

**SPECIAL 4**  
BREATHE  
@47

**NATION 5**  
PM DIRECTS OFFICIALS TO ENSURE  
SUFFICIENT MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

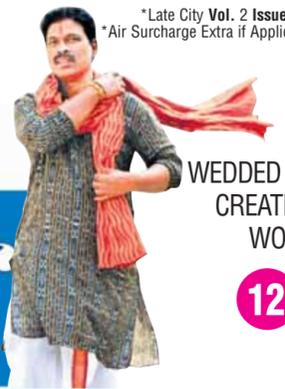
**MONEY 6**  
US EMPLOYMENT PLUNGES AMID  
WORSENING CORONA DAMAGE



# sunday pioneer

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HYDERABAD, SUNDAY APRIL 05, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



WEDDED TO  
CREATIVE  
WORK

12

## PM TO INTERACT WITH POLITICAL PARTIES ON APRIL 8

## PVR LOOKS AT SOCIAL DISTANCING IN ITS THEATRES AFTER LOCKDOWN

## MP MAN WHO THREW A FEAST FOR 1,500 TESTS CORONAVIRUS+

## 'SHOULD RETHINK': MAHA MINISTER ON PM'S CALL TO TURN OFF LIGHTS

Amid a countrywide lockdown due to COVID-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with floor leaders of various political parties via a video link on April 8. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said Prime Minister Modi will interact with floor leaders of all those parties who have more than five MPs in both houses of Parliament on April 8 at 11am. COVID-19 and countrywide lockdown are likely to be discussed during the meeting. This will be the prime minister's first interaction with opposition leaders after the lockdown.



PVR, the largest theatre chain in India, is looking at seat distancing in its halls as one of the out of the box ways to ensure audiences feel safe about returning to the movies after the coronavirus forced lockdown is over, says PVR Cinemas CEO Gautam Dutta. Besides introducing social distancing at the ticket booking level -- saying goodbye for the moment to shared popcorn and holding hands as part of the movie watching experience PVR will also sanitise all its theatres and train its staff, Dutta told PTI. We are planning a number of things, from sanitising our cinemas to coming up with a feature where we will do social distancing within the cinema.



A Dubai-returned man and 11 of his family members have tested coronavirus positive in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, days after he organised a feast for 1,500 people in the honour of his dead mother. The local authorities have sealed the entire colony where the function took place to prevent it from becoming a new COVID-19 hotspot in the state. The man, identified as Suresh, works as a waiter in Dubai. He came to Morena on March 17 and organised the ceremony on March 20. Around 1,500 people took part in the funeral function and ate at the feast.



PM call to fight the darkness brought upon the country by coronavirus pandemic - "can affect emergency services", the Maharashtra Energy Minister said. In a message, he has made an appeal saying: "Do not turn off all the lights at the same time". "We should rethink before switching off all the lights at the same time at our homes. This can lead to a grid failure and affect emergency services," Dr Nitin Raut said. Explaining what he meant, he added: "Putting off the lights together at the same time can lead to a huge difference in demand and supply."



**Light candles, Diyas at 9 pm today**  
In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call, The Pioneer urges its readers and business associates to switch off lights and "dispel darkness" at 9-00 pm today by lighting candles, lamps or holding mobile phone torches for nine minutes to demonstrate the nation's collective will to fight Covid-19. As clarified by the Union Power Ministry, there is no need to switch off street lights or appliances like computers, TVs, fans, refrigerators and ACs in homes.

# 1,023 Corona +ve cases linked to Tablighi Jamaat

17 states affected says Union health ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 1,023 COVID-19 positive cases found in 17 states have been traced to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday, underlining that about 30 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country are linked to "one particular place".

Joint Secretary in the ministry Lav Agarwal said in the daily media briefing that the rate of doubling of COVID-19 cases in India is pretty less as compared to other countries.

He said a total of 2,902 COVID-19 cases have been reported so far and cases have risen by 601 since Friday.

The joint secretary said as many as 68 deaths, including 12 since Friday, have been reported and added that 183 people have recovered or have been discharged.

A total of 1,023 positive cases of COVID-19 with links to Tablighi Jamaat congregation have been reported across



**"Around 30% of the total cases so far are linked to one particular place where we could not sort of understand it and manage it"**  
— LAV AGARWAL, Union Health Ministry Joint Secretary

17 states, Agarwal said. "Rigorous contact tracing is on across 17 states which have reported cases related to Tablighi Jamaat congregation," the health ministry official said.

"Around 30 per cent of the total cases so far are linked to

one particular place where we could not sort of understand it and manage it, he said.

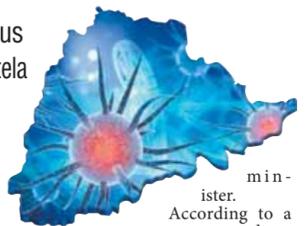
The Tablighi Jamaat congregation was held earlier last month in Delhi's West Nizamuddin area, which has turned into a COVID-19 hotspot.

## '22-K TJ members Quarantined'

**NEW DELHI**, Nearly 22,000 Tablighi Jamaat members and their contacts have been quarantined across the country so far, a home ministry official said on Saturday. During the daily briefing, Punya Salila Srivastava, a joint secretary in the Union Home Ministry, told reporters that the Union government undertook "massive efforts" in coordination with states to trace the Jamaat members and their contacts to contain the spread of COVID-19. All issues related to the ongoing lockdown are being monitored by a 24x7 control room of the Ministry of Home Affairs here, she said, adding that about 200 personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Central Armed Police Forces are linked to it on the ground level.

# Telangana reports 43 more Corona virus cases

- Hyderabad now hotspot of coronavirus
- No community transmission as yet: Eetela
- Rate of transmission less in rural TS



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State has apparently reported 272 cases of Covid-19 positive patients so far. On Saturday, 43 cases were reported, representing the second big spike -- after the 75 positive cases registered on Friday.

The fresh cases have been reported from 21 districts of the state. Hyderabad is now the epicentre of coronavirus with more than 100 cases being reported from the state capital. No other district in the State has reported more than 30 cases.

By Saturday afternoon, 21 cases were confirmed and towards the evening another 22 patients tested positive.

One person has been cured.

**By Saturday afternoon, 21 cases were confirmed and towards the evening another 22 patients tested positive**

He was discharged on Saturday. Health Minister Eetela Rajender said that Telangana had not yet witnessed community transmission yet.

The government has procured 5 lakh N95 masks, PPE kits, viral transmission kits and 500 ventilators, 4 lakh corona testing kits, 20 lakh surgical masks and 25 lakh hand gloves, according to the

minister. According to a report generated on Saturday afternoon, when the number of reported cases stood at 250, Hyderabad accounted for 105 cases; Warangal had 22 positive cases; Nizamabad had 18 cases and Karimnagar 17 cases.

About 15 patients each from Rangareddy and Medchal, 10 from Kamareddy and 7 from Nalgonda have been identified. Adilabad and Sangareddy reported six cases each, while Medak reported five cases.



**'ALL AND SUNDAY'**

**Staggered end of lockdown may not usher major changes**

2



**PM's appeal to switch off lights on Sunday could impact grid**

5

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Chaitra & Shukla Paksha  
Panchangam:  
Tithi: Dwadashi: 07:24 pm  
Nakshatram: Magha: 02:57 pm  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 04:54 pm - 06:26 pm  
Yamagandam: 12:18 pm - 01:50 pm  
Varjyam: 10:03 pm - 11:28 pm  
Gulika: 03:22 pm - 04:54 pm  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritakalam: 12:46 pm - 02:13 pm  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:54 am - 12:43 pm

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**  
Forecast: Sunny  
Temp: 33/23  
Humidity: 64%  
Sunrise: 06:07  
Sunset: 06:30  
Current Weather Conditions  
Updated April 4, 2018 5:00 PM

# Telugus among techies either furloughed or laid-off in US

NAVEENA KAVI ■ HYDERABAD

Techies from Telugu States residing in the US are among hundreds of others getting a taste of the ills of coronavirus-induced stimulus. Until recently, not many Telugus working in the US heard of the term 'furlough' (which means a temporary leave from work that is not paid and is often for a set period of time), but due to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, they are becoming victims of it. Furloughing is



designed to support firms that have been badly hit by coronavirus and to check mass unemployment. P Venkat, working in Michigan, said, "Furloughing is

**Furloughing is designed to support firms that have been badly hit by coronavirus and to check mass unemployment**

a real thing here in US. Instead of terming it as layoff, they are calling it temporary lay-off or forced vacation.

# ICJ seeks UNHRC to impose 'exemplary damages' on China for spreading Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The London-based International Council of Jurists has urged the UN Human Rights Council to make China pay "exemplary damages" for its "grave offences against humanity", alleging the coronavirus pandemic is primarily a conspiracy of Beijing to catapult itself as a superpower.

"Chinese government's inaction in arresting the spread of the virus has resulted in recession across the world and loss of trillions of dollars and rendered jobless to millions of workers in India and rest of the world," ICJ President Adish C Aggarwala said.

It remains a mystery as to how the virus has not spread in all provinces of China but at the same time, has spread to all countries in the world, he said.

He urged the Geneva-based human rights body's intervention to hold China, its army and the Wuhan-based



**"Chinese government's inaction in arresting the spread of the virus has resulted in recession across the world and loss of trillions of dollars and rendered jobless to millions of workers in India and rest of the world"**  
— ADISH C AGGARWALA  
ICJ President

land responsible for the spread of the virus, which has killed over 50,000 people globally and brought the world to a grinding halt.

# TS, AP power utilities gear up for blackout

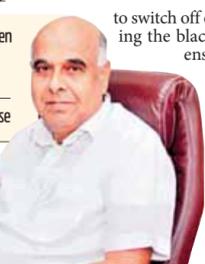
L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

The State load dispatch centres and transmission utilities in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have geared up to deal with the possibility of any adverse impact on the electricity grid on Sunday, in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for a nationwide blackout accompanied with the lighting of diyas, mobile

- Consumers advised to switch off only lights and utilise power for all other needs
- Special monitoring cells to deal with sudden fluctuations in power demand between 9.00 and 9.09 pm
- All steps taken to avert power grid collapse

torches etc. from 9.00 pm to 9.09 pm to dispel darkness and to reflect India's united stance against battling Covid-19. Power utilities have asked people to utilise power for all

purposes like refrigerators, fans, ACs, coolers, grinders etc. and



to switch off only lights during the blackout period to ensure that there is not much impact on the power grid on account of the consequent fall and rise in demand between 9.00 pm and 9.09 pm on Sunday.

# Daily wager walks 600 km to see birth of his baby

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There was panic in the air with talk of a pandemic, his job was probably gone as was the roof over his head, but Mukesh Maurya did not let his spirits flag as he set off from Delhi for his village, more than 600 kilometres away, determined to be home to see his baby being born.

There were no trains and few buses to get to Musafirkhana in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi district all the way from Rajouri Garden where he worked as a daily wage labourer, but get there he did.



**It took many hours of walking, several more hours of waiting and three gruelling, very crowded bus rides, with social distancing a random, distant thought**

It was March 28, Saturday, when he set off for home, 650 km away. The nationwide lockdown to curtail the spread of

COVID-19 had begun after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's March 24 announcement and all roads to home it

seemed were blocked. But where there is a will there is a way, and 22-year-old Maurya, who reached home on Sunday evening, found it.

It took many hours of walking, several more hours of waiting and three gruelling, very crowded bus rides, with social distancing a random, distant thought.

I reached just in time. My wife was having labour pains when I reached our village and we had to quickly arrange for an ambulance to take her to hospital, Maurya, now a proud father of a baby boy, told PTI

over the phone. I could manage to be there with my wife when my son was born, he added, the three days of stress and the arduous journey home seemingly already a distant memory.

The young man, who earned about Rs 8,000 a month as a daily wage labourer in Rajouri Garden on west Delhi erecting tents and pandals for weddings and other events, said he waited for three days from Wednesday to Friday for the situation to improve and to find some way to leave.

'ALL AND SUNDRY'

# Staggered end of lockdown may not usher major changes

A question engaging the mind of every thinking Indian is what life will be like when the 21-day corona virus-forced lockdown ends on April 15. One thing is for sure that a dramatic turnaround is unlikely from the 22nd day onwards as experience from Communist-controlled nations shows. What then are the alternatives? There were three options before the Centre: extension of the lockdown till April-end, interim relief of 5-6 days for people to stitch together their lives torn by sudden imposition of the lockdown and a staggered end. Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba pre-empted speculation by announcing that the lockdown would end on April 14 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Chief Ministers that it would end in a staggered manner. Health experts and epi-

demiologists feel this is the best way forward to prevent nullification of the gains achieved. The curve of corona cases may not have flattened, but it did not shoot up vertically either. It could have flattened if only the Tablighi Jamaat had scrapped its religious congregation in Delhi. Jamaat attendees account for 31 per cent of India's corona cases.

Modi's teleconference with Chief Ministers came in handy to lay down broad outlines of his government's determination to save every life through testing, tracing, isolating and quarantining. In asking Chief Ministers to suggest plans for a staggered end, he obviously had in mind the colossal blunders committed by the Delhi administration in allowing free movement of lakhs of migrants. Such mis-steps have to be consciously avoided from April 15 when States may have to devise a different strategy.

## Prime Minister Narendra Modi's teleconference with Chief Ministers came in handy to lay down broad outlines of his government's determination to save every life through testing, tracing, isolating and quarantining

Nobody has a clue what a staggered end involves. What it does NOT mean is permitting flights, trains, buses and private vehicles to operate or all shops to open, offices to resume work as usual, giving people a free run to eat at restaurants or allowing senior citizens have their morning walk. It cannot be enforced geography-wise as social distancing will go for a toss. It will be a phase-wise opening. For instance, the distance one can travel will be extended from 3 kms to 5 kms.

There are three broad areas in which the Centre and the State need to work in a spirit of cooperation to win the war against the virus. Firstly, they must pool all their resources to minimise the number of deaths and maximise recovery of the ill. Experts say we are one month behind USA, global epicentre of corona virus, in the course of the disease. We have to be fully prepared when cases peak by late April or May; not caught off-guard like the US where President Trump invoked the Defence



S NAGESH KUMAR  
Former Resident Editor,  
The Hindu

Production Act to force car manufacturers to re-orient assembly lines to make ventilators.

By delaying the course of the disease, India has got a head start over many Western countries where myopic leadership and people, sceptical about usefulness of lockdowns, laid their bets entirely on WHO-

mandated mantra of 'testing, testing and testing'. New York City and Lombardy region of Italy are case studies in logistical failures.

India must learn lessons by marshalling ventilators for patients and personal protection equipment for doctors, nurses and paramedics, besides setting up more temporary hospitals and ICU beds before the disease curve peaks. The projections made by experts when this happens is frightening. As all hands must be on the deck, the mobilisation of trained medical personnel is vital.

Dr. Devi Shetty, chairman of Narayana Hrudayalaya, has submitted proposals to the Health Ministry for producing 1.5 lakh doctors by simply changing MCI regulations. Apart from hiring doctors in specialist disciplines, he has suggested recruiting students of senior classes and pass-outs

from Russia and China. This proposal must be cleared without delay because health care workers are vulnerable to infection and even death if they work for long hours in an infected ward.

The second most important task is to put the economy on the path to recovery. This is not easy, given the unmet restrictions on cargo movement, opening of businesses, and likely reverse migration within a state, region or city. True, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Rs. 1.7 lakh crore package and generous subsidies announced by States are providing a safety net for the poor. However, the question is: How long can the governments sustain these programmes? That would depend on how long the virus torments us. Nobody has an answer.

Finally, enforcement of lockdown, even if staggered, will prove a test on several fronts,

primarily the sense of freedom it brings to people cooped up in small houses and in slums for weeks. They will be longing to go to the cinema or simply on family outings. It may breed irresponsibility with the Tablighi Jamaat having set an atrocious example of social distancing and its head cleric Maulana Saad evading arrest. It has helped the enemy - corona virus - just when India was earning encomiums from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for preventing the disease from spiraling out of control.

China was widely criticized for using brutal methods for keeping Wuhan city under total lockdown from January 23. Western nations ended up being neither here nor there. India must find a middle path of cracking down on violators and being battle-ready against corona. There is no other way to fight the pandemic.

## TPCC: Let field assistants return to work

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Saturday demanded that the State government to restore the services of 7,500 field assistants who work for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in view of Coronavirus situation.

In an open letter to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, Uttam said that the MGNREGA Fields Assistants went on strike following imposition of new conditions for renewal of their contracts as per Circular No. 4779/2020 dated February 28, 2020. As per the circular, it was proposed that the contracts of those field assistants would not be renewed who fail to meet the targets. However, in view of situation that emerged due to Coronavirus, the field assistants have offered to call off the strike unconditionally to rejoin duties.

# Lockdown leaves realtors facing unfamiliar territory

BAKKA TENNYSON ■ NALGONDA

The nationwide lockdown amid spread of coronavirus had severely affected real estate business in Nalgonda district. Especially, the real estate ventures spread around Yadagirigutta and Alair belt witnessed a major slump for the past fortnight and the realtors, who had invested huge sums, are compelled to face hardships.

Since the announcement of the lockdown, the registration process of the plots in about 70-odd ventures around Yadagirigutta have come to a halt and the realtors and agents, who relied on the business, were forced to face many problems.

According to an unofficial survey, around Rs 1,000 crore was invested on the real estate ventures in and around the Yadadri. The real estate business in the district picked up pace in the last three years. The ventures



According to an unofficial survey, around Rs 1,000 crore was invested on the real estate ventures in and around Yadadri. The real estate business in the district picked up pace in the last three years. The ventures

are spread across in an extent of thousand odd acres. The Yadadri Development Authority

has accorded permission to these layouts as per the stipulated norms.

Since a major hype was created on the real estate sector here, many were keen on investing in Nalgonda. The master plan implementation process was also undertaken and the buyers came in large numbers making the region as the most sought after region in the entire belt.

But the lockdown has turned the realtors' plans upside down. The boom is unlikely to return to normalcy soon even if the government withdraws the lockdown, said a realtor. S Govardhan Reddy, a realtor told the PNS that the business is unlikely to limp back to normalcy in the next few months as he suffered a serious setback with the Corona.

The lockdown is expected to substantially impact demand and supply across the real estate sector. Housing sales are likely to witness a 25-35 percent yearly drop in 2020 and net office absorption is expected to see a dip of 13-30 per cent.



