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OF THE TUNNEL

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PUJARA DEAL

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY APRIL 10, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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FILM TO ROLL
NEXT YEAR

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DELHI'S BENGALI MARKET SEALED OVER 3 COVID-19 CASES, 35 FOUND ON SHOP ROOF

A new coronavirus scare has emerged in Delhi after 35 workers were found on the rooftop of a pastry shop at Bengali Market, a popular family haunt in the heart of the capital. Bengali Market has been sealed off along with the 20 virus hotspots in Delhi after three persons were diagnosed with COVID-19. An FIR has been filed against Bengali Pastry Shop for endangering lives by defying the lockdown to check the spread of COVID-19. Asserting that it was closed, the iconic shop, in its defence, said it had provided shelter to workers who had nowhere to go.



ODISHA FIRST TO EXTEND LOCKDOWN TILL APRIL 30

The Odisha government today announced it has extended the lockdown over the COVID-19 pandemic till April 30, becoming the first state to do so as the number of patients infected by the novel coronavirus continues to rise across the country. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has asked the centre not to start train and air services till April 30. "Odisha cabinet decides for extension and also recommends to union government to do the same," the state government said in a statement. "Coronavirus is the biggest threat that the human race has faced in more than a century. Life will not be the same ever."



'STOPPED COUNTING': NEW YORK COUPLE SEES TRUCKS REMOVING COVID-19 VICTIMS

A New York couple has seen the cityscape outside their Brooklyn apartment change dramatically in recent weeks, as refrigerated trucks line up in the lot below to receive the remains of COVID-19 victims as they exit the Wyckoff Heights Medical Center. Alix Monteleone, a 28-year-old account supervisor, who lives in a trendy part of Bushwick with her 33-year old fiancé, Marc Kozlow, described what the two have witnessed peering out their window. "We have a bird's eye view," Monteleone said, during a recent interview conducted by Reuters via Skype.



WORLD'S BIGGEST LOCKDOWN SLASHES OIL DEMAND BY 70% IN INDIA

Oil demand in the world's third-biggest consumer has collapsed by as much as 70 per cent as India endures the planet's largest national lockdown, according to officials at the country's refineries. The estimate for the current demand loss is a stark reminder of the challenge facing oil producers as they haggle over a deal to cut supply and prop up the global energy industry. Consumption for the entire month could average about 50 per cent below last year's levels but that's based on India's three-week lockdown ending April 15 as planned, according to the officials.



CONTAINMENT ZONES ACROSS TS



Surplus FCI stocks can be utilized to engage, feed hungry millions

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Strength of federalism has given major boost to fight against COVID-19: Soren

5



RBI hopes monetary, fiscal measures to spur economic activity

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TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Chaitra & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam:
Tithi: Tritiya: 09:31 pm
Nakshatram: Vishakha: 09:54 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 10:44 am - 12:17 pm
Yamagandam: 03:22 pm - 04:55 pm
Varjyam: 1:37 am - 03:06 am
Gulika: 07:39 am - 09:12 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 01:58 pm - 03:24 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:52 am - 12:42 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 36/24
Humidity: 72%
Sunrise: 06:05
Sunset: 06:30
Current Weather Conditions Updated April 08, 2020 5:00 PM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government, having urged the Centre to extend lockdown, is rolling out its cluster containment plan, which is a sort of lockdown within a lockdown. According to sources, the TS government's cluster containment plan has married the Cluster Containment Strategy considered by the Centre with the 'Bhilwara model' that succeeded in Rajasthan, as part of its own exit strategy post lockdown.

Towards this end, the Telangana government has identified 12 clusters in Hyderabad as constituting the epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic in state, where a total of 101 hotspots have been identified. Residents in these clusters would be virtually locked in their houses, with their daily essentials being supplied by the authorities.

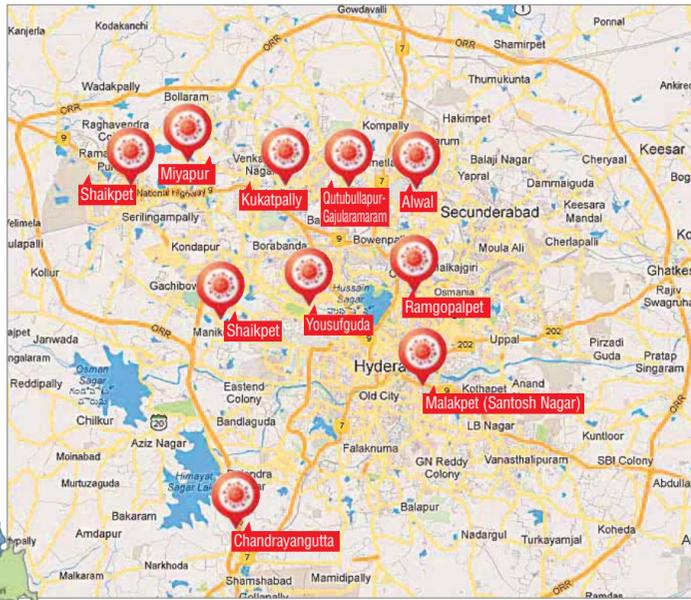
A containment zone is one where Covid-19 positive cases are found and such areas are considered contaminated and therefore sealed off. Explaining the significance, Minister Eatala Rajender said, "To stop coronavirus spread, based on WHO and ICMR guidelines, we are defining zones, call it 'red zone', 'containment

RESTRICTIONS

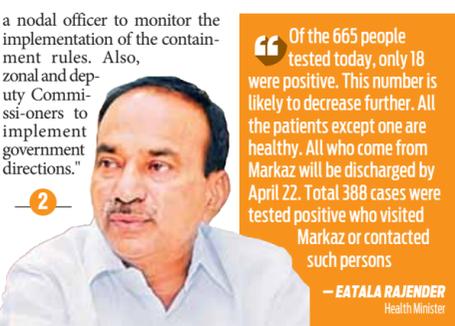
- No person is allowed to go out of containment zone; nor are others allowed to enter it
- A special phone number will be allocated to those who are inside to convey their problems
- Government will supply everything, from milk to groceries to those who need it
- Enhanced surveillance by police will be in place with barricades wherever necessary
- Police not to allow any local to move out without a valid reason



Public who are residing in these clusters should not come outside their houses. Outside people or others should not visit those areas. ASHA workers, self-help groups, GHMC workers will ensure that screening is done and essential items are made available in these areas. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar said, "A special phone number will be allocated to those who are inside to convey their problems. GHMC Commissioner has to nominate



a nodal officer to monitor the implementation of the containment rules. Also, zonal and deputy Commissioners to implement government directions."



Of the 665 people tested today, only 18 were positive. This number is likely to decrease further. All the patients except one are healthy. All who come from Markaz will be discharged by April 22. Total 388 cases were tested positive who visited Markaz or contacted such persons

What does this mean?

If the area where you stay is part of a containment zone, it means that you are not allowed to step outside your house.

There is a nationwide lockdown anyway...
Yes, but it does not ban anyone from stepping out to buy vegetables, grocery items, medicines and other essentials.

Then how to get essential supplies?
Do not panic. The local administration has tied up with Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) and market associations to provide door-to-door supply of essential items. Areas where such associations are not active, civic volunteers will be roped in.

Will any shop stay open?
Nothing, including banks will be open. Even if you need medicines, it is to be delivered to you.

Who is allowed to enter or leave a containment zone?
No one other than officials of the local administration, police, health officials and municipality workers. Serious medical cases will be exempt, but after due verification. Entry and exit of every person, including those from enforcement agencies, will be registered in the records. Media will not be allowed to enter these places, but journalists and others involved in essential services staying in these areas will be allowed to go their workplaces. But they have to undergo screening for Covid-19 symptoms each time they enter or exit a containment zone.

