognising the partnership with Cyient, Cyberabad Police tweeted, "Great collaboration with Cyient to stop the spread of Covid-19.



**Special drones to sanitise public places**

**Hyderabad:** A start-up, Marut Dronetech Private Limited, founded by IIT Guwahati alumni has developed and deployed drones for spraying disinfectant in public spaces to prevent coronavirus. Marut Dronetech is working with the state govern-

ment to deploy drones for public safety applications. Recently, Karimnagar Municipal Corporation, Telangana, had deployed customised drones of Marut Drones for spraying disinfectants in Mukarampur area of Karimnagar where 10

Indonesians and 1 local had tested positive for Covid-19. Disinfectants were also sprayed at public places using the drones. In a given time, it is seen that drones disinfect 50 times more area than traditional methods and can keep human operators out of harm.

**Police conduct raids for fake masks, hand sanitisers, arrest two**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Special Operations Team (SOT) LB Nagar zone of the Rachakonda Police raided a godown, hoarding masks and sanitisers to be sold at hiked prices and seized huge quantities of stocks at Dilukhannagar on Thursday.

The arrested person has been identified as Y Manikyam, 60, a medical shop owner, who was selling the masks from his house in Chaitanyapuri.

The SOT raided a house at Chaitanyapuri where Manikyam was selling masks at a hiked rate to the public. Apart from doing that illegally, he was not billing the sales too, said the police.

Officials seized 6,775 masks from his possession. The seized material along with the arrested person was handed over to the Chaitanyapuri Police for further investigation. The SOT also raided a

duplicate hand sanitisers manufacturing unit at Mallikarjuna hills in Nagole and seized 752 duplicate sanitisers worth Rs 3 lakhs.

The arrested person has been identified as Gadde Mohan Kumar, 61, a resident of Keyshia Nagar in Bandlaguda.

The unit was being run on the name Gladys P-150, Disinfectant Hand Rub at road no.6 of Mallikarjuna hills, Nagole without permission from concerned departments. Kumar started manufacturing hand sanitizers and falsely printed the bottle stickers, without any batch number and was supplying to leading medical shops in Telangana.

Officials seized 665 50 ml, 70 500 ml and 17 5 litre sanitizers bottles, all worth Rs 3 lakhs from his possession.

The seized material and Kumar were handed over to the LB Nagar Police for further investigation.

**COVID-19 CRISIS IIT-Hyderabad researchers study changes in travel patterns**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad and Indian Institute of Technology Bombay Researchers have studied the impact of Covid-19 outbreak on daily commute during the transition phase between pre-lockdown and the lockdown period.

The researchers believe that the lockdown decision taken by the government has decreased risk of exposure to the coronavirus, due to decrease in crowded setting observed in public transport such as buses, metro and trains.

The research team comprised Dr. Digvijay S. Pawar and Dr. Pritha Chatterjee, Assistant Professors, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Hyderabad and Prof. Nagendra Velaga, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Bombay, and Ankit Kumar Yadav, Research student, IIT Bombay.

This study analysed travel and visit behaviour changes that occurred during third week of Covid-19 outbreak in Indian during pre-lockdown period. More than 1,900 participants participated in the study. The researchers received a majority of their response from Tier-1 cities (63.6 percent) followed by Tier-2 (20.6 percent) and Tier-3 cities (15.8 per cent).

**SBI, HDFC & ICICI BANKS**

**All you need to know about moratorium**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following lockdown clamped on the whole country, the RBI revised repo and revers repo rates and extended the facility of availing moratorium on loans for three months. The public sector giant SBI, private sector prominent bank HDFC and the ICICI bank are extending the facility to the loanees one after the other.

The SBI customers wishing to avail the moratorium should fill the Application Form Deferral of Recovery of Instalment/EMI through NACH and mail it to the bank. The e-mail ID changes according to the bank circle. The email identity can be



secured from the SBI website. In case the customers have funds and want to remit the loan amount from their bank account, they would have to

do nothing. Those who want to download the NACH form from the "https://www.sbi.co.in/stope" link

**Those who avail moratorium would have to pay interest. If you exercise three month moratorium the loan tenure increases by 3 months and it would have no impact on Cibil**

https://www.sbi.co.in/stopemi The customers can also visit the bank branch and avail moratorium by handing over a letter to the bank authorities.

Similarly, the HDFC and ICICI Banks are also extending the moratorium facility on the lines of the SBI. The banks have been sending messages to customers.

The HDFC Bank customers wishing to avail the moratorium should call 022-50042333, 022-50042211 and should give their consent to avail the moratorium facility.

By using the link, "https://apply.hdfcbank.com/vid/afp/\l" Application\_moratorium\_mo" at "blank" https://apply.hdfcbank.com/vid/afp#Application\_moratorium\_mo the prospective moratorium seekers can enter details like name, loan account number and so on and submit

the form to authorities.

The ICICI Bank customers keen on availing the facility should exercise the option by using the link "https://buy.icicibank.com/moratorium.html?ITM=nl\_cms\_hp\_1\_static\_EMI-moratorium-d\_ChooseYourOption" at "blank" https://buy.icicibank.com/moratorium.html?ITM=nl\_cms\_hp\_1\_static\_EMI-moratorium-d\_ChooseYourOption.

Those who avail moratorium should remember one thing that they would have to pay interest. If you exercise three month moratorium the loan tenure increases by three months and it would have no impact on your Cibil score.

**State launches dedicated website for fact checking**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government launched a dedicated website https://factcheck.telangana.gov.in on Thursday as part of its efforts to check the spread of fake news, misinformation and rumours in the backdrop of coronavirus spread and the consequent lockdown.

It may be recalled that the Telangana Government has already invoked the provisions of Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and notified Telangana Epidemic Diseases (Covid-19) Regulations, 2020 framed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897. Disseminating information on social media platforms without ascertaining

the facts and obtaining prior clearance from competent authorities is deemed a punishable offence under the said Act and Regulations.

Supreme Court took serious note of the panic created by fake news leading to mass movement of migrant labourers directing the Union and State Governments to take effective measures to check circulation of fake news.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao in his recent media briefings on Coronavirus Lockdown also warned the spreaders of fake news, misinformation and rumours of stern action. The CM has ordered the DGP and CS to take stringent measures against the perpetrators.



# Reaching out, at people's doorstep

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In these times of unprecedented crisis, under the guidance and directions of the Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, the Departments of Agriculture, Marketing & Horticulture, in a concerted effort have endeavoured to utilise the available infrastructure and ensure providing of vegetables and fruits to the people of the state. The departments concerned have come out with a new strategy as the present lockdown times necessitated that citizens cannot move out of their houses.

In this background, the Agriculture Department, led by the senior officers and battalion of estate officers, farmers, agriculture officers, drivers, agriculturists, Hamalis in the markets have responded admirably to meet the needs of the people in respect of vegetables and fruits and contributing to the security of the Telangana State.

There are 15 market yards, 43 rythu bazars across the state. The 12 rythu bazars in GHMC area cater to over 20 lakh households with most vegetables



being handled at Bowenpally and Guddi Malkapur have ensured sufficient supplies, quality products and reasonable prices, thereby strengthening the resolve of the Government in ensuring containment measures to combat the Corona.

As maintenance of social distancing was an area of concern in market places, a strategy to use Mobile Rythu Bazars combined with extending of existing Rythu Bazars and markets to open places adjacent (Including some roads) areas, thinning of crowds was

achieved. This resulted in providing an enabling environment in social distancing norms on the ground. It also encouraged the people to stay at home rather than crowding the markets and reduced the pressure at the market places. The tsunami model of outreach using the Mobile rythu bazars has shown encouraging results on the ground.

The department ensured that the farmers could transport their produce to the markets and gave assurance of safe pas-

sage, with the help of the police department. On arrival of the vegetable stocks at the rythu bazars, the mobile rythu bazars were pressed into service to reach out to every nook and corner of the city.

They are a classic illustration of the government endeavour to enable people stay at home, thereby contributing to restricting the number of Corona cases. About 200 Mobile Rythu Bazars deployed on various routes using GIS technology are reaching out to over 500 locations every day and 3,500 loca-

**Agriculture Dept, in coordination with GHMC and Police, has taken various measures to ensure that people won't face any problems during lockdown**

tions every week. With Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), spread over 625 sqkms, the mobile rythu bazars are able to reach out across the 150 wards. Ward Level corporators are also showing special interest in planning the locations in their respective wards, more so in view of the fact that the vegetables and fruits supplied are fresh and reasonably priced. The doorstep delivery of vegetables and fruits by the Mobile Rythu Bazars has come as a boon to the 20 lakh household of the twin cities, who otherwise would have crowded the Rythu Bazar markets.

# Harish puts officials on high alert as Corona cases spike

PNS ■ GAJWEL

Finance Minister T Harish Rao has put the official machinery on a high alert as more Corona positive cases are being reported in the state in the aftermath of people returning to their native places after attending Markaz in Nizamuddin.

Participating in a review meeting at RDO office here on Thursday, the Minister asked the officials to send people who have Corona symptoms to isolation ward and run diagnostic tests. The officials have been asked to post him with the latest info about the virus in Gajwel, Gajulapalli, Ahmednagar and Madannapet.

Report on each individual's status should be prepared by undertaking door-to-door survey, he said asking officials not to allow the people to come out and provide essential commodities to the people at their door step.

Earlier, the Minister toured Gajwel town and the villages visited by a person from the town who tested positive for the virus. MP Kotta Prabhakar Reddy, TSFDC chairman Vanteru Pratapa Reddy, District police commissioner Joel Davis, additional commis-



**The Finance Minister asked the officials to post him with the latest info about the status in Gajwel, Gajulapalli, Ahmednagar and Madannapet**

sioner Muzami Khan, GADA special officer Mutyam Reddy, Gajwel RDO Vijayar Reddy, medical officers and local elected people's representatives accompanied the Minister.

Later speaking to media, five persons attended the Markaz held in Delhi from Gajwel district. One person, who visited Delhi tested positive and another person tested negative while reports of the others who attended the prayers from Mulug, Akkannapet, Madduru, Cheryal are not yet to be received.

The persons from Gajwel who visited Delhi returned to Kachiguda on March 19 and toured Gajwel, Gajulapalli and Ahmed Nagar in Daultabad mandal, Veera Reddy palle, Madannapet I Mirdoddi mandal on March 19 and 20.

He confined himself to home quarantine from March 20. Diagnostic reports of the Gajwel resident's 12 family members would be received from CCMB on Friday evening. Another 12 persons whom the resident contacted would be sent to CCMB for checking their samples.



**Corona victim buried after due procedure**

PNS ■ NIRMAL

A man who died of Covid-19 at a government-run hospital here on Wednesday was given a quiet burial at a graveyard in Nirmal town in the early hours of Thursday.

The body of the 49-year-old man, who died while undergoing treatment at Gandhi Hospital, was shifted to the town, about 200 km from here, in an ambulance.

Police and municipal authorities made the necessary arrangements for the burial as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) stipulated by the Government of India for disposal of bodies of Coronavirus patients. The man from Nirmal is one of the nine persons who have died of Covid-19 in the state.

**'Cooperate with medical teams'**

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Power Minister G Jagadish Reddy on Thursday has enquired with the Nalgonda district medical and health officer Dr Kondal Rao the line of treatment being provided to those who tested positive for Corona in the district.

Speaking to District Collector Prasant Jivan Patil, SP Ranganadh and the DMHO over phone on Thursday morning, the Minister asked them to convince their family members of those who tested positive for the virus to go to quarantine facility. Since

The Minister sought people's support to the Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's efforts to rein in the virus. He exhorted the people not to panic, but remain calm as those who have tested positive are under the govern-



ment's surveillance. All arrangements have been made to extend treatment to them. He appealed to people to cooperate with the medical teams.

Meanwhile, BC Welfare and Civil Supplies Minister Gangula Kamalakar condemned the attack on doctors providing treatment to coronavirus patients. The Minister distributed free rice to the needy at Kothirampur area.

**547 procurement centres set up in Nizamabad**

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Nizamabad district administration has made all arrangements to purchase paddy crop in the district. The officials concerned have set up 547 procurement centers in Nizamabad district, said Additional Collector Chandrashekar.

The Addl Collector said that out of 547 centres, 472 centres are running under the supervision of PACS, 7 under MEPMA, 11 under ICDMS and remaining 57 under supervision of IKP centers.

He said that government would purchase A-grade paddy at the MSP of Rs 1,835 and common variety at Rs 1,815 per quintal. The additional Collector said, to avoid crowding, tokens will be distributed to the farmers by the agriculture department and mentioning the date and time on them, and according to the token numbers, farmers should bring their produce to the procurement centres.

**Will procure paddy at MSP: Niranjan**

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minister for Agriculture S Niranjan Reddy said that the State government was taking all steps for the benefit of the farming community in the State and added that it would purchase all the maize and paddy yield by offering the minimum support price (MSP) in these days of crisis situation caused by the pandemic coronavirus.

He along with Minister for Panchayat Raj & Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar Rao and Narsampet MLA Peddi Sudharshan Reddy inaugurated the first maize procurement centre of the State at Nekkonda in the district on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Niranjan Reddy said the State government was ready to purchase 14 lakh metric tonnes of maize from the farmers across the State. "We are offering Rs 1,760 per quintal as MSP spending Rs 3,213 crore. Narsampet is the highest producer of maize as it was culti-



ivated in 53,000 acres. Since there is good demand for maize in the global market, farmers should prefer maize cultivation in the Yasang season," he said and added that 260 paddy procurement centres were also set up across the district.

In order to help the farmers, Chief Minister has readily accepted the proposal made by the Agriculture Ministry for the purchase of the maize and paddy, the Minister said and asked the officials to give tokens to the farmers to make hassle-free procurement.

**Coronavirus survivors blood might save lives**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has permitted the emergency investigational use of blood of people who have recovered from COVID-19 as a possible antidote for the deadly disease.

"As there are no approved treatments, FDA is permitting the emergency investigational use of convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19. The treatment involves the use of convalescent plasma collected from recovered COVID-19 patients," the FDA stated.