## Errabelli distributes food kits to needy

PNS ■ TORRUR

Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao was all praise for Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for distributing 12-kg rice free of cost and Rs 1,500 to all the ration card holders in the state.

The Minister appealed to the people of the state to extend their helping hand to the CM at this hour of crisis.

Speaking after distributing rice worth Rs 3.5 lakh among migrant labourers of Torur and food kits among them here on Saturday, the Minister said that the Chief Minister did not forget the well being of the poor during the current crisis. The rice and food kits were contributed by Anumandla Rajender Reddy and Jhansi of the Women Empowerment Telugu

Association of the USA. Food kits were contributed by Anumandla Tirupati Reddy, he said. The CM set aside Rs 33,000 crore to purchase paddy and maize produced by farmers, he said adding that the Government regards the migrant labourers as the sons of the soil. No state government has made arrangements to lift the farmers produce, the Minister said.

He appealed to the charitable public to extend a helping hand to the government by donating liberally. The Minister also distributed masks worth Rs 20,000 to the sanitation workers. He also distributed a quintal of rice among the orphans. Local elected people's representatives, NRIs, officials, migrant labourers and orphans took part in the programmes.

## Pay full salaries to staff: Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy on Saturday demanded that the State Government to pay full salaries to the employees of Revenue, Panchayat Raj and Municipal Administration & Urban Development (MA&UD).

Narayana Reddy said that just like employees of Medical & Health and Police departments, the employees of Revenue, Panchayat Raj and Municipal Administration & Urban Development (MA&UD) have been working hard on almost 24x7 basis in anti-Coronavirus operations across the State.

He said the employees of these departments have been taking care of logistics and providing other support during the lockdown period. He said that the Municipal employees were actively taking part in spraying operations and other activities. Similarly, Revenue and Panchayat Raj employees were playing a crucial role in rural areas. Therefore, he demanded that government modify GO Ms No 27 by adding the employees of Revenue, Panchayat Raj and MA&UD, along with Medical & Health and Police Departments to pay full salaries.

## 5 Jr doctors fall sick ...

Continued from Page 1

On Saturday, six more cases of returnees from Nizamuddin congregation were referred for testing and almost all the cases tested negative, he said. A total of six more patients were being treated in the quarantine section.

The nodal officer detailed that the MGM isolation unit, because of various interlinked wards, is facing the threat of virulent situation and since segregation of the isolation unit was not possible immediately, the Covid-19 positive patients were being shifted to Gandhi Hospital on the advice of the district authorities.

## Don't use ...

Continued from Page 1

In a video message of over 11 minutes, Modi had also asked people to maintain the "lakshman rekha" of social distancing by staying indoors and not getting together in groups during the exercise.

"Please refrain from using alcohol-based hand sanitisers tomorrow before lighting candles or diyas," K S Dhatwalia, Principal Director General of PIB, said at a media briefing.

## TS reports 43...

Continued from Page 1

Jogulamba Gadwal, Badradri Kothagudem and Mahabubnagar reported four cases each, while Nagarkurnool, Jagtial and Janagan reported two cases each. While Warangal rural reported 3 cases.

## Telugus among techies either...

Continued from Page 1

Some car companies in Michigan are furloughing even those who are full-time as the sales went down. Furloughing is better if you are a resident and not H-1B. But then it may also indicate that you will never get your job back."

Anil, working in Columbus, said, "About 80% of our company workforce were put on furlough due to COVID-19 crisis. There are also 15 H-1B

employees who were laid-off because as per H-1B norms, they cannot claim unemployment benefits. The folks who are citizens and green card holders are informed to stay on unpaid leaves and can claim unemployment benefits. However, my H-1B colleagues had to bear the brunt. Now they lost the job and have to leave the country too."

However, those working on H-1Bs cannot be furloughed. H-1B workers and their

employers who may want to furlough them have a legal problem. The employer has to amend their H-1B to be part-time, and they can be terminated. In case of H-1B employee, if put under furlough, they have to be paid for the period.

As per the prevailing conditions, the employee needs to be terminated, and revoke H1B visa after offering them a one-way ticket back to their home country.

## Daily wager...

Continued from Page 1

When it didn't, he just packed his belongings in a backpack and started walking, joining the exodus of many thousands of migrant workers trekking back to their homes with no food, no jobs and no savings.

Maurya, who has been working in Delhi for more than a decade, is safe with his family, which also includes his parents, three brothers.

## ICJ seeks UNHRC to impose 'exemplary damages'...

Continued from Page 1

Aggarwala sought direction from the UNHRC to China to pay "exemplary damages to the entire world and in particular to India" for spreading the disease. "This pandemic declared by the WHO is primarily due to conspiracy of

Chinese government aimed at catapulting itself to the position of a superpower of the World and undermining other countries through biological warfare and gross negligence and incompetence of Chinese government and their authorities to alert the WHO and rest of the world," Aggarwala said in a statement.

"The Chinese government misled the WHO to believe that COVID 19 is not a pandemic warranting its interference," he said, adding that this resulted in thousands of deaths. "Lack of transparency in dissemination of information relating to the spread of this

virus and continued misleading statements had resulted in violation of human rights of the entire global community warranting immediate interference and prompt action against China as mandated under Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," he said.

# Congress leaders reach out to the needy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress Control Room at Gandhi Bhavan is receiving around 20 calls per day from the people. The party had set up the control room to help people who are enduring lockdown in the state. The party is directing the local leaders reach out to those who made calls to the Control Room. The party is extending its help especially to the migrant labourers.

According to TPCC CPRO K Hariprasad, the party had extended its help to the labourers hailing from West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra



and other states, who got stuck in the state due to lockdown. He said that the party leaders were

reaching out to the needy and distributing essential goods, food packets, groceries and

other items. He said that on Saturday, party leader Nizamuddin had extended help to over 100 migrant labourers from Maharashtra by distributing food packets and groceries

in Old City. On the other hand, Youth Congress leaders were also extending help. LB Nagar Youth Congress leader P Jaipal Reddy extended help to 45 poor families at Lingojiguda in LB Nagar constituency on Saturday. Jaipal Reddy said that the Youth Congress activists were organising 'Annadanam' programmes everyday across the city.

He alleged that the daily wage workers were not receiving the help extended by the government. It may be recalled that the Telangana Congress had set up Control Room at Gandhi Bhavan on March 30 to extend help to the poor.

## TS, AP power utilities...

Continued from Page 1

Special monitoring cells have been set up at load dispatch centres to overcome variations of power demand and to ensure smooth and safe operation of the grid during the blackout period. Rao said the safety and security of the State Grid would be maintained at any cost to implement the Prime Minister's call.

"During this period, around 500 MW to 700 MW domestic load reduction is expected. All necessary steps have been taken to address sudden variation in demand before and after the event of shutting down the lighting loads during the brief 9 minutes period. TS Transco is totally geared up to meet any fluctuation in electricity demand on Sunday at 9 PM," Prabhakar Rao said.

To overcome this variation of demand and to ensure smooth and safe operation of grid, a Special Monitoring Cell had been established at the State Load Dispatch Center at Vidyut Soudha, Hyderabad.

The Telangana State Load Dispatch Center is appreciated by CEA, New Delhi as the best

one in the country in scrupulous implementation of NLDLC & CERC guidelines issued from time to time.

"The State Load Dispatch Center will continuously monitor the load generation patterns and shall take corrective actions in co-ordination with the Southern Regional Load Dispatch Center (SRLDC). All the EHV substations and 33/11 KV Substations will be personally manned by the concerned engineers from the respective areas," Prabhakar Rao added.

All the electricity engineers and staff will make all-out efforts in overcoming this situation of instant switching-off the lighting load and instant switching-on the same within a brief lapse of time. All consumers are requested to avail power supply for all purposes duly switching-off the lighting and not to believe the rumours in social media, he requested.

The country has gone through a grid failure in 2012 due to technical reasons. However, India presently has a strong transmission network, which is capable of handling fluctuations in power demand, they added.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION: HYDERABAD**

NIT No.: 4 Tender Notice No: 01/EE/PD-EZ/GHMC/2019-20 Dt. 04.04.2020  
Name of the Work: Dismantling of affected properties at Nagole to facilitate the SRDP work of construction of flyover at Nagole, East Zone, GHMC. Estimate Amount/ EDV : Rs. 21.00 lakhs. Start Date: 06-04-2020 05.00 PM, Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 16-04-2020 3.30 pm. Name and Address office Cell No. : 0/0 Executive Engineer, PD, EZ, GHMC, 970440902 Further Details can be seen at e-procurement@www.tenderprocurement.gov.in  
R.O. No. : 1070-PP/LADVT/1/2020-21 Sd/- Executive Engineer, PD East Zone, GHMC

**CRIME CORNER**

**ONE ARRESTED, GUTKHA WORTH RS 10 LAKH SEIZED**

The Cyberabad police raided a gutkha manufacturing unit at Mailardevpally and seized material and machinery worth Rs10 lakh on Saturday. According to the Police, a tip off was received about the gutkha being manufactured. A team raided a house located at Tatanagar in Katedan. The owner of the unit along with a few workers were manufacturing gutkha under the brand name 'Amber' and packing it and the material was being supplied to the shops in the city. One person who was at the manufacturing unit was caught while efforts are on to nab the owner who went absconding, said an official from then Cyberabad Special Operations Team. The police handed over the arrested person and seized material to the Mailardevpally police for further action.

**MISCREANT LOOTS LIQUOR FROM WINE SHOP IN THE CITY**

Amid lockdown, a miscreant has looted liquor worth Rs 25,000 and Rs 8,000 in cash from a wine shop here, police said on Saturday. CCTV footage revealed that the thief had made an entry into the shop by removing a grill on the ceiling, the police said. Though the theft took place on March 31, owners of the outlet did not notice it until Friday night. The shopowners were checking the CCTV cameras installed in and around the shop through their mobile phones as the shop remains locked due to the ongoing lockdown. The owners noticed that the feed from two cameras was not coming. So they went to the shop on Friday and noticed that wires of the camera installed at the entrance were cut and after opening the shop they realised that the liquor and cash were missing. They immediately alerted the Excise and police officials. The shop is located opposite to the state-run Gandhi Hospital and was closed due to the ongoing lockdown. Along with liquor bottles, the intruder decamped with Rs 8,000 in cash, the police said adding the case is under investigation.

**Fraudster creates fake PM CARES ID, booked**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyber crime police of Hyderabad has booked a person for creating fake UPI IDs similar to that of the one created for the PM CARES. Officials said that several fake UPI IDs resembling the UPI ID of PM CARES fund - pmcares@SBI were traced. The police asked the citizens to verify the UPI ID and the registered name of the account holder before transferring the amount to PM CARES. The original UPI ID of PM CARES id pmcares@sbi and name of the account holder is PM CARES. PM CARES was set up with a primary objective to invite funds in the distress situation in support of the country to fight against Covid-19.

**Rohingyas cramped camps most vulnerable to Corona**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rohingya refugees packed in camps here appear vulnerable to coronavirus, like they are vulnerable to any other disease. Though no Covid-19 positive case has been reported so far among the refugees, the fact that many families are living in wretched conditions puts them at risk.

About 6,000 refugees in the city are facing the worst crisis since they arrived here eight years ago, due to the coronavirus-fuelled lockdown.

Like other poor and economically weaker sections of the society, the lockdown has hit them hard. However, what makes the condition of the refugees more pathetic is the fact that many families at the camps are staying in 10x10 feet plastic shacks side by side.

The refugees, who earn their livelihood by working as rag pickers, construction labourers or by selling vegetables and other items, have remained confined to their homes.

With no money to satiate their hunger, the refugees are totally relying on the non-



**More than 6,000 refugees in Hyderabad are facing the worst crisis since they arrived here eight years ago, due to the coronavirus-fuelled lockdown**

governmental organisations and charity groups.

The fear is visible in Balapur and other camps in the old city of Hyderabad. The refugees said they heard about the pandemic from television news or the audio and video content some of them receive on their mobile phones.

Like other slum dwellers, social distancing is impractic-

able for them. "What will be the social distancing for families living in 10x10 huts," asked Mazhar Hussain, director of the Confederation of Voluntary Associations (COVA), an NGO distributing ration among the 1400 refugee families. "Not just refugees any poor family of four to six people has to spend their entire life in a

small room. Even middle class families can't observe social distancing," he said.

He believes that the refugees are not vulnerable to coronavirus as neither do they travel abroad nor those returned from abroad visit them.

They also don't mingle with locals but another activist said some refugees work for Tablighi Jamaat, whose congregation at Delhi last month proved to be a major source of Covid-19 spread in the country.

However, as the refugees avoid travel even within the country, none of them is believed to have attended the Delhi meet.

About 20 camps of refugees are spread over Balapur, Shaheen Nagar, Barkas, Hafiz Baba Nagar, Kishan Bagh and Jalpally.

The refugees hailing from Rakhine State came here in 2012 after fleeing Myanmar.

More than a million Rohingya are reported to have fled Myanmar to escape persecution by the armed forces. The majority of them have taken refuge in Bangladesh.

**88k tonnes of rice distributed so far: Mareddy**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies Corporation chairman M Srinivas Reddy on Saturday said that 88,000 tonnes of rice was distributed among 22 lakh families across the state since April 1. Of the 87.59 lakh families, 25 per cent of the cardholders availed the free rice facility in the last four days. At least 4.5 lakh cardholders released their quota of free rice from the morning till 12 noon on Saturday.

He put the number of card-holders in Hyderabad at 5.80 lakh. There are 5.24 lakh in Ranga Reddy district and 4.95 lakh in Medchal district. Because of very high rate of ration portability in the three districts, some technical problems have cropped up, he said adding that the civil supplies commissioner and officials spoke to NIC and SDC officials to resolve the glitch.

He appealed to the ration card-holders who have received their tokens are alone allowed to collect their free rice and advised the people against congregating near the fair price shops.



**Citizens told to eat more fruits, veggies**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Horticulture Department is making necessary arrangements to make available mangoes, sweet lemons and lemons through mobile rythu bazaars and rythu bazaars by granting the necessary permits through district and mandal level horticulture officers to ensure that the people consume them and improve their immunity since these fruits are rich sources of vitamin C and fibre.

The officials of Horticulture Department said that district collectors have been asked to give wide publicity to the nutritional value of these fruits through print and electronic media. Acting in directions of CM K Chandrasekhar Rao, vegetables and fruits are made available in 3,500 locations by the Marketing, Horticulture and Police Department personnel at the door step of the people.

The department put the area under various horticultural crops like mango, guava,

lemon, sweet lemon and lemon at 4.41 lakh acres. Sweet lemon and mango crops are ready for harvesting. The Chief Minister recently made an appeal to people to consume fruits produced in the state by themselves to improve their immunity power as number of corona cases are rapidly increasing.

The Horticulture Department observed that the per capita consumption of fruits is less in the state. The fruits are rich source of minerals, vitamins and anti-oxidants. According to ICMR survey, per capita consumption of fruits in Telangana should increase to 3 kg per month, which includes 1 kg of mangoes and 2 kg of sweet lemons. In April, May and June, 70,000 tonnes of sweet lemon, 1.22 lakh tonnes of mangoes will be made available to the people. Consumption of citrus fruits like sweet lemon are rich source of Vitamin C and fibre.



**Govt ensures no one goes hungry**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao's assurance to take care of migrant labourers, the government is taking steps to provide them food. As part of this, 11 Municipal Corporations across the state are serving free lunch and dinner for migrant workers and the poor, on the orders of the Minister KT Rama Rao and Municipal Secretary Arvind Kumar.

About 26,526 poor and migrant workers in 11 municipal corporations across the state are being served food. With the objective of ensuring sufficient food to every migrant worker and homeless in Telangana, the state government is extending helping hand.

**SCR to provide 1k beds**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Continuing its efforts in containing the spread of Covid-19, South Central Railway is gearing up to provide 1,000 beds to quarantine the patients suspected of pandemic at various locations over the zone.

These 1,000 bed facilities are coming up at railway hospitals, health units, training Institutes and junior colleges in around 30 locations of the zone. Apart from Central Hospital in Lallaguda, it has hospitals in six divisions and health units in primary locations.

"Efforts are being made to help the state government in extending the facilities to fight against Covid-19. Already we are transporting essential commodities in freight and parcel services. As a precautionary measure, we would accommodate 1,000 quarantine patients," said an official.

Meanwhile, Indian Railways has directed SCR to ready 484 coaches that can be used to isolate patients infected with Covid-19. All the zones were told to convert 5,000 sleeper class coaches into isolation beds.

Authorities are working on modifying the coaches at Secunderabad, Kacheguda, Hyderabad and Vijayawada coach depots in the zone. Already Carriage Workshop, Lallaguda modified two cabins as prototype isolation cabins.



**SCR runs parcel vans from Sec'bad to Delhi**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In its continuous effort to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential commodities during the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19, South Central Railway is operating both freight and parcel trains on continuous basis to ensure transportation of necessary items to all parts of the country, though passenger train services have been suspended till April 14, 2020. As part of this, "Doodh Duronto Special" has been dispatched from Renigunta to Delhi (H. Nizamuddin) at 08.00 hrs of April 4, 2020. This train consists of 6 milk tankers, each tanker with capacity of 40,000 liters totaling to 2.40 lakh liters of milk, one Parcel Van loaded with mangoes from Renigunta and Secunderabad with 23 tonnes

capacity and another parcel van loaded with musk melons from Guntakal with 23 tonnes capacity.

In order to keep the supply chain intact as per the demand in the prevailing situation, SCR is according highest priority to operate freight and parcel trains. As part of this, on an average 180 freight trains are being operated daily. Apart from this, recently, milk special with 6 tankers to Delhi and parcel special with 5 VPs to Howrah with essential commodities has been transported by the zone.

Gajanan Mallya, General Manger, SCR has appreciated the efforts of staff and officers in mobilising the essential commodities for offering loading in coordination with consignor and state government authorities to cater the needs of the nation.

**VIRUS-FREE**



Ensuring that the personnel at forefront helping the public in fighting Covid-19 remain safe, the Hyderabad Commissioner of Police, Anjani Kumar, launched a sanitising and disinfecting programme of patrol cars in Hyderabad city on Saturday.

**Cops kind gestures win appreciation**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the people continue to reel under the coronavirus-fueled lockdown, the crisis is bringing out the best among police personnel in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in their attempts to help the needy. A woman constable in Andhra Pradesh's Vizianagaram district carried an ailing woman in her hands to hospital.

A woman home guard in the same district is helping a crawling destitute with food every day and is also providing her face masks.