Out of 400 cases reported in TS, 100 from same family

L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

People from lower-income groups living in cramped houses appear to have contributed to the spike in Coronavirus cases in Telangana, as social distancing is impossible in such dwellings. Of the over 400 cases reported in the state so far, about 100 pertain to those from same families who live in

cramped houses comprising one or two rooms with five to 10 family members. A single infected person living in such a dwelling can infect other family members within no time. Family members living in such dwellings share same rooms and common toilets naturally are more vulnerable to infections and contract the virus more easily.

Salaries pending to lakhs of people in organized sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Majority of over 45 lakh people in the organised sector are yet to get their salaries, though we are in the second week of April. Normally, firms in the organised sector pay wages to their employees in the first week of every month. However, this month, majority of them are yet to receive their wages. Most of the organisations in the organised sector are

schools, colleges, institutes and coaching centres. At least, 20 lakh people are employed in them.

Following the nationwide lockdown, many organisations and institutions, including schools and colleges, have shut their shutters and the situation will continue till April 14. Financial problems are staring at these organisations as their day-to-day operations have come to a grinding halt.



Telangana reports one more death

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State reported another Covid-19 death on Thursday, taking the death toll in the state to 12.

Telangana has so far reported 471 cases, of which 414 are active. On Thursday, 18 people tested positive for Coronavirus. Minister Eatala Rajender said that tests had been completed for all those who had returned from Markaz and their contacts.

The number of cases is likely to drop drastically from tomorrow. Etela said, "We are controlling people's movements in areas where there are positive cases. We have identified 101 centers in the state."

Manipuris denied entry in city store

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Racism raised its ugly head in a city store, but the problem was nipped in the bud on Thursday with the arrest of the store manager and two of its employees, following outrage in social media and official alacrity.

Enquiries revealed that two natives of Manipur were denied entry into a supermarket by its staffers, who told them they looked like 'foreigners'. The incident occurred at Star Supermarket in Vanasthalipuram on Wednesday. The incident gained traction on social media, when a user posted on Twitter clips that showed his friends, who had gone to the supermarket to buy groceries, being denied entry and sent



Enquiries revealed that two natives of Manipur were denied entry into a supermarket by its staffers, who told them they looked like "foreigners"

society even in the midst of this pandemic. Sadly, we are fighting two pandemics (#COVID19 & Racism) (sic). The Rachakonda Police responded immediately and sought details from Jonah.

Earlier, many prominent persons, including the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju responded to the tweet, asking Jonah for "details of the location of the incident".

Telangana Principal Secretary (Municipal Administration and Urban Development) Arvind Kumar also responded to Jonah's tweet, saying the incident was unfortunate and apologized for the incident. "Collector RR dist has informed that FIR is registered against the manager of this outlet and that the accused are in custody."

Mother travels 1400 km on two-wheeler to fetch son

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

A woman travelled from Bodhan to Nellore of AP and back on her two-wheeler, covering a distance of 1,400 km to fetch her son stranded in Nellore, crossing innumerable check-posts, hurdles, police patrols, fences erected by farmers and so on.

The woman's journey at a time the entire world is locked down, and her display of courage, has not only earned her praise from all quarters, but also reminded everyone that a mother's love knows no bounds. Razia Begum set out on her 1,400-km journey on April 6 and reached Nellore on April



7. She started her return journey on the evening of April 7 and reached Bodhan on April 8, a tedious job for even the hardcore roadie, let alone a woman teacher. Razia Begum lives in Bodhan of Kamareddy district. Ever since the death of her husband 12 years ago, she shouldered the

The woman's journey at a time the entire world is locked down, and her display of courage, has not only earned her praise from all quarters, but also reminded everyone that a mother's love knows no bounds

responsibility of bringing up her son. She works as a teacher in a Government school. Her youngest son Mohammad Nizamuddin completed Intermediate in Bodhan and is preparing at Narayana Medical Academy in Hyderabad to get a seat in MBBS. Nizamuddin had struck friendship with a youth of Nellore while he was pursuing

Intermediate in Bodhan. In March, the duo visited Bodhan from Hyderabad to take the Intermediate supplementary examinations. Meanwhile, Nizamuddin's friend got a message that his father was unwell, and left Bodhan for Nellore. Nizamuddin also accompanied him.

Withdrawal symptoms amid lockdown

800 liquor addicts report at mental health hospital

DAVE BENNETT SILVERY ■ HYDERABAD

Courtesy lockdown, the Institute of Mental Health at Erragadda here has recorded 800 cases of liquor addicts showing varying degrees of withdrawal symptoms, with more than 170 of them being admitted to the institute for treatment. The prolonged closure of all wine and toddy shops across the State due to the nationwide

lockdown has hit persons dependent on intoxicating substances like alcohol and toddy. In the absence of their daily fix, they are losing their balance and showing withdrawal symptoms. According to doctors, the institute, which used to see four or five alcoholics per day, has suddenly begun to receive too many cases, with more than 100 cases reported on Monday alone.

REVVING UP ECONOMY POST LOCKDOWN

Surplus FCI stocks can be utilised to engage, feed hungry millions

The Covid-19 pandemic has shattered the lives of millions of migrant labour, those employed in the unorganized sector, daily wage-earners and petty vendors. Apart from medical attention, what these people need most is food, which, under normal circumstances, they earn on a day-to-day basis without any kind of social security net whatsoever.

Still, given the urgency of the present situation, there are ways in which their basic needs can be met now and post lockdown. We can provide them emergency relief using surplus stocks of food grains lying with the Food Corporation of India in its godowns. This is perhaps the easiest way in which the Centre can reach out to the migrant labour and others who are jobless and hungry in urban and rural areas.

As things stand, the problems facing these sections of people are likely to multiply, with people eating into their little stores of essential commodities and exhausting their meagre savings. Before things get out of control, we need to utilize FCI stocks of food grains by engaging voluntary organisations that are equipped to supply cooked food, gurudwaras, NGOs like Akshaya Patra etc. Even hotels and canteens could be roped in to make and distribute food, using food grains supplied by FCI. Select NGOs could be asked to oversee the arrangements, including earmarking areas for distribution and tying up with the hotels and rations. All they need to mobilize additionally are additional inputs required like vegetables, cooking oil etc. These supplies could be arranged through government agencies wherever possible or by involving other NGOs.

The country will have to rev up the economy as soon as possible to productively engage large sections of unemployed population. The toll of Covid-19 on daily-wage earners and contract labour, employees of service sectors like malls, shops, hotels, shopkeepers, street hawkers, skilled tradesmen like construction workers, job-work factory labour, etc is already visible. In the days ahead, unless a miracle takes place, the problems will creep up to embrace employees of factories and bigger businesses across the board.

Clearly, no establishment can afford to pay salaries indefinitely to its employees if they cannot be productively engaged, more so in employment-oriented and service industries. Despite the Government of India's exhortation to employers to pay full salary for this month, several state governments have resorted to pay cuts.

In rural areas, the effects of the lockdown are just emerging. In some areas, crops are ripe, but labour for harvesting is not available. Farms are drying up for want of watering.

As things stand, the problems facing these sections of people are likely to multiply, with people eating into their little stores of essential commodities and exhausting their meagre savings.



ANIL KUMAR KUTTY, IAS (Retd)

Elsewhere, farm produce is rotting for want of transport and marketing avenues. Mechanisms like Direct Benefit Transfer and schemes like MNREGA should be viewed as part of a safety net that buys us the time required for isolation and treatment

related issues. We have no choice but to restart economic activity as quickly as possible.

Successful easing of the lockdown is no mean task. Given the complexities involved, resumption of economic activity has to be cautious, measured, and graded in differing geographies.