Convalescent plasma is the liquid part of blood that is collected from patients who have recovered from an infection. Antibodies present in it are proteins that might help fight the infection.

Use of convalescent plasma was also studied in outbreaks of other respiratory infections, including the 2009-2010 H1N1 influenza virus pandemic, 2003 SARS-CoV-1

**The treatment involves the use of convalescent plasma collected from recovered COVID-19 patients**

epidemic, and the 2012 MERS-CoV epidemic. The federal agency added, "There is some information that suggests it might help some patients recover from COVID-19."

It is possible that convalescent plasma contains antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19 and might be effective against the infection. "It is important to determine through clinical trials, before routinely administering convalescent plasma to patients with COVID-19, that it is safe and effective to do so."

FDA stated that the plasma must only be collected from recovered individuals, if they are eligible to donate blood.

**Shift Markaz participants to isolation wards: Raja Singh**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP lone MLA from Telangana Raja Singh Loath on Thursday urged Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao to shift all those who participated in Delhi Markaz to isolation wards.

Stating that thousands of people lost their lives across the

world due to Corona, Raja Singh expressed concern over the prevailing conditions across the state.

Expressing anger over the people for coming out on to the roads unnecessarily, Raja Singh urged the people to follow the quarantine keeping the future generations in view.



**BJP condemns attack on doctors**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLC and Greater Hyderabad city president N Ramachander Rao condemned the attack on doctors in Gandhi Hospitals. Rao appealed the people to help doctors in providing treatment to coronavirus victims instead of resorting to attacks on them. "In this crucial juncture, doctors are the only hope in saving our lives," Rao said. He asked people, those who attended Nizamuddin markaz in Delhi, to voluntarily come to the hospitals and help in preventing spread of the virus. He blamed government for taking effective measures to identify markaz participants.

**Jamia student arrested in connection with Delhi violence**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Thursday arrested a student of Jamia Milia Islamia for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to incite communal riots in northeast Delhi, officials said.

Meeran Haider (35), a PhD student at Jamia, is the president of RJD youth wing's Delhi unit, sources said.

On Wednesday at 10 am, Haider was called for interrogation by the Special Cell at their Lodhi Colony office and was subsequently arrested, the officials said. Rajya Sabha MP and



RJD leader Manoj Jha tweeted, "Delhi Police called him for investigation and then received orders from above and arrested Meeran Haider, who has been

helping people during the time of coronavirus outbreak."

Chhatra RJD unit of JNU also demanded the release of Haider and said the police should become 'people-friendly' and not scare people. The Jamia Coordination Committee (JCC), a group comprising students and alumni from the varsity, condemned the arrest and demanded his immediate release.

"The country is facing a massive health crisis, however, the state machinery is busy harassing and framing student activists in false cases to suppress voices of dissent," they said.

**Karne lashes out at Uttam Kumar**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS leaders took potshots at the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy for politicising Corona issue. They said that Chief Minister's comments stating the Congress party is dangerous than the virus, has become true with Uttam's statements.

Government Whip in Legislative Council Karne Prabhakar, GHMC Mayor Bonthu Rammoohan and TSIC chairman Gyadari Balamallu



have said that when all the countries across the globe are unitedly fighting against the virus, the Congress leaders are on a different path.

"Uttam Kumar Reddy is making baseless allegations by demanding the government to pay full salaries where the government employees themselves extending support to impose salary cuts in view of prevailing situation," Karne Prabhakar said.

He said that the Chief Minister had already announced that the government will pay full salaries to the police and medical staff besides announcing that the government will give incentives to them. He said that it is sad on

the part of Uttam that the latter is not in a position to see that Telangana stood as a role model to the nation in fight against Corona.

He pointed out that opposing the decision of the government of inviting tenders for shifting third TMC water from Kaleswaram project shows the ignorance of Uttam. He asked Uttam whether the latter didn't know the fact that the construction of Kaleswaram project is going on with the funds of Central finance institutions and bank loans.

**Salary cuts illegal: Sr Advocate**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Advocate of Telangana High Court S Satyam Reddy on Thursday wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of the court and urged him to Suo-Moto take up the issue of the decision of the state government to defer the salaries of all state government employees as public interest litigation.

In his letter, he told the Chief Justice that the GO MS No. 27 issued by the state government on March 30, 2020 to defer the salaries of its employees was completely illegal. He told the High Court that the pay and allowances of a government servant can neither be deferred nor not paid except as a measure of punishment.

He said that the pay and allowances of the government



employees were protected under the fundamental rules. He told the court that, in the ongoing period of extreme difficulties the government employees should not be forced to sustain themselves with 50 per cent of their salaries, especially at a time when the prices of essential commodities had been increased by unscrupulous elements.

He also told the HC that the extension of the GO to pen-

sioners of the state was very harsh. He told the HC that the right to life guaranteed by Indian constitution had been violated by the GO issued by the state government. He urged the HC to protect the life and liberties guaranteed to the government employees and its pensioners under the Constitution of India and also under the rules applicable to the government servants and its pensioners.

**Tablighi Jamaat ubiquitous in Telugu States**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

From remote villages to cities, they are seen everywhere. Clad in long white kurtas over pyjamas and wearing skull caps, they move around in groups doing 'gash' or going door to door to personally meet Muslims, invite them to namaz and emphasising the need to follow the true path for success in life after death.

Tablighi Jamaat has been active in undivided Andhra Pradesh for decades. Working with a simple objective of helping Muslims revive their faith, Tablighis or members of the organisation have been carrying out their activities in almost every town and village. After inviting Muslims to 'namaz' followed by 'ijtama' or gathering at the neighbourhood mosques, they exhort them to introspect and remind them of their



responsibilities as Muslims and their duty to work for propagation of the faith. The participants in 'ijtama' are urged to devote their time to join 'jamaat' for going to another place for a similar preaching mission. Thus the chain of missionary mission continues.

The jamaats or group of

**Unlike some other leading Muslim organisations working to spread the message of Islam among non-Muslims, Tablighi Jamaat works only among Muslims**

of preachers will have an 'Ameer' or leader who guides through the tour, interact with people and address 'ijtama'.

The uninitiated are exhorted to leave homes, remain away from families for a certain period and sacrifice their time and money in the path of Allah. Some people spend 24 hours in Jamaat while others join the groups for 3 days, 10 days or more. Jamatis are told to give 40 days in a year and at least one year in their lifetime for preaching.

Unlike some other leading Muslim organisations working to spread the message of Islam among non-Muslims, Tablighi Jamaat works only among Muslims. They stay away from politics and controversies and confine themselves to the single point agenda of inviting ordinary Muslims to namaz and Tablighi or preaching. Though in existence for over 90 years, the organisation was never in the limelight as publicity or media is a big no for the organisation.



SHORT READS



**'CMs should ask religious leaders to avoid large gatherings'**

**MUMBAI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accepted Maharashtra Chief Minister's suggestion that religious leaders should be asked to refrain from holding large gatherings. Thackeray made the suggestion during a video conference with Modi in the morning, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said. Modi held a video conference with all chief ministers to discuss ways to check the spread of coronavirus. The prime minister accepted Thackeray's suggestion and asked all chief ministers to speak to religious leaders from their respective states and ask them to tell the community members about the need for social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, the CMO said in a statement. Modi also supported Thackeray's view that citizens need to be in good mental health during the lockdown period, it said. State Health Minister Rajesh Tope, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray and senior bureaucrats also attended the video conference.

**Tiger mauls man to death at MP's Bandhavgarh Reserve**

**UMARIA (MP):** A man died after being attacked by a tiger at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) on Thursday, a forest official said. Chintamani Baiga (40) was mauled to death by a tiger when he stepped out to relieve himself in the early hours of Thursday at Gohani village, BTR's sub-divisional Officer (SDO) Anil Shukla said. Baiga was posted as a watchman at the Gohani village camp of the forest patrolling party, he said. When villagers raised an alarm, the big cat left Baiga at a distance and fled the scene, the SDO said, adding that the victim had already died of severe injuries by then.

**Kargil man tests positive for covid-19**

**LEH/JAMMU:** A man from Kargil has tested positive for coronavirus and efforts are being made to trace all his contacts, a senior official said on Thursday. The test of one person has arrived. He is positive. The person belongs to Sanjak area of Chitan belt of Kargil. Commissioner (Health) Rigzin Samphel told reporters. The infected person is already in quarantine in a hospital, he said. Teams of health workers headed by a block medical officer (BMO) have been sent to the area of Sanjak-Chitan to find out his contacts and take urgent action, he said. "We came to know that he had also visited Achanathang area of Kargil. We have sent a team to that area to find his contacts," he said. While the man has no history of foreign travel, he had come in contact with pilgrims from Iran, he added.

# Chronicles of death not foretold in coronavirus days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As a kind of hush settles deeper across the expanse of India and thousands of towns and villages shut down to ward off a pandemic, life goes on as it must — and so does death.

In times of social distancing, thousands of people are dying alone without a last glimpse of their loved ones who are unable to reach them. Mourning, too, is about isolation with no extended family, friends or even neighbours to share your grief in person. In a dystopian present, imagined as a distant future only in fiction perhaps, the affluent and connected are mourning with each other through video conferencing and attending virtual funerals. Others, in villages and towns without easy access to technology, are left to grieve, alone with their thoughts and no one to help with the healing process.

Delhi-based journalist Ritika Jain, who lost her 85-year-old grandfather in Palitana, Gujarat, during the 21-day lockdown, which began on March 24 to curtail the spread of the coronavirus, couldn't get to meet him that one last time.

Her father managed to take the last flight from Mumbai to Bhavnagar just before the lockdown came into force but none of the others could. They attended the funeral through the Zoom mobile application.

"In the evening, the entire family met virtually through Zoom, paid last respects to my grandfather and consoled each other," Jain said as the number of COVID-19 cases crossed 1,900 with 50 fatalities.

Actor Sanjay Suri did the same when his wife lost her grandmother.

"... it was so strange attending a funeral via Zoom. Strange times!" he wrote on Twitter.

With governments limiting the number of people who can attend a funeral to 20 or less, no way to travel from one city to another and passes needed to leave the house, deaths have become complicated beyond



belief. And the emotional trauma is just one of the many things to deal with.

When 77-year old Kesavan, who lives in a Chennai suburb, heard news of the death of his 94-year old mother at his sibling's home in a distant corner of the city, his first thought was the commute. Finally, he told PTI, he just left home without waiting for the pass.

"The spectre of coronavirus is horrible as it punishes even those who are not affected," added K Veeraraghavan, also from Chennai, who lost his father recently. No members of the family could join the cremation.

Funerals have always been a time for social bonding in Indian society. But not any more with crematoriums and

burial grounds strictly limiting the number of people allowed.

According to Rakesh Kapoor, caretaker of the Shamsan Ghat (Mukti Dham) in Punjab's Ludhiana town, the number of people at a cremation have come down sharply from 100 to just 20. "As soon as the body arrives, we allow people to pay their last respects for just one or two minutes and then start the process of performing last rites," he said.

In Haryana, too, rules are being strictly followed.

Sukhbir Singh, from Gorakhpur village in the state, lost his uncle to cancer recently and said the family followed all the regulations.

But it all came at an emotion-

**"In the evening, the entire family met virtually through Zoom, paid last respects to my grandfather and consoled each other," Jain said as the number of COVID-19 cases crossed 1,900 with 50 fatalities**

al cost. "The kind of support one gets from friends, neighbours and relatives is not there these days due to the restrictions," he said.

For many families, the lockdown has also meant coming to terms with the fact that everything cannot go as they had always planned.

In Odisha, for instance, many Hindus believe that those cremated in Swargaradh in Puri will get moksha.

On normal days, about 60 bodies are cremated at Swargaradh each day, said Bjay Kumar Das of the Puri Municipality. But this has come down to less than 10.

B Dhai, from Banki village in Cuttack, went to Swargaradh for his mother's last rites in accordance with her last wishes and a handful of family members accompanied the hearse to the seaside town.

However, the post death rituals have been done away with.

Church leaders are being equally strict. "Normally, over 100 people are present at the burial ground during funeral of any member of our community. However, we will have to reduce the number to less than 20 during this 21-day period," said Paresh Das of the Church of Christ in Bhubaneswar.

But it all came at an emotion-



## Coronavirus helplines either busy or unreachable: Users

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

When over the counter paracetamols did not help abate Delhi-based Ankur Tiwari's low-grade fever, sore throat and breathlessness, he tried calling up the COVID-19 helplines to check if he needed to get tested for the fatal virus, but to no avail.

"The numbers were either busy or did not connect at all. I waited for over half an hour on a single call, but it never connected," Tiwari told PTI.

The two helpline numbers that the 46-year-old teacher had tried calling were — 011-22307145 (Delhi govt) and 011-23978046 (central govt), both of which he took down from the audio message that plays on the phone before making a call.

"Eventually, I had to go to a local doctor, who has assured

me that I have nothing more than seasonal flu," he said.

Tiwari is among the many people who have raised concerns, especially in the last two weeks when the number of positive COVID-19 cases in the country started spiking, about the allegedly non-functional helpline numbers issued by the central and state governments.

As on Thursday, at least 1,965 people in the country are infected with coronavirus while 50 have died due to the disease.

Over a month back, the central and the state governments set up 24X7 helplines to answer people's queries on novel coronavirus, including when, how and where one should get tested in case they have symptoms like coughing, fever, shortness of breath, and vomiting.

## NCC offers to join the fight against Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NCC has offered the services of its cadets from across the country to join India's fight against coronavirus, the defence ministry said on Thursday.

At least 1,965 cases of COVID-19 have been reported till date in the country and 50 people have died due to it.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) has offered a helping hand to civilian authorities in the country's fight against COVID-19 by extending the services of cadets under 'Exercise NCC Yodan', the defence ministry said in a statement.

So far nearly 47,000 senior NCC cadets have volunteered pan-India, a senior official said.



Employment of volunteer NCC cadets will be based on requisition from state government and district administration, the statement said. "The NCC has issued guidelines for temporary employment of its cadets to augment relief efforts and functioning of various agencies involved in battling the pandemic," it added.