Vizianagaram Superintendent of Police B Raja Kumari rewarded the two women on Saturday.

In Telangana's Jogu Lamba Gadwal district, a police const-

able shifted a mentally ill woman to a hospital. Naresh along with a couple of employees of 108 ambulance service shaved the woman's head around a wound and bandaged it.

Telangana Director General of Police M Mahender Reddy has lauded the constable for his gesture. The police chief also posted a picture of a man sleeping at a barricade on the road in Cyberabad police commissioner-erate limits.

"I salute to your commitment, dedication & devotion. Not leaving your place of responsibility at any cost, just for one word, social goodness, in the wake of covid-19 spread, the biggest challenge humanity has ever faced," the DGP tweeted.

**UoH admissions schedule for year 2021 announced**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The University of Hyderabad (UoH) has announced admissions into 128 courses for the academic year 2020-21. This year, the UoH introduced six new PG courses including M.Ed Education (intake of 50) MA Gender Studies (20) MA Communication (Media Studies) (25), MA Communication (Media Practice) (25), M.Tech Microelectronics & VLSI Design (slow pace) (6), M.Tech Manufacturing Science and Engineering (18) and one PhD programme in Microbiology with an intake of four.

**CS interacts with doctors treating Covid-19 patients**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary to Government of Telangana Somesh Kumar, IAS held a teleconference with the doctors of various hospitals treating coronavirus patients.

The Chief Secretary has personally interacted with all the members and explained about the various proactive steps taken up by the government under the leadership of the Chief Minister K



Chandrashekhar Rao and assured all the possible support

from the Government to all the doctors working in the field for management of coronavirus.

The Chief Secretary discussed Individual hospital problems related to personal protection gear, security, sanitation, travel of staff, accommodation of the staff, management issues related to the patients in detail.

DGP Mahender Reddy, Special Chief Secretary (Health) Shanti Kumari par-

ticipated in the teleconference and explained the various measures taken up by the respective departments. Superintendents and doctors of Gandhi hospital, King Koti, Sarojini Devi eye hospital, Chest hospital, Nature Cure, Nizamiatibbi, MGM Warangal participated in the meeting.

The Chief Secretary also conducted a separate teleconference with the coronavirus laboratories.

**Sharp spike in cases triggers fear psychosis**

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Sudden increase in coronavirus positive cases in Telangana, especially in Hyderabad triggers fear psychosis among the people since Friday as the state records 75 coronavirus positive cases in a day.

Residents are scared that they will be infected with coronavirus if they speak to others on the road. People started taking precautions and lockdown more seriously from Friday than previous days.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Professor in Osmania University Prof K Stevenson said, "Fear increased a lot among the people residing in Hyderabad after a drastic increase in coronavirus positive cases across the state."



A deserted view of road in front of historic Charminar monument on Saturday

fering from a fear psychosis. Fear about being the next victim. Fear about being taken to hospital. Fear about dying. I may be the next victim' feeling increased among the public."

A faculty in a private degree

college Narsi Reddy opined, "I am so scared after seeing the sudden raise of coronavirus positive cases on Friday. I don't know how the number will increase in the coming days. The persons who have

**Media is enhancing the fear psychosis among the people these days with the continuous publication of news on coronavirus deaths, opine psychologists**

symptoms have to undergo tests. That will help the government to control the pandemic."

Discussions on sudden raise of positive cases increased over phones. On the other hand, residents are more scared to come out of their houses from Friday.

A psychologist Dr A Manoj Kumar said, "Mental disorders during epidemic disasters among the human beings are quiet natural. However, the coronavirus impact is severe and hence the disorders percentage is also severe. Some will not eat food properly and

some will not sleep properly due to these situations."

He added, "Media is enhancing the fear psychosis among the people these days with the continuous news scrolling on coronavirus. Fear is increasing among the people due to the channels telecast of deaths here and other countries. Some channels are creating awareness on the intensity of the coronavirus impact and instilling confidence among the people. It is better if the media decreases to telecast news on number of deaths across the world similar to displaying cricket scores."

**Governor asks citizens to heed Modi's call**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In response to the clarion call given by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan has appealed to all the citizens in the state to turn off all the lights in your homes on April 5 at 9 PM, and light candles or diyas, torches for 9 minutes.

The Governor requested the people to light up candles or diyas on the day to express our solidarity and to demonstrate the country's collective will to fight coronavirus. The Governor also requested the citizens not to assemble in groups and do not go out on to the roads while participating in the programme and urged them to do it at the doorstep or balconies of their homes.



**Essentials worth Rs 20k distributed to 40 artistes**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Federation of LIC Class-I Officers' Associations South Central Zonal Council on Saturday distributed essential commodities, vegetables among 40 artistes of Surabhi troupe at their door step in Vanastalipuram.

Association general secretary Natta Jwanes and other leaders of the association, including Komali Devi, T Venkateswarlu, Dr T Lakshmi, Madhukar, Satyarsi, Wilson Rao, were present on the occasion. The artistes thanked the LIC officers' association for its gesture.

# Breathe@47

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, rising cases and deaths, one thing that the citizens can take heart is the improved air quality index which is down to less than 50 in many parts of the country, a number that had stood at 222 a couple of months back in Delhi-NCR. SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with experts to tell you more



Azure sky as seen from Connaught Place during the ongoing lockdown in New Delhi

Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

**B**ack in the 70s, 80s and even 90s, there was a time when azure sky was a norm. Then everything changed. Globalisation opened doors and the almost empty roads and no traffic snarls soon became a thing of the past. Soon the air quality index was touching 1,000 and beyond and many people ended up with several breathing problems.

Cut to March 25, 2020. Clear blue skies, a smattering of stars in the night sky and a clear view of the Capital for miles end from the roof top without the usual haze is what Delhiites are waking up to since the lockdown. While the circumstances that have led to the present situation is extremely unfortunate given that the number of COVID-19 cases as of April 4, 2020 stands at 3,474 and deaths at 91, there are a few numbers that are falling and people can take heart from it and breathe easy due to improved air quality.

According to a data by SAFAR (March 30, 2020), the Capital has seen a reduction of 63 per cent in NOx and 49 per cent fall in PM2.5. Mumbai too witnessed a decrease in numbers — NOx 57 per cent down and PM2.5 down by 53 per cent, Pune: NOx stands at reduced percentage of 55 and PM2.5 at 38 per cent.

According to Anumita Roychoudhary, associate director general at the Centre for Science and Environment, the overall air pollution levels have dropped sharply after the lockdown because vehicles, factories, construction has stopped. "We don't want to depend on this kind of emergency to bring this change. But this crisis has proved that if health risk perception can provoke emergency response it can galvanise far reaching changes. Collective community action during this pandemic has forced us to reinvent solutions to reduce our vulnerability to toxic risk. We have made massive lifestyle adjustments to practice social distancing," Roychoudhary says.

She tells you that whether this crisis induced change can throw up long-term solutions to air pollution is a question that we need to address. This means that we have to make systemic changes to institutionalise some of the emergency responses in terms of maximising potential of digital world to alter the concept of workplace, scale up public transport options to reduce vehicle miles travelled and personal vehicle numbers, roll out electric mobility to move towards zero emissions, ensure zero tolerance for non-compliance with emissions control regulations and standards, among others, only then post pandemic period can gain from this short term breather from emergency action.

"Health risk associated with the ongoing

air pollution problem also needs emergency response. There are concerns that during post pandemic period, it will be business as usual and pollution will go out of control once again. But people need to understand that air pollution kills 1.2 million people and makes many more ill annually. This requires similar emergency response and public support for strong action. This pandemic has also brought to light the evidence that air pollution increases vulnerability to pandemic because poor air pollution has already compromised lungs and overall health of people. It is important to deepen awareness and public understanding of this connection and overall health risk associated with air pollution to build the momentum for hard action. We need strong and sustained action across regions and give our national clean air programme effective teeth," Roychoudhary says.

Environmentalist BS Vohra tells you that the reduced AQI levels has one message to give. "It was all manmade. It was our fault that we allowed polluted industries to function and we allowed vehicular pollution to reach levels that people in Delhi were choked. Nature has given us a strong message — when we try and correct the wrong — when we stop things that create pollution — things change for the better," Vohra says.

Also, there is now no scope of ambiguity. "Today, we know the exact reason for the high AQI levels. Earlier, there were many studies that threw up different reading on what was contributing to the air pollution. Now, we know the real reason. We are being told that the mistake was ours and we need to take corrective action," Vohra tells you.

He paints a dismal picture if we don't learn the lesson this lockdown has taught us. "First, the lockdown was not something that human did to combat air pollution. It was forced due to COVID-19. The improved AQI doesn't mean man has done something. If the virus has not been there, things would be as it was before. There would have been no improvement in AQI levels. Second, there is going to be no long-term impact. If today, the lockdown is opened, it would not take more than a fortnight for things to be back to what they were. The AQI is going to shoot up once again if we allow the industries to work at the same pace and just as many vehicles to ply on the roads," Vohra says.

Dr Gufran Beig, chief project scientist, System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology tells you that they have put up data of the last two years to compare the NOx levels and PM 2.5 in the four SAFAR cities —

PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT AIR POLLUTION KILLS 1.2 MILLION PEOPLE AND MAKES MANY MORE ILL ANNUALLY. THIS REQUIRES SIMILAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE. THIS PANDEMIC HAS ALSO BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE EVIDENCE THAT AIR POLLUTION INCREASES VULNERABILITY TO PANDEMIC BECAUSE POOR AIR HAS ALREADY COMPROMISED LUNGS AND OVERALL HEALTH OF PEOPLE — ANUMITA ROYCHOUDHARY

Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad. "This lockdown has given us chance to validate inventory emission levels. Once we are back to normal, we will be in a position to combat pollution levels. It is unfortunate that COVID-19 has forced this situation on us but it has made it possible for us to correct the earlier findings and provided us an opportunity to set our priorities right for the future," Beig explains. Besides the AQI, another pressing question staring at us is whether this will have an impact on the climate. Beig tells you that when one studies climate, one looks at a long-term impact. He tells you that it is early days but some ongoing international studies suggest that there may be changes. "Some changes are taking place in the air circulation leading to faster recovery of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. But these are early days to reach any concrete conclusions for now," Beig says.

Prarthana Borah, India director, Clean Air Asia, that propagates reduced economic activity as a strategy for reduced air pollution, tells you that what is encouraging is that sectors will now think of reorganising activities to benefit air quality and use new technology like virtual platforms to replace existing ways of work, travel and conducting business which may lead to a positive impact on air quality.

"We don't need something as drastic as the fear of death from a pandemic caused by a virus as a solution to air pollution. We must try to understand that while air quality has improved it has improved due to the complete absence of economic activity be it traffic -- road, rail, air, stopping of construction and industry and any other polluting activity. This can never have a long-term impact as we can't envisage a world of no economic activity. In the last week, PM2.5 was as low as 35 and PM 10 between 55 and 70. This means while it is not as good as the WHO standards, we are capable of having a baseline that meets the national ambient AQ standards. This will guide the process of targets we need to set for ourselves with increased economic activity and how much of this increase matches with achieving the 20-30 per cent decrease in air pollution levels we want to achieve," Borah opines.

She tells you that it is easy to maintain the present AQI levels once things are back to normal. "What we need is to figure out the right way to reduce our negative impact on the environment. For this we need regulations that limit our activities. We need to set targets and then work on restricting or improving economic activity by introducing the right technologies that will continue to restrict air pollution. Once

these quantitative figures are in place it will be easier to work on developmental work that prioritise clean air targets. However, there is also a danger that priorities post COVID-19 will be different and many other pressing issues like air pollution and climate change may take a back seat. We can already see this in the postponement of the 2020 COP Climate talks. The same may be with air as cities will be battling with COVID-19 recovery and it may take some time for them to start talking about air," Borah says.

The lockdown has left its mark on wildlife as well. There are several videos on social media doing the rounds where people have filmed a civet in Kerala, deer in Haridwar, Nilgai roaming the deserted streets of Noida, leopard spotted in Chandigarh and a pod of dolphins spotted along the seashores of Mumbai. There are many who believe that since humans are now confined to their homes, this is Nature's way of claiming what was its territory.

According to Dr Ravi Chellam, CEO, Metastring Foundation & director of Mission Secretariat, National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-being, this is one of way of viewing it.

"It does tell us about the remarkable resilience of Nature to come back if we give it the slimmest of opportunity. It is time that we humans recognise, accept and work with the fact that we are part of Nature and it is the foundation for our existence and development. There is a price to pay for destroying Nature and the cost will always be higher than any projected economic benefit. Even places like Chernobyl which was abandoned after the nuclear disaster became a thriving wildlife habitat. Nature is very resilient and when given an opportunity it would try to re-colonise and make a comeback," Chellam says.

Pawan Sharma, founder of Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare, based out of Mumbai agrees with Chellam and tells you that one can say that is partially true that Nature's way to take back what was rightly its.

"There is need to co-exist with the animals. Till now they co-existed with us, now it is our turn to give back. What we are witnessing that had led to the lockdown is the damage human intervention can do. Nature has its way to balance itself out. We had only read it in books but today we are living it. It is time to slow down. In our quest to develop we are destroying Nature but development and conservation needs to go hand-in-hand. Animals don't understand manmade boundaries. Man has encroached on their habitat and damaged it. Since there is no disturbance now, animals are curious and are out exploring,"

Sharma says.

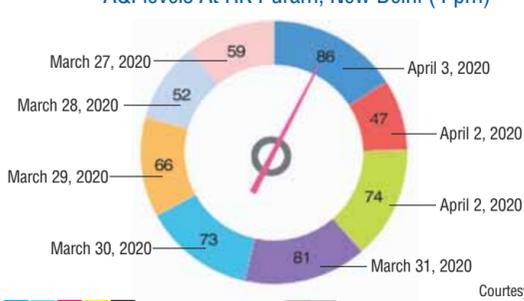
Chellam is quick to point out that reports of wild animals roaming the streets need to be viewed in the right perspective. "Even before the lockdown it was not unusual to see lions, leopards, elephants, gaur, rhino, many species of deer and antelopes including nilgai and black-buck, many other smaller mammals like jackals, mongoose, many reptile species including monitor lizards, different species of snakes, many species of birds including large ones like Sarus cranes, either on or by Indian roads. These sightings were when things were normal. With the lockdown, human presence and disturbance has gone down drastically and hence we are getting to see these animals much more frequently and also more often during day time," Chellam explains. There are several reasons why these animals are in the cities to begin with.

First, many of these animals live around cities and their habitat may be fragmented by the city and hence they would be using the city for passage from one part of their habitat to another which would have been difficult when there was traffic and human presence. It should not be forgotten that it is we humans who have settled in wildlife habitats and in some sense, we are the intruders and not the animals. Second, could be that the city offers resources, primarily food (mostly in the form of garbage and food plants in our gardens and parks), domestic animals including dogs and pigs and water. It is also important to understand that these animals haven't settled in the urban areas. They are only using it for some time.

Chellam sees a way forward. "It is absolutely crucial that humanity learns the right collective lessons from this pandemic. It would be a huge mistake to revert to business as usual once the worst of the pandemic is over or a vaccine is developed. If we continue to develop in ways that destroy Nature and pollute the environment and without compassion for all fellow human beings, such tragedies are only bound to be repeated. We have to recognise that we live in an inter-connected world not just with citizens of other countries but equally if not more importantly with Nature and all species that occur in the wild. We need to completely re-prioritise and invest more in restoration of Nature and functional ecosystems, basic but very essential needs of all people like health, sanitation, adequate nutrition, safe housing and education instead of grandiose infrastructure projects and the military. The re-prioritised development model will enable much greater levels of equity, much more sustainable development and build resilience," he tells you.

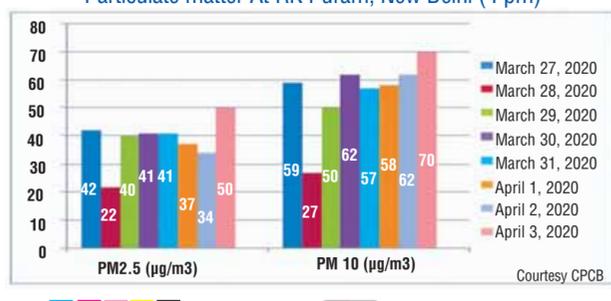
## FACTFILE

AQI levels At RK Puram, New Delhi (4 pm)



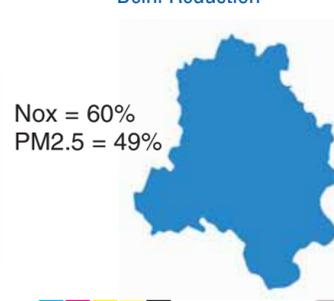
Courtesy CPCB

Particulate matter At RK Puram, New Delhi (4 pm)

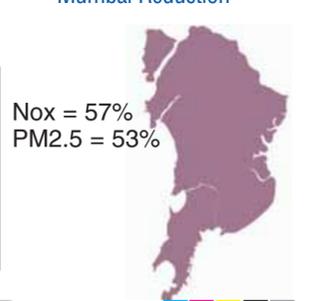


Courtesy CPCB

Delhi Reduction



Mumbai Reduction



Graphics: Satish C. Jakkhola

SHORT READS



**Lockdown: Cops stop 70 migrant workers from going to K'taka**

**PUNE:** As many as 70 migrant construction workers were stopped by the police here from going to Karnataka in a truck amid the lockdown, an official said on Saturday. The workers, currently living in Bibewadi area of the city, were planning to return to their native places in the neighbouring state, he said. "We got a tip-off about it and stopped them from going," a senior official of Bibewadi police station said. A case has been registered against the contractor and the construction workers under IPC section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), he said.

**Liquor shop looted in Delhi amid lockdown**

**NEW DELHI:** Amid the nationwide lockdown, some unidentified persons broke into a wine shop here and decamped with liquor bottles, police said on Saturday. During patrolling on Saturday morning, police found that the shutter of a wine shop at the Roshnara Road in north Delhi was broken. "The shutter of the wine shop had been forcibly pulled up and some liquor bottles and crates were stolen," a senior police officer said. A case under relevant sections of the IPC was registered at the Sabzi Mandi police station, he added.

**Authorities take over 21 hotels to set up isolation wards**

**MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP):** The authorities here have taken over 21 hotels for setting up isolation wards which can be used in an emergency situation due to COVID-19 pandemic, officials said on Saturday. The hotels will be used as isolation wards and doctors, along with para-medical staff, will be deputed in the facilities, said Additional District Magistrate Amit Singh. He said food and other necessary items will be provided to those who are kept in isolation in these hotels.