The experience of some foreign countries can be instructive. Countries like Italy and the UK initially downplayed the magnitude of the problem and are now facing the consequences. Countries like Taiwan and the Czech Republic have rigorously enforced masks and social distancing, allowed essential services like trains and trams to run, and permitted limited economic activity. Japan and Sweden have allowed most economic activities, while taking due precautions of mask-

ing and maintaining minimum social distances. These countries have concentrated on testing and quarantining people coming from outside their borders, while allowing those inside to pursue economic activities without going into a total lockdown. Singapore too initially achieved considerable success in controlling the spread of the virus, despite keeping its schools, offices, markets, restaurants and public transport running. Of late, it has seen a slight increase in infections and it responded immediately by tightening restrictions and closing all schools and most workplaces.

As India comes out of the lockdown, it would help vastly if we could identify zones in the country as A, B and C to reflect totally virus free, fewer cases and more cases respectively, and then dovetail a

range of economic activities. We need to have strict controls on intra-zone movements. The details of the economic activity in states and UTs must be finalised in consultation with medical experts and state govts. Complementary measures like enforced wearing of masks while travelling and at work, social distancing, allowing only 50% occupancy in trains, buses, restaurants, and encouraging e-commerce and door delivery of goods may help.

The foregoing steps can yield results only with the whole-hearted participation of all stakeholders - the Government of India, the State Govt. including the district administration at the grassroots level and above all people themselves right down to the panchayat level.

(The author is former Union power secretary)

Manipuris denied entry...

Continued from Page 1

Also, request people to come out in support of our brothers and sisters from NE at this point esp, (sic), Arvind Kumar tweeted.

Taking cognizance of the incident, the working president of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and Minister of MA&UD, Industries and IT&C Kalvakuntla Taraka Rama Rao wrote: "This is absolutely ridiculous and unacceptable. Racism in any form should be dealt with sternly. Request @TelanganaDGPGaru to instruct all Police Commissioners & Superintendents of Police to take up these issues seriously with retail association & send out a clear message."

The Rachakonda Police have detained the manager of the supermarket and two of its guards for the incident. A case has been booked under sections 153, 188 and 341 of the Indian Penal Code.

Salaries pending to ...

Continued from Page 1

In many organisations, the process of disbursement of wages for the month of March is yet to begin. The state government sanctioned paid leave from March 22 to April 14 for employees engaged in the organised sector. As per rules, the employees are entitled to full wages. However, many institutions and firms did not credit wages into the bank accounts of employees even on April 7.

However, some institutions have embarked on paying wages to employees. The Labour Department's statistics suggest that so far 30 per cent of the institutions forming part of the organised sector have disbursed wages to employees across the state. But many institutions have paid only half of the wages. Payment of wages in the organised sector will be in tune with the rules of the Labour Department.

Some institutions do not provide ESI and PF facility to employees, but pay wages according to the number of working days. In view of the lockdown since March 22, the companies and institutions have been paying full wages up to March 22.

Telangana reports one more death

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We appeal to people that they cooperate with medical staff.

He urged donors to give goods and not money. Eetela said, "Many people are giving money to CMRE. We appeal to you to provide aid in the form of goods, not money. Today we reviewed this with Municipal Minister K Taraka Rama Rao and we are looking for goods worth Rs 70 crore".

Across districts, lockdown violators under watch

AVINASH DEEPAK PULI
MAHBUBNAGAR

Gadwal town, which figures in the list of 'Red Zone' is under the scanner as the Police and officials concerned are thoroughly monitoring the movements of the public in this area.

Two persons from the town, who attended Markaz in Nizamuddin, tested positive for the virus. Around 250 people came in contact with the duo. Since the primary contacts were also regarded in the virus contact list, the district authorities have alerted all the people in the town to remain agile and alert to overcome the crisis by staying indoors.

Stringent measures have been announced and the police warned the public of filing cases against them if they violate lockdown rules. Ayija is another town where four wards have been on Red Zone list. Shadnagar town also recorded more number of positive cases



In Warangal, police stepped up the efforts on Thursday and the youths roaming without any valid reason were being monitored by the police forces with the aid of CC Cameras.

through internet by the police to the patrol parties.

In all, about five to six thousand odd bikes were seized for violating the lockdown rules and the rural Telangana police were taking necessary steps to impose and promulgate the strict orders of the government. Reports from Nalgonda say that the Minister Jagadish was seriously monitoring the lockdown rules and advising the people not to violate the orders of the official machinery.

adjoining this district but since Ayija is among the Red Zone, the authorities have alerted the public not to step outside. Entire Mahbubnagar was put on alert following the incident where an infant tested positive for the virus. In Warangal, police stepped up the efforts on Thursday and the youths

roaming without any valid reason were being monitored by the police forces with the aid of CC Cameras. The CC camera network with the command control in the Warangal police headquarters has been enlisting the violators with the aid of camera network and the violation list is circulated

What does this mean?

How long will it continue in Hyderabad?

The containment plans will stay in place "till the potential threat of Covid-19 is not ruled out" in these areas.

How do I know if my house falls in a containment zone?

The local administration has issued a list of these areas. Additionally, it is informing residents using public address systems. If your house falls in a containment zone, all entry and exit points in that area have been cordoned off or sealed by now. And still, if you step out unknowingly, you will be stopped by the police and informed about the lockdown.

What do I expect during this time?

There could be multiple screening by health officials, police and civic bodies. People living in containment zones are put under surveillance to track if any person has developed the symptoms of Covid-19 (fever, sore throat, etc.).

How large is a containment area?

It can be as small as one lane in a residential colony or it can be a wider area comprising an entire ward or more. The size of a containment zone is directly proportional to the population density of the cluster in question and the scale of the outbreak.

My area has been declared a containment zone. Does it mean I live in a Covid-19 hot spot?

Not necessarily. While all hot spots are turned into containment zones, all containment zones are not always hot spots. Some lanes and neighbourhoods can be declared containment zones even if there is a single case of Covid-19. A hot spot is an area where multiple cases emerge from a locality

What is the difference between a hot spot and a containment zone?

A hot spot is a potential threat area identified by

authorities after multiple cases emerge from that place. Following this, a containment strategy is devised to prevent further spread of the infection and to break the transmission chain. Under this strategy, a containment zone is declared.

What about cleanliness in a containment zone?

Sanitizing the area declared under the containment plan is a top priority for the local municipal corporation. It disinfects every nook and corner of the declared area multiple times a day.

What happens if one violates the rules?

The person may be warned at the first instance. But violators can be booked under various sections of Disaster Management Act, 2005, as well as the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and provisions of the Indian Penal Code. The punishment can be jail sentence up to two years and/or a fine decided by the enforcing agencies.

Cramped ...

Continued from Page 1

Officials have identified infected people living in such cramped houses in various districts and shifted them to quarantine centres to check the spread of Coronavirus.

In Hyderabad, nine people from the same family were infected. When the officials visited the spot for inquiry, they found that the family lives in a cramped house in Chandrayangutta. Two of them had attended the Tablighi Jamaat convention at Nizamuddin in Delhi, where they were infected. The other seven members of the family, who shared the same rooms and toilets contracted the infection. Officials shifted all of them to quarantine centres later.

Another family of five members, again in Chandrayangutta, was infected. Officials inquiring into the incident found that one of the family members was initially infected. As other four family members reside in the same house, they too contracted the virus.

MALLANNA SAGAR PROJECT

Officials told to fast-track land acquisition works

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Thursday appealed to the local public representatives to put in collective efforts with the Revenue and Irrigation Department officials to expedite land acquisition pertaining to Left and Right bank canals of Mallanna Sagar project, distributary canals and minor canals.

Speaking at a review meeting with public representatives and officials in Siddipet, the Minister also reviewed the progress of packages 10 and 11 under Ranganayaka Sagar Project and Left and Right bank canals under the Mallanna Sagar project work.

Harish said that there was serious need to complete the land acquisition at Yellaipally, Vitalapur, Machapur, Gangapur, Chandlapur, Ramancha, Pudur, Chinnagundavelli, Burgupally, Ensanpally, Irkode, Venkatapur, Bandarapally, Yellareddypet, Ghanpur, and Tukkapur villages for minor canals which are intended to supply drinking water to the villages. The Minister asked the local public representatives to help the officials complete



The Minister further instructed the officials to continue the works of all the important projects in Siddipet district even as they follow the guidelines of the lockdown.

the process of land acquisition so that their villages can get Godavari water soon.