## PIB's COVID-19 Fact Check Unit becomes operational

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Press Information Bureau's COVID-19 Fact Check Unit (FCU) became operational on Thursday. The unit is headed by the bureau's director general, Nitin Wakankar, a statement issued by the PIB said. The PIB on Wednesday had set up a portal to check facts related to the novel coronavirus pandemic. It will receive messages by email and will send a response in a stipulated timeframe. The official version of any news on COVID-19 can be obtained from the unit, the statement said.

## Min identifies 20 existing, 22 potential hotspots

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday said it has identified 20 existing and 22 potential hotspots of COVID-19 in the country and asserted that although there is no evidence of widespread community transmission, containment measures will require large human resource.

The ministry said this in an advisory on human resource management of COVID-19 to provide guidance to the states on manpower that can be mobilized for the management of the disease along with possible role assignments and their training requirements.

"Although there is no evidence to widespread community transmission, 20 existing and 22 potential hotspots have been



**The advisory stressed on capacity building, saying identified human resource needs to be trained online using online training programs developed by the ministry**

identified. The containment measures to break the cycle of transmission and clinical management of those affected would require large human resource," it said in the document.

The advisory stressed on capacity building, saying identified human resource needs to be trained online using online training programs developed by the

ministry. The training for different target groups shall cover areas like field surveillance, contact tracing, sampling, packaging and shipment of specimen, hospital infection prevention and control, including use of appropriate PPEs and biomedical waste management, clinical case management including ventilator management, training on

managing quarantine and isolation facilities and community based training in psycho social care, the document said.

The ministry advised states to identify and designate a nodal officer for training who will coordinate all these activities.

For COVID-19 management, it advised the district administration to pool-in the requisite human resources who would stay in the containment zone till such operations are over.

"For isolation areas, in addition to training, all hospital staff, dentists and AYUSH practitioners available should also be trained. Retired doctors and other healthcare professionals should be identified to work in non-COVID areas in hospitals in case of emergencies," the advisory stated.

## Top Cong leaders criticise govt for insufficient measures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Top Congress leaders on Thursday discussed the situation arising out of the coronavirus outbreak, with party chief Sonia Gandhi criticising the Centre for "unplanned" implementation of the lockdown and calling for "solidarity" in meeting the challenge posed by the pandemic.

Besides Sonia Gandhi, former prime minister Manmohan Singh, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and other senior leaders discussed the health crisis at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) held through video conferencing.



Addressing the meeting, Sonia Gandhi said the country is in the midst of an unprecedented health and humanitarian crisis that has caused "untold suffering" across the world but also "reaffirmed the bonds of brotherhood" that

unite humanity. "The magnitude of the challenge before us is daunting but our resolve to overcome it must be greater," she said.

She said in India, the poor and disadvantaged have been most vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic. "We must come together for their sake and do all we can to support them through the difficult days that lie ahead," she said.

Describing as "heartbreaking" the sight of lakhs of people walking for hundreds of kilometres without food or shelter, she criticised the government for its "unplanned" implementation of the nationwide lockdown and causing hardships to the poor.

## Air India suspends contract of 200 employees

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Thursday temporarily suspended the contracts of around 200 employees including pilots, who were re-employed after retirement, as all domestic and international commercial passenger flights have been suspended in the country till April 14 to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, official said. "Since almost all the planes have been grounded and the carrier's revenues have taken a significant fall during the last few weeks, the airline has decided to temporarily suspend the contract of around 200 employees including pilots who were re-employed after their retirement," said the official.

## AI to conduct special flights to London to fly out stranded foreigners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India is planning to conduct multiple special flights to London between April 4 and April 7 to fly out foreigners stranded in the country amid the lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus, said senior officials on Thursday.

India is under a 21-day lockdown till April 14 and all domestic and international commercial passenger flights have been suspended for this time period.

However, cargo flights and flights specially permitted by the aviation regulator DGCA can operate during this time period.

Senior Air India officials said the national carrier will conduct four flights on Delhi-London



route between April 4 and 7.

The officials added that the national carrier will also be conducting flights on Mumbai-London route on April 5 and April 7. When asked if these flights to London from India will bring back Indians on their return, a senior Air India official responded, "It is unlikely. As per the plan till now, these flights will return empty from London".

In a letter to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday, one of the airline's pilot unions had alleged that crew members of Air India are being provided with substandard, ill-fitting and flimsy personal protective equipment (PPE) on flights that are being operated amid coronavirus pandemic to either bring Indians from abroad or take foreigners to their countries.

## AIIMS' doctor tests positive?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A senior resident doctor of AIIMS, Delhi has tested positive for COVID-19, official sources confirmed on Thursday.

The doctor from the Physiology Department has now been admitted to the new private ward of the hospital and all those who had come in contact with him are being screened and advised home-quarantine accordingly.

The family members of the doctor will also be screened and their samples will be tested, official sources said, adding further contact-tracing has been initiated.

The source of the infection is yet to be ascertained but official sources said the doctor does not have any foreign travel history so far.

Two resident doctors of the Centre-run Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi also have tested positive for COVID-19, besides two doctors of two Delhi government-run hospitals who have also tested positive for the coronavirus infection, they said.



One of the Safdarjung Hospital doctors, who is part of the team treating COVID-19 patients at the hospital, is believed to have contracted the disease during the course of duty, the sources had said.

The other medico, a female resident doctor who is a third-year post-graduate student of Biochemistry Department, had recently travelled abroad, they had said.

Both of them showed symptoms of COVID-19 and their

test results came out positive two days ago. They are now undergoing treatment at the isolation ward of Safdarjung Hospital.

"All doctors and staff who had come in contact with them have been tested and so far nobody else has been found positive for coronavirus infection," said sources.

At Sardar Patel Hospital and Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) too, a doctor each has tested positive for the coronavirus infection, the sources had said.

## Meteorological data relayed by aircraft goes down by 60% due to suspension of flights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The suspension of flights in India due to the coronavirus outbreak has led to a 60 per cent decline in the availability of meteorological data relayed by aircraft, Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M Rajeevan said on Thursday.

He told PTI that due to the reduction of air traffic across the world, the crucial meteorological data shared with air traffic controls by planes has gone down by 50-60 per cent globally. The air traffic controls in turn share data with meteorological organisations.

A scientist dealing with the aircraft relay data said the information is run in two models in India — the UK Met office model and US' Noaa model — for coming out with forecasts.

"It does affect the quality of forecast, but then there are



other sets of data that are used to forecast to bridge the gap," the scientist, who works with one of the institutions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, added.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) Director General M Mohapatra said the data shared by the flights is used in forecast models, especially in the medium range in predicting weather over the

span of 10 days.

He said the airlines across the globe share data with air traffic controls, which in turn share data with meteorological organisations.

"The aircraft are fitted with meteorological equipment that measure the temperature, air speed and humidity. The aircraft shares the observation on the route it takes," Mohapatra said.

**A scientist dealing with the aircraft relay data said the information is run in two models in India — the UK Met office model and US' Noaa model — for coming out with forecasts**

He said the data is important as all the measurements are taken directly unlike the one from satellites which have to be converted through different models.

Since meteorological phenomena is inter-linked, data from different parts of the globe is crucial in weather predictions.

According to the World Meteorological Department, the idea of making meteorological and other scientific atmospheric measurements from aircraft is nearly as old as aviation itself, but it is only in the late 1980s that the Aircraft

Meteorological Data Relay (AMDAR) observing system commenced as an operational programme sanctioned by WMO.

"AMDAR and other aircraft-based observations provide an improvement in forecasting ability through a reduction in NWP forecast error of up to 15-20," the WMO stated on its website.

A 21-day lockdown was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 to fight the coronavirus outbreak. Since then all flight services in the country have been suspended.



## Our own safety net

As we run against time in our battle to fight the virus, we need to scale up domestic manufacture of medical devices



The Coronavirus spiral was inevitable but now that it is squeezing health infrastructure and medical care staff, we are battling a second front of the disease, when it attacks the preparedness. Doctors and caregivers from around the country have complained, even threatened to go on strike, because they do not have enough personal protective equipment (PPE), namely coveralls, gloves, goggles, masks and so on. There have been reports of frontline staff making use of raincoats and anything else that they can lay

their hands on. The lockdown and the migration of labour have meant that even those manufacturing these essential gear are not being able to roll them out at breakneck speed. Though there is no dearth of Indian innovation — like the Pune virologist's version of the test kits, IITs' collective efforts to roll out apparatus or even car companies' offer to make ventilators — the fact of the matter is these are all small-scale efforts. What is needed is a massive rollout, which, because of policy hurdles, delay in placing orders and over-dependence, like the West, on China for crucial components, has been halted badly. Even the contracts being handled by domestic companies are of a small to middling nature, with no capabilities to scale up output. It would be easy enough to attribute the scarcity to a global trend, arguing all countries battling the Coronavirus are facing it as well. But we didn't plan it as well with the Government ordering PPEs just before the lockdown. Safety wear would now need at least three weeks to be readied domestically, considering imports are not that reliable with most infected countries dependent on factory floors in China and Southeast Asia. China has just about emerged after the first wave of the virus and its manufacturing prowess is still not 100 per cent. The Government could also not have exported 90 tonnes of medical equipment and safety gear to Serbia at this time of a national emergency, confirmed by a tweet from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) though denied by the Health Ministry. Leave aside N95, even the triple layer surgical masks are not available for healthcare staff. There is also the issue of facilitating working capital for these units in the time of lockdown. As for chemicals and disinfectants, India has been dependent on China for critical intermediate goods and components. With so much dependence on China, particularly for raw materials, it is difficult to find easy replacements.

As we ride this unprecedented World War III, that literally came from nowhere and hit us before we could realise it, what should be the road looking ahead? Simply prioritise our health sector and go back to home-grown drug and health equipment manufacturing. They were there before but globalisation meant these units were sidelined and lost out on the cost advantage to cheaper imports. And now that the virus may spur the process of de-globalisation as it were, we need to begin with crucial sectors that impact national safety, health and well-being. Immediately after Wuhan, the Government drew up a list of 38 drug raw materials that it wants locally produced to end the country's dependence on Chinese imports. Some of our key life-saving drugs, including those for cardio-vascular issues, use active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), which are solely sourced from China. Indian drugmakers import around 70 per cent of their total bulk drugs from there. Now there is no time for committees, policy or pondering. There is already a Make in India wishlist suggesting ways to make India one of the top five medical devices manufacturing hubs in the world. Most domestic manufacturers have in pre-crisis days shut their idling units and become importers and traders themselves. We have ignored an industry that could have helped us stave off this crisis. What else explains that though there are 1,000 domestic medical devices manufacturers, only 15 have a turnover of above ₹200 crore and the rest are less than ₹10 crore. If they are to scale up, then they need an enabling ecosystem, a level-playing field vis-a-vis imports and assured volumes. The last won't be difficult given India's huge market for healthcare, projected to be the fourth largest in Asia. Post-Corona, the demand is not expected to dip but rise. This way we can easily end our import dependence by 70-90 per cent. And be self-sufficient in the time of unforeseen crisis.

## No Wimbledon

The cancellation of this summer's edition of the tennis tournament is a big blow for fans and athletes as well



The length of the men's tennis season at Wimbledon is one that is often debated and there seems to be a general acceptance that it is undoubtedly the longest when compared with other forms of team sports. Wimbledon is not just a championship, it is a culture. But in all the eeriness of the Coronavirus, this sporting event, too, has fallen victim like other games and championships. Everybody understands the need to prioritise public health but the regret is more about not getting back to the constancies that have so far defined our lives as we knew it. It was, perhaps, the biggest blow that the oldest Grand Slam tournament, one that has maintained continuity ever since it was first held in 1877 with the exceptions of World War I and World War-II, suffered when its leaders unanimously announced not a postponement but the rescheduling of the event for June next year. But the cancellation was inevitable. Some may argue that the decision came too early with the game scheduled for May and the UK Government yet to review restrictions but the organisers took the right call by giving certainty to the players than the game itself. Yes, with global sporting events receding on account of the present crisis, the news that there will be no Wimbledon this year will jolt many fans and athletes as well. Millions of spectators will miss the classic final between Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, unending rallies by champions and traditional delicacies like strawberries and cream. Of course, players, for whom rankings depend on their form and performance, stand to lose the most, especially when it is a matter of prowess on the grass court. Eight-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer took to Twitter to express his shock and could do so with a one-liner, "devastated." An equally devastated seven-time Wimbledon singles champion Serena Williams, too, expressed it with a one-liner, "I'm shocked."

With age not on their side, it remains unclear if Federer and Serena would still be playing when Wimbledon resumes in 2021. Federer is almost 40 now and with the Wimbledon cancelled this year, he stands to lose an opportunity to add the 20th slam to his well-decorated cap. Serena, 39 right now, remains stuck with 23 Grand Slam singles titles, just one step away from equalling that of Margaret Court's record. In the midst of all this, the only succour is that the game will still manage to maintain its relevance, prestige and financial clout. Unlike other sporting events, Wimbledon may not face any monetary rout for the decision came well ahead. Besides, it has an extensive insurance policy that would guard it against the global pandemic.

Asim Suhail  
 Mumbai

# A novel course correction

With a rapid rise in COVID-19 cases, the Government can ill-afford to either extend the lockdown or do without it. The best course of action is to opt for a gradual lifting of the curfew



DEEPAK SINHA

Among the vast numbers of pictures starkly reflecting the reality of the utter deprivation and difficulties confronting the migrants trying to reach the safety of their own homes, there was one that truly encapsulates the tragedy. It was aptly captioned as: "Bharat meets India." There can be no two opinions that at this time of great peril, India once again let down Bharat, the colloquial euphemism for those vast numbers who inhabit the hinterland. While the labourers may be blamed for having panicked, that would be excusable given the limited amount of information made public by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he announced a nationwide lockdown for 21 days on March 24.

It can be debated as to who should be blamed for this avoidable tragedy but what cannot be disputed is the fact that the implementation of the Prime Minister's directive was poorly organised with little or no cooperation among various Ministries or States. And for this, bureaucrats, who are the final arbiters of how things should proceed, must take a major share of the blame. The situation was not helped in any way by Union Minister Prakash Javadekar's asinine tweet about the Government's decision to screen the *Ramayana* on public demand. As usual, the police were left to muddle through, which by and large they did at their incompetent best; though examples of exemplary behaviour on the part of some personnel must be appreciated.