**Drones help cops nab over 40 violating social distancing rule**

PTI ■ KOCHI

At least 41 people, who ventured out for a morning walk in a posh area here early Saturday morning, were caught on night vision cameras of a drone deployed by the city police to enforce social distancing to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus.

The violators were 39 men and two women, police said. They were held for allegedly violating Section 144 of CrPC clamped in the district prohibiting assembly of more than four people, police said.

They have been charged under IPC Sections 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and Section 4 of The Epidemic Diseases Ordinance 2020 passed by Kerala government last week, the police said.

The rule came into force to unify and consolidate laws relat-



ing to the regulation and prevention of epidemic diseases, they said. Section 4 of the ordinance allows the state government to take special measures and frame regulations to tackle an epidemic disease. All have been released on station bail, police said.

The police headquarters have given drones to several districts including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kochi, Thrissur and

Kannur for carrying out surveillance to enforce social distancing. The drones having night vision can fly 40 minutes continuously at a time. In Kochi, the police started flying the drones at 4.30 am in the areas where the chances for the people to come out violating lockdown announced by the government.

"When we flew it (drone) in the morning we were able to see

**They have been charged under IPC Sections 188, 269 and Section 4 of The Epidemic Diseases Ordinance 2020 passed by Kerala government last week, the police said**

the people moving through the (Panampilly Nagar) walkway. They were warned by the police continuously asking them not to come out. Even after repeated warning, these people were coming out. They were ignorant, then we thought we have to take stringent action (against the violators)," G Poonguzhali, Deputy Commissioner of Kochi City Police, said.

**PM directs officials to ensure sufficient medical equipment**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday chaired a meeting of the various empowered groups set up to respond to the coronavirus threat and directed officials to ensure sufficient availability of all essential medical equipment such as personal protective equipment, masks, gloves and ventilators.

Modi reviewed countrywide preparedness regarding availability of hospitals, proper isolation and quarantine facilities as well as disease surveillance, testing and critical care training, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

At the joint meeting of the empowered groups constituted for planning and ensuring implementation of COVID-19 response, the prime minister also directed the groups and officials concerned to ensure sufficient production, procurement and availability of all essential medical equipment such as PPEs, masks, gloves and ventilators, the PMO said in a series of tweets. The government last Sunday



constituted 11 empowered groups to suggest measures to ramp up healthcare, put the economy back on track and reduce misery of people as quickly as possible post the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

These groups are empowered to identify problem areas and provide effective solutions, delineate policy, formulate plans, strategise operations and take all necessary steps for effective and time-bound implementation of plans, strategies or decisions in their respective areas, a notification issued by Home Secretary

Ajay Kumar Bhalla had said. Out of these 11 empowered groups, nine are headed by secretary-level officers, one by a NITI Aayog member and one by the NITI Aayog CEO.

The groups that were constituted include empowered group on medical equipment and management plan, empowered group on availability of hospitals, empowered group on essential drugs, medical equipment, empowered group on augmenting human resources by MSME and empowered group on facilitating supply chain and logistics management.

**PM's appeal to switch off lights on Sunday could impact grid**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday expressed concern over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for switching off lights for nine minutes on Sunday night, saying it could deeply impact the power grid stability. The former union minister hoped that the government is managing the grid well for the lighting call.

"As somebody who has been associated with the power sector for almost three decades including as minister, the call to go dark for 9 min at 9 pm on the 5th can have deep impact on the grid and its stability. I sincerely hope this is being properly managed," Ramesh said on Twitter.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged people to switch off the lights at their homes and light up lamps, candles or mobile phone torches for nine minutes at 9 pm on Sunday to display the country's "collective resolve" to defeat the coronavirus.



Congress leader Shashi Tharoor also raised similar concerns. He said the prime minister should have thought about this while making the call. "An unprecedented drop in electricity demand at 9 pm Sunday and an immediate surge at 9.09 pm could cause the electrical grid to crash. So Electricity Boards are contemplating load shedding from 8 pm and staggered return to normal after 9.09pm. One more thing the PM didn't think about," Tharoor tweeted.

**PIL in SC seeks full wages for MGNREGA workers**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre and authorities to pay full wages to MGNREGA workers for the entire period of the nationwide lockdown. The 21-day lockdown from March 25 was announced by the government to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed by activists Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan.

It said that over seven crore workers registered under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Scheme be deemed to be on job during the lockdown period like other employees and they be paid full wages.

The plea, filed through lawyer Prashant Bhushan, assailed the direction of the Ministry of Rural Development to state governments that MGNREGA workers may be allowed to work wherever possible during the lockdown. It has sought protection of



**The plea, filed through lawyer Prashant Bhushan, assailed the direction of the Ministry of Rural Development to state governments that MGNREGA workers may be allowed to work wherever possible during the lockdown**

fundamental rights to health and livelihood guaranteed under Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution for over 7.6 crore workers under the employment guarantee scheme.

"By the order dated March 24, issued under... the National Disaster Management Act, and binding on all ministries/instrumentalities of the central government and state governments, the central government has placed the entire country under a 'National Lockdown' with requisite exceptions only for essential services/goods to protect lives/health of all citizens of the country by ensuring social

physical distancing," the plea said.

The guidelines of the Ministry of Rural Development saying that MGNREGA workers may be allowed to work is contrary to the lockdown order and it risked "health/lives of MGNREGA workers as it is not possible to ensure social/physical distancing in the nature of the works performed," it said.

Being largely involved in construction work, workers pass material from one person to another and social distancing is not possible, it said.

"Pertinently, COVID-19 is now present in almost all districts of the country which is a

serious health hazard for these vulnerable citizens particularly because the number of persons seeking work is bound to increase as many persons otherwise employed in other sectors are desperate for wages (including migrants who have returned from various cities/places)," it said.

The plea said asking MGNREGA workers to work is "arbitrary and violative" of their Article 14 (right to equality) rights as other non-essential workers have been allowed to protect their health by staying home and ensuring physical distancing.

"The present petition... prays that Respondents issue uniform guidelines to all states/union territories that for the entire duration of the lockdown at least all active and registered job card holders under

the MGNREGA Act will be deemed to be at work and accordingly make full payment of their wages at the earliest," it said.

Forcing over 12 crore workers to seek work daily during the lockdown when public transport is not available and police have clear directions to apprehend non-essential worker amounted to violation of right to life and livelihood of these vulnerable citizens, it said.

"As coronavirus cases have now spread to large parts of rural India, the arbitrary order exacerbates a public health emergency," the PIL said.

The plea has also sought a direction to authorities to issue "individual temporary job cards within 15 days to all migrants who have returned from the cities to their native villages".



**Odisha govt launches online quiz to engage people**

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha transport department on Saturday introduced an online quiz competition on road safety in an effort to keep people engaged during the ongoing nationwide lockdown and the state-imposed total shutdown in three cities.

The initiative by the State Transport Authority (STA) will continue till the end of the 21-day lockdown and 48-hour shutdown in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Bhadrak.

The names of five winners will be announced every day and they will get Rs 1,000 each, Transport Commissioner Sanjeev Panda said.

"As most of the citizens remain indoors, we are introducing few activities relating to road safety to have a meaningful and enriching experience," Panda said, adding, participants can also get latest updates regarding motor vehicle rules.

He hoped that with enhanced knowledge, citizens will be more responsible on the road and help the society in improving traffic culture. The quiz will feature 20 questions.

The state government has imposed a total shutdown, akin to curfew, in the three cities for 48 hours from 8 pm on Friday during which all essential supplies have been suspended.

**Justice holds meet with HC judges for prompt hearing of urgent matters**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court E-committee Chairperson Justice D Y Chandrachud has held a meeting through video conferencing with high court judges heading such committees to ensure urgent matters are heard promptly and litigants are not required to come to court during the lockdown.

Justice Chandrachud emphasised that prompt measures be adopted "at this time of crisis" and said the use of technology must be institutionalised even after the lockdown is lifted and normalcy returns.

The committee, in its meeting on Friday, also discussed the possibility of live streaming of court proceedings held by video conferencing but based on an assessment of technical issues like availability of bandwidth and dedicated servers, it was felt that the recordings should be hosted on court websites by the next day to ensure that people



have access to the proceedings. The committee also noted that, ideally, judicial officers and advocates should work from their homes but it was left to the high courts to decide to what extent this was feasible.

Justice Chandrachud reviewed the measures initiated by the high courts in the operation of virtual courts and after noting the difficulties faced by some states in e-filing of cases, he proposed a meeting of the chairpersons of the computer committees of the high courts

to discuss the issues. Judges of 23 high courts, heading the computer committees, participated in the meeting.

The chairpersons of computer committees shared their views on steps taken and the challenges faced and agreed with the suggestions of Justice Chandrachud on taking prompt measures and institutionalising the use of technology.

Justice Chandrachud also informed the judges about an e-filing module which is in an advanced stage of development in the Supreme Court and it was agreed that such modules may be used during the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

He suggested the high courts may use the funds utilised so far from Phase II of the e-courts project for meeting immediate needs and assured that demands for funds or software will be promptly processed by the e-committee and submitted to the Department of Justice.

**Cyber agency cautions against fake PM-CARES UPI IDs**

**NEW DELHI:** The national cyber security agency has alerted donors against fake 'UPI IDs' for a special fund launched by PM Narendra Modi to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. In an advisory issued on Saturday, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) said it has "tracked several fake UPI IDs which are similar to the UPI ID used by the 'PM-CARES Fund'. CERT-In is the country's nodal agency to guard cyber space. The advisory identified some of the fake UPI IDs in circulation such as pmcares@pnb, pmcares@hdfcbank, pmcare@yesbank, pmcare@ybl, pmcare@upi, pmcare@sbi and pmcares@cici. "It may be noted that the genuine UPI ID is 'pmcares@sbi' and the registered account name is 'PM CARES,' it said, asking people to verify UPI ID and the registered name before making any donations.

**CNI churches to live-stream special worship sessions**

PTI ■ KOLKATA

With public gatherings banned due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Church of North India (Diocese of Kolkata) has decided to go for live-streaming so that members of the community can join from home the special worship sessions, lined up till Good Friday and Easter.

The CNI has decided on webcasting live-services during the Holy Week, starting this Sunday, a spokesman said on Saturday.

"While meetings, seminars, choir practices, which involves large gatherings, have been cancelled, the mass/prayer sessions have to continue and accordingly we have instructed all parish churches under our order to go for webcasting of the holy events," the spokesman said. The Holy

Week, starts on Sunday (April 5) and ends on next Sunday (April 12), the day of Easter.

Special prayers will be held on April 5, 9, 10 (Good Friday) and 12 (Easter Sunday) and all will be streamed live on YouTube from the Bishops House. The spokesman said services had never been live-streamed in this fashion before the lockdown, as the situation did not warrant so.

"This time we feel the need to make community members feel together," he said. On March 29, in a live streaming appeal to members of the community, Bishop Paritosh Canning of CNI, Kolkata asked everyone to be on guard against the coronavirus, "which has intruded into the territories of our state and country, and expressed firm belief that Jesus Christ will save us all from this pandemic."

**WB govt shelve plan for virtual classrooms**

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A day after announcing one week-long virtual classrooms on DD Bangla for Class 9 to 12 students from April 7, West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee on Saturday said the state has shelved the plan for the time being due to logistical reasons.

Chatterjee told reporters in videoconferencing that while the state had fixed the 4-5 pm time slot on certain subjects for class 9 to 12 students in state-run/aided schools, that timing was not mutually acceptable to both teachers and guardians.

"Even as the Education department had booked the 4-5 pm time slot on DD Bangla for a week from April 7, a section of guardians and teachers have



informed the timing is not okay with them and they are suggesting separate time slots, which cannot be accommodated.

"In such a situation, we have decided not to go ahead with the plan to hold virtual classes from April 7 as had been announced," the minister said.

With the suspension of classes in schools due to coronavirus pandemic since March 16, Chatterjee told reporters on Friday that from April 7, during 4-5 pm, students from class 9 to 12 will sit before their TV sets and switch on the DD Bangla channel where in class-

**Even as the Education department had booked the 4-5 pm time slot on DD Bangla for a week from April 7, a section of guardians and teachers have informed the timing is not okay with them and they are suggesting separate time slots, which cannot be accommodated**

room atmosphere some well-known teachers will give lecture on particular subjects.

"Unfortunately we have to shelve this plan which was aimed for helping the students missing their classes," the minister said on Saturday.

Chatterjee said the other decision to ask students to submit their home activity report during the period of suspension of classes till April 14,

will continue to be in force. Model questions for the activity report can be downloaded from state school education department portal by teachers of respective institution and sent to students via Whatsapp, mail after modification by the concerned teacher if they think so, he said. The questions will be framed as per the curriculum of the first summative exam in every school.

**Shah Rukh Khan offers his office for BMC quarantine**

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Days after Shah Rukh Khan and his wife Gauri Khan announced several initiatives to help the central and state government in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic, the superstar has now opened his office for treating Covid-19 patients. The local municipal body, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC),

took to social media on Saturday to thank Shah Rukh and Gauri for the help.

"We thank @iamsrk & @gaurikhan for offering their 4-storey personal office space to help expand our Quarantine capacity equipped with essentials for quarantined children, women & elderly. Indeed a thoughtful & timely gesture," BMC's official Twitter handle post read. The 54-year-old superstar announced various initiatives to help the country during the crisis. The actor has taken the help of his companies — Kolkata Knight Riders, Red Chillies Entertainment, Meer Foundation and Red Chillies VFX -- to provide support to the central and state governments.



**'Maha may extend lockdown'**

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government may not lift the current lockdown on April 14, when the countrywide restrictions end, if the people of the state do not observe discipline and the number of COVID-19 cases rises, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Saturday. Tope urged people to observe strict discipline so that the number of cases goes down, which will then pave the way for lifting of the lockdown. He, however, said that the lockdown will be lifted in phases whenever it is done, so that "not all the people can be allowed to come on to the streets at one go".

CAPSULE



Hyundai commits support to central, state govts

**NEW DELHI:** Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the CSR arm of Hyundai Motor India, on Saturday said it will contribute relief funds to the central and state governments to fight against Covid-19 pandemic. The foundation said it is also preparing to provide the Indian medical fraternity with much needed protective and patient care equipment. "In these challenging times, our global vision - 'Progress for Humanity', holds us firmly rooted to core values of community service," Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMI) MD and CEO SS Kim said in a statement. The company is committed to support India in this fight against the Covid-19 crisis and it is advancing its CSR initiatives that are aimed at enhancing support and care of society and communities, he added.



FabHotels lays off over 100 employees, to cut up to 20 pc salary

**NEW DELHI:** New Delhi, Apr 4 (PTI) Budget hotel chain FabHotels has laid off over 100 of its employees as a result of its 'resource optimization' exercise. According to an impacted employee, over 100 employees of the company are being laid off mainly from operations, tech, sales and supply acquisition teams. A letter by the company to a sacked employee said "as per the telephonic discussion with your reporting manager a few days back, we are writing to inform you that as a result of our resource optimization exercise, your position will be redundant going forward". Hence, "we would not be able to continue your employment with FabHotels. Your last date of employment with the company shall be March 30, 2020 in line with the contractual notice period," it added.



Flight booking open from April 15: AirAsia

**Mumbai:** Budget carrier AirAsia India on Saturday said bookings for its flights are open from April 15, but it is open to any change in case aviation regulator DGCA issues fresh directives on the issue. Domestic and international commercial flights in the country are suspended till April 14 amid the lockdown to curb spreading of coronavirus infections. Most of the airlines have commenced taking bookings for their flights from April 15 onwards. However, on Friday state-owned Air India said it has stopped bookings till April 30 and is awaiting a decision after April 14, when the nationwide lockdown is scheduled to end.

# US employment plunges amid worsening corona damage

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

As the US economy craters, crippled by coronavirus shut-downs, businesses jettisoned jobs at an alarming rate last month, government data showed Friday, and the situation will get dramatically worse.

US employment plunged by 7,01,000 in March and the jobless rate surged to 4.4 per cent, the Labor Department reported.

Yet the department acknowledged its statistics could not yet capture the full extent of the damage, and its own weekly data on first-time claims for jobless benefits showed 10 million people lost their jobs in the last two weeks of the month.

With COVID-19 cases topping a million worldwide, a quarter of which are in the United States where the death toll is over 6,000, cities have turned into ghost towns and officials are struggling to find ways to ease the ruinous damage to the economy and individuals.

"The drop in payrolls in March was unprecedented for the start of a recession and will get more than twenty times worse in April," said Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton.

"We will easily lose more than twice as many jobs as we



lost during the Great Recession during the first two months of this crisis alone," she said in an analysis.

The monthly report reveals the worst monthly job loss since the depths of the global financial crisis in March 2009 and the biggest single-month jump in the jobless rate in more than 45 years.

However, the Labor Department said it "cannot precisely quantify the effects of the pandemic on the job market in March," and errors in counting those who lost jobs mean the unemployment rate was likely a full point higher.

Economists predict the figures in April will be devastating, with a double digit unemployment rate and as many as 20 million jobs destroyed.

The leisure and hospitality sector -- among the first to feel the impact of the travel restrictions imposed to contain the virus -- lost 459,000 jobs last month, the report said.

But the harm was widespread and notable losses also were recorded in healthcare, retail and business services.

The data were released on the same day as the government began a new program to encourage businesses to retain workers and rehire those who were laid off.

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the government needs to do much more to soften the blow, and "extend and expand" on the \$2.2 trillion rescue package known as CARES passed just one week ago.

"It is imperative that we go bigger and further assisting

## US employment plunged by 7,01,000 in March and the jobless rate surged to 4.4 per cent, the Labor Department reported

small business, to go longer in unemployment benefits ... and to give families additional direct payments," Pelosi said in a statement, calling for a relentless bipartisan effort to pass a second stimulus bill.

"This is terrible but unfortunately it's nothing compared to what's coming in April," said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics, who predicts a jobless rate of 12 to 14 percent next month.

The two surveys that make up the closely-watched monthly government jobs report are taken during the week that includes the 12th of the month, which in March was before the most restrictive of the lockdowns were imposed that closed businesses nationwide.

That means the "surveys predated many coronavirus-related business and school closures," the report said.

## Direct jute mills to resume ops, says Centre

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Centre urged the West Bengal government on Friday to direct jute mills in the state, which are shut due to the nationwide lockdown, to resume operations in order to prevent any shortage in supply of packaging materials.