Terminating the construction of Kaleshwaram Project, reservoirs and canals as a historical work in the history of Telangana, the Minister urged them to play a vital role in completing such an important work. Since they were digging up canals to supply Godavari water to all the villages by filling lakes and irrigation tanks besides improving the ground-water table, Rao observed that the efforts they put in would change the face of the villages forever.

The Minister further

instructed the officials to continue the works of all the important projects in Siddipet district even as they follow the guidelines of the lockdown. When the officials raised the need for 150 trucks of cement to continue the work for double bedroom houses, underground drainage in Siddipet, and drinking water works, Rao asked the Police to issue special passes to vehicles to help these departments to get the required cement. Additional Collector, M Padmakar, Municipal Chairman, Kadavergu Rajanarsu and others were present.

Containment zones across TS

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Secretary advised all the district collectors that every household in the containment clusters has to be checked twice on a daily bases and any suspect cases should immediately be referred for treatment.

Further, there will be police picketing to ensure that there is no human movement happening in these zones. The lanes surrounding the containment zones would be cordoned off and cops posted at all entry and exit points.

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Anjan Kumar said, "We are ensuring that all the essential items are made available to roughly 4,000 to 7,000 households in each of these containment areas. 12 to 15 areas have been identified in which we have constructed 8 feet to 10 feet barricades".

Sources said that the creation of containment zones is part of the exit strategy post lockdown. The idea is that these cluster containment zones will not come out of the lockdown, though the remaining areas will be relatively free of lockdown.

The government has leaned on the Bhilwara model due to the assured outcomes. In Bhilwara, curfew was imposed stopping all essential services. This was followed by extensive screening and house-to-house surveys to check for possible cases. Besides, there was detailed contact tracing of each positive case.

Mother travels 1400 km on two-wheeler ...

Continued from Page 1

While Nizamuddin was in Nellore, the whole country was locked down due to Coronavirus pandemic.

With her son stuck in Nellore, Razia Begum began to worry, her anxiety mounting with each day. She decided that the only way she could ensure Nizamuddin's return was bringing him back herself.

Razia Begum called on Bodhan ACP Jaipal Reddy and explained the situation to him. She obtained a letter from the ACP, giving her permission to travel. Armed with the letter, she set out on her

journey of 700 km to reach Nellore on Monday. She managed to reach her destination on Tuesday afternoon. The same evening, Razia Begum set out for Bodhan and reached home on Wednesday. When the media spotted her travelling on her two-wheeler along with son in Bodhan, she revealed her adventure.

Razia Begum said that she was stopped at many places by the police, but was allowed to proceed after she produced the letter given by the Bodhan ACP. She thanked police for allowing her to undertake her journey.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION AND CAD DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
IRRIGATION CIRCLE, WARANGAL
e-procurement Tender Notice Nos. 96/2019-20,
Dt: 13.03.2020 (1 work)
Warangal Rural District - Bids are invited for (1) no of Checkdam work in Warangal Rural District is published in the web site from 13.04.2020 to 20.04.2020. For further details log on to <http://tender.telangana.gov.in> website Sd/-
Superintending Engineer & CAD., Irrigation Circle, Warangal
R.O. No.: 1146-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION: HYDERABAD
GPMC
NIT No.: 1
Name of the work: for 3 No. works of Annual Desilting (Manual means / Mechanical Means) of Nalas/SW drains for the year 2020 etc., in Ward No. 57, 58 & 61 of Rajendranagar Circle - 11, GHMC, Estimate Amount / ECV: Rs. 12.78 Lakhs, Downloading Start Date & Time: Dt: 13-04-2020 at 2.30 PM, Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bid: Dt: 17-04-2020 at 2.45 PM, Name & Address of E/SE: Executive Engineer, Rajendranagar Div. No. 11, GHMC, Cell No. 9849096775 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Division-XI (RJNR), GHMC
R.O. No.: 1138-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21

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CRIME CORNER
STUDENT JUMPS OFF TERRACE

An engineering student allegedly committed suicide by jumping from a multi-storied building at Serilingampally on Thursday morning. Police are still investigating the reason for the suicide. The victim was identified as 21-year-old Pooja Ambika. A resident of Rajiv Swagraha in Serilingampally, she was studying computer science in a private college and stayed with her parents, Yedukondalu and Samanthakamani, both tailors by profession. Ambika was also working in a private company while studying, said the police. According to the police, Ambika went to the terrace of her apartment and allegedly jumped from there. She fell on the ground and died on the spot due to the multiple severe injuries she sustained. The apartment residents found her dead and informed the police. The Chandanagar Police booked a case of suspicious death and are investigating the incident. The body was shifted to the Osmania General Hospital for an autopsy.

TV ACTRESS FOUND DEAD

A daily soap actor of local language was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her house in SR Nagar police station area on Thursday. According to the police, the deceased was identified as Vishwa Shanti alias Shanti, 35, who was staying alone at an apartment in Yellareddyguda for the last couple of years. On Thursday, the apartment watchman got a call from a relative of Shanti informing that she was not taking phone calls for the last two days, and requesting him to enquire at her flat. "The watchman who went and knocked the door on not getting any response, alerted the building residents association secretary Venkateshwar Rao about it" said the police. After receiving information, the SR Nagar Police reached the place and broke open the door. "We found Shanti lying in the room. After investigation we shifted the body to the Gandhi Hospital mortuary for post-mortem," said D Krishnaiah, sub inspector, SR Nagar police station. "We have seized the mobile phone of Shanti for investigation. Once the family members come here, we will question them to know more about her. The cause of the death will be known only after the post-mortem examination," he added. A case under Section 174 of CrPC was registered by the police and investigation taken up.

ZOOM BOMBING

As video conference meetings surge, hackers play spoilsport

NAVEEN KUMAR
HYDERABAD

As the world is going digital with social distancing and lockdown, the crowd working from home and attending classes online are heavily relying on video conferencing applications, particularly Zoom, which picked heavy traction in the last two weeks. However, researchers have branded the application as unsafe as it allegedly let's your personal data out for hackers. Multiple counts of "Zoom Bombing" attacks, which basically means hackers finding their way into your conference on the Zoom VTC, was reported by the public on the application's comment section.

According to check point researchers, hackers began targeting the platform as use has dramatically increased with the pandemic. There have also been a significant number of malicious domains registered in the last month that are tied to Zoom and other video-conferencing platforms. "The Zoom platform itself has come under fire several



With lockdown extension news floating around, these apps will be in demand and one has to take the precautionary measures to avoid malicious attacks

times last month for a host of privacy-related concerns, including the Zoom Bombing incidents and for sharing data with Facebook," said a city based data analyst.

However, in response to these reports, Zoom announced that it was halting software development for the next three months to focus on privacy and security concerns, as it's seen more than 200 million daily meeting partici-

pants, both free and paid, during March alone.

"We are using the platform everyday for group calls as it has a friendly interface. Even my kids back home are using the same application on their iPads and mobiles to tune into virtual classes," said Sai Prasad, an employee of Cognizant.

To get ahead of these concerns, the FBI has provided key recommendations for

organisations to defend against these attacks. "It's important to verify that meetings are not made public. Through Zoom, users can either require a meeting password to gain access, or employ the waiting room feature to control the admittance of guests. Links to these teleconferences should not be made publicly available through social media posts. Rather, the link should be provided to the intended guests," said their statement.

The FBI also reminded organisations to manage screen sharing options. In Zoom, that means changing the screen sharing settings to "Host Only."

"In January 2020, Zoom updated their software. In their security update, the tele-conference software provider added passwords by default for meetings and disabled the ability to randomly scan for meetings to join" report said.