While the scale of these heart-rending scenes is only a small fraction of what occurred, they are still reminiscent of the Partition and the refugee crisis. Most of us would be aware that the communal riots prior to the Partition left millions of people dead or homeless, forcing the minority community, from both sides of the newly demarcated borders, to migrate with what little they could salvage. However, what most of us would not be aware of is the fact that former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and MA Jinnah moved quickly to handle this tragedy and established an ad hoc Military Evacuation Organisation (MEO) in September 1947, under Maj Gen Chimni. The body functioned for just three months and did yeoman service. It was responsible for escorting Muslim refugees from India to Pakistan and Hindu refugees from Pakistan to India. Within that period, it escorted 85 lakh refugees, providing them with not just secure passage but also arranging for their transportation, food, campsites and medical support, a far cry from what we witnessed recently. This clearly shows the level to which our political leadership and administrative capabilities have sunk.

Notwithstanding the fact that a nationwide lockdown was inevitable, given our



distinct set of challenges, if we were to have any hope of controlling the virus, it still required immense courage and decisiveness on the part of the Prime Minister to have gone ahead with it, at the time he did. Though, instead of just exhortations to follow his directions, it may have been more appropriate to have treated his listeners as adults and laid out the line of thought that was guiding his decision-making and the likely future course of action.

In democracies, citizens abhor autocratic behaviour and generally tend to show displeasure by exhibiting disobedience. That, unfortunately, along with ignorance on the part of some and a complete disregard for social norms by those who should have known better, resulted in the measures being implemented as envisioned.

In this context, the action of religious groups and political leaders organising large gatherings is condemnable. In addition, one has no choice but to cater to the average citizens' excessive reliance on fate. This has, in turn, rendered us more vulnerable to the onslaught of the virus. The fact is that even without these hiccups, the Government already has an extremely challenging task ahead. Its response to the spread of the virus is based on

data. No matter how accurate it may be, it is a minimum of two weeks behind, given the lag between an individual becoming infected, the emergence of the symptom and the diagnosis finally being confirmed.

Following strict isolation norms. The fact is that till now, testing has been poorly handled by the nodal agency responsible, the Indian Council of Medical Research. This needs immediate rectification.

Of course, there are some who believe that for a country which lost approximately six million people to the Spanish flu and three million to the Bengal famine, numbers mean little. We should, therefore, get back to business as usual and hope for the best, much in the manner in which Japan has been acting till recently.

There's also the speculation that high temperatures may actually impact the spread of the virus. A case in point is Australia, which is in its summer season and where the Government has been able to control the spread of the virus despite a disjointed effort in this direction. This suggests that if we are willing to take some risks, we could go with the gradual lifting of the lockdown, increasing the pace of opening up as ambient temperatures rise.

Whatever decisions he may take, Prime Minister Modi finds himself in an unenviable position of being damned if he does and damned if he does not. There is also no getting away from the fact that our

administrative machinery is in a state of disrepair. Gross neglect and misgovernance of the past 70 years have led to the present situation. There's a need for the present Government to greatly up its game if it is to remain in control of the outcomes.

Finally, it also stands to reason that we cannot get back to our bad old ways. The involuntary improvement in pollution levels that have occurred because of the lockdown must not be frittered away in the name of economic progress. We must give sustainable development more than just lip service. Undoubtedly, in the long term, we will also have to address the weakness in our administrative and police infrastructure to make them more effective, efficient and decentralised.

More importantly, we must look at our primary and secondary education syllabi and introduce changes that will give much more importance to developing social responsibility and character building. Without attention, how can we ever develop responsible citizens in the future?

(The writer, a military veteran is a Consultant with ORF and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)

## SOUNDBITE

It is praiseworthy how States have worked together to check the spread of the virus. The focus should be on testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine.

Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



I am not a Bollywood singer. I am just a singer. Bollywood's biggest problem is that there are too many things involved, including business.

Singer — Palash Sen



Controversy around Beijing's transparency has strained ties, adding to bad feelings triggered by a conspiracy theory in China that the US military was to blame for the virus.

US President — Donald Trump



The lockdown may have been necessary but the unplanned manner in which it has been implemented has caused chaos and pain in the lives of millions of migrant workers.

Congress chief — Sonia Gandhi



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Selective amnesia

Sir — Over the last two days, there has been much shouting in the media regarding the gathering at the Markaz building in Nizamuddin. As per reports, some positive cases of COVID-19 were found there, which led to the whole debate on the gathering of foreigners in the Markaz. Before passing any judgment on the event in Markaz, it is necessary to know when and why people gathered there and why they did not evacuate the place after a complete lockdown was announced.

The truth is that Markaz is a place where people from around the globe come and stay. On March 22, without prior notice, the countrywide lockdown was imposed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked everybody not to cross the *lakshman rekha* of their homes. The Markaz authority also followed it, besides informing the nearest police station, which neglected the alert. If Markaz is responsible for this crisis, so should the police.

Asim Suhail  
 Mumbai

### Amid lockdown, class divide all too evident

The class divide in India has become starker amid the nationwide lockdown necessitated by the Coronavirus crisis, with visuals of migrant workers walking long distances, being herded in trucks and hosed with disinfectants. At the same time, India's rich rushed to hire luxury private jets to fly their children studying abroad back home. The rich India is rich enough to weather the difficult days on its own but its poor counterpart will wither away without timely intervention by the Government. Nobody is saying that the lives of the rich are not precious but all human lives are.

It is important for the Government to respect the rights of people while implementing restrictions. The way the hapless migrant workers were made to squat on the roadside, shut their eyes and were hosed with disinfectant — sodium hypochlorite, a chemical not even sprayed on cattle but used to clean inanimate objects — and robbed of their dignity in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly was "dehumanising," to describe in one word. The Bareilly incident was an illustrative example of the administration's entrenched habit of looking at the poor as no more than herds of cattle. The disinfection bath looked like a



cleansing ritual of yore. The primitive, futile exercise to eradicate the virus made a mockery of medical science. When the pandemic puts the less fortunate, impoverished segments of population in aggravated deprivation and distress, it falls on the Government to do all that it can to support them with food, water, shelter and some cash. Its response must match the impact of the crisis.

G David Milton  
 Maruthancode

### Check black marketing

Sir — Amid a nationwide lockdown ordered by the Government, economic activity has been halted and stock markets, too, have been battered but prices of essential commodities in

the market are on the rise. The reason for this is irregular supply of essentials as commodity exchanges are happening on a thin volume. However, the presence of black market dealings cannot be denied. In lieu of this, the Government must allow producers to sell their products

directly in the market. This will ensure regular supply of the essentials and at the same time keep a check on high prices as well. The farmers can be issued passes for a limited time period to directly sell their goods.

Navneet Seth  
 Via email

### Teachers' role

Sir — With the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths increasing rapidly, everyday life around the world has changed drastically. In these times, one of the odd outcomes is the lack of appreciation of teachers. With schools shut, most parents are home tutoring their children although schools are offering support. Like so many occupations, teaching requires training, skills and commitment. When we return to a normal life, it would be good to continue to value the work that teachers do.

Dennis Fitzgerald  
 Melbourne

### At what cost?

Sir — It is regretful that while well-off people coming from abroad were not sprayed with disinfectant, migrant labourers were hosed down with it. The poor are bearing the cost of the rich.

Shambhavi  
 Via email

Send your feedback to:  
 letterstopioneer@gmail.com



**FIRST COLUMN**

## Let us restart the economy

The young workforce has to be thrown back into the great rebuild ahead. But the playbook will be revised many times as we go



**KUMARDEEP BANERJEE**

It was at the serving end of a serpentine queue of humanity, distanced by a metre each, standing under the hot sun with whatever containers they could grab at the last minute, to fill with food. As I stood there trying to help all with a spoonful or two of nourishment, it struck me that these people, who form the invisible algae layer of the economy, will soon wither away with a scarred psyche of a war they couldn't see or understand. The invisible virus is a mystery in terms of its mutations and manifestations to the best scientific minds in the world. Hence, it leaves little scope of being understood by a lay person. In such a scenario, based on the limited and evolving research on the Coronavirus, it is imperative for each State to decide the best way forward to protect its citizens and save the economy.

India took the bold step of putting its 1.3 billion citizens under lockdown for almost a month. Much has been written and published on the plight of migrant workers walking along railway tracks in hopes of reaching home, some succumbing to fatigue and hunger. But the lockdown is possibly the only solution to save a giant scoop of humans from an epidemic. Criticism and the emergence of a "hard State" have become topics of conversations and on the social media. Somewhere, as it always happens in a war, these messages start being taken seriously and a fertile patch is laid for seeds of discontent against the powers that be.

However, in this new India, the reach of the Government has been amplified tremendously via the digital media. To the Government's credit, despite a sudden hard lockdown for almost a month, it ensured the supply of essential items like food and medicines for citizens and critical business continuity as far as possible in the current scenario. But the biggest niggling point which remained was the lack of seamless flow of information from the top to the executor wielding a stick and many times a clueless policeman manning a checkpoint.

The country watched the Prime Minister, for the second time in a couple of days, addressing the nation at a time unseen and unheard of in this century. The citizens then rushed out in a collective panic to stock up on whatever they deemed necessary to prepare for an uncertain time ahead. Such was the panic that policemen on the streets had to intervene and the much-talked-about police bandobast and upturning of supply carts got ample publicity. In retrospect, a lockdown of this magnitude could have been planned better, with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and clear dos and don'ts percolating from the top Government official at the Centre to the lowest clerk in the States, the police force, civil defence personnel and right up to the volunteers on the ground. It could have saved the Government from a lot of criticism for an otherwise, "just in time decision." The other issue is that almost simultaneously all Central Government departments got into a frenzy of issuing multiple advisories which further multiplied at the State and District Magistrate level. This led to obvious confusion among the law-enforcers and law-abiders, alike. Sure it is also a great sign of participative governance where almost every key decision is available for the common man to see and share. However, it would be best to create a central dashboard or tracker of all crisis-related orders, right to the village panchayat level if need be, in one framework. The world-class digital channels of a giant connected governance created in the last few years will need to be integrated right to the last mile, once this crisis is over.

The next step would be to plan the kickstart of the nearly \$3 trillion economy, even as the full ramifications of the dreaded virus play out in the subcontinent. A task force comprising several inter-ministerial departments and senior-most Government officials has been created to rebuild the India of tomorrow. This task force should open multiple channels of communication with the war room officials currently waging a battle against COVID-19 and with industry bodies to chalk out a post-crisis revival plan.

Again, the decision to allow transportation of essential and non-essential items stuck on trucks in highways crisscrossing the country is a positive one. However, the vital question of those vehicles still stuck has to be sorted. The labour force, which was unloading those trucks and was the crucial link in the supply chain, has fled. It will take a huge amount of confidence-building measures, including giving some sops like a free, post-health check-up documented ticket back to the fields, factories and under construction buildings of India. The word documented here means a proper ticket issued in any category with the name and details of the person travelling for work in any mode of transport.

While it may look like a hard State keeping a tab on people's movement, yet the irony is, one has to somehow track, if any resurgence of the dreaded virus is to be prevented. There could be other better ways to do the same in anonymised formats as well. The crux remains once at the end of 21 days, hopefully the virus has been clustered and isolated, the rest of the country can be eased back to normalcy.

The young workforce has to be thrown back into the great rebuild ahead. But the playbook will be revised many a time as we go about this business of kickstarting the Indian economy.

*(The writer is Country Manager, India, ITC Council)*

UPON INFORMATION AND BELIEF, IRAN OR ITS PROXIES ARE PLANNING A SNEAK ATTACK ON US TROOPS AND/OR ASSETS IN IRAQ.

—US PRESIDENT  
**DONALD TRUMP**

**POINTCOUNTERPOINT**



UNLIKE THE US, WHICH SURREPTITIOUSLY LIES, CHEATS AND ASSASSINATES, IRAN ONLY ACTS IN SELF-DEFENCE.

—IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER  
**MOHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF**

# India must seize the day

Considering the impact of the US-China trade war, the Hong Kong revolt and the COVID-19 spread, it is likely that the US, and the world at large, would reduce trade ties with Beijing



**ABHISHEK RAJA**

The COVID-19 menace continues to expand globally as the virus has infected 9,38,348 people till now and killed 47,286. And the number is going up by the hour. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has imposed a nationwide lockdown for three weeks in an attempt to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. Everyone, except those related to essential services or facing a medical emergency, has to stay confined to their homes as social distancing is the country's only hope of getting through this crisis without major damage. Though, as of now, the number of reported Coronavirus infections and casualties remains relatively low in India — around 2,032 confirmed cases and 58 dead — the fear is that, should the virus hit as it has in the United States (US), Europe or Iran, it would lead to a disaster far bigger than anywhere else because of our teeming population and cheek by jowl existence. The Indian economy is large and complex and the pandemic will have direct and indirect consequences over a longer period of time. However, as the American business tycoon Warren Buffett once said, "A great investment opportunity occurs when a marvellous business encounters a one-time huge but solvable problem."

**Governments to the rescue:** Right now, the whole world is dealing with losses, both human and economic because of the pandemic. However, we humans have survived in this world despite all the numerous disasters that have visited the planet because we have learnt to adapt ourselves to the environment, no matter how tough it is. In keeping with our indomitable spirit, Governments worldwide have opened up their treasuries and announced financial packages to help businesses and ordinary people tide over these tough times and make up for the financial losses they are experiencing due to lockdowns. While the US approved an over \$2 trillion rescue plan for its people, India announced a \$22.6 billion (₹1.70 lakh crore) package.

**China has bigger problems than COVID-19:** Before the Coronavirus outbreak shook the world, newspapers were flooded with news related to the US-China trade war. The US imposed three rounds of tariffs on Chinese products last year on over \$250 billion worth of goods. While justifying these, US President Donald Trump said that he wanted to "stop the unfair transfers of American technology and intellectual property to China" and protect jobs.