In a letter, the Union Ministry of Consumers Affairs, Food and Public Distribution told the state government that manufacturing units of packaging materials are exempted from the purview of the lockdown. "Procurement operations of foodgrain, for which availability of packaging material like jute bags are immensely required by major procuring states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh where procurement operations will begin from April and peak season is for only two-three weeks only," the letter said.



## Stocks fall on Wall Street, heading for another weekly loss

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Stocks are falling in afternoon trading Friday, putting Wall Street on track for its third losing week in the last four.

The losses came after the government said U.S. employers cut 701,000 more jobs than they added last month, the first drop in nearly a decade. Many businesses have screamed to a halt amid attempts to slow the spread of the coronavirus outbreak, and economists say the dire data is only going to get worse.

U.S. stock indexes held steady at first, then headed lower after the price of oil lost some of its momentum. That undercut a rally for energy stocks, which had been helping to keep the overall market's losses in check. Losses accelerated after New York's governor announced the biggest daily

jump yet for deaths caused by the coronavirus in the country's hardest-hit state.

"The worry is, there's just too much uncertainty," said Mark Hackett, chief of investment research for Nationwide.

The S&P 500 was down 2.5% as of 2:05 p.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 526 points, or 2.5%, to 20,886, and the Nasdaq was down 2.6%.

Such losses would be striking during a normal market, but since the market began selling off in mid-February, the average down day for stocks has brought an even steeper loss of 3.8%.

"It shows that markets have already factored in dismal economic numbers for at least the next few weeks," said Peter Essele, head of portfolio management for Commonwealth Financial Network.



## State power utilities gear up for blackout

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State load dispatch centres and transmission utilities are gearing up to deal with the possibility of any adverse impact on the electricity grid on Sunday following the Prime Minister's blackout appeal.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged people to switch off the lights at their homes and light up lamps, candles or mobile phone torches for nine minutes at 9 pm on Sunday to display the country's "collective resolve" to defeat the coronavirus.

There have been concerns

that the blackout may impact the electricity grid due sudden drop in peak power demand, which was already down 25 per cent at 125.81 GW on April 2 compared to a year ago.

However, a power ministry spokesperson had on Friday said there would be no such impact on grid stability as everything has been taken care of. Meanwhile, the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) of Uttar Pradesh has written to state utilities to take a series of steps to deal with the possibility of a sudden drop in power demand.

## Raj's revenue collection likely to be hit

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Revenue collection in Rajasthan is likely to be hit due to economic slowdown following the lockdown - imposed in the state from March 22 to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Collection of commercial tax, excise and other taxes normally take place in the last week of March, which came under the lockdown.

"Substantial decline in revenue collection is expected due to the lockdown, which was important to be imposed to contain spread of coronavirus. It is estimated that losses in revenue collection due to corona impact could be around Rs 3,500 crore till March end," Chief Secretary DB Gupta told PTI.

However, he said that figures will be finalised by next week.

## TAFE expands free tractor rental scheme to Raj, UP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Farm equipment major TAFE is expanding its free tractor rental scheme to Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to help small and marginal farmers during the coronavirus pandemic.

The company, which on Thursday announced the scheme to help small farmers in Tamil Nadu, said it will be offering a total of around 14,000 tractors and 62,000 implements rent-free in the two states for 90 days.

TAFE Chairman and Managing Director Mallika Srinivasan told PTI that the step has been taken to mitigate the impact of coronavirus pandemic on small and marginal farmers and the company would bear the cost of renting the tractors and implements.

"We had a good monsoon and the water level was good. The prospects for the Rabi crop were looking very good.



At that time, the unfortunate thing has come and hit us.

"So, from our side, what we are trying to do is a measure to support at this very crucial juncture, where they (farmers) have to have a good income from their current crop and be doing timely preparation for the next crop," she said.

From Monday, TAFE will start in a small way in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, she said.

Sharing the scale of the initiative in the two states, she

said in Rajasthan the company would have about 11,000 and 50,000 implements covering over 20 key districts, and in Uttar Pradesh about 3,000 tractors and 12,000 implements in over 20 districts.

The scheme will be for a period of 90 days starting from April 6, Srinivasan said.

Already in Tamil Nadu the company is offering 4,400 tractors and over 15,000 implements across 30 districts rent-free for 90 days, starting from April 1.

## Parsvnath not to charge interest

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Parsvnath Developers on Saturday said it will not charge interest on outstanding instalments of all its existing customers for three months, starting March 15, to help customers amid coronavirus outbreak.

Real estate developers levies interest as a penalty, if property buyers fail to pay their instalments before the due date. The interest rate charged by builders are as high as 18 per cent.

The company has decided to "provide an interest holiday on outstanding amounts to all its customers/home buyers for three months from 1 March 15 till June 15," Parsvnath said in a statement.



## MTal urges govt to maintain liquidity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Medical Technology Association of India (MTal) has urged the government to ensure maintaining of liquidity in the healthcare sector in light of COVID-19 outbreak in the country. The government must, "consider deferring statutory taxes, fees, dues and compliances for a period of 5-6 months and direct the financial institutions, so that liquidity is maintained throughout the value chain, without creating any debilitating burden on any stakeholder," MTal said in a statement.

## Putin says Russia ready to cooperate on cutting oil production

PTI ■ MOSCOW

Russia is ready to cooperate with Saudi Arabia and the United States to cut oil production, President Vladimir Putin said Friday.

Putin said Russia was willing to make agreements within the framework of the OPEC+ group and that "we are ready for cooperation with the United States of America on this issue," according to a statement published by the Kremlin.

"I believe that it is necessary to combine efforts in order to balance the market and reduce



production." Oil prices have tumbled in recent weeks in the face of a drop in demand and global economic uncertainty over the new coronavirus pandemic.

Last month, OPEC and its allies failed to reach a deal on oil production cuts after OPEC+ leader Moscow refused to tighten supply to counter the effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

Speaking with Energy Minister Alexander Novak via conference call, Putin said Russia was prepared to discuss "a reduction in the volume of about 10 million barrels a day, a little less, maybe a little more." He said Russia was in close contact with partners Saudi Arabia and that he recently spoke to US President Donald Trump.

## Central Warehousing Corp contributes Rs 5.65 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) has contributed Rs 5.65 crore to the PM-CARES Fund for tackling the coronavirus outbreak. CWC, a public sector unit (PSU) under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, has "contributed Rs 565.42 lakh (Rs 500 lakhs from CSR fund and employees' voluntary contribution of one day salary, Rs 65.42 lakhs) to the PM CARES Fund", it said in a statement.

## Nestle announces Rs 15 cr grant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG major Nestle India on Saturday announced an initial grant of Rs 15 crore for providing food and essential groceries to the needy amid the coronavirus lockdown.

It will also support purchase of medical equipment for hospitals to fight against the Covid-19 outbreak, Nestle India said in a statement.

The company has already started with a contribution of Rs 1 crore to Narayana Hrudayalaya Foundation for purchase of ventilators for Delhi/NCR.

"We commit to initially, a



sum of Rs 15 crores towards feeding programs for less privileged sections of society through participation with leading and credible NGOs engaged in this along with distribution of essential groceries to the needy," Nestle India said.

## I-T dept allows more time to file TDS exemption

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has allowed individuals to submit Form 15G and 15H for the current fiscal after June 30 for claiming exemption from TDS on interest income to mitigate the hardship of people amid the Covid-19 crisis.

Forms 15G and 15H are filed by persons whose incomes are below the taxable threshold, to seek exemption from TDS on interest income.

These forms are usually submitted by taxpayers to banks and financial institutions in April.

In an order, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said the 15G and 15H forms submitted last fiscal will remain



## Forms 15G and 15H are filed by persons whose incomes are below the taxable threshold, to seek exemption from TDS on interest income

CBDT said: "In case if a person has submitted valid Forms 15G and 15H to the banks or other institutions for FY 2019-20, then these form 15G and 15H will be valid up to June 30, 2020, for FY 2020-21 also."

While Form 15H is submitted by senior citizens, 15G can be filed by an individual whose taxable income is less than the exemption threshold.

In a separate order, the CBDT said the assessee who have filed application for issue

of certificate for lower rate/nil deduction/collection of Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) or Tax Collected at Source (TCS) in 2019-20 fiscal to the I-T department will now have to intimate the Assessing Officer about the pendency of issue such a certificate via e-mail.

"The Assessing Officer shall dispose off the applications by April 27, 2020, and communicate to the applicant regarding the issuance/rejection of certificate vide email," the CBDT said.

## D'Souza takes charge as MD & CEO of Tata Consumer Products

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

FCMG firm Tata Consumer Products on Saturday said Sunil D'Souza has assumed charge as managing director and chief executive officer of the company.

Tata Consumer Products was formed in February 2020 following the merger of Tata Global Beverages (TGBL) and Tata Chemicals Limited (TCL) to spearhead the FMCG ambitions of the USD 113-billion Tata group.

D'Souza had joined TGBL in December last year.

"Tata Consumer Products has an impressive portfolio of



brands and there are few exciting additions which we have planned. We will focus on delivering on the synergies to develop an unparalleled consumer retail platform cutting across food and beverages,

D'Souza said. "The present situation in the country and across the world is unprecedented but I am confident that we will emerge stronger from these challenging times," he added.

D'Souza, who holds a post-graduate diploma in management from IIM Calcutta, was leading Whirlpool India for four years prior to this.

He had a 15-year stint in PepsiCo, where he worked in several leadership roles.

D'Souza started his career at Brooke Bond Lipton India in 1993 and has 26 years of experience in the consumer goods industry.

# 'Unruly' Tablighis be killed with bullets: MNS

PTI ■ MUMBAI

MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Saturday said that the Tablighi Jamaat members who reportedly misbehaved with women medical staff during quarantine and are engaged in "some conspiracy" be killed by firing bullets. He also questioned the need for giving medical treatment to such people.

The MNS chief demanded that videos of such people being thrashed be made viral on social media, to instill sense of "trust" among people.

He also said the people would have felt satisfied had Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about the current scenario and where the country is heading at in its fight against coronavirus than the latter just speaking about lighting up lamps and candles. In his message to the nation, Modi on Friday asked people to switch off lights in their homes and light lamps, candles and switch on mobile phone flash lights at 9 PM on April 5 to display collective spirit to defeat the coronavirus.

Speaking about harassment being faced by police and medical personnel, Thackeray said, "We can see the police being attacked and abused when they try to control the situation".

"The meeting (of Tablighis had taken place) at Markaz in



Delhi. Such people be killed by firing bullets at them. Why give them treatment? A separate section be created and their treatment be stopped," Thackeray told reporters here.

"If they think that their religion is bigger than the country and want to engage in some conspiracy...they are spitting at people, on vegetables, roaming nude before the nurses," he said.

Thackeray further said that videos of such people being thrashed should become viral, which will instill a feeling of trust among people. "The prime minister should have talked about it (in his video message on Friday)," he said.

Reports have emerged that Tablighi Jamaat members quarantined at a hospital in Ghaziabad misbehaved with the nurses, making lewd remarks and dropping their pants, pro-

**"If they think that their religion is bigger than the country and want to engage in some conspiracy...they are spitting at people, on vegetables, roaming nude before the nurses," he said**

voking the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to invoke the stringent National Security Act against them. They are among the thousands who had attended a religious congregation at the organisation's New Delhi headquarter, now being seen as a coronavirus hotspot.

## COVID-19 cases rise to 62 in Haryana

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The number of COVID-19 cases climbed by 18 to 62 in Haryana on Saturday, with Palwal district reporting the highest jump, the state health department said. The total includes 14 patients who have been discharged. There are 48 active cases in the state, it said.

According to officials, Tablighi Jamaat members from other parts of the country, who entered the state before the lockdown, accounted for majority of the 18 fresh cases reported.

They, however, did not give the exact number. The health department bulletin said Palwal has the maximum number of active cases in the state at 16, including 13 reported on Saturday.

## Give more financial aid to states: Cong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday appealed to the central government to empower states in their fight against coronavirus by providing them with more finances and resources.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said the Centre should also take state governments on board while evolving strategies to fight the deadly disease. "We have talked about cooperative federalism. Time has come that we should walk the talk. The Centre should take the states together with it, empower them by providing them with more finances and resources. It is only when the states are capable and when the

Centre has decentralised, that we can win this war against coronavirus," she said. Addressing a press conference via video, she said states are at the forefront of the fight against coronavirus, while implementing and executing various policies on the ground.

The Congress leader said the Centre should provide Rs one lakh crore to states to fight COVID-19, besides releasing pending GST dues of Rs 42,000 crore to state governments with immediate effect. "The states at this time are facing the biggest financial crisis in fighting the virus. The central government should provide a Rs 1 lakh crore package for states to fight COVID-19," she told reporters.



## Healthy baby born to COVID-19 positive woman at AIIMS; first such case in Delhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A coronavirus positive woman has given birth to a baby at the AIIMS here, official sources said, adding that the baby is "healthy and doing well as of now".

Dr Neerja Bhatla, professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at AIIMS who led the team which carried out the delivery said the baby boy was born on Friday evening, a week early, through C-section and is doing fine so far.

When asked if the baby's sample would be tested for COVID-19, she said, "We are going to monitor his condition and look out for symptoms. So far the baby is doing fine."

According to doctors, this is the first baby to be born to a coronavirus infected woman in Delhi. The baby's mother



who was nine-months pregnant had tested positive on Thursday after her husband, a senior resident doctor working in the department of physiology at AIIMS, was found to be infected with the virus. The doctor's brother has also tested positive

for the respiratory infection. The baby is with his mother since he will need breastfeeding. So far, there is no proof that suggests that the virus can be transmitted through breastfeeding, another doctor said.

**The baby's mother who was nine-months pregnant had tested positive on Thursday after her husband, a senior resident doctor working in the department of physiology at AIIMS, was found to be infected with the virus**

The doctor said the mother is also fine and though she has tested positive for COVID-19, she is asymptomatic at present. The AIIMS has already prepared a protocol dedicated to the care of COVID-19 infected pregnant women patients.

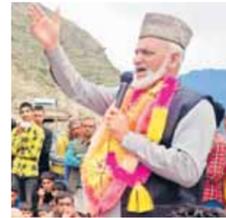
## J&K Congress leader welcomes amended domicile rules

PTI ■ JAMMU

A senior Congress leader from Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday welcomed the amendment in the J&K recruitment rules to reserve all government jobs in the Union Territory for the domiciles.

J&K Congress vice-president and former minister G M Saroori, however, urged the central government to fulfill the "cherished demand" of the local residents for restoration of statehood. The Centre has amended its two-day-old order and reserved all jobs in Jammu and Kashmir for the domiciles of the Union territory — people who have stayed there for at least 15 years.

On Wednesday, while laying down the rules for domiciles, the government had reserved jobs only up to group 4, which is equivalent to the rank of constable in police parlance and multi-



tasking staff in government offices.

However, following angry reactions from local political parties, an amended gazette notification — titled the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order-2020 — was put out on Friday night, reserving jobs for the domiciles of the UT, which was formed in October last year after the Centre withdrew the special status of the erstwhile state

and announced its bifurcation.

Welcoming the amendment, Saroori congratulated the people of Jammu and Kashmir for remaining united and "forcing the centre to amend the order for the better future of Jammu and Kashmir". "The backlash from everyone irrespective of caste, colour, creed, region and religion forced the BJP government to amend the order within 24 hours..." he said.

Besides, Saroori demanded constitutional guarantees over land rights for the people of the erstwhile state.

Without identifying anyone, he said some elements are trying to divide the society and asked people to remain vigilant against them. The former minister urged the Central government to fulfill the cherished demand of the local residents for restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

### FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



The USNS Comfort passes the Statue of Liberty as it enters New York Harbor in New York City, March 30, 2020. The floating hospital will take up to 1,000 non-coronavirus patients, to take the pressure off civilian hospitals.

- Photo: Reuters

## Govt issues advisory asking people to wear 'homemade face covers'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As India witnesses a spike in coronavirus cases, the central government on Saturday issued an advisory asking people to wear "homemade face covers", particularly when they step out of their houses in order to curb the spread of COVID-19.

In the 'Advisory on the use of Homemade Protective Cover for Face and Mouth', the government said the use of such masks will help in protecting the community at large, and that certain countries have claimed benefits of homemade face masks for the general public.

The number of COVID-19 cases in the country rose to 2,902 while the death toll increased to 68 on Saturday. In the US, President Donald Trump has asked all citizens to voluntarily use non-medical masks as an additional public health measure to fight the deadly coronavirus while keeping medical-grade masks available for health workers.

The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that Americans wear basic cloth or fabric masks that can be either purchased online or simply made at home.



**The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that Americans wear basic cloth or fabric masks that can be either purchased online or simply made at home**

The Indian government's advisory underlined that usage of homemade masks certainly will help in maintaining overall hygiene, while cautioning that "this face cover is not recommended for either health workers or those working with or in contact with COVID 19 patients or are patients themselves as these categories of people are required to wear specified protective gear".

"It is suggested that people who are not suffering from medical conditions or having breathing difficulties may use the handmade reusable face cover, particularly when they step out of their house. This will help in protecting the community at large," it said. The advisory also has a

## Using 'red dot' signal, women escape domestic violence

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Social entrepreneur Iti Rawat recently received an email with a woman's picture with a red dot on her palm and a message "ma'am, I need your help".

The woman was indicating that she was being subjected to domestic abuse, a crime which saw a sudden spike ever since the lockdown was imposed in India in view of the coronavirus outbreak that has claimed at least 68 lives and infected over 2,900 so far.

The restricted movement due to the lockdown has specially hit the victims of domestic violence who suddenly found themselves trapped in their homes with their abusers.

Several women are either unable or too afraid to call the police to get help to move out.

To help such women reach out, WEFT (Women Entrepreneurs For Transformation) Foundation, a not for profit body working for women's empowerment, launched a new initiative called 'red dot' under which citizens can identify a domestic violence victim by seeing a red dot on her palm and inform NGOs or authorities.

### SHORT READS



#### COVID-19: Over 100 labourers housed in Amravati shelter

AMRAVATI: The district administration here came to the rescue of over 100 migrant labourers and travellers during the COVID-19 lockdown by housing them in a shelter home in Nimhona in Maharashtra's Amravati district. The state has witnessed a mass exodus of migrant workforce amid the lockdown, with many labourers adopting any means possible to get to their hometowns. As many as 144 migrant labourers and travellers, who were stranded during the lockdown, were put up at a hostel belonging to the social justice department in Nimhona, district information officer (DIO) Gajanan Koturvar said. Arrangements at the shelter were made in keeping with the norms of social distancing, he said, adding that masks, drinking water, soaps, mosquito coils etc, were provided by the authorities.