With lockdown extension news floating around, these applications will be more in demand than ever and one has to take the precautionary measures to avoid malicious attacks on their devices.

Telemedicine in demand in times of Covid-19 pandemic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With Covid-19 cases spreading across the country, face-to-face consultations can be risky for both patients and doctors. Under the circumstances, remote consultations over the phone or video calls can help patients access health care while also limiting their and doctors' exposure to the disease.

The irrational fear of contracting the disease, also called Nosophobia has seen a rise among the citizens as they are being exposed to information related to Coronavirus constantly.

Under these circumstances, The Forum for Peoples Health has started a free telemedicine service in both the Telugu-speaking states.

Ramesh Bhimireddy said, "In just a week that we launched, 5,000 families have utilised the services of medical helpline and took prescriptions and guidance from doctors. More than 500 patients are seeking medical advice from helpline in a day. Doctors from various multi-speciality hospitals are giving free consultation. All kinds of people are reaching us on the helpline including pregnant women and handicapped people."



The Forum for Peoples Health has started a free telemedicine service in both the Telugu-speaking states.

Telemedicine was confined as pilot project in Telangana as part of T-Fibre initiative for almost two years.

A list of doctors from various streams has been prepared with the timings they are available. District Collectors requested the people to give a call to the doctor based on the timings. The consultation is also free and ensures that people stay at home.

It may be mentioned here that as per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and

Family Welfare and the Indian Medical Council, the practice of remote delivery of medical services during the lockdown period is allowed and doctors can write prescriptions based on telephonic, textual or video conversations - chats, images, messaging, emails, fax and others. Sunshine Hospitals, Medicovert Hospitals, Srihara Hospitals & AIG Hospitals are using mfin, an AI powered healthcare service which enables medical consultations to connect with their patients.

Cops warn strict action on lockdown violators

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Traffic Police have warned people moving aimlessly on the roads of strict action including seizure of their vehicles. Anil Kumar, Additional Commissioner (Traffic), said the traffic police have set up check points in the city to curb unnecessary movement of public on the roads.

"Unless very necessary, do not come out on the road if at all you come,

maintain social distance and follow the lockdown rules," he said.

Anil Kumar along with other traffic officials visited several areas in the city and interacted with the traffic police personnel on duty.

He was accompanied by K Babu Rao, DCP (Traffic). "Polite requests to the people for to return home was not working and hence the administration has decided to be stern," an official said.



Police officials set up barricades in the containment zones to stop people from leaving or coming in, in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak in the city

UoH students roped in for Coronavirus surveillance

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Students of Public Health of city-based University of Hyderabad have been drafted in by the government to carry out epidemiological field work in various districts across the state as part of its containment strategy against the spread of Covid-19.

About 15 students of the second-semester MPH course of the university who have volunteered for the work have been issued orders by district authorities to participate in active and passive surveillance teams, a release from UoH said.

In addition, four research scholars and another 30 students, including current MPH seniors and alumni, have submitted their credentials to the government and offered to work for the humanitarian cause, it said.

University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor Prof Appa Rao lauded the students' motivation to serve voluntarily in this hour of crisis.

Home Minister distributes essentials items to needy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali along with his family members distributed essential commodities including rice, dall, onions to the poor at Azampura consecutively for the second day.

The Home Minister said, "It is the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on the very first day of imposition of lockdown in the state decided to issue essential commodities to poor people over 87 lakh



holding white ration card and also those poor who do not have food security card/ration card free of cost for one month."

Accordingly, the state government have been distributing the essential commodities so that no one in the state face star-

vation. He states that due to imposition of lockdown in the state as well as in entire country as a measure of containing the spread of coronavirus, many NGOs and people have been coming forward to help their mite with distributing food, food grains to the poor people and others who depend on their daily wages and have gone jobless and facing many problems. As a part of helping the poor people, Mahmood Ali has been distributing essential items to the poor personally from his family and others, he stated.

Police intensify security at containment clusters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police have stepped up security at the 12 containment clusters identified in the city so as to help health and GHMC authorities carry out surveys and disinfection works in these areas.

The GHMC had identified 12 containment clusters after 89 Covid-19 cases were identified from the areas.

While the Health and GHMC authorities are conducting a survey of houses in the containment zone, apart from sanitation and spraying disinfectant, the police has

taken steps to prevent unauthorised entry of outsiders into the area.

City Police Commissioner Anjali Kumar visited a few containment areas in the city on Thursday and inspected the security arrangements and asked the police not to allow any outsider into the area or allow any local to move out without a valid reason. Policemen will be manning the temporary gates of containment clusters round the clock.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar interacted with the inspection team through tele-conference.

Meanwhile, the police officials has upped the security and safety measures in the department after the first case of Coronavirus was reported within its staff.

A 54-year-old head constable of Saifabad police station, was tested positive for Coronavirus earlier this week. He was reportedly stationed at Telugu Talli flyover junction and started showing symptoms of Coronavirus. After he was tested positive, being the first such case from Hyderabad Police, social media platforms went abuzz with the news. ACP of Saifabad, C Venu

Gopal said that they have increased safety measures and had sent the other staff who worked with him under quarantine.

"Nobody are showing symptoms of the virus. The patient is responding well to the treatment. The police department is taking extra measures to curb the spread in general but after our staff was tested positive, we are asking the men to be cautious while in public places and asked them to follow mandatory hand washing. They are all provided with masks, sanitisers and temperature devices," said the official.

IIT-H provides sanitisers for Sangareddy administration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad has been providing 100 litres of hand sanitisers per day to the Sangareddy District Administration since April 4 to help the local community against Coronavirus.

The hand sanitisers were developed by a research group led by Dr Jyotsnendu Giri, Associate Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering, IIT Hyderabad. They are being handed over to the Sangareddy Collectorate, which facilitates dissemination of the product to the local population.

Dr Jyotsnendu Giri's research group developed their own compositions of hand sanitiser, which

Isopropanol/ethanol, Mectronium Ethyl Sulphate, Glycerol, Brilliant Blue and Fragrance.

Speaking about this initiative, Prof BS Murty, Director, IIT Hyderabad said, "Amid the Coronavirus crisis, IIT Hyderabad, as a premier academic institution, is geared up to contribute to the society, the nation and the world at large through its research and offer support to the local community. To combat Coronavirus, the Institute initially prepared hand sanitisers for internal usage. In view of the scarcity of this product for the public at large, the Institute is now preparing and delivering about 100 litres of hand sanitiser every day to the Sangareddy District Collector's office for local distribution."

Usual hustle bustle missing at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The usual hustle bustle of passengers and screaming noise of landing and taking-off aircrafts is missing for more than 15 days at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, one of the busiest airports in the country which has now turned into a virtual parking lot for the flying machines.

About 50 aircraft belonging to various airlines can be seen parked at parking bays near the main runway, which remains operational to handle evacuation and cargo flights.

Aircraft of Air India, IndiGo, Vistara, GoAir and a couple of international airlines are seen parked in several rows.

The swanky airport, located at Shamshabad, about 30 km from the city, was handling 550 air traffic movements and about 60,000 passengers daily before



Covid-19 induced lockdown came into effect last month.

Billed as the world's third fastest growing airport in the category of 15 million passengers in the world, it is also the best-connected airport in south and central India, connecting 55 non-stop domestic destinations.

Airport sources told that ever since the lockdown came

into effect, all activity related to passenger operations came to a halt. However, skeletal workforce continued to report for duties every day for essential services like maintenance of ACs, data server, security and sanitation.

"We can't shut the airport. We have to maintain certain systems so that they don't collapse

RGIA was handling 550 air traffic movements and about 60,000 passengers daily before Covid-19 induced lockdown came into effect

and remain ready whenever the flight operations resume," they said.

Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Air Navigation staff are also attending the duties as the airport continues to handle evacuation and cargo flights. "Employees are passing through thermal screening and all safety measures are being taken," they said.