Apart from this, China is also facing anti-Government protests in Hong Kong. The agitations started in June 2019 and the demonstrations, which began as a fight against a Bill that would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be extradited to the mainland, have morphed into a call for free elections, which largely do not exist in China. The Bill was withdrawn later but demonstrations continued and protesters demanded full democracy and an inquiry into police atrocities. The rallies have quietened considerably as most residents hunker down at home to avoid being sickened by the Coronavirus. However, smaller protests nevertheless flare up now and then and arrests continue. To Beijing, it is a direct challenge to the leadership, tantamount to losing control of Hong Kong, which it can never tolerate.

**An opportunity for India:** Right now, the US has more known cases of the Coronavirus than any other country and people in general blame China for the outbreak of this pandemic. Considering the impact of the US-China trade war, the Hong Kong revolt and the COVID-19 spread, it is likely that the US, and the world at large, would reduce trade relations with China. When it comes to choosing the best overseas manufacturers in Asia, two countries,

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India and China, are at the forefront. Both nations have very dynamic production capabilities and unique economic landscapes with proven skills, strengths and weaknesses, that make them both viable choices. But now, India will surely have an edge over China and must make the most of this opportunity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal through the 'Make in India' initiative is to bring basic manufacturing to an economy that needs better-paying jobs. With an increasing share of a young working population, India can achieve its full manufacturing potential as it looks to benefit from its demographic dividend and large workforce.

However, it is imperative to weigh our choices carefully by considering specific external factors that will have an impact on our supply chain. First, let's review the economic landscape in India and China followed by five key factors that influence manufacturing in these two countries.

**Pricing:** Purchase cost is usually the most important factor when manufacturing overseas. But so is quality, delivery times and the ease of doing business. India's manufacturing labour is more competitive when compared to China. In 2014, the average cost of manufacturing labour per hour was \$0.92 in India and \$3.52 in China. India has a huge number of labourers who are skilled as well as unskilled. The skilled, educated workers like researchers, engineers and IT professionals are able to contribute cost-effective development support to manufacturing operations.

Along with a massive workforce and an emerging supply base, India also has access to natural resources needed in production. Notably, iron ore and aluminium for engineered goods, cotton, silk and jute for textiles and coal for power generation.

**Logistics:** Newer roads and highways, railways, waterways and airports give China an advantage from a logistics perspective. On the other hand, India relies heavily on a massive network and grids

of roads which are not always paved or wide enough to be able to transport products comfortably. But, with the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) E-way bill, the time for delivery of consignments has reduced. The Government is working steadily on investing in the development of railways, highways, ports and airports, which is expected to cut back transportation time and costs by 20 per cent.

**Product expertise:** China's major advantage over India is its ability to scale. Beijing has created Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and industrial clusters to encourage manufacturers, suppliers and other relevant parties to be physically close to one another. It provides higher flexibility and the ability to react in case of insufficient quality, non-conforming materials, or other issues. As per McKinsey, Chinese manufacturers are five times more productive than their counterparts in India. However, most Indian manufacturers use high quality machines and tools to produce good quality products. Many Indian industries are well-known for this and are considered trustworthy when it comes to their work ethics and business deals. Unlike China, India does not carry the stigma of poor-quality production.

**Language skills:** English is the second official language in India and executives have embraced it to conduct business. In contrast to China, India incorporates British customs and legal systems, ensuring a smaller culture gap that needs to be bridged. Therefore, India has a clear edge over China in soft skills.

**Manufacturing processes:** India's culture, as compared to China's, has always been to manufacture at a small scale. In certain instances, to keep costs low, China is relocating production sites to other developing countries and entrepreneurs are replacing manpower with machines. Overall, China is maximising its manufacturing processes, aiming to stay competitive and delivering larger quantities on tight schedules.

India's manufacturing culture of producing at a smaller scale has at times created a poor image in the eyes of big companies, entrepreneurs and investors. In addition, India favours family and artisanal models which result in buyers facing greater quality risk and production delays.

After China, India is the only country in the world to match the scale of operations and integrate its supply chain for global customers. To effectively harness the emerging opportunities, India needs a carefully-crafted strategy and its meticulous implementation at the grassroots level. Policymakers are far more prepared today than they were during the 2008 economic meltdown. Crude oil is at the lowest it has been in the last few decades, thus reducing overall costs. India has a huge domestic market with a rapidly-increasing middle class and overall population. Investments in the Indian manufacturing sector have been on the rise and post COVID-19 they would increase further. Initiatives like 'Make in India' and sector-specific incentives to various manufacturing companies aim to make the country a global production hub.

India is already an attractive destination for foreign investments in the manufacturing sector as several mobile phone, luxury and automobile brands, among others, have set up or are looking to establish their production bases here. This sector has the potential to rank among the top three growth economies and manufacturing destinations of the world. Corporations have a golden opportunity to emerge from the shadow of the services sector and seize more of the global market. Therefore, when we think of scope, this seems to be the best time for India to achieve its dream of becoming a \$5 trillion economy. As they say, "Victory comes from finding opportunities in problems."

*(The writer is an author and GST and economics specialist)*

# The buck stops with the WHO

There is an urgent need to reform the global health watchdog to ensure that such an outbreak like the Coronavirus pandemic should not occur in the future due to lack of transparency and strong work ethics



**SUMIT KUMAR**

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to rapidly spread across the globe, countries have also intensified their efforts to protect their people from this deadly virus. Of course, human civilisation has seen several deadly contagions in the past and the Coronavirus outbreak would also not be the last one. But this comprehension does not allow us to overlook some critical facts about the present global health crisis: This is the first time in recent history when a deadly virus could spread to almost all parts of the

world. The global economy has never in the past faced such a critical situation due to a pandemic and the international community has never appeared so helpless as it is today, especially when it is equipped with a highly advanced healthcare system.

This, in turn, brings us to a focal question on the outbreak. Was it possible to prevent the global spread of this contagion? It is certainly not easy to answer this question but it is equally true that had China and the World Health Organisation (WHO) acted promptly and honestly, the impact of this virus could have been reduced to a minimum. In this context, it needs to be recalled that while the first case of COVID-19 was identified in Hubei province on November 17, the Chinese Government acknowledged that there were Coronavirus cases in Wuhan only at the end of December 2019. And it was only on January 23 that China finally decided to put Hubei province under lockdown. Not surprisingly,

Beijing did not think it prudent to inform the WHO and other countries of the world well in advance about the serious implication of this virus. The whole world came to know about this deadly virus only when China failed in its efforts to hide information about the COVID-19 outbreak.

But, Taiwan, which is one of the leading countries in the health sector and also happens to be China's neighbour, did not waste a second in informing the WHO about the possible global outbreak of the Coronavirus, as it transmits from human to human. Sadly, the WHO completely ignored Taiwan's early warning and the movement of people between other countries and China continued at a normal pace. Even after becoming aware of the global risk of the Coronavirus in December 2019, WHO Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, was busy praising China's "commitment to transparency." Eventually, a significant portion of cur-

tail time was already lost before the WHO got its act together and announced on January 24 that COVID-19 can spread from human to human and as late as on March 13 declared the Coronavirus a pandemic. As a result, China's efforts to suppress information about the Coronavirus and the WHO's complete failure in its duty have so far resulted in over 9,38,348 confirmed cases and 47,286 deaths worldwide.

Now, while there is a growing understanding among scientists and doctors that the Coronavirus hopped to humans from a bat and they are also trying to identify "patient zero" to reach the bottom of the Coronavirus pandemic, China appears more interested in saving its dubious prestige in the international community than explaining the truth behind the global spread of this virus. Undoubtedly, China's unscrupulous behaviour has set off an ugly spat between China and the US, with President Trump repeatedly call-

ing the Coronavirus the "Chinese virus." In retaliation, China launched a propaganda war, saying that the virus was planted by the American army and also expelled US journalists. At the same time, it is also very interesting to note that the US and most of Europe is dependent on China for its medical items, including pharmaceutical ingredients, masks and gloves. In fact, the spread of the Coronavirus could be seen as a golden opportunity for China to make a better trade deal with the US. Whatever may be the possible impact of the COVID-19 on bilateral relations between Beijing and Washington, the fact remains that the global geopolitical and economic milieu shall not remain the same at the end of this crisis. And, certainly, China's cosmetic efforts to extend a helping hand to other countries in controlling this disease shall not remove the bloodstains from its hand.

On the other hand, sensing the gravity of the situation and realising

that no country can effectively battle an outbreak of this magnitude alone, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries on March 16 and an emergency fund was created with India making an initial contribution of \$10 billion.

Soon after, member countries of G-20 held a meeting through video-conferencing, expressing their collective resolve to minimise the social and economic damage of the Coronavirus pandemic. In doing so, they have decided to inject \$5 trillion into the global economy.

Another important aspect of this G-20 meeting that has largely remained underemphasised is Modi's call for the need to strengthen and reform the WHO. The fact that its Director-General supported China's cover-up efforts is the prime reason for the exponential explosion of COVID-19 across the globe, because countries heavily rely

on WHO reports and trust it to warn them of any outbreaks.

The larger question is not just why the WHO failed in its duty but how China succeeded in not letting the world know the actual number of COVID-infected people. And also how it persuaded the WHO to spread pro-China information to the international community. Of course, this is not the first and the last time when WHO has worked at the behest of China, especially when its DG happens to be a pro-China man.

It is a serious indication of how China will continue to undermine global democratic institutions if necessary and corrective measures are not taken by the world community to address this challenge. There is an urgent need to reform the WHO to ensure that such a crisis should not occur in future due to lack of transparency and ethics.

*(The writer is ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Pondicherry University)*



CAPSULE



**SBI lists USD 100 mn green bonds on India INX**

**NEW DELHI:** (PTI) BSE's India International Exchange (India INX) on Thursday said state-owned SBI has listed green bonds of USD 100 million (about Rs 750 crore) on its debt listing platform. The bank has listed green bonds of USD 100 million under its USD 10 billion global medium term note programme on India INX's Global Securities Market Green Platform (GSM), the exchange said in a statement. "The issuance has been done in very challenging market conditions. We welcome SBI's green bond issuance on our GSM platform," India INX MD and CEO V Balasubramanian said. The State Bank of India (SBI) has earlier also listed its maiden green bond issuance on India INX of USD 650 million, he added. SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar said, "It is an extremely important transaction for the country especially in this critical situation. We believe this issuance will reassure confidence in the country's strength in the international bond market."



**TVS Motor Company Successfully Completes BS-VI transition**

**Domestic Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India (NewsVair):** TVS Motor Company registered sales of 144,739 units in March 2020 as against 325,323 units in March 2019. There has been a huge impact on the Company's production and sales this month because of COVID-19 lockdown across the country. TVS Motor Company launched attractive and feature rich BS-VI versions of its entire portfolio. These have been well received and there are adequate stocks already in the market when it reopens. International market demand was also good for both two-wheeler and three-wheeler categories. However, due to the lockdown, there was a significant loss in production, and also vehicle stock in the factory for both domestic and international markets, which could not be dispatched.

**Allow refractory makers to operate plants: IRMA**

**New Delhi:** The Indian Refractory Makers Association (IRMA) on Thursday said refractory manufacturers must be allowed to operate plants during the lockdown period as non-availability of the key ingredient could hit steel production. While the government has allowed the steel industry to continue operations along with raw materials like iron ore and coke during the lockdown under the Essential Services Maintenance Act, but refractory which is a critical component for production of any high temperature manufacturing process like steel, cement or brass, agrochemicals has been left out, the IRMA said. "All steel plants are carrying some inventory ranging from 10-15 days. But they need to be replenished and everyday we are getting calls from major steel manufacturers regarding supply of refractories," IRMA Chairman Parmod Sagar said.

**'Lockdown to cost Indian economy \$4.64 bn every day'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The unprecedented nationwide lockdown that shut businesses, suspended flights and stopped all modes of transport will cost the Indian economy almost USD 4.64 billion every day and the entire 21-day lockdown will result in a GDP loss of almost USD 98 billion, Acuite Ratings & Research Ltd said on Thursday.

The rapid spread of Covid-19 has not only disrupted the global economy but also triggered a partial shutdown in many parts of India from early March and an almost complete shutdown from March 25.

"While the countrywide shutdown is scheduled to be lifted from April 15, 2020, the risks of prolonged disruption in economic activities exist depending on the intensity of the outbreak," the credit rating agency said in a statement.

The ongoing disruption, it said, will have a significant economic consequence across the world and also in India.

IMF has already forecast a recession for the global economy in 2020.



**The rapid spread of Covid-19 has not only disrupted global economy but also triggered a partial shutdown in many parts of India from early March and an almost complete shutdown from Mar 25**

Acuite Ratings believes there is a risk of a contraction of April-June (2020-21 fiscal) GDP to the extent of 5-6 per cent, with Q2 (July-September) also likely to post modest growth in a best-case scenario. It expects the overall GDP

growth for FY21 (April 2020 to March 2021) to be in the band of 2-3 per cent which takes into account a significant economic revival in the second half of the financial year.

Sankar Chakraborti, CEO, Acuite Ratings & Research, said: "Acuite Ratings estimates

that every single day of the nation-wide lockdown will cost the Indian economy almost USD 4.64 billion. Consequently, the 21-day lockdown will result in a loss of GDP of almost USD 98 billion."

Stating that the ratings agency employed multiple methods to assess real GDP estimates for Q1 FY21, he said there is a significant risk that it may contract up to an extent of 5-6 per cent as compared to a pre-Covid growth estimate of 5 per cent.

In such a lockdown scenario, the sectors that are most severely impacted are transport, hotel, restaurant, and real estate activities.

In our opinion, there would be at around 50 per cent GVA (gross value added) loss in these sectors, which account for around 22 per cent in overall GVA, in Q1 of FY21," it said.

On the other hand, the services that are expected to see enhanced activities during this crisis are communication, broadcasting, and healthcare. But with a 3.5 per cent share, their contribution to the overall GVA is small.

**ONGC to lose Rs 4,000 crore on new gas price**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) will lose about Rs 4,000 crore in revenue and start making cash losses after the government slashed the natural gas prices by a steep 26 per cent by benchmarking it against rates prevalent in gas-surplus nations.