#### 'No final decision on resumption of services yet'

NEW DELHI: Railways on Saturday said no final decision has been taken yet on restoration of train services and that a call on it would be taken in a few days. The statement comes amidst railway zones preparing action plans to resume services from April 15 after passenger trains remained suspended for 21 days during the lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. "Train services will have to be resumed only on specific approval of each train from Railway Board. Suggestions for phase wise planning should be given to Railway Board," an official said Saturday. This decision was taken in a video conference meeting of Railway Minister Piyush Goyal with the Chairman, Railway Board on Friday, officials said. Trains, however, will begin operations only after receiving a green signal from the government which had formed a GoM on the issue.

#### Guj: Tally of COVID-19 patients now 105, death toll reaches 10

AHMEDABAD: With 10 more persons testing coronavirus positive in Gujarat on Saturday, the number of such patients in the state rose to 105, while the death toll reached 10 as one more person succumbed to the infection, officials said. Four more COVID-19 patients were discharged from hospitals after recovery, one of them in Vadodara and three others in Gandhinagar, including an 80-year-old woman who also suffered from diabetes and other diseases, Principal Secretary (Health), Jayanti Ravi, said. With this, 14 patients have been discharged in the state so far, she said. "Ten more cases, five from Ahmedabad, two each from Bhavnagar and Gandhinagar, and one from Patan, took the total of COVID-19 patients in the state to 105," Ravi said. While nine of them are cases of local transmission, one patient from Patan has a travel history to Mumbai. This is the first case in Patan district. With the death of a 67-year-old woman at Ahmedabad hospital, the number of such deaths in the state has gone up to 10 so far, she said.

## Coronavirus: Doc stays at the door during rare visit home

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

His last meeting with the family was just a few minutes long -- the time it takes to have a cup of tea. And this was sipped outside the front door.

Dr Gurpal Kataria is posted at Punjab government hospital in Nawanshahr, a coronavirus hotspot. The frontline doctor and his team are taking care of the 18 infected patients admitted at the isolation ward there.

The doctor has little time now to visit his family in Jalandhar, 60 km away. He keeps in touch over the phone but the last, brief visit was two weeks back.

"I did not enter the home as a precautionary measure, just saw them and then returned on



duty," he says. Kataria's wife is a dentist at the Hoshiarpur civil hospital. "My daughter, who has given the class 10 exam, always tells me to take care. She also feels proud that her parents are

serving people," he says. Nawanshahr has reported 19 coronavirus cases so far, the highest number from any district in Punjab where the count was 53 on Saturday morning. A 70-year-old patient has

**"My daughter, who has given the class 10 exam, always tells me to take care. She also feels proud that her parents are serving people," he says**

died in Nawanshahr. Eighteen others, including a two-and-a-half-year-old child and three women, are in the isolation ward of the civil hospital, waiting for the day their tests results show negative.

Kataria says a major concern is the patients' morale. They often ask doctors about the coronavirus count, worrying how many people have died each day.

"For us this is like a place of worship, where we get a sense

of satisfaction when we see happiness on the faces of our patients," says the 54-year-old doctor.

"We counsel our patients on a regular basis and tell them there is no need to be scared and they will be fine. We try to keep them in positive frame of mind and keep their morale high," Kataria says. "We do not let them feel that they are stuck here."

"When they go back from here, they will certainly

remember us," he says.

He says all arrangements are in place at the government hospital to deal with any coronavirus eventuality. Medical teams are on standby, in case there is a spike.

Kataria's own team -- which includes a microbiologist, a rural medical officer, a pharmacist and a lab technician -- stays in houses within the hospital complex.

"I and my team are available round the clock here," he tells PTI over the phone.

Kataria got his MD degree from the Amritsar government medical college. His experience at the time of swine flu outbreak in 2009 has helped him in dealing with the coronavirus cases, he says.

## Thane IMA seeks insurance cover for pvt doctors

PTI ■ THANE

Private medical professionals in Maharashtra's Thane city have sought insurance cover from the state government in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

In a memorandum to the state Health Minister Rajesh Tope, the Thane Chapter of the Indian Medical Association demanded insurance cover for health care professionals in the private sector similar to the ones provided by the Centre, Haryana and Delhi governments.

Most hospitals in Thane city were dealing with emergency and routine cases and a

Thane Rapid Action Corona Team was also formed, IMA's Thane chapter President Dr Thinkar Desai said in the memorandum.

Nearly private 50 doctors were helping the Thane Municipal Corporation's medical team, he said, adding that the IMA and the civic body had set up a helpline where 60 doctors were available for consultation during the pandemic.

Apart from seeking insurance cover for private practitioners, Dr Desai also demanded additional protection gear, including N95 masks, PPE kits and sanitisers for health workers.



IN DIFFICULT TIMES, WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO QUIT BELIEVING; WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO QUIT GROWING — JOEL OSTEEN



**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**



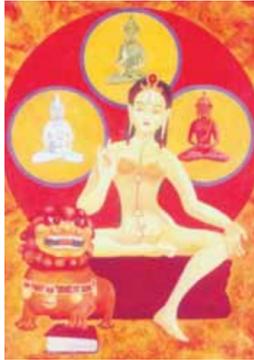
MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week will be very hectic for you. You need to control your aggression. Getting physically violent may hurt your image. You will be highly perceptive and intuitive. You need to control your emotions and ambitions. Avoid any kind of arguments with the people around you. Since it is work from home for most of you, a feeling of stagnation, dissatisfaction may take a toll on you. If you remain focused enough then there is a good chance of realising your potentials and opportunities coming your way. On the personal front, things are a little difficult. You may face accusations and your partner may be demanding. Singles may set their heart on someone who is unavailable to reciprocate their love. Time to clear away all illusions.

**Lucky number 1**  
**Lucky colour** Indigo  
**Lucky day** Friday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Your health looks promising this week. This is a great time to practice new health care approach. Exercise, eat well, and make sure that you get enough sleep to keep well. Fitness is on top of your mind. You may come across valuable health information on the internet or indulge in a discussion with your friends. Work from home may put tremendous work pressure and leave you exhausted. In such a case, don't hesitate to seek help or delegate your workload. Leaders should know how to get work done efficiently. On the love front, you will enjoy unconditional love and affection this week. News of a pregnancy will bring happiness and fulfillment in a marital relationship. You will feel emotionally attached and closer to your partner.

**Lucky number 16**  
**Lucky colour** White  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

Your determination and will power will help you tackle any health challenges. You need to be disciplined this week. Avoid spicy foods. Follow your routine exercises, and a planned diet to stay healthy during this pandemic. Besides, ensure timely medical care to tackle existing health issues. Your focus is your strength in your career as well. This week is rewarding in terms of your profession. Those in partnership business will work for selfless motives. You will lead from the front and win many followers. Those who are in a job will accomplish an important project that will mark a stepping stone in their career. On the relationship front, you will feel blessed and will share cherished moments with your partner.

**Lucky number 9**  
**Lucky colour** Red  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week most of your time is consumed by your passion for creative pursuits or hobbies. There is a sense of satisfaction, and a positive environment that surrounds you and you will enjoy the bliss of good health. You are seeking pleasure in life's little things and appreciating whatever comes to you. On the work front, you will get wakeup calls to change yourself for the better. During your stay at home, you have the time to realise the area for change and get over the confusion. If you stress over small troubles then everything will get tangled. It's time you start taking things as they come. A new love interest is on the horizon. An experience will bring a new passion to your life. Existing relations will also blossom.

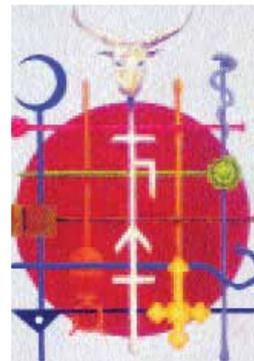
**Lucky number 11**  
**Lucky colour** Pastel Blue  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

You will radiate with a healthy aura and reflect a smart persona this week. You are active and are constantly attempting to make things happen. This week you will utilise your skills to create a world you want. Your skill in smooth-talking and adaptability to any situation is working in your favour. Professionally, you feel stagnated. This may irritate you and make you an under-confident person. Don't worry, this is a temporary feeling. Your creative and logical thinking will sail you through a rough time. You need to realise your potentials and others will believe in you. On the personal front, this is an entertaining and rewarding week. You are spending quality time with your loved ones. This week has in store many good things for you. Stay blessed and safe.

**Lucky number 12**  
**Lucky colour** Yellow  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week you will be generous and kind. Your concern and care for others will be appreciated. Overall health remains good for you. You are likely to spend some time looking after your ailing parents or a friend. You are a spiritual person and are most likely to invest time in meditation, Yoga and Pranayam and other practices. You will feel in tune with your body, mind and soul. Professionally, this is a good period. Old associations will be helpful. Do not waste your time in leisure. Ensure there are no pending tasks. On the personal front, a happy and prosperous family life will bring bliss. Your partner will understand your dilemma and provide support if needed. Singles, use this time to reflect on what you need from a relationship.

**Lucky number 17**  
**Lucky colour** Silver  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week you have that kind of ability to perform right action at any given moment. You will embark on a new path. By being in tune with the spiritual environment, as well as those around you, you will not make any error in judgment. You are precise, and therefore, appear to perform tasks efficiently. Some of you are taking your work lightly. This may cause a serious problem in your career. The world has not come to an end, so don't ignore your inefficiency and focus on your work. Some of you are experiencing a void. This is the time when you can use some quiet time to decide whether you want to continue the job or take a break. This is a very good week for relationships. Warmth and affection with the near and dear ones is on the cards.

**Lucky number 20**  
**Lucky colour** Golden  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You need to keep a close check on your health this week. Stress and anxiety may take a toll on your health. Ensure that you are following a proper diet, exercise, and sleep routine. Keep a positive attitude. With people at home, you may need some time alone. You will find depth and wisdom in solitude, and in listening to your inner voice. On the work front, you have an excellent energy to complete pending tasks. You will focus your time towards work rather than killing it in unnecessary leisure activities. Financially you will feel secure. Do not invest in any project right now. This is not a good time to put in your money. The week is extremely good in terms of a relationship. Trust and faith will be generated and you will be committed.

**Lucky number 7**  
**Lucky colour** Brown  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

You are sentimental and emotional this week. Small things may cause worry. Ignore rumours and follow the relevant source for news. Any tension can be a cause of ill health. You will suffer mood swings. Talk to someone trustworthy and let out your frustration. Follow meditation and other Yogic practices that will keep you balanced. Career-wise, whether it is your energy, time or money investment, you have worked with full dedication and are now waiting for the dividends. Stay positive as good things are on their way. This is the time to relax. Relationships are smooth and easy-going. You will enjoy mutual understanding among the family members. Love is in the air. Good news awaits married couples.

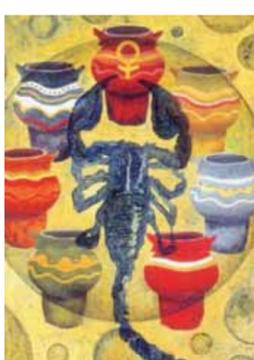
**Lucky number 13**  
**Lucky colour** Rose Gold  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

The week will bring new energy, stamina with good health. You are likely to put your all your energy in creative pursuits. This week, you will put forth your best. You may never know what your creation will bring out at this time. Quality time with family and children is indicated. You will connect with old acquaintances this week. This will prove beneficial for your career. Old connections and associations will bring a smile on your face. Stay alert as an opportunity may come your way. Don't lose this chance because it will be difficult to regain it. This week relationships may be troubling and are likely to bother you to a great extent. You may end up hurting the feelings of your near and dear ones.

**Lucky number 10**  
**Lucky colour** Off-white  
**Lucky day** Monday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

You are filled with a new zest for life. You will feel healthy and experience a change in perspective. Your negative thoughts will be replaced with optimism. You will spend time in analysing your problems and learn the importance of solving them with conscientious thinking. You will feel relaxed in terms of your professional life. Praise from a senior will make you confident, secure and well-established. You are a motivator and will be an inspiration to your colleagues. Those having their own business, your ideas and views are being respected and followed. On the personal front, your dynamic personality will ooze charm and leave an impression on the others. Romance is in the air. Your appreciation and sweet words for your spouse will rejuvenate your relationship.

**Lucky number 3**  
**Lucky colour** Peach  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

You are sensitive to diseases this week, especially water-borne diseases. Keep yourself safe from any kind of infection. Coming in contact with a diseased person could prove harmful for you. Avoid alcohol or unsafe water. Those who are feeling physically low should take timely action. At this time, it is not advisable to ignore your health. You should drink plenty of water, juices to avoid dehydration. On the career front, you will feel indecisive and under-confident as a person. This is all an illusion. Be aware of any misdoings that will be revealed, eventually. You will feel optimistic, upbeat, and hopeful about your relationships. Those in a committed relationship will take it to newer heights. This week you will have fun and be positive and committed.

**Lucky number 1**  
**Lucky colour** Golden  
**Lucky day** Tuesday

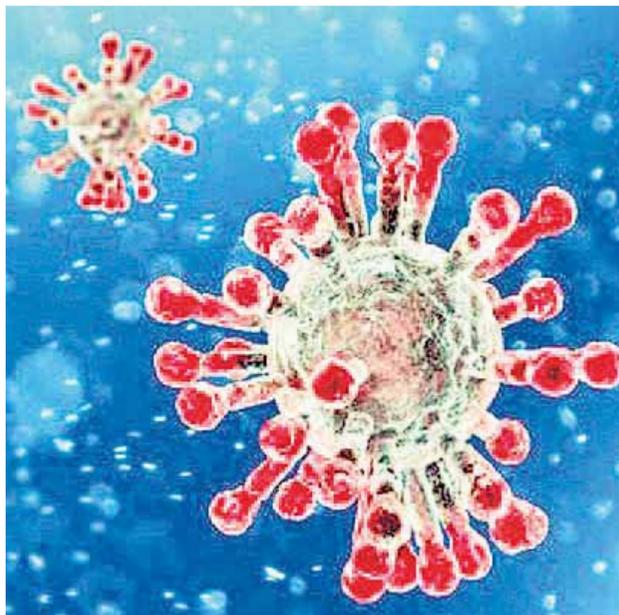
Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



# Be ready to combat evil forces

The first calling of the present pandemic is not to panic. Should you panic, you may lose your sense of reasons and alert, which may not let you carry on your fight prudently in all strength. Let us brave the situation by exercising all the care and caution as suggested by the experts. We have braved many such pandemic in the past. Even this one will pass. Rest assured, the situation may begin to ease out soon. In the cosmic game plan, global health situation is figured out through a look at progressive movement of the Sun. That is about to reach its zenith on April 14th. Till then, watch your health carefully and remain live to our collective obligations as well. Situation may begin to gradually ease out thereafter. Once the Sun moves considerably beyond the Rahu-Ketu axis by June end, the situation may expectedly be in control. Even otherwise, if we ever lose our alertness and become complacent, we could be taken for a ride. Only a few days back, Chaitra navaratra got over, when the devout would have offered prayers to Mother Goddess Durga, believed to be repository of Shakti. Mind it, it is a period of major weather change

in India when one needs to rejuvenate oneself and be well geared up to face the challenges during the emerging season. We maintain austerity and regulate our food regime to tone up our digestive system, vital to our overall health condition. Regular prayers help clear off the clutters of mind, regain confidence, and strengthen vital forces playing within. It may be pertinent to note here that all ancient puranic stories necessarily discuss terror — fight between devtas (high born) and rakshas (demon), in which, the latter always have the first laugh. Why? Perhaps, the devtas would have been complacent, not been alert against impending danger from unseemly forces, and forgotten their sense of collective obligations. Hence their fall. But when all devtas gather, invoke the divine — the all-powerful and all-knowing eternal element of consciousness, which drives all our dynamic functionalities including power of knowing — they outsmart the demonic forces and regain their lost ground. Import of the above simile does not need any further elaboration. Mother Goddess, in the form we perceive, is shown with 10 hands — car-



rying weapons in eight, a conch shell (blowing instrument) in one, and lotus flower in the other — having two imports. First, the ten directions. Second, the 10 sensory organs — five each of perception and action. She combats negative energies flowing through eight directions with her armouries, with the rest two marked with productivity. The conch-shell when blown excites a sound note comparable to 'O?' — the primal-sound that supposedly got excited when the first motion happened at the primordial source, which, in turn, excited the creation chain. The conch-shell thus naturally symbolises the source energy, up above in the cosmos. The majestic lotus flower in all colours made of numerous petals signifies enormity and diversity of creation. Mind it, lotus flower grows in the mud underneath water body. But not even a trace of mud or water droplet can stay on flower leaves, which implies that though being all-powerful, yet, she does not carry any sense of ego, or attachment to the primal elements making it. The evil forces are in evidence all across, making us vulnerable to their onslaught. Their killing potential would be felt much faster and relatively cover a fairly wider range than our productive initiatives, which could take us

for a ride if ever we become complacent. We, therefore, need to be fully on guard in a combative mode against the evil forces to make optimum use of our productive potential, vital to our existence. Now, why weird form assigned to the demons? It is said that demons are conjurers, capable of hoodwinking us by making varied illusionary presences and take us for a ride. Remember, no such form-existence is in evidence anywhere in the world. It is so characterised just to exemplify in clear terms the danger inherent in the evil forces playing from within or beyond. Coronavirus could be taken as one form of unseen demonic force available in our surrounding carrying killing potential. Negative memory implants in our minds are another form of negative forces playing within, which often make us lose our sense of reasons and order that may cost us heavily. Let us be always war-ready to combat such demonic forces for a smooth sail of life.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110 025  
Tel: 91-11-49848475/9618037273  
Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

Obviously social media has had a massive impact on the fame game, but not in a positive way. But it can be for some  
— Margot Robbie



FROM THE INSIDE

Article 370: A fresh perspective

Bashir Assad's new book provides a refreshing narrative of the actual situation obtaining in Kashmir



Recipe straight from the hills!