The lockdown has provided an opportunity to airport authorities to take up large-scale sanitation works in the entire airport. During normal operations, some of the areas are not properly covered due to

continuous movement of passengers.

The airport, operated by GMR, continues to handle relief flights during lockdown. A special Air India flight on April 7 airlifted 99 US citizens stuck in Hyderabad. It carried the US citizens to Mumbai, from where they were connected with Delta Airlines to their final destination in the US.

On March 31, the airport handled a group of 38 German nationals who flew by a special flight of Air India which ferried the passengers from Chennai, Hyderabad and Mumbai to Frankfurt.

GHAIL steps up to feed migrant labourers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting total lockdown having brought India virtually to a standstill position, many migrant labourers are facing a tough time in coping with the situation.

With neither money in their hands nor any safe shelter available during the current lockdown, the migrant labor are the most affected during these tumultuous times. Recognising the important role played by these migrant labourers in keeping the economy running, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. (GHAIL) believes that it is our society's combined civic duty to support them in their hour need.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
Revenue (LA) Department or Collector / Joint Collector / Special Collector (LA) / SDC (LA)

FORM - VII
DECLARATION

(See Sub-Rule (1) of Rule - 25 and Section - 19 (1) of the Act - 30/2013)
Gazette No. : Hyd 64 Dated : 08-04-2020
No. A/87/2019 Dated : 08-04-2020

Where as it appears to the Government of Telangana/ Special Collector (L.A.) & Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad that a total of 524.87 Sq. Yards of land is required in Kanchan Bagh Village, Bandlaguda Mandal of Hyderabad District, for public purpose, namely, for proposed 150.00 wide road from Chandrayangutta Flyover to Owaisi Hospital Junction via Hafez Baba Nagar, Raja Narsimha Colony, Madhani under SRDP.

Therefore declaration is made that a piece of land measuring, more or less 524.87 Sq. Yards Standard measurement under acquisition for the above said project in Kanchan Bagh Village Bandlaguda Mandal, Hyderabad District, whose details description is as following.

Sl.No.	TS No.	Block	Ward	Type of Title	Area under Acquisition Sq. Yards	Name & Address of person interested	Boundaries				Trees	Structures		
							North	South	East	West		Number	Type	Plinth area
1	58/2	E	276	Patta	90.27	Mohd. Jahangeer Baig H.No.18-8-192/8/A/1	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-192/8/A/3	-	-	Slab House	-
2	58/3	E	276	Patta	81.12	Mohd. Moiruddin H.No.18-8-192/8/A/3	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-192/8/A/1	-	-	Slab House	-
3	58/5	E	276	Patta	22.22	Mohd. Mukaram H.No.18-8-220/19/D/3 & 4	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-220/19/D/105	-	-	TIN Shed	-
4	13/2	F	276	Patta	110.85	Mohd. Lateefuddin & Mohd. Fareeduddin H.No.18-8-221/16	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-221/17	-	-	Slab House	-
5	58/7	E	276	Patta	119.44	Mohd. Azam H.No.18-8-220/19/B/1 to 5	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-220/19/B/1 to 5	-	-	Tin Shed	-
6	58/6	E	276	Patta	22.22	Mohd. Azam H.No.18-8-220/19/D/1 & 2	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-220/19/D/3 & 4	-	-	Tin Shed	-
7	58/4	E	276	Patta	78.75	Mohd. Bashoureddi H.No.18-8-192/8/1	Owner's Property	Road	Road	18-8-192/8/2	-	-	Slab House	-
524.87														

This declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested and due enquiry as provided U/s 15 of the Act No. 30/2013. The number of families likely be resettled due to land Acquisition is - Nil.

Mines of coal, iron-stone, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired are not needed.

Sd/-
Special Collector (L.A.)
Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad

Sd/-
Spl. Dy. Collector
LA, GHMC, Hyderabad

DIPR No.1470/LA/PP-Advt/Agency/2020-21

COVID-19 SCARE

Secretariat employees taking no chances

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the rise in number of Corona positive cases in the state, the secretariat employees are taking a slew of measures to protect themselves from the novel Coronavirus. Besides protecting themselves by using sanitisers and wearing masks, the officials concerned are conducting thermal screening on the employees visiting the secretariat at BRKR Bhavan.



Earlier this month, the Secretariat was thrown into chaos after an official who had attended Markaz and returned to TS, continued to perform his regular duties

It may be recalled that earlier this month, the Secretariat was thrown into chaos after an official from Animal Husbandry Department, who had attended the Markaz and returned to the state, continued to perform his regular duties. The official attended the religious congregation in the Nizamuddin Markaz, but upon his return he continued to attend all official meetings of secretaries and the matter came to light only after a list of Delhi returnees was made where his name was mentioned. However, he was tested negative. The incident has left the staff at the Secretariat panicked. The premises of the

BRKR Bhavan were thoroughly disinfected. Following this incident, the state government took several. The government has strictly prohibited outsiders from visiting the place.

The officials had set up two thermal scanners -- one at the main gate and another at the employees lift. The security

staff are allowing the employees only after thermal scanning. Anyone who has cough and cold besides fever is being sent to quarantine. To contain the spread of the virus, the state directed the secretariat employees to work on rotation basis. In every department, the Assistant Secretary or Deputy

Secretary and the higher officials are attending the duties every day. Cadre below Assistant Secretary and Deputy Secretary like Section Officers, ASOs, Record Assistants, Attenders and others are attending only 20 per cent every day. One of the officer on condition of anonymity said, "We are working to see that there is no pending work. We all are in touch over phone. Due to this arrangement, I am attending once after nine days as our department has 30 section officers," he said. Telangana Udyogula Sangham president A Padma Chary said that the government was taking all measures to ensure good health of the employees.

One of the senior officers, who is attending his office at secretariat every day, said that he is using sanitiser frequently besides wearing mask. "I am taking bath immediately after reaching the house. I believe in fortune these days as the situation is dreadful. Otherwise, it is not possible to work by coming to office. Before Corona, it is the fear which kills us," he said.

Civic body office gets disinfectant tunnel

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) Mayor Gunda Prakash Rao said the civic body was taking all steps to check the spread of the novel coronavirus in the city.

He along with Commissioner Pamela Satpathy has inaugurated the disinfectant tunnel installed at the GWMC office here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that five more such tunnels would be installed each at Balasudram vegetable market, Laxmipuram market, Jubilee Market, Kazipet and Excise Colony Rythu Bazaars in the city.

"We have already made proposals for setting up the disinfectant tunnels at these places.

They would be installed soon. All the visitors must pass through the tunnel in order to make themselves free from the virus," he said.

Municipal Health Officer Dr B Raja Reddy, EE Vidyasagar, Deputy EE Ravinder, AE Harikumar and others were also present.

CS talks tough on lockdown violators

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar directed the district Collectors to take all measures to contain the spread of the virus to protect and safeguard public in the districts. Chief Secretary on Thursday held a video conference with the District Collectors on containment clusters, government quarantine, surveillance of home quarantine and relief measures taken up for migrant workers in the districts and others.

The Chief Secretary advised all the district Collectors that every household in the containment clusters has to be checked twice on daily bases and any suspect cases should immediately be referred for treatment. Chief Secretary instructed to strictly ensure that no person is allowed to move freely in barricaded area.

He asked them to ensure that disinfectant is spread twice daily in the containment areas. He said that any foreign returnees or persons belonging to other states, who do not have homes, should be allowed to stay in government quarantine.

The CS said that any violation by home quarantine persons has to be dealt with strictly. He also asked them to ensure that essential commodities are delivered at the door steps of the people in containment clusters. He said that surveillance of local teams is more important particularly for home quarantine persons. He asked district collectors to arrange control room and also publish pamphlets in local languages with instruc-



tions to follow during this period. Santhi Kumari, special Chief Secretary to Health, Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary to Govt. (MA&UD), Vikas Raj, Principal Secretary to Govt. (GAD), Sanjay Jaju, Central Nodal Officer for Telangana

State(COVID-19), Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Secretary to Govt, PR&RD, Ronald Ross, Secretary, Finance, Sarfaraz Ahmed, IAS, Director, Prohibition and Excise Department, Rajat Kumar Saini, CCLA, Director and others participated.