Prices of natural gas, which is used to produce fertilizer, generate electricity and gets converted into CNG for use in automobiles and piped natural gas for household cooking, was from April 1 cut to USD 2.39 per million British thermal unit - a rate about 37 per cent lower than the cost of production.

"These rates are unsustainable for us. We have already told the government that the gas pricing should be freed. There should be complete pricing and marketing freedom," ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Shashi Shanker told PTI here.

The BJP-led government had in October 2014 evolved a new pricing formula using rates prevalent in gas surplus nations like the US, Canada, and Russia to determine the price in a net importing country. Prices using this formula are calculated semi-



**On April 1, the gas price was reduced from USD 3.23 per mmBtu to USD 2.39 - an 84 cent reduction**

annually. Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on March 20, 2017, had stated that the cost of production of natural gas in the prolific Krishna Godavari basin is between USD 4.99 -7.30 per mmBtu. The same for other basins is in the range of USD 3.80 -6.59 per mmBtu, he had said.

For ONGC, which produces most of its 64 million standard

cubic meters per day of gas from western offshore, the breakeven is around USD 3.8.

"The rates are now way below cost," Shanker said.

For every USD 1 dollar change, the company's revenues are impacted by Rs 4,400-4,500 crore annually. On April 1, the gas price was reduced from USD 3.23 per mmBtu to USD 2.39 - an 84 cent reduction which translates into annual Rs 4,000 crore of revenue loss.

**Deadline extended for comments on relaxation in QIP, delisting norms**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of coronavirus pandemic, Sebi has extended the deadline for public comments on proposed relaxation in norms with regard to six-month-gap between two QIPs, and delisting of a firm in case of its merger with listed holding firm till April 30.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had sought comments on these two proposals till April 15.

In addition, the deadline has been extended for submission of comments till this month-end on proposed e-voting facility provided by listed firms as well as on a proposal that will require listed entity to obtain prior approval from the shareholders before extending any loan and guarantee to promoter entities.

The comments on these two proposals were sought till March 31.

"In view of the representa-



**Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had sought comments on these two proposals till April 15**

tions received by Sebi seeking extension of timelines due to impact of COVID-19 pandemic, it has been decided to extend the timelines for seeking public comments on... (the) consultation papers to April 30, 2020," the regulator said in a report dated March 31.

With respect to QIP, it has been proposed to relax the mandatory requirement of a six-month-gap between two successive issuances of shares to qualified institutional investors by listed companies requiring urgent funds, if they meet certain conditions.

As per the Sebi regulations, a listed company cannot make any subsequent qualified institutions placement until the expiry of six months from the date of the prior qualified institutions placement made pursuant to one or more special resolutions.

In respect of delisting, the capital markets regulator proposed to exempt a listed company from following regulations in case of its merger with a listed holding firm, if the shareholders of the subsidiary entity gets shares of the parent.

**Retail sales recovery may kick-start from May**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The short-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic on retailers in the country will be severe, but retail sales recovery period for India is expected to kick-start from the first week of May subject to the lockdown not being extended further, a report by Capillary Technologies said.

The report said until March 16, the consumer retail sales and walk-ins did not see much dip compared to last year and this could be due to festive shopping (Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Navratri etc).

"However, the India consumer retail witnessed a big drop in sales by 46 per cent and 55 per cent fall in the number of customers per store from March 17 to 25, which is expected to drop further in the coming weeks due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown," it added.

The government had announced a 21-day lockdown starting March 24 to contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus infection that has claimed thousands of lives globally. The study by Capillary Technologies was undertaken on the impact of COVID-19 in the retail ecosystems of India, Middle East, China, and Singapore. Data of over 10,000 stores was analysed in these regions before and during lockdowns.



**Acuite Ratings sees Q1 growth contracting 5-6 pc on virus woes**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Domestic ratings agency Acuite Ratings has forecast a massive 5-6 per cent contraction in growth in the first quarter of the new fiscal due to the coronavirus-driven lockdown.

The agency estimates the daily loss to the economy from the lockdown at around USD 4.6 billion and fears that if at all the countrywide shutdown is lifted on April 14, the risks of a prolonged disruption in economic activities exist depending on the intensity of the outbreak.

"The 21-day lockdown will result in a GDP loss of almost USD 98 billion, pulling down the Q1 growth 5-6 percent," the agency warned, adding that in the best case scenario, growth may limp back into the green territory in Q2.

Accordingly, it expects "the overall GDP growth for FY21 to be 2-3 percent which takes into account a significant economic revival in the second

**The agency fears that if shutdown is lifted on April 14, the risks of a prolonged disruption in economic activities exist**

half." The worst hit sectors due to the lockdown are transport, hotel, restaurant and real estate activities, which would see around 50 per cent GVA loss accounting for around 22 per cent in overall GVA, in Q1.

The agency believes that it would take at least two-three months to restore the supply chain even if the lockdown is limited to 21 days, as there are also further risks of local lockdowns in various regions depending on the extent of the outbreak.



**Coal India acting swiftly to continue supplies**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India has taken various initiatives to continue dry fuel supply to various sectors, including power, even during the lockdown period, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

"Acting swiftly, @CoalIndiaHQ has taken several initiatives to continue coal supply even during the ongoing #lockdown," Joshi said in a tweet.

The measures include extending the time for coal lifting and making payments, to relaxing penalty against defaulters, coal companies are truly supporting the nation in this time of need," Joshi tweeted.

The coal minister last week had directed all the officials of the coal ministry to work harder to ensure that critical coal supplies are maintained during the lockdown period due to Covid-19 pandemic so that power and other critical sectors are unaffected due to the current situation.

The coal ministry had said that daily meetings of all senior officers of the ministry are being held for monitoring coal production, supplies and dispatch.

The first such virtual meeting took place on March 26 through video conferencing by Coal Secretary Anil Kumar Jain.

**Security concerns with 'Zoom' during BARC's meet**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Security concerns with popular video conferencing app, Zoom, came to light during a media briefing by television body BARC on Thursday.

The Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), which was hosting a virtual conference to inform people about TV and smartphone consumption trends amid the lockdown, was forced to stop the briefing midway because of the "hacking" episode.

Lockdowns across the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have forced professionals in the service sector across the world to work from home, have resulted in the app being the most popular way of conducting meetings.

Zoom has seen a spike in downloads and usage, but experts have been repeatedly pointing out to security risks with the app.



**Cipla completes successful phase-3 clinical study**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pharma major Cipla on Thursday announced the successful completion of Phase-3 clinical study for generic fluticasone propionate and salmeterol inhalation powder indicated for treatment of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The study results demonstrate that Cipla's fluticasone propionate and salmeterol inhalation powder 100/50 mcg is therapeutically equivalent to Advair Diskus 100/50 mcg, Cipla said in a statement.

The Phase-3 study, which successfully completed in the first attempt, was conducted over a period of 15 months at

over 100 sites in the US enrolling 1,400 asthma patients, it added.

"This is an important milestone and is a testament to Cipla's strong respiratory capabilities and will go a long way in strengthening our respiratory franchise in the US," Cipla MD and Global CEO Umang Vohra said.

Unmatched presence across the care continuum and the widest range of drug-device combinations has established Cipla's position as a lung leader in India and other key emerging markets, he added.

"Our endeavour is to extend this expertise across developed markets through niche product development," Vohra said.

**Date for track, trace system for exports of drug formulations extended**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has again extended the date for implementation of track and trace system for exports of drug formulations till October 1 this year, according to directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT).

The decision is applicable for both non-SSI (small scale industry) and SSI-manufactured drugs.

"The date for implementation of track and trace system for export of drug formulations



with respect to maintaining the parent-child relationship in packaging levels and its uploading on central portal has been extended upto October 1 this year for both SSI and non-SSI manufactured drugs," DGFT has said in a public notice.

**Dominos Pizza, ITC Foods join hands**

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Dominos Pizza, in partnership with ITC Foods, on Thursday announced the launch of Dominos Essentials to deliver essential items at home in view of the lockdown imposed owing to the spread of coronavirus.

The delivery infrastructure of Dominos would be leveraged to help customers order everyday grocery essentials," a joint statement said.

A combo pack of Aashirvaad Atta and spices including chilli, coriander and turmeric powder



would be available on Dominos app starting today (Thursday), it said. The service would be

available for consumers first in Bengaluru and then in the cities of Noida, Mumbai,

**They announced the launch of Dominos Essentials to deliver essential items at home in view of the lockdown imposed owing to the spread of coronavirus**

Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad.

To avail of this service, customers need to use the latest version of the Dominos app and click on Dominos Essentials section.

Customers would then be able to select the combo pack and use digital payment mode

to complete the order. Dominos Safe Delivery Expert would follow the Zero Contact Delivery practice to deliver the package.

This service method would ensure that customers receive their order without coming in contact with the Safe Delivery Expert, the statement added.

**20% APAC non-fin cos in high risk due to Covid-19: Moody's**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Only 20 per cent of the non-financial companies in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region face high exposure to coronavirus disruptions and the resultant credit risks, Moody's Investors Service said on Thursday.

It noted that while these 20 per cent companies face high risks from the pandemic as they are sensitive to shifting



consumer demand and global travel restrictions, 36 per cent face moderate exposure and 27 per cent of them stare at refinancing risks.

"We have identified six sectors as the most affected by the coronavirus outbreak, namely airlines, auto OEMs and auto parts supply, oil & gas producers, gaming, global shipping, discretionary retail and hospitality," the report said. Also, of the 20 per cent high exposure companies, 67 per cent have negative outlook or are under review for downgrade, weak liquidity, or both.





## NGOs to the rescue of needy

Hyderabad youngsters from various organisations are doing their bit to serving the needy by donating essential groceries, and creating awareness about various issues in times of the Corona pandemic, writes V SATEESH REDDY

Coronavirus is making life difficult for daily labourers and those living in the slums who earn on a daily basis. Daily wage labourers are finding it hard to get their bread and butter. But several volunteers and NGOs of Hyderabad are doing their best to ensure daily-wage labourers and migrant workers receive sufficient and nutritious food, with help from the Telangana state police.

Malleswara Rao, founder of Aarambham, distributes food to at least 5,000 people every day with the help of volunteers across the city. "Corona made life difficult for over thousands of such people in the city. By taking necessary precautions, we are distributing food to the needy in areas like Madhapur, Kondapur, Miyapur. We distribute eggs, soaps and other essentials to those living in slums. Many people around the city have been helping us with donations," he tells us.

Prasanna Vikhil of 'Friends Being Helping Hands' is donating essential groceries to the needy orphanages in and around Uppal. He shares, "We are providing food for the elderly thrice a day. We are working with two other organisations including Sri Rajamatha and VIP Helping Hearts to feed the needy. Police officials are playing a crucial role

The police (DGP's essential supplies covid facilitation center) has created a group on Whatsapp with people who are willing to supply dry ration/food to the needy. Police are coordinating with women and child welfare, MEPMA, media requests etc. Group of dedicated NGOs/young volunteers are working with the police to help migrant labour, destitute homes, construction workers, stranded people. One can reach out to TS police if in dire need through Whatsapp on +91 94906 17523.

to ensure our services reach those that need it." Sara of Seven Rays foundation is helping people around ECIL by distributing groceries and food. "This time of social distancing is important and we are to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus. Through our strong volunteers' base, we are identifying the areas that need help, through calls and emails. We then send our volunteers to help people."

Members of Sri Sai Shanti Sahaya Seva Samithi are helping people in the slums of Manikonda and Abids. They set up a vehicle and with the help of the police, are donating food. One of the members, Purnashanti says, "With the help of the police, we are able to distribute food to more than 1,000 people in the city."

While there are those that are helping with food and groceries, there are others like Rupesh Mittal, founder of Cyber Jagriti, who are creating awareness among people about cybercrimes during the Corona crisis. Rupesh

shares, "Covid-19 is a pandemic that has its wings widely spread. Even the smallest physical contact can spread the virus at an alarming rate. While anxious citizens of India and the government are trying to educate themselves, a lot of scams and online frauds are creating panic. Complaints are being registered from different parts of the country on various scams in the name of Coronavirus. Hackers are using different techniques to take advantage of this situation and fool people," he informs. To prevent people from such scams his organisation is explaining and debunking myths and techniques that hackers use, to fool people.

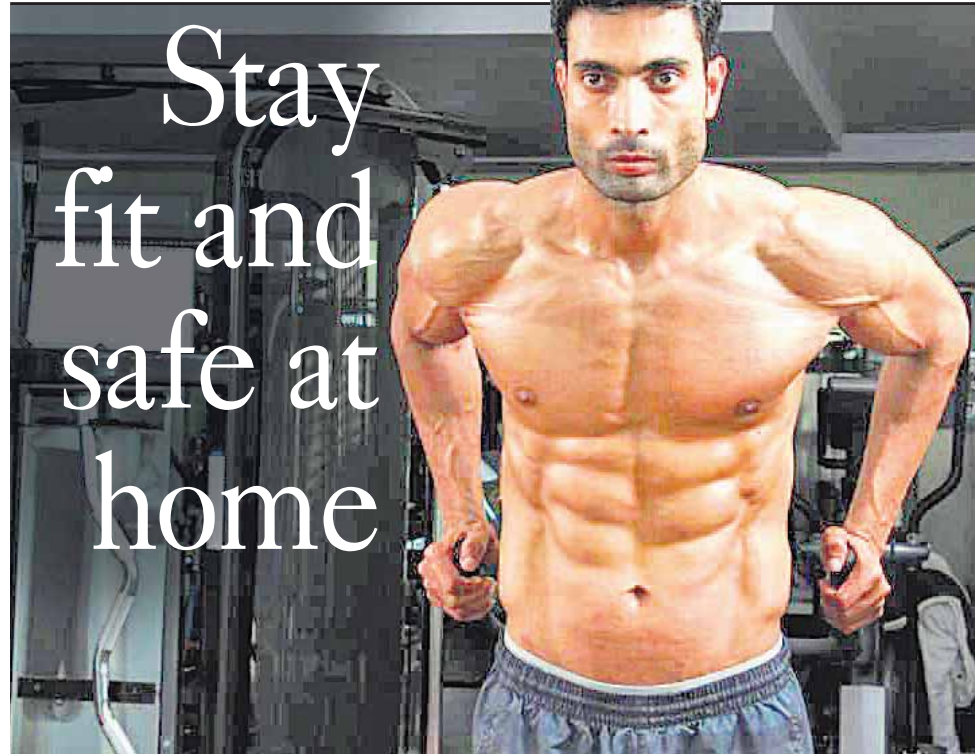
He said that the Covid-19 map malware can spy on an individual through his/her android phone's camera and microphone. "This malware map is designed to steal your critical information such as username, password, credit card details, and other valuable information. As a user tries to navigate through the map to see the spread of Coronavirus disease worldwide or in a specific country and learn other things about the spread of coronavirus, a malware is activated in the background which basically is an information stealer," he explains.