In a tiny hill of paradise in Uttarakhand, people love having a tingy-tang of 'Buran Chutney.' Kheem Singh Negi talks about its recipe



Children react in different ways due to lack of ample sleep or even excess of sleep impacting their health, writes KERRY BAJAJ, as she shares tips on how to ensure that your baby or child is able to sleep peacefully during a time when anxiety is running high in the family due to Coronavirus lockdown



# SLEEP IN THE TIMES OF CORONA

Before the coronavirus lockdown, did you ever think your house could be capable of so much multi-tasking? My house is now a one-room schoolhouse, an office, a gym, a restaurant that's turning out three meals a day, a messy art studio, a global pandemic monitoring station, and the place where our family relaxes and sleeps.

Speaking of sleep, I've never been so grateful that my kids have an early bedtime — 7 pm and 8 pm for the 4 and 5-year-old — and happily sleep through the night. As a sleep consultant, I've been speaking to many parents about how to navigate this challenging time. I've always preached that ensuring a good night's sleep is a precious gift for our children, and I believe it now more than ever. Here's why:

- Sleep is a powerful immune-booster. Both adults and children that are sleep-deprived are more susceptible to illness. Without sufficient sleep, your body produces fewer cytokines, which is a protein that targets infection.
- Sleep supports our emotional health. Sleep is a mood-booster, and acts as a soothing balm for our emotional balance. Much-needed at the moment.
- Sleep is crucial for all aspects of our physical health, from cardiovascular to metabolic to respiratory to immune system.

As Matthew Walker says in *Why We Sleep*, "Sleep is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day."

Here's my guidance on how to ensure your baby or child is able to sleep peacefully during a time when anxiety is surely running high in the family.

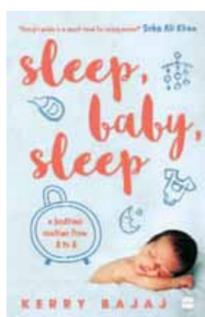
## THE DAYTIME SCHEDULE

The hundreds of parenting decisions we make during the day will impact our children's night sleep.

**Anchors.** As I say in *Sleep, Baby, Sleep*, routine is like a magic wand for parents to keep their babies happy, healthy and secure. But let's face it — our young children have nowhere to go and no pressing deadlines. Yet we can still create a predictable routine, which provides a sense of normalcy and safety. For my two daughters, I've put a focus on creating "anchors" in our day, points of stability in the ocean of free play. After breakfast, we do our math lesson. While eating lunch, we listen to a storytelling podcast (*Listen & Play* by the BBC). In the afternoon, we work on phonics. In the late afternoon, we call the grandparents. Before dinner, my husband does physical exercise with the girls. These are the predictable touchpoints that they can count on every single day. There's no need to be rigid, but having a daily rhythm with anchors gives children a sense of security.

**Exercise.** Our stir-crazy little kiddos need physical activity — and lots of it! Movement is great for releasing endorphins and will help our children to sleep well at night. Even when stuck inside, we have options — you can have a dance party, water play in a small kiddie pool or bathtub, Cosmic Kids Yoga, or hopscotch, relay race or frog jumps in the hallway. I've even seen videos of kids biking, roller skating and skateboarding inside the house. Be creative! Get the kids up and moving at least 3 times a day — and join them, because it's a good stress-buster for you, too!

**Screentime.** As soon as the WHO declared a global pandemic, I decided that my strict stance on screentime could be relaxed during these weeks at home. My kids don't nap



anymore, and we all need downtime. Every day after lunch, we pull the curtains, turn off the lights, snuggle up under blankets and "go to the zoo." Meaning we visit the Cincinnati Zoo Home Safari via their Facebook page. Hanging out with the hippos and porcupines is soothing, sweet and educational. If you're juggling cooking, cleaning, laundry, work, and homeschooling — choose a nice programme (*I love Daniel Tiger* for toddlers) and give some guilt-free screentime. Since we have a set time for screens, the kids aren't bugging me to watch videos the rest of the day, which is an added bonus.

**Note:** please don't use screentime for the 2 hours before bedtime, because it may be too stimulating and interfere with a good night's sleep.

## THE BEDTIME SCHEDULE

Many families that I consult with have trouble setting a bedtime routine because they have family functions, weddings, and travel. Since all of that is off the table, it's a perfect time to establish an age-appropriate bedtime for your little one.

**Early to Bed.** Babies and young children need 11 to 12 hours of continuous night sleep. This means that if your baby wakes up at 7 am, bedtime should be between 7 and 8 pm. Sleep is essential for your child's mood, growth, development and immunity. To shift your child's bedtime earlier, I recommend pulling the curtains and turning off the bright overhead lights after sunset. Create a bedtime routine. It can be simple — dinner, bath, books, bed. Write it down on a piece of paper, let your child decorate the bedtime chart, and hang it on the wall in their bedroom.

**Comfy, Cozy Bedtime.** I always encourage clients to think of bedtime as the best part of the day, rather than a power struggle. Cuddle up with your child, read books, sing a lullaby or say a prayer. In order for your child to relax enough to "let go" of the day and fall asleep, they should feel secure and connected. Every night I ask my daughters what they want to dream about (it's often cake and unicorns) and then I spritz them with imaginary "dream spray." This puts happy thoughts into their minds about sleep.

**White Noise.** I recommend white noise to every parent that wants their baby or child to sleep better. White noise provides a soothing rumbling backdrop for sleep and helps drown out the household noises. Especially these days when you may be taking late-night conference calls from the living room, play some white noise for your child. The easiest way to try it is by

downloading a free app (such as *Sleep Pillow*) on your phone or tablet.

Will your child get "addicted" to white noise? This is a common question and the answer is no! If you want to wean off of white noise in the future, you can simply reduce the volume for a few days.

**Sleep Training.** I spoke with a mom of twins who has let go of her domestic helpers during quarantine, has a job in banking that has converted to work-from-home because of coronavirus, and is exhausted from the night wakings that used to be handled by a nanny. Her elderly mother is attending to one twin, and she is attending to another and they are both up twice at night, for as long as an hour each time. For babies over 6 months, you can do sleep training and proactively shape the sleep patterns so you don't have so many night wakings. In my book *Sleep, Baby, Sleep*, you will get the complete guidance to help your baby sleep through the night. In the book, I also cover newborn sleep, baby sleep, toddler sleep and nap schedules for age 0 to 4 years.

## SOOTHING THEIR WORRIES

It's mission critical to be mindful of what we're saying in front of the kids. Our children will surely struggle with sleeping peacefully if we are exposing them to too much talk and worry about coronavirus.

**Turn Off the TV.** Put the TV news on a 21-day lockdown. There is absolutely no reason to expose your child to sensational and scary news reporting. If it's terrifying for you as an adult, then please protect your child. Also, don't talk on the phone about the gory details of coronavirus in front of your kids. They are always listening and absorbing what you say on the phone. Remember, the beauty of having an early bedtime is that you can watch the news and make your phone calls at night.

**Invite Questions.** I've given simple and honest explanations about coronavirus and the lockdown to my kids. Since their world has drastically changed from school, playdates and sports to 24/7 at home, I do check in with them once a day. I simply ask "do you have any questions for me?" Most of the time they don't, but they know that the lines of communication are open. They know it's safe to have questions. If we can help our children process their concerns in the day, they will better be able to relax and surrender to sleep at night.

**Manage Your Own Triggers.** To help your child's anxiety, you have to manage your own. For me, that means having an extra loaf of bread

and the freezer and an ample supply of chocolate. It means not looking at Whatsapp while I'm playing with the kids because the news is too triggering. It means talking to a friend when I'm feeling scared or anxious so I can work through it, but not in front of the kids. It means focusing on what I can control — staying home, washing my hands. And letting go of what I can't control — the actions of others, how long this will last.

**Empowering Messages.** Since the kids understood from their school friends that coronavirus is a big, scary thing, I have focused on what our family is doing to stay healthy. They know that children are mostly not getting sick from coronavirus, but I'm sure they're scared about their parents getting sick. I tell the kids — I eat healthy food, I exercise, I take vitamin C and I sleep well. I'm strong and healthy. I've assured them that if I do get sick for a few days, my body will fight the virus and bounce back.

**Honour Ambiguity.** We are on a 21-day lockdown, but there is no guarantee that it will end there. This is an ambiguous situation. Please don't get your heart set on having freedom on April 15 and then feel crushed if it doesn't happen. When my 5-year-old asks how long we'll be at home, I tell her the truth — I don't know. It may be 21 days, or it may be 100 days. You may also want to consider the possibility that this could be a long road ahead, so that you'll also be able to emotionally support your children in the weeks ahead.

**Love Them Up.** I tell the kids every single day that I love being at home with them. That this is such a special time for our family to be together. That there is no one I'd rather be stuck home with. You may be spread thin and stressed out of your mind, but don't underestimate what a gift it is for your children to have bonus time with their parents.

So there you have it — create a flow for your daytime routine, enjoy cozy bedtime snuggles, and protect your children from nonstop coronavirus conversation. In doing so, we can create a virtuous cycle where our kids feel good during the day and sleep peacefully at night, thus boosting their physical and emotional resilience. For all the essential workers on the front lines of this crisis, endless thanks for your service. For all the rest, please stay home, stay safe, take care of each other and wash those hands!

The writer is an American sleep consultant living in Mumbai. She is a holistic nutritionist and author of book *Sleep, Baby, Sleep*, published by HarperCollins

BOTH ADULTS AND CHILDREN THAT ARE SLEEP-DEPRIVED ARE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO ILLNESS. WITHOUT SUFFICIENT SLEEP, YOUR BODY PRODUCES FEWER CYTOKINES, WHICH IS A PROTEIN THAT TARGETS INFECTION





SO PLEASE, OH PLEASE, WE BEG, WE PRAY, GO THROW YOUR TV SET AWAY, AND IN ITS PLACE YOU CAN INSTALL A LOVELY BOOKSHELF ON THE WALL  
— ROALD DAHL

Bashir Assad's new book provides a refreshing narrative of the actual situation obtaining in Kashmir, not touched upon otherwise by the so-called Kashmir experts, writes PROF K WARIKOO

# Article 370: A fresh perspective

**B**ashir Assad, the Kashmiri writer has come out with yet another interesting and insightful study of Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. To quote Bashir, he has brought out the "bitter truth following his inner voice" underscoring the Islamisation and Pakistanisation of narratives in Kashmir. And he blames the political leadership in Kashmir which remains "mired in conservatism and short-sightedness around Muslimness" for the troubled situation. Competing schools of Islamist extremism have sway in Kashmir with the local political leaders, intellectuals, media, social and cultural activists, lawyers, businessmen, employees etc. spearheading the Islamist extremist movement. Being witness to the steep decline of the unique Kashmiri culture, Assad calls upon the silent majority of Kashmiri Muslims "not to be carried away by the frenzies of the extremists who thrive on violence".

As regards the decision of the Indian parliament to revoke Article 370 and reorganise the J&K State into two UTs of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, the international community has by and large viewed this decision as India's internal affair, with the exception of Pakistan and its ardent supporters—China, Turkey and Malaysia. However, there has been concern over the restrictions imposed in the State following this decision. So far as the local response to this historic decision is concerned, Assad is right in his analysis that in north Kashmir (excepting Sopore and Rafiabad belt in Baramulla district which is dominated by Jamaat-e-Islami), the local people have remained peaceful. And the new narrative of the Indian Government revolving around empowerment, investment and development (EID) has found resonance among the people in rural Kashmir, Gujjars and Bakarwals, Paharis, Kupwara, Handwara, Gurez and most of the Jammu region.

In case of south Kashmir, Jamaat-e-Islami has been influential in Kulgam, Tral, Pulwama, Bijbehara, Anantnag, Kokernag, Doru and Pahalgam and that gets reflected in the different political response and incidents of violence there. In central Kashmir, Srinagar city remains the hotbed of separatist nerve centre of Pakistani narrative being parroted by the political elite, intelligentsia, academia, journalists and civil society.

Coming back to Article 370, Assad believes that the idea behind this Article was to allow the unique Kashmiri identity



based on composite culture, social harmony and brotherhood to flourish. This very foundation of Kashmiriyat collapsed with the ethnic cleansing and forced exodus of the entire indigenous minority community of Kashmiri Pandits in January 1990 and thereafter. The Pandits continue to live in forced exile for the past 30 years now. And there is no prospect of their return to their homes, as all their landed properties, houses, business and educational establishments and even the temples have been occupied in an organized manner. And with the digitisation of land revenue records going on in full swing in Kashmir, all these properties are being conveniently transferred in the names of their illegal occupiers. Here it would be pertinent to mention that all through the past 75 years, the successive State governments have legalised the settlement of non-Kashmiri Muslims in the State. Over 26,000 Afghan Pashtuns were provided land and State citizenship in 1950s at Gullu Bagh, Ganderbal. Similarly over 650 Tibetan Muslim families were provided land and State citizenship in Hari

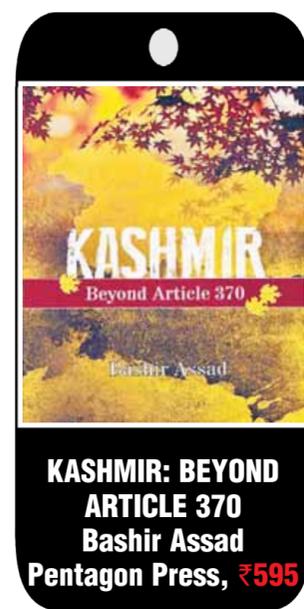
Parbat area in Srinagar around 1959-60. And after 1970s, one has been noticing the ingress and silent settlement of radical Muslims belonging to Allah Wale group from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc., who set up their shops and captured the local mosques. So much so, over 800 local Kashmiri Muslim Imams were silently replaced by these radical fire-brand non-local Muslims who contributed a lot in radicalising the Kashmiri Muslim society by weaning them away from the local Sufi-Rishi tradition of Islam. Assad has been honest in pointing out that most of the Kashmiri Muslim employees who would shift to Jammu during the annual Durbar move, have purchased land or houses in Jammu particularly during the past decade or so. This is in quite contrast to the fact that none of the Hindu employees shifting from Jammu to Srinagar during the Durbar move, have ever purchased in any land or house in Kashmir. One may add that thousands of acres of forest and nazonal land has been occupied by influential Kashmiri Muslims and Gujjars/Bakarwals, which was subse-

quently regularised by Farrooq Abdullah and GN Azad governments under the Roshni Act. All this has been done to change the demographic character of Jammu region into a Muslim majority one, so that the narrative of Muslim and separatist politics is extended to Jammu region as well.

Assad makes yet another valid point stating that the NC government under Chief Ministership of Farooq Abdullah (1996-2002) rebuilt the "completely collapsed infrastructure including hundreds of bridges, schools, hospitals, shrines and government buildings." Yet the NC and its leadership never highlighted these achievements in their 2002 election campaign. Instead their election plank was the restoration of autonomy. Here one would recall how the NC stalwart Mirza Afzal Beg would during his election campaign in 1977 flaunt a piece of rock salt (of Pak origin) and a green handkerchief (*rumal*) in order to emotionally blackmail the local Muslim population. Assad is emphatic in saying that both the "NC and PDP used Article 370 for winning elections. They only complained about

the erosion of authority when out of power. For them, Article 370 was laying golden eggs". The abrogation of Article 370 once again brought the think tanks, NGOs, human rights groups, media etc. to the fore, with the local political class propagating "soft separatism". The problem is compounded because the "political family fieldom has taken deep roots in Kashmir. And this political kinship survives in the conflict, with both the separatist and mainstream political elites being the conflict profiteers". So the challenge for the Government of India is to make peace more profitable for these political elites than the conflict.

Assad argues that the increasing Pakistanisation and Islamisation of the Kashmiri narrative, actually prompted the Modi government to abrogate Article 370. He blames the separatists and the NC and PDP leaders by holding the threats of secession, for the dilution of Article 370. As regards the impact of the abrogation of Article 370, Assad is right in saying that "the majority of Kashmiris are happy that the political class, which exploited them emotionally, economically and politically



for decades, is finally made to pay the price for it. The common people want these corrupt leaders to be arrested on charges of corruption, misappropriation, embezzlement, nepotism and favouritism". Now that Article 370 is history, new tasks for the government are to restore the confidence of the people through EID, de-radicalisation, rational delimitation to give due representation to deprived sections both in Jammu and Kashmiri regions, and to undo the artificial merger of areas in a particular constituency initiated by Mirza Afzal Beg in post-1975 period to prevent the Shias, Kashmiri Pandits, Gujjars and other communities from getting elected from their territorial strongholds. To conclude, the book provides a refreshing narrative of the actual situation obtaining in Kashmir, not touched upon otherwise by the so called Kashmir experts. As such it is a must for all those interested in understanding the social and political dynamics in Jammu and Kashmir.

The reviewer is a Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi and editor, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies

## NEW ARRIVALS

**FIREKEEPERS OF JWALAPURAM: THE KISHKINDHA CHRONICLES BOOK 2**  
Vamsee Juluri  
Westland, ₹450

In this, the sequel to *Saraswati's Intelligence*, we see that an environmental catastrophe has hit the land, causing a shortage of food for Kishkindhans. Hanuman, Vaishnavi, and the *rishis* split up to go and urge people everywhere to leave their villages and shelter in the cave-temples. Meanwhile in Kishkindhanagara, Riksharaja has made life miserable for Sugreeva, blaming him for abandoning his brother Vali and accusing him of stealing the throne. A refugee crisis is also on their doorstep, with thousands of villagers coming to the rock city everyday as their plants and trees are dying...

**TIMELESS TALES FROM MARWAR**  
Vijaydan Detha  
Puffin, ₹250

*Timeless Tales from Marwar* gives a new lease of life to his folk tales. It is a hand-picked compilation from the much-celebrated *Batan Ri Phulwari* — 'Garden of Tales' — a fourteen-volume collection written over a span of nearly fifty years.

**YOUNG PANDAVAS: THE CITY OF ELEPHANTS**  
Anupam Arunachalam  
Hachette, ₹199

Nine-year-old Sahadev and his four brothers — Yudhishthir, Bhim, Arjun and Nakul — are happy in their little forest home, until a forgotten curse changes their lives forever. They return as princes to Hastinapur, a city full of riches... and secrets. Lively and action-packed, this illustrated reimagining of the *Mahabharata* brings alive the world of the great Indian epic.

# Stories that inspire action and change

GUNJAN VEDA's book seeks to celebrate the everyday heroes, who have, despite all odds, managed to change not just their own lives, but the lives of those around them. An excerpt:

Ten kilometres from the Pratap Singh High School, on the road to the famous Kaas Plateau, Maharashtra's very own Valley of Flowers, is the picturesque campus of the Bhartiya Bhatke Vimukta Vikas Va Sanshodhan Sanstha (Indian Institute of Research and Development of Nomadic and De-notified Tribes). Inside, there is a School of Social Work, a junior college, hostels and an Ashram school with 250 students from classes 1 to 10.