CS seeks people's support

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar urged the people to support the government in tackling the spread of Coronavirus in the state.

Chief Secretary on Thursday visited Mallepally area in Khairathabad Zone along with local MLA Jaffar Hussain Miraj, DGP Mahender Reddy, MA&UD Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar, GHMC Commissioner DS Lokesh Kumar, Hyderabad Collector Swetha Mohanthy, Commissioner of Police Anjani Kumar.

The Chief Secretary said that 12 containment clusters have been identified to combat Covid-19 spread in the city. He urged public residing in these areas not to come outside of their houses. The Chief Secretary also indicated that



outsiders should not visit those areas. A special number will be allocated to those who are inside to convey their problems, the Chief Secretary told. The Chief Secretary instructed GHMC Commissioner to nominate a nodal officer to monitor the implementation of containment rules. He also instructed Zonal and deputy Commissioners to implement government directions intact. He said that people are completely supporting to the government's decision impose lockdown. Zonal Commissioner Praveenya, Corporater Majid Hussain were also present.

Three lakh tonnes of maize produced in Khammm: Ajay

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly three lakh tonnes of maize was produced in Khammam and steps to procure the entire produce were taken, said Transport Minister P Ajay Kumar.



Inaugurating maize and paddy procurement centres at different villages in Sathupalli Assembly constituency in Khammam and in Aswaraopet Assembly constituency in Bhadradi Kothagudem on Thursday, the Minister said maize was cultivated in about 88,000 acres across the district this year and that the State government ensured a minimum support price of Rs 1,760 per quintal. Nearly 40 lakh gunny bags were made available for procuring the produce.

The Minister said paddy was cultivated in about 2.34 lakh acres from which about eight lakh tonnes yield was

expected. Elaborate arrangements were already in place for procurement, he said. The Minister urged farmers and officials to ensure social distancing at the procurement centres to contain the spread of coronavirus.

MP Nama Nageswar Rao, Kothagudem ZP Chairman Koram Kankaiiah, MLC B Lakshminarayana, MLAs Sandra Venkataveeriah and M Nageswar Rao, State Markfed Vice-Chairman B Rajashekar, DCOMS chairman R Seshagiri Rao and others were present.

713 centres started procuring paddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ministers Niranjan Reddy and Gangula Kamalakar on Thursday asked the officials concerned to not to compromise on the issue of cleanliness and social distancing at paddy procurement centres across the State. They said farmers would not be put to any inconvenience during the procurement.

Reviewing the status of the ongoing procurement process in the State, the Ministers said 713 centres had started operations so far and more could be added based on the phased paddy harvesting process in the State. It was also observed that there would be more paddy available for procurement as harvest would speed up within a week.

The Agriculture, Marketing and Civil Supplies Departments were directed to provide basic amenities and also take all necessary steps for the smooth functioning at the centres. The review meeting also discussed steps to further improve the quality of rice cultivation in the



The review meeting also discussed steps to further improve the quality of rice cultivation in the State

State and opined that there was a need to set up a committee under the Commissioner of the Agriculture Department with active consultation with the Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Board.

The meeting also discussed the need to expand the capacities of rice mills and storages and the encouragement that the rice milling industry should receive from the State government. Similarly, it was felt that the food processing industry in the State must be

encouraged following the advice of experts from that domain. The Ministers also discussed the plan of action in front of the Civil Supplies, Agriculture and Marketing Departments as the paddy and corn procurement had picked up in the State.

State Civil Supplies Corporation Chairman Mareddy Srinivas Reddy, Civil Supplies Commissioner P Satyanarayan Reddy and Rice Millers Association president Nagender and others attended the meeting.

ITI, DRDO to sign pact for producing portable ventilators

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Wilmar, which sells edible oils and other food items under Fortune brand, on Thursday said it has tied up with online food aggregator Swiggy to deliver essential food items to customers in view of the nationwide lockdown to contain coronavirus.

Logistics and supply chains have been disrupted due to the ongoing lockdown. While the current lockdown is slated to end on April 14, there is no clarity when the situation will return to normal.

"Our tie-up with Swiggy is to ensure that our customers can access our whole range of products without stepping out

of their homes and putting themselves at risk of coronavirus," said Angshu Mallick, deputy CEO, Adani Wilmar.

The deliveries of Fortune range of products by Swiggy delivery persons are expected to commence in Lucknow and Kanpur by next week, the company said in a statement. Adani Wilmar aims to expand the facility to 13 more cities, including Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, among others.

We are confident that the convenient mode of delivery through Swiggy and the excellent quality of our products will ensure that the service is very well received by our customers, Mallick said.

Covid-19 tests: HC seeks reports

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday directed the State and Central governments to file detailed reports in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on the imposition of charges of upto Rs 4,500 for performing Covid-19 tests on patients by private laboratories during the ongoing lockdown situation.

The petition was filed by advocate P Thirumala Rao seeking direction from the HC to the State and Central governments to provide diagnosis and treatment to Coronavirus affected patients free of cost.

Arguing the case through video conference, the petitioner told the High Court that the Supreme Court has only ordered for conducting free tests for all Covid-19 patients. He also said that the imposition of the charges by private laboratories were not only arbitrary but also grossly discriminatory.

He said that the acts of the laboratories would frustrate and defeat the very purpose of the two governments. He said that both governments ought to assure and undertake full responsibility to provide the covid-19 treatment free of cost to all the people of the state at private laboratories and private medical establishments.

A division bench of the High Court comprising of the Chief Justice of the State Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice T Amarnath Goud later posted the matter to April 15 for further hearing.

'Release White Paper on lockdown'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy asked party leaders and cadre to prepare a plan for extensive relief operations as the ongoing lockdown due to Coronavirus would have a long lasting impact on common people.



Addressing senior leaders of Congress party through a video-conference on Thursday, Uttam feared that normalcy might not return to the State immediately after the end of lockdown period which is most likely to be extended. Therefore, he said that the Congress leaders should prepare a comprehensive plan to extend help and relief to people affected due to lockdown. While the immedi-

ate priority is supply of food to daily wage earners, migrant workers, homeless and other poorer sections, he said that the Congress leaders would also need to work out a plan to help those who lost their livelihood or jobs due to lockdown.

He said all Congress workers should try to inculcate hope and confidence among people who might be experi-

encing extreme trauma and pain due to loss of jobs and sources of earnings.

He said that the fear of Coronavirus and the impact of lockdown would leave a negative impact on a sizable population and all Congress workers should play a pro-active role in bringing out people from that mindset.

Uttam advised the party leaders to carry out relief works in an organised manner. He said Control Rooms established in different districts should coordinate with the main Control Room at Gandhi Bhavan and everyone involved in relief works should be connected through separate WhatsApp Groups. He asked them to keep the TPCC Control Room updated about

their daily activities and respond to the requests being forwarded to them for helping the people who are approaching Control Room.

Uttam also demanded that the State government release a 'White Paper' disclosing the real statistics pertaining to Coronavirus in Telangana State besides disclosing facts on the financial situation of Telangana State. He said it was unfortunate that people have started raising apprehensions that State Government was hiding real statistics of Coronavirus patients, suspects and deaths. He said such apprehensions were triggered due to the failure of authorities in releasing Media Bulletins on number of cases on regular basis.

CORONA WARRIORS



Former MP Kalvakuntla Kavita has come forward to provide food to the doctors treating Coronavirus patients. She is providing food to the doctors, patients' attendants and stranded migrant workers under the aegis of 'Jagruti'. Jagruti Nizamabad district president Avanti Rao, Nizamabad District Headquarters Government Hospital superintendent Dr Nageswara Rao, in-charge doctor Jalagam Tirupati Rao commenced the free meals programme on Thursday.

Liquor still available at a premium during lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD/CHENNAI

Lockdown days have been tough for people across the states in terms of movement, food and grocery. The days have been tougher for those looking for their daily stock of liquor. How do they manage? Tightened security may have made liquor smuggling difficult, but the availability is coming at a premium in several places. Wine shops are being looted while some innovators don't mind using milk cans or vegetable-laden vehicles to smuggle in the bottles.



In Uttar Pradesh, since the lockdown began on March 22 with the Janata Curfew, only a few people have been arrested for liquor smuggling.

According to police sources, barely a dozen persons have been arrested in various districts for smuggling liquor during the lockdown.

Two persons were arrested on April 1 in the Para locality in Lucknow, who were working as carriers in the liquor smug-

gling racket. The third accomplice managed to escape. Two crates of liquor were recovered from their possession with 96 pouches of country liquor.

On Wednesday, in the Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh, thieves broke into a liquor shop and decamped with

In Mahbubnagar district, excise police seized alcohol worth Rs 31,000 and arrested three persons for procuring the alcohol from Goa

liquor worth lakhs of rupees. The incident took place at Alinagar where the thieves broke into the shop from the rear gate.

In Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, no consolidated figures of the number of people arrested and cases booked by the Excise Department were available. However, both the states have reported sporadic incidents of sale of liquor during the lockdown.

In some cases, the owners of

the liquor shops were found violating the rules. For instance in Hyderabad area in Hyderabad, police raided a liquor outlet that was operating illegally during the lockdown. The owner of the shop was arrested and over 100 liquor bottles were seized.

Liquor bottles worth Rs 26,000 stolen from a wine shop in Gandhi Nagar area. The wine shop owner complained to police that the offender drilled a hole and committed

the burglary. Excise Department booked three cases of illegal sale of 'gudumba' or illicit liquor in the Dhoolpet area of Hyderabad. In Mahbubnagar district, excise police seized alcohol worth Rs 31,000 and arrested three persons for procuring the alcohol from Goa. In Khammam, police seized liquor bottles worth Rs three lakh and took a wine shop owner into custody for illegally selling the liquor.

People in other parts of Khammam and Bhadradi-Kothagudem districts complained that some wine shop owners are illegally selling the liquor bottles for three times more than MRP and even transporting it to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Medical teams conduct survey

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Medical teams carried out health survey in Karimnagar and Huzurabad towns on Thursday. Teams comprising doctor, supervisors, ANMs and ASHA workers visited each and every house and tested people with infrared thermometer.

Around 21 medical teams conducted survey in Mukarampura and Kashmirgadda areas of Karimnagar, where ten Indonesian preachers toured last month. A total of 4,005 persons staying in 1,207 houses were tested. Meanwhile,

health checkup was done on 5,053 persons of 1,402 houses in Huzurabad where three positive cases were reported. Though surveys were already carried out in these areas, it was repeated on Thursday to check spread of coronavirus.

On the other hand, 31 persons, who were in Satavahana University quarantine facility, have now been shifted to home quarantine as they were tested negative for coronavirus after 14 days of isolation. While discharging them from quarantine, they were asked to stay at home and approach doctors if they developed cough, cold and fever.

SHORT READS



GB Pant Hospital removed from list of COVID-19 facilities

NEW DELHI: GB Pant Hospital, a designated COVID-19 facility, will no more be on the list of such hospitals in view of problems being faced by general patients, according to a Delhi government order issued on Thursday. The order issued by the health department said GB Pant Hospital will continue to function as it was before being made a designated facility. Five hospitals, including LNJP Hospital combined with GB Pant Hospital, were recently made as designated COVID-19 facilities. The decision to remove GB Pant Hospital from the list has been taken in view of the problems faced by general patients who are receiving treatment in the super speciality stream, the order said. LNJP Hospital will create additional 500 beds by utilising OPD space and a newly-constructed block, in lieu of beds designated at GB Pant Hospital, it said.

COVID-19: UP gov orders fire safety checks of hospitals

LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh government has ordered fire safety checks for all government and private hospitals handling COVID-19 cases, an official said on Thursday. "State home department has ordered fire safety checks of all medical colleges, government hospitals and private hospitals taken for COVID-19. The check is to be done on Thursday itself," said Director General, Fire department, RK Vishwakarma. He said directives have been issued to all the fire officers in this regard. After the safety checks of hospitals, the fire department officials will present their findings to the head of these establishments, Vishwakarma said.

COVID-19 lockdown hits Goa's poultry supply

PANAJI: Goa's poultry supply has been hit by the COVID-19 lockdown, after over 50,000 birds belonging to the state's poultry owners remained stuck at Belagavi in neighbouring Karnataka. Several poultry owners in Goa prefer to have their breeding farms in Belagavi because of its favourable weather. "Before the Goa government sealed the state borders on March 22, we were in the process of bringing in 50,000 birds to the state," said Jaikrishna Naik, president of All Goa Poultry Owners Association. The poultry is still stuck at Belagavi and the state government has not shown any interest in allowing transportation of the same, he said. The biggest worry for the poultry farmers is that the birds need to be fed regularly and it costs them Rs 2 lakh on an average every day for their feedings, Naik said. "If this situation continues, we will have to dispose them off in Karnataka and the entire trade will suffer a huge loss," he said.

Strength of federalism has given major boost to fight against COVID-19: Soren

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The strength of federalism has come to the fore in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic with many chief ministers coordinating with each other to help out people stranded outside their home states, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said on Thursday.

Soren said he spoke with chief ministers of various states, including Kerala, Maharashtra and Delhi, where people of Jharkhand were working and they promised all support.

In an interview to PTI, he said based on the total calls received at the migrant helpline being run by the state's labour department, there are about 7 lakh Jharkhandis who are currently outside the state.

Soren said lifting the lockdown is a "big challenge" and must be given a considered thought. Though the spread of the coronavirus has been kept in check in Jharkhand, things could



change if a large number of people return to the state from various parts of the country, he said.

"The prime minister (Narendra Modi) did not ask the states while imposing the lockdown and now he is asking states for suggestions to open the lockdown," he said.

The nationwide lockdown was imposed from March 25 by the Centre to prevent the spread of the coronavirus that

has claimed 166 lives and infected 5,734 people across the country.

Soren said his government started work early and that had helped in keeping COVID-19 cases in check.

"About two lakh people came into our state after the lockdown somehow, but we had put mechanisms in place to deal with the situation. Now details of 1.75 lakh out of those peo-

The nationwide lockdown was imposed from March 25 by the Centre to prevent the spread of the coronavirus that has claimed 166 lives and infected 5,734 people across the country

ple are with us. Some people belong to Jharkhand, while others are from West Bengal and other states," he said.

They are in home quarantine and information on them could be obtained as the committees were formed by the state government at the district, block, village and panchayat levels, Soren said.

"We have also set up informa-

tion centres. There is one for people within the state and the other is for people from our state stuck in other states," he said.

The chief minister also said Jharkhand was largely dependent on the Centre for resources and would need a dedicated financial package to deal with the crisis.

"Due to the imposition of the GST, the central government has already broken the back of states. We would need a dedicated package from the Centre. We would also need more health equipment," he said.

Soren said the Centre had given about Rs 250 crore to Jharkhand from the package announced by it nationally and it also received some pending dues, but that is not enough.

The Jharkhand chief minister also asserted that India's federalism had manifested itself during the COVID-19 crisis and many chief ministers were coordinating with each other.

Maharashtra Cabinet names Thackeray's for MLC post

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Thursday decided to recommend Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's name for being nominated as member of the state Legislative Council from the Governor's quota.

Thackeray, who is currently not a member of either of the Houses of state Legislature, was not present at the Cabinet meeting where the decision was taken. At present, there are two vacancies in the Legislative Council from the Governor's quota after MLCs Rahul