There also are a plethora of advertisements online, claiming to sell special face masks to protect from Coronavirus. "There are no special veils accessible to shield you from coronavirus. Anyone claiming to sell special masks that prevent Coronavirus is a fraudster. Scientists and other health officials all over the world are yet to find a cure. Products or companies who claim to have a vaccination or any other medicine are just looking to scam you," he adds.



By taking necessary precautions, we are distributing eggs, soaps and other essentials to those living in slums. Many people around the city have been helping us with donations. We distribute food to atleast 5,000 people everyday.

MALLESWARAO



Ahead of World Health Day, Celebrity trainer Satish Paryad, in an exclusive chat with SHIKHA DUGGAL, shares tips on how to stay fit during quarantine and some do's and don'ts

With all gymnasiums being shut as a result of nationwide lockdown, maintaining physical fitness in times like this has become a task. Ahead of World Health Day, we speak to Hyderabad's renowned fitness trainer, Satish Paryad, who's trained the likes of Mahesh Babu, Allu Arjun, Jr. NTR and Advisesh among others. He helps us understand why and how one must stay fit, even while at home. The celebrity trainer says that the fitness industry has indeed come to a halt and is becoming an ardent concern for gym freaks who cannot stop themselves from pulling off numerous sets of lunges, push-ups, etc. "Endurance exercises are what one needs to practice at home along with a few other simple workouts/exercises. The possibilities of going to the gym can be daunting now, however, you can still exercise at the comfort of your home. Beginners can try basic push-up exercises to help build strength and squats which will also help women ease their regular movements," adds the trainer. Emphasising the benefits of burpees, Satish highlights how this physical activity will help burn calories like a single leg-body-weight rep of lunges. They can help boost your endurance in the comfort of your home, he says. "If you have a dumbbell at home, it should help you work out at home to keep your body in good shape. You can try out a bench press, lying fly exercise or maybe a pullover and sweat it out. You can also have a drilling session of active yoga that will restore your metabolism and fix your flexibility," says this gym enthusiast. There is no shortage of

motivation on Instagram, thanks to the various challenges, home work out videos. But Satish Paryad asks one to refrain from taking up these challenges. "These challenges can result in injuries and that's the last thing you would want to suffer from, in times like these," he says. Instead, he advises one to go onto apps like 'Animal Flow on Demand' and 'Sun-Salutation' to recharge one's body. "A healthy and safe environment for working out is what one needs to work out in peace. Crunches, planks, jumping exercises, hip-rotations, and calf exercises are some of the other body movements that can help you stay fit while at home," he adds.

- Do's for home workout**
- Warm-up well
  - Drink adequate water
  - Breathe right
- Don't's while doing a home workout**
- Don't exercise in a humid room
  - Don't practice jerky workouts
  - Don't lift heavy weights without supervision



# 'SLOW AND STEADY IS MY MANTRA'

**A**ctress Taapsee Pannu says slow and steady is the mantra that has helped her get an audience and their trust. The actress is elated that her fans gave her the no. 1 spot on a list created by Bollywood Ranker on the basis of votes that audience gave to her movies on IMDb. "I might not have the maximum hundred-crores grossers, but it's quite satisfying to see that the audience has voted me basis the kinds of films I have done," Taapsee said. "Slow and steady is the mantra that has helped me get my audience and their trust. I hope I live up to their trust every time they decide to spend the few hours of their life watching my films," she added. The *Pink* star continued, "It helps me feel I am on the right path and that I can continue pushing the envelope as there is an audience who is following my thought process. That is why I try and push to do something new and different every year." Taapsee recently won Best Actress Awards for her movie *Badla* and *Saand Ki Aankh*. On the film front, Taapsee will be seen in *Haseen Dillruba*, *Rashmi Rocket* and *Shabaash Mithu*.



# COVID-19: Award-winning singer-songwriter Adam Schlesinger dies at 52

**E**mma winner Adam Schlesinger, best known as the co-founder of the 2000s pop-rock band Fountains of Wayne, has succumbed to coronavirus complications. He was 52. The composer was admitted to hospital after testing positive for COVID-19 infection and was on ventilator. Schlesinger passed away on Wednesday morning, *The Hollywood Reporter* has confirmed with Schlesinger's lawyer. He is also known for co-writing the band's 2003 hit *Stacy's Mom*. Schlesinger also worked as an executive music producer on the musical show at *The CW Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* and composed songs for *A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All!*, *Too Late With Adam Carolla*, *The Howard Stern Radio Show* and *The Dana Carvey Show*. He won three Primetime Emmys: two for original music and lyrics for the 2011 and 2012 Tony Awards and, another for original music and lyrics for *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* in 2015. A *Colbert Christmas*, co-written by Schlesinger and David Javerbaum, won him the 2009 Grammy Award for Best Comedy Album.

Schlesinger also penned the iconic song *That Thing You Do*, which was part of the 1996 film of the same name, starring Tom Hanks. The actor also wrote and directed the film. Hanks, who himself is recuperating from the coronavirus at home, took to Twitter to mourn the writer, who received an Oscar nod for the song. "There would be no Playtone without Adam Schlesinger, without his *That Thing You Do!*. He was a One-der. Lost him to Covid-19. Terribly sad today," the actor. Schlesinger also wrote songs for title sequences for Netflix's *To the Bone*, Warner Bros' *Music & Lyrics*, 20th Century Fox's *John Tucker Must Die* and *Me, Myself & Irene* and Universal's *Josie and the Pussycats*.

The celebrated composer is also credited as a writer of songs for popular Amazon series *The Marvelous Mrs Maise*, NBC's *Late Night With Seth Meyers*, the 2013 Emmy Awards, the 2012 Tony Awards, *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*, *My Name Is Earl*, *One Tree Hill* and the 1997 Academy Awards.

A prolific name in Hollywood's music entertainment side, Schlesinger co-wrote the music and lyrics for the 2008 Broadway musical *Cry-Baby*, adapted from the John Waters movie that starred Johnny Depp. Recently, he reunited with his *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* collaborator Rachel Bloom on the score for a forthcoming Broadway musical adaptation of the 1990s sitcom, *The Nanny*. Besides Fountains of Wayne, Schlesinger also helped discover bands Ivy and Tinted Windows. He worked with Dashboard Confessional, The Monkees, They Might Be Giants and Robert Plant as a record producer. Schlesinger was also nominated for a Golden Globe and many Emmys, Tonys and Grammys.



# Neha Kakkar, Salim Merchant, Armaan Malik gear up for 'sofa' gig

**M**usic artistes like Neha Kakkar, Salim Merchant and Armaan Malik have come together so that their fans can enjoy live music while seated on their sofas. It's been days since the nationwide lockdown was announced. To make things entertaining, TikTok as part of its #GharBaithoIndia campaign, has started TikTok Sofa Concert. Neha will be performing her latest hits like *Yaad piya ki aane lagi* and *Garmi*. "At a time like this, as much as staying home is important, so is maintaining positivity and keeping ourselves engaged. As an artist, I am using this time to interact with my fans through TikTok and its live concert to keep them entertained. Being calm right now is the key," said Neha. Armaan will be performing his new single.

*Control* live for the first time along with his other popular songs such as *Main hoon hero tera* and *Bol do na zara*. "Today, when social distancing is the need of the hour, music is the one thing I find my solace in. I personally believe that one can do a lot of creative things while staying at home, and I am spending my time creating new music every day. With TikTok's live music sessions, I am looking forward to having fun and more importantly spreading love and comfort through my music," said Armaan.

Singers like Shirley Setia, Arjun Kanungo, Dhvani Bhanushali, Jonita Gandhi, Yo Yo Honey Singh and Darshan Raval will also entertain the TikTok community. "It is important for us to stay at home, take precautions and follow social distancing. I am doing my bit by staying indoors and a platform like TikTok is helping us all in staying positive, connected and entertained via their initiatives," said Arjun.



## FUN

### ARCHIE

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

### GARFIELD

### NANCY

### GINGER MEGGS

### REALITY CHECK

### SPEED BUMP

### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20

### SUDOKU

	8		1	2				
	4			6		8	5	
6			2				9	
4	2					3	9	
				6				2
	8		1					
5	1		8			3		
		6	5			7		

### ACROSS

- Expecting a baby
- Scraps of material
- Weigh yourself with these
- Frequently
- A row of metal rings fastened together
- Jumble together (3,2)
- Sneak
- Baby's toy
- A stinging insect
- A newspaper employee
- Use your eyes
- Rub wood smooth with this
- An imaginary line around the middle of the Earth
- Precise
- Jump
- A chopping tool

### DOWN

- Actor or singer
- An octagon's number of sides
- As well
- Instructor





# ROMANTIC girl to romance SHAURYA

In the film, an emotional sports drama, Ketika will be seen as Shaurya's love interest. Her role has its own prominence in driving the narrative forward, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

**E**ven before her maiden Telugu film, *Romantic*, alongside Akash Puri opens in cinemas; Ketika Sharma has bagged another plum project. Although some reports indicated that she was cast in Naga Shaurya's next with Sukumar's assistant Kasi Vishal last month, it's far from true. We've reliably learnt that she has been cast opposite Shaurya in his next with Santhosh Jagarlapudi, who earlier directed Sumanth-starrer *Subrahmanyapuram*. The untitled film is a joint production venture between Sharrath Marar, Narayana Das Narang and Ram Mohan Rao and was launched sometime back in last October. A source close to the development tells us, "Santhosh received good feedback about Ketika's performance in *Romantic* through a cinematography friend of his and decided to approach her. The other reason was that her pairing with Shaurya would

be fresh. She hopped on board immediately after the script was narrated to her. While she will be seen as Shaurya's love interest, the role has its own prominence in driving the narrative forward."

The source further adds that the film has gone in front of the cameras last month in Hyderabad but after shooting for a couple of days, the team had to call off the shoot because of Covid-19 outbreak. "Ketika though didn't shoot in the first two days as she wasn't required. Alongside her, the film will see Naseer and Satya in supporting roles. Jagapathi Babu too has given his consent to for a key supporting role but his dates are a problem. As far as the supporting department goes, Santhosh got the nod of Kaala Bhairava for musical accompaniment, while *RX 100* lensman Ram Reddy is the cinematographer," the source shares.

An emotional sports drama in which Shaurya will be seen as archer, the film will be majorly shot in Hyderabad while some portions require the unit to visit Warangal.



## Payal perfecting Telugu language

**S**he might not have had the best of run of late but actress Payal

Pranadeep's *5Ws*, where she plays a cop, and in Jayanth's *Narendra*, where she will be seen as a fighter pilot. She is also in talks for her Tamil debut.

Rajput is keen on more offers from Telugu. Which is why, we hear she is trying to perfect Telugu and impress upon filmmakers. "Besides tuning to OTT platforms for the past 10 days, Payal is also using the lockdown period to learn Telugu. Yes, she understands and can speak the language a bit but she wants to be more comfortable with it. She is taking the help of Google for the same. The idea is to dub for her parts in the future," says a source.

The actress will be next seen in debutant director



## Mani Sharma balances big and small cinema

**I**t's not just big films for Mani Sharma, who is in much demand after *iSmart Shankar*. Having agreed to compose music for Chiranjeevi-starrer *Acharya*, Venkatesh-starrer *Naarappa* and Nithiin-starrer *Power Peta*, the tunesmith is balancing out small cinema as well. The latest small film — after Rahul Vijay's *Black*



& *White* — that he accepted is a love story which features a new actor Akhil Reddy in the lead. A directorial venture of Padma Raju, the untitled film goes to floors shortly. Somaraju Kalyani is producing it under AK Talks.

## Now, Nikhil's wedding deferred

**N**ikhil Siddhartha, who recently in an interview stated that he would be wedding his fiancée Dr Pallavi Varma in Hyderabad on April 16 come what may, seems to have changed his mind. A little birdie informs us that the actor has decided to assess the situation after the lockdown is lifted and will wed only when his and Pallavi's families are comfortable with the idea of big wedding. "Being a doctor, it was more of Pallavi's decision that the wedding gets postponed to some other date. Nikhil too echoed a similar opinion after seeing the situation first-hand on ground. Both the families will consult a priest later this month and fix on the *muhurat*," chips in a source.

Nikhil, who is busy distributing masks and sanitizers to health officials, cops and needy in the past one week, got engaged to Pallavi in Goa on February 1st.

On the work front, the actor has films like *Karthikeya 2* and *18 Pages* to shoot this year.

**BEING A DOCTOR, IT WAS MORE OF PALLAVI'S DECISION THAT THE WEDDING GETS POSTPONED TO SOME OTHER DATE. NIKHIL TOO ECHOED A SIMILAR OPINION**



# SARILERU... BEATS BAAHUBALI 2

**S**uperstar Mahesh Babu-starrer *Sarileru Neekevvaru*, which had its satellite premiere on Ugadi last month, has managed to draw record television rating points (TRPs), overthrowing *Baahubali: The Conclusion* from the top slot. The Sankranti action-drama garnered 23.4 TRP while SS Rajamouli's costume drama got 22.28 when it premiered nearly three years ago. The high rating points of Mahesh's film is attributed to the current lockdown in place. With *Sarileru*, Mahesh now has two films in top five Telugu films with highest number of TRPs. His *Srimanthudu* stands at number 5 with 21.34 TRPs. Chuffed to bits with this achievement of *Sarileru*, film's producer Anil Sunkara tweeted the next telecast will be even better with added scenes.

## KIARA OR SARA FOR MAHESH?



Meanwhile, script work of Mahesh's next with Parasuram is in full-swing. According to the latest buzz, the makers are keen on either Kiara Advani or Sara Ali Khan to do be the film's leading lady. Word on the street is that Namrata is in favour of Kiara as her chemistry with Mahesh in *Bharat Ane Nenu* worked out well and fans are rooting to repeat her again. If the actress is not in a position to accommodate dates given her tight schedule in Hindi, the makers would want to approach Sara.

The untitled film, a joint production venture between Mythri Movie Makers, 14 Reels Plus and GMB Entertainment, is a love story laced with family emotions, plenty of humour and action.





# Playing Test cricket made Virat better person

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday said he became a better person by playing Test cricket, calling the format a representation of life where one doesn't have the option of quitting when the going gets tough.

Speaking to former England batsman and IPL teammate Kevin Pietersen during an *Instagram Live*, Kohli touched upon his passion for Test cricket, the worst phase of his career, how he turned into a vegan and how much he is filled with gratitude for being able to live a comfortable life during a global crisis like COVID-19.

Asked which is his favourite format, the Indian skipper emphatically replied: "Test cricket, Test cricket, Test cricket, Test cricket and Test cricket. I have said it five times."

"Because it is the representation of life. Whether you get runs or not, you have to clap when others are batting. You have to go back to your room, get up and come the next day."

"You have to follow the routine whether you like it or not. It's like life where you don't have the option of not competing. Test cricket has made me a better person," said world's premier batsman, who has 27 hundreds and 7240 runs in 86 games.

Pietersen, a superb Test batsman himself, lauded Kohli for trashing the idea of four-day Tests which the ICC has floated to pull in more crowds.

"I was called for a debate and I told them that if Virat Kohli doesn't want four day Tests, it's not hap-



Virat Kohli plays a shot during his innings against New Zealand in the first Test at Wellington

AP/File Picture

pening," the former England captain said as Kohli had a hearty laugh.

His aggressive on-field demeanour has polarised opinions but the Indian skipper feels that for him, aggression is a form of enjoy-

ment and then comes thinking about strategy.

"I don't think I need to behave myself just because I am the captain. I need to be able to enjoy and then comes strategy."

But there is one guy he will never sledge in his life and that is AB de Villiers, for the simple reason that there is just too much of respect.

"IPL has done a lot in terms of respecting each other. I would never

ever be able to do it (seldging) with AB. There is a friendship that lasts much longer than all these things."

In fact, asked to choose two batsmen he enjoys batting with most, De Villiers is one of them along with former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"I enjoy batting with those who understand my running between the wickets. You have to understand my calls. I have enjoyed batting with MS and with AB, we don't even need to call as we look at each other and we know."

Kohli also spoke about the Indian cricket team being one of the best fielding sides in the world and how he got that culture in the side.

"I was lucky to be in the centre of transition. I got to see what we were lacking and what the world was doing and we needed to catch up. So I was lucky to play with players who were on same page," Kohli said.

The pair also went down memory lane to talk about their days playing together for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in 2009 and 2010.

"Right from 2009-10 we had amazing fun at RCB. We hit off well from Day 1. You came in as the big KP a star. We had a gun team with Kallis, Boucher, Anil Kumble, Rahul Dravid," Kohli said.

RCB have reached three finals but haven't won. We deserve to win a title. At RCB, we get talked about so much as we had stars. The more

## Rohit roasts Pant over 'biggest six challenge'



Rishabh Pant bats during nets session PTI

MUMBAI: Ace India cricketer Rohit Sharma on Wednesday roasted Rishabh Pant after he came to

know that the young wicketkeeper-batsman wants to challenge him in hitting the biggest six.

During an *Instagram Live* session, Jasprit Bumrah told Rohit that Pant wants to challenge him to see who can hit the biggest six between the two.

In reply, the Indian opener played down the challenge in hilarious manner, saying: "Mere sath usko karna hai? ek saal hua nahi usko cricket khelke, chhakkke ka competition kar rha hai (He wants to compete against me? He has played cricket for hardly a year and wants to have a competition)."

Rohit has so far hit 423 sixes in international cricket in 346 matches whereas Pant has hit 47 maximums in 56 games he has played for India so far. IANS

you think (about winning the IPL), the more it keeps running away from you. There have been added pressure lately but we need to just enjoy and not take pressure."

As he had said earlier, he would like to play all formats till 2023 and then take a call, he reiterated that the 2014 tour of England was the lowest point of his career when he felt that failure was inevitable.

"It was a phase where I felt that there was no chance of me getting any runs. I would get up and go to a match knowing that I will not get

runs. To go through that feeling that you will fail demolished me."

"I promised never to let that happen to me again," he said with a message for all youngsters who want to be the next Virat Kohli.

The reason for the disaster in England was putting himself ahead of the team and being "obsessed about his own game and success" and not being able to shut out the voices who spoke about success in England being the ultimate Test of a cricketer.

"Don't be self centred," was his message to the youngsters.

## WC won was by India, obsession over one six should stop: Gambhir

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir on Thursday lashed out at those only celebrating MS Dhoni's six to win the 2011 World Cup, saying it was won by the entire team and not just one hit. India lifted the World Cup on April 2 nine years ago.

"Dhoni finishes off in style. A magnificent strike into the crowd! India lift the World Cup after 28 years!" these were Ravi Shastri's words after Dhoni led India to a win in the 2011 World Cup final at the Wankhede Stadium

with a humongous six off Sri Lanka pacer Nuwan Kulasekara.

With that six, Dhoni had fulfilled the long-cherished dreams of batting legend Sachin Tendulkar, who had all the batting records to his name in international cricket except his hands at the World Cup trophy. The Master Blaster had waited 22 years to lift the trophy and on April 2, 2011, his dream was finally fulfilled.

ESPN Cricinfo, therefore, tweeted "the shot that sent millions of Indians into jubilation" with a photo of

Gambhir, in his reply, said: "Just a reminder @ESPNcricinfo: #worldcup2011 was won by entire India, entire Indian team & all support staff. High time you hit your obsession for a SIX."

The stylish left-hander had scored 97 while Dhoni, who had promoted himself to No 4, smashed an unbeaten 91 as India won by six wickets.

"A World Cup won by Indians, for India & with India!" Gambhir later tweeted.



## Vaughan calls for five-week IPL in Sept

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Michael Vaughan feels a shortened five-week Indian Premier League leading up to the ICC World T20 in October and November could be a feasible solution if the current situation, in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, is brought under control by then.

While IPL has been postponed till April 15, there is very little chance of a shortened tournament in May as it might take months for normalcy to return.

"Here's a thought .. The IPL is played for the 5



weeks leading up to the T20 World Cup in Oz .. All players use it as the great warm up for the WC .. Then the WC happens .. So important for the game that the IPL takes place but also the WC," Vaughan tweeted.

However if one goes by Vaughan's suggestion, it would mean that he is expecting IPL in the September window in the lead up to the World T20 which begins in Australia on October 18.

In September, India are supposed to play Asia Cup in the UAE which is going to be hosted by the Pakistan Cricket Board. After the Asia Cup, England are supposed to come to India to play three ODIs and three T20s.

"September is the time when there is monsoon in India. Mumbai will be under water, there could be

steady rain in Chennai. It is a decision that can't be taken that lightly," a senior BCCI official said.

There is a suggestion to do away with the ICC World T20 in October-November and hand that slot to the BCCI for conducting of IPL but sources in ICC as well as BCCI feels that it's too premature to comment at the moment.

"You don't know the situation tomorrow. Let there be a sign that the curve is flattening and normalcy can return. That's when you start discussing options," the BCCI source said.

## Mental strain to wait for Olympics will take toll: Biles

NEW YORK: Reigning world and Olympic all-around gymnastics champion Simone Biles says coping with the mental strain of waiting another year for the Tokyo Olympics will take a heavy toll by 2021.

Biles, who turned 23 last month, told the *Today* show on US Olympic telecaster NBC that she expects coaches will have her in top condition, but getting her mind in top shape in July a year later than planned will be difficult.

"Physically I have no doubt that my coaches will get me back in shape," Biles said. "But mentally going another year, I think that's what's going to take a toll on me and all of us, most of the athletes."

"So we have to stay in shape mentally as much as physically, and that will play a big factor moving forward, listening to your body and your mind." Biles told the *Wall Street Journal* she was planning to retire after the



Tokyo Olympics this year and is playing next year's Games "by ear." Biles won all-around, vault, floor and team Gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics and owns five all-around world titles among her 19 world titles since 2013. AFP

## NRAI under pressure to cancel New Delhi WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pressure is building up on the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to call off the upcoming shooting World Cup in New Delhi after the cancellation of the Munich edition owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Delhi World Cup, originally scheduled to be held from March 15-26, was postponed barely four days before the start of the event.

It was then decided to hold the tourna-

ment in two parts — Rifle and Pistol competitions from May 5-12, while Shotgun competitions from June 2-9.

However, with the Munich World Cup being cancelled, sources close to the NRAI said the sport's apex body in India is also under pressure to follow suit, considering the uncertainty arising out of the unprecedented health crisis.

"There is pressure, especially after the cancellation in Munich, which was to be held after Delhi. Given that lockdowns are being enforced not just in India, how will the shooters prepare for an event like a World Cup now," a source said.



"Going by the views of many associated with the sport in India, the writing is on the wall and the NRAI would do well to announce it now rather than doing it much later," another source added.

## Belgian league agrees to declare season finished

AFP ■ BRUSSELS

The Belgian football league has recommended that the current season be declared finished early due to the coronavirus pandemic with the present table accepted as final, it said on Thursday, becoming the first European league to take such a measure.

The decision is set to be formally validated at a General Assembly on April 15, meaning that Club Brugge would be declared champions as they currently sit 15 points clear of Gent at the top of the table.

In a statement, the Belgian Pro League said it was "very unlikely" to be able to hold matches in front of crowds before June 30 and that it had "unanimously decided that it was not desirable...to continue the competition" after that date.

Matches behind closed doors were "theoretically possible", but the league said it preferred not to put more pressure on health services and police in the circumstances. It therefore agreed not to restart the season and "accept the current



league table as final."

Belgium — whose national team top the FIFA world rankings — would become the first European league to take such a measure due to the ongoing health crisis, which saw football across the continent grind to a complete halt in the middle of March.

The Belgian season stopped with one round of games remaining in the 30-match regular season.

After that the league usually splits up, with the top six having their points totals halved and going on to play each other home and away to decide the title winners.

## Corona crisis to end 'unhealthy' spending in football

MUNICH: The crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic will stop the "unhealthy" inflation of player wages and transfer fees in football, Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge wrote in an editorial published on Thursday.

"With every crisis comes an opportunity," Rummenigge noted in Bayern's own club magazine. "For a long time we have seen unhealthy amounts of money paid in wages and transfer fees. The coronavirus and the

crisis it is causing will at least put an end to this idea of 'always more, everything more expensive and quicker than before.'"

He added: "Supply and demand will regulate the market and help establish a new equilibrium."

With the German season being halted on March 13, Bayern players have agreed to take a pay cut, as have players at other clubs in the Bundesliga.

The reigning German champi-

ons are one of the world's richest clubs although they have been reluctant to splash out on the kind of transfer fees paid by other top sides in Europe.

Their record transfer fee is the 80 million euros (\$87.3m) spent on France defender Lucas Hernandez from Atletico Madrid last year, some way short of the world record 222 million euros paid by Paris Saint-Germain to Barcelona for Neymar in 2017. AFP

## Barca could offer Griezmann to get Neymar back

IANS ■ LONDON

Spanish football giants FC Barcelona could part ways with Antoine Griezmann in order to bring back Neymar from Paris Saint Germain, according to a *Sky Sports* report.

Barcelona have long wanted to bring Brazil forward back into their fold after he left them to join French heavyweights PSG in 2018.

PSG value Neymar at €150m while Barca value Griezmann at €100m, says



the report as quoted by ESPNFC.

France World Cup winner Griezmann has not been at his best form in his first season in Spain and

selling him could aid the Lionel Messi-led side fund their summer spending.

Barca seem determined to sell Griezmann even if PSG don't agree to the deal, though the current market might prevent such hefty deals from happening, given how many clubs are struggling financially as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, the report further said.

"BEAUTIFUL STORY" Brazilian midfielder Willian has revealed that he is likely to leave Chelsea

## IOC chief thanks PM Modi for his support to Tokyo Olympics



IOC President Thomas Bach AP/File Picture

LAUSANNE: International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach has thanked India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his unflinching support to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which has now been shifted to 2021 because of the global coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to Modi, dated April 1, Bach said he was "grateful" to the Indian Prime Minister for his support to the Tokyo Games during the recent G20 Leaders' Summit which was held via video conference in the wake of the pandemic.

"Please accept my sincere thanks for the support you have given to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, expressed in the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit Statement, commending the International Olympic Committee for contributing to the

containment of the COVID-19 virus," Bach wrote in his letter.

"I am really grateful for your support for the Olympic Games and their unifying role, which the G20 Leaders' Summit had already expressed at your meeting last year in Osaka."

The IOC chief firmly put his support behind Tokyo, saying despite the pandemic, the Japanese city is well-prepared to host the quadrennial Games.

"Given the great work having been done by our Japanese partners and friends, Tokyo is the best-ever prepared Olympic city."

He is confident that with the support of the global leaders, the Tokyo Games next year will be a grand success.

"Thanks to the excellent and trustful cooperation we are enjoying, like from the G20 Leaders' Summit, we are confident that these Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will be a great success," Bach said.

"Like you, we are confident that the Olympic Games 2020 will be a symbol of human resilience. They will again show the unity of humanity in all our diversity by bringing together the world's best 11,000 athletes from all 206 National Olympic Committees and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team."

"As humankind currently finds itself in a dark tunnel, together with our Japanese partners and friends we want to make these Olympic Games a light at the end of this tunnel," he added. PTI