At 2 pm on a weekday, the place is abuzz with activity. Students and teachers have just returned from an invigorating lunch break, ready to resume their quest for knowledge. I head to the first floor of the double-storied institute building that embraces a circular courtyard. Here in a small corner room, a group of 50 students await me—the youngest is 12 years old, the oldest 16. Some play the *tabla*, the *dholki* and the Congo drums. Others create music on the synthesizer and the harmonium. Together they form the school's orchestra—one that has won name and fame in the district.

They are often invited to sing for the All India Radio and at local programmes. As the strong voices of the girls and the boys in the group decry casteism and call for equality through their songs, a new energy pervades the room, and with it, a new hope.

It is these students whose stories I wish to tell...

Aishwarya  
Aishwarya Umesh Dharase is



13 years old. Slim, with a deep sepia skin tone, she wears a bright, sleeveless red and gold salwar suit. Her jet black hair is oiled and tightly pulled back into a pony. 'I want to become a lawyer and fight for the truth,' this Class 7 student tells me. She also wants to learn to play the harmonium and the *tabla*. After all, she spent the first few years of her life around these musical instruments. Aishwarya's parents lived in the Bijapur district of Karnataka. Her father played the *dholki*, *tabla* and *pakhawaj* in an orchestra, while her mother was a singer. She also sewed garments to feed her family. Then one day, when she was barely six years old, Aishwarya's mother died in an accident. Shortly after, her father abandoned her. 'I was very small then. I didn't understand

what was happening. Suddenly I had no family, no one to call my own,' she tells me matter-of-factly. Life as Aishwarya knew it was over. Initially her paternal grandparents looked after her. Soon however, her *mausi* (maternal aunt) took over.

Aishwarya does not know if she is related to her *mausi* by blood. She doesn't know her maternal grandparents either. '*Mausi* says my mother was her sister and she treats me like her own daughter. That's all that matters. I have seen her work in the fields to raise me. It is her name—Bharti—that I write when I am asked for my mother's name.' Bharti first got Aishwarya admitted into a Kannada-medium school but she wasn't happy with the quality of education. She decided to send her to the

Ashram school where her own daughter Vaishnavi was studying. It was in Class 6 that Aishwarya came to Satara. 'I have been here for a little over a year now. Each day I learn new things. When I feel low, I think of my *mausi*. She is my inspiration. One day I will make her proud,' she tells me, the quiver in her voice only emphasizing the determined look on her face.

### Pragati

Next to her sits a slim bespectacled girl in a white, printed salwar suit. 13-year-old Pragati Ranjeet More is a student of Class 8. Eyes brimming with tears, she narrates her story.

'When I was born, my mother abandoned me in the hospital and went to live with her parents. She didn't take me home. Didn't



hold or hug me.' Pragati's father collected her from the hospital and took her to Pune. There he left the tiny infant with his sister. 'My *buja* raised me. She put me in a school in the city. Then one day my *dadi* turned up. She said that I shouldn't stay in Pune. She fought with my *buja* and brought me to Phaltan in Satara district. Since that day my *buja* stopped talking to us.'

Young Pragati was once again uprooted. She lost the only life and family she had known. But she was a survivor. She began to adjust to her new life. Just as she was learning to cope, another tragedy befell the family. Their house in Phaltan collapsed.

They had to move to Satara. Pragati's father used to be a construction worker. But he drank heavily and gradually stopped working. In fact, it was his drinking that had driven Pragati's mother away. In Satara, her grandfather took up work in a hotel to feed the family. Pragati enrolled in a nearby school.

One day, when she was in Class 3, her grandmother and father fought bitterly. 'My *dadi* burnt herself. She died,' Pragati recounts in a stony voice. Her mother used this opportunity to divorce her father.

That was when she discovered that she had a younger brother. 'My mother never came to see me. I didn't know that my father used to visit her. After they divorced, I found out that I had a younger brother, Omkar. He is now in Class 4.'

Despite all the tragedies that life had heaped on her, Pragati did not give up. She had learnt how to cook when she was barely five years old. While her grandfather helped her with the housework, he also had to go out and earn. So young Pragati went to school, did housework, cooked and looked after her brother. One day, in the newspapers, she read about the Ashram school in Satara. She quietly went to her father and said she wanted to join the school.

He agreed. Thus began a new journey.

*The Museum of Broken Tea Cups: Postcards from India's Margins* written by Gunjan Veda is published by Yoda SAGE Select

In a tiny hill of paradise called Ranikhet in Uttarakhand, people love having a tingy-tang of 'Buran Chutney.' Kheem Singh Negi, an ex-serviceman residing here in Hyderabad, talks about its recipe and more, in an exclusive chat with SHIKHA DUGGAL

## RECIPE STRAIGHT FROM THE HILLS!

**C**oming straight from the hills of Uttarakhand, the Buran chutney is loved by many and is a famous and favourite dish of Ranikhet. Its recipe has traveled over to as far as Hyderabad, through ex-serviceman Kheem Singh Negi.

With Coronavirus at its peak and the nationwide 21-day lockdown in place, Kheem Singh Negi is busy in the kitchen trying out ethnic dishes. "Buran chutney is a blend of sweet and tangy flavours made with wild, edible flowers called Buran aka pink rhododendron blossoms in the spring season. This flower is widely sold by the locals and markets in Ranikhet," informs Negi. The flower is also used for making juices and yummy squashes. "But the Buran chutney is something I discovered myself and it tastes divine. You can keep munching on it and also have it with 'madua chapati' and 'dal-bhat'," Negi tells us. Talking about its health benefits, he says, "The chutney, an effective booster of immunity, keeps your blood rush stable and betters the functioning of the liver too."

"Sugar and spices are added according to one's taste. It's more aromatic with mint leaves if you like it that way," Negi adds. With smoother texture and preparation that takes very little time, this chutney is sure going to be your favourite too. "You can serve it with hot grain chapattis garnished with fresh coriander and tantalise your taste-buds," he advises.

Kheem Singh Negi



### HOW TO MAKE BURAN CHUTNEY

- Collect adequate Buran flowers
- Separate the parts of the flower
- Add peppermint leaves
- Boil tamarind in a cup of water, separate the water from it later on
- Add green chillies
- Grind all the above ingredients into a paste
- Add required salt as per taste
- Transfer it into a bowl and you're lip-smacking Chutney is ready to serve hot!

### TIPS TO MAKE YOUR CHUTNEY YUMMIER

- Add a tinge of ginger, dry gourd or fennel powder
- If you wish to add vinegar, ensure to cook it well enough to eliminate the smell of vinegar
- Make use of green onions instead of normal ones.
- For tanginess, you can add raw mango and you're good to go.



### SHIKHA DUGGAL

A square baked treat of chocolate is sure to water your mouth! Brownies come in various shapes, sizes and textures — from fudged to caked ones, the only difference is the density they bear. Decorated with toppings like nuts, frosting, chocolate chips, the batter for the brownie is made of brown sugar and vanilla. A 19th century-old delicacy, Chef Sandeep from the Explore Cafe at Ammuguda tells us more about this dessert.

"Rich and dissipated with refined flour and sugar, a brownie sounds very tempting but contains a lot of calories too. Adding adequate cocoa powder with the right balance of flour will make it tasty and healthier," says the chef. The supremely chocolatey dessert with a pinch of roasted walnuts can sometimes become hard to chew into, in hot summers like this, due to the insufficiency of wet ingredients.

"Remember that to have an amazing frosting, the proportion of sugar and butter must be in the right proportions. It will give you a glaze that will spread easily on top of the chocolate walnut brownie," suggests Chef Sandeep.

Calling attention to a very evident trick all the chefs tend to try, the addition of an extra egg to the brownie mix gives a cake-like brownie instead of a chewy one, shares the chef. "The extra egg adds volume and a soft texture," he adds.

So what are you waiting for? Don the chef's hat and try this easy-to-make Chocolate Walnut Brownie at home!

## GLORIOUS relationship with brownies!

### WHAT YOU NEED

- BUTTER: 4 tbsp
- BROWN SUGAR: 3/4th cup
- EGGS: 2 large sized
- VANILLA EXTRACT: 1 1/2 tsp
- COFFEE POWDER: 1/4 tsp
- COCOA POWDER: 4 tbsp
- BAKING SODA: 1/4 tsp
- SALT: 1/8 tsp
- CHOPPED WALNUTS: 1/2 cup



### HOW TO MAKE

- Preheat the oven.
- Cream butter and sugar together in a bowl, beat eggs with vanilla extract, coffee powder, and melted chocolate.
- Stir cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt together. Add walnuts.
- Pour the batter into a pan and bake for the next 20-22 minutes. Cool it completely before cutting the pieces.

### PRO TIPS

- Don't use a mixer to stir your batter as you may over mix them.
- Whip too much air into the eggs for a good texture
- Mix everything by hand in a bowl if required



Chef Sandeep



### FOLLOWING ARE SIMPLE STEPS TO HELP PRESERVE VEGETABLES:

- Wrap up your leafy greens

Rinse them, wrap them up in a towel and keep them in your refrigerator.

- Tomatoes need no refrigerator

Store them at room temperature, remove the green parts of the tomato and slice them. You can also store them in zip-lock bags.

- Freeze your green chillies

Place them on a plate and cover aluminum foil. Freeze and then store in an airtight container.

- Preserve your green peas & add more flavour into your recipe

Peel green peas and store them in a bowl. Now add some water to it. Boil the water and add 2tsp of sugar. Add chilled water, strain the peas and they are ready to be stored in zip-lock packets.

- How to not let your coriander leaves wilt

Spread the leaves on a piece of paper and let them dry in. Now place the lower end of the coriander into a glass of water and store it in a cool place.

- Garlic cloves

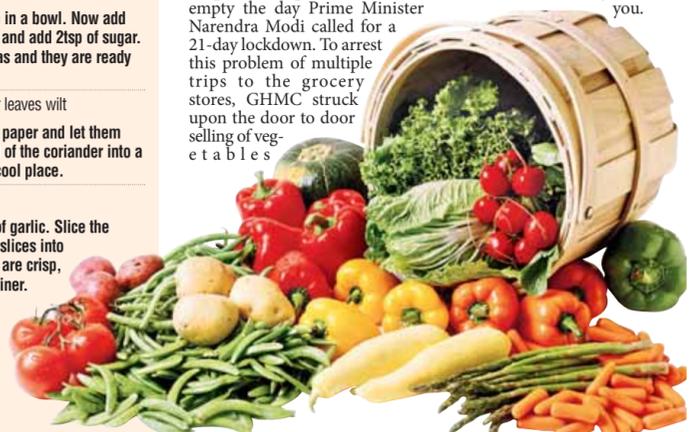
Nobody likes dwindling cloves of garlic. Slice the cloves into thin pieces, pop the slices into a bowl of water. After the slices are crisp, you can store them in any container.

Get rid of the guilt over food wastage and try these simple tricks at home. You now know that you don't have to be a food expert for that!

## How to preserve your veggies during the lockdown

**T**here is still time for the lockdown to end and people have not much choice but to stock their groceries sensibly. Shopping for groceries turned nightmare when shops and supermarkets went empty the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a 21-day lockdown. To arrest this problem of multiple trips to the grocery stores, GHMC struck upon the door to door selling of vegetables.

through mobile Rythu bazaars. But even as you decide to purchase and store more than an adequate amount of veggies at home, what about the problem of being able to preserve them all for long? Here's us attempting to allay that for you.



A lot of sacrifices were made by those who were in the forefront of the Telangana movement at different points of time. Some did not take up arms or stage protests, but still made significant, lasting contribution with their intellectual prowess. Mamidi Harikrishna, Director, Department of Language and Culture, Government of Telangana, is one of them. In an exclusive interview to **THE PIONEER**, he reveals how his numerous essays and other works reflecting the agony of Telangana people, the movement per se, and everything related to the state attracted the attention of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. A senior official who wears many hats, Harikrishna has won accolades as a poet, painter, writer, translator, historian, critic and more. He is the man behind "Fusion Shayaree", a novel form of poetry that represents our multicultural and multilingual lives in contemporary society. He has penned hundreds of articles for various national and international journals and periodicals. He has edited over 25 books, including *Telangana Harvest: Telugu Short Fiction 1912 -2011* (2017). He has won Nandi award twice. A perfectionist at work, Harikrishna tells *The Pioneer's* **K RAMYA SREE** how he ran away from in quest of his dreams as well as his abiding love for his mother and Telangana.

# WEDDED TO CREATIVE WORK

## Will direct a movie...

I have been a part of many movies and was also involved in the development of stories. I remember changing scenes of a few films even at the edit table, and am sure I will direct a movie sometime. I also read a lot of scripts and have made over 150 documentaries on various subjects, including world cinema and Telugu cinema. I have also interviewed some famous figures like Akkineni Nageswar Rao garu.

## Urban-centric environment...

My grandfather, M Venkataraja, was a landlord. As he was the first man to build a bungalow in our village, the name 'Bungalow Venkataraja' stuck to him. My father, Dr M Sudarshan, was a Registered Medical Practitioner. He used to travel on his bicycle and treat people in nearly 30 villages. My mother Swarajyam too was highly educated. Thus, I grew up in an urban-centric environment that had a rural background.

## Typical Telangana village...

I was born in Shayampet, Warangal district. My village was very peaceful and close to nature as it was surrounded by lakes. When I speak about my childhood, I can only think of my village. We were economically stable as we usually had good agricultural produce. The village was dominated by the Padmashali community whose members were into handloom weaving. I grew up in a 'typical Telangana village'.

## Finished Class X at the age of 13...

I was in Class X when I was 13 years old. A trust started the only English medium school in our village. They would promote kids to the next class within six months, instead of the usual one year. That way I was underage when I appeared for my Class X exams. But my school principal wrote to the then DEO and sought an exemption for me. Because of the academic atmosphere in my house and English medium background, I had an edge over my friends.

## Wanted to be a scientist...

I was interested in Science and wanted to be a scientist during my school days.

I always read beyond the syllabus. I did not score enough in Class X to take up Science. Instead, I chose HEC (History, Economics and Civics). That's how my love for history developed. During the 1980s and the 90s, like it is now, people were considered 'bright' if they studied Science and 'brighter' if they opted for Math. In such a situation, having chosen HEC, I decided that I must prove that HEC is no less than any subject. It was the end of my dream of becoming a scientist.

## We can build a nation within 4 walls of classroom...

I like teaching. So, during my graduation I chose BA and did my B Ed. I believe in the dictum, 'Within the four walls of a classroom, we can build the nation'. We can influence ideologies at the budding stage. I was a state ranker in B Ed and went on to do my

M Ed as well. Libraries are my greatest temples. I would spend most of my time in libraries as I love reading books. I also did MA Psychology and started to respect and love people after studying Psychology. No one is perfect in this world.

## A curious child...

I was a very naughty, curious child. I was always busy doing something:

father wanted my mother to cook at that hour and since we did not have gas stove, we had to cook using wood and coal. He would wake me up while the chicken is being cooked and ask me to sing in front of my grandfather. One night, my mom was taking time to cook



With father and sisters

playing games, painting, or reading. During summer holidays, I would make thrones and other jewellery items with cardboard after watching historical films. We got two to three newspapers every day and my father would bring weekly magazines. Every summer, I would make scrap books out of paper clippings on subjects like

Science, Philosophy, History, Sports, Economy and so on. I used to have three rooms for myself and all those rooms used to be filled with a lot of books and my art works.

## Running away from home...

I ran away from home once when I was in Class 9. My father would return home only around 11 pm after touring the villages nearby. He would get a hen while returning home. Back then, villagers would give hen, goat, and so on as a gift if they felt the treatment was good. My

and my father got furious. I got angry and revolted. So, my father hit me and my mother also raised her voice on me. I thought 'I revolted for my mother and she is questioning my actions. What am I doing?' So, I left home, not knowing where I was headed. I lost my route and was dropped back home the next day as someone recognised me at a bus stop as 'doctor saab ka son'.

## Creativity came from mom...

I was drawn towards literature, culture, cinema and all that because of my mother. She was a wonderful story-teller. She used to narrate stories of whatever books she read or whichever film she saw. She would narrate stories to beedi makers while they were working. I used to enjoy listening to her stories. From my childhood itself, I have nurtured the sense of creativity, love for literature and cinema because of my mother.

## Mom's demise is the greatest loss...

The sudden demise of my mother was a very emotional moment in my life. It's a gap that is yet to be filled in my life, as I loved my mom very much. I couldn't even imagine that my mom was no more. That is when I understood what life is. On the 11th day of my mother's demise, my father said: 'Your mom is no

## Love Telangana as much as I love my mother...

I love Telangana as much as I love my mother. I decided that I could contribute to the Telangana movement by utilising my knowledge and writing skills. I started writing essays on the agony of people, the movement, and everything related to the state. I also decided to translate all poems written by great leaders so that this movement would be known to all and not just to Telugu people. That's the best thing I have ever done. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao garu noticed my work and chose me to serve as the Director, Department of Language and Culture. This job has given me the opportunity to share my knowledge and explore myself. I have been working here since 2014.

## Being the quiz master...

Every night I would conduct quiz competitions at home. I would divide my parents, brothers and sisters into teams, and ask questions. I used to ask questions that would help improve memory. My childhood was very interesting. I would not even eat properly because I was very curious about extra curriculars.



With parents DR M Sudarshan, Swarajyam, sisters Sravanti, Swati, Sukruti and brother Jayakrishna



With actor Uttej and director Harish Shankar



Young Harikrishna with parents



With CM KCR

## RAPID FIRE:

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF:** A lone crusader  
**WHAT DO YOU HATE THE MOST IN ANOTHER PERSON:** I don't hate anything in anyone. I accept people as they are.  
**FAVOURITE HOLIDAY DESTINATION:** My hometown

**WHO HAS INSPIRED YOU MOST:** My mother  
**FAVOURITE FILM:** I have a huge list as I am an ardent fan of cinema  
**HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY:** By seeing my mother's face  
**CITY YOU WISH TO VISIT:** Rome

**WORST SUBJECT IN SCHOOL:** Biological Science  
**FAVOURITE CELEBRITY:** Kamal Haasan  
**WHAT DO YOU TO RELAX YOURSELF:** I don't like to relax. I like taking up tasks  
**HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH ANXIETY AND STRESS:** I watch a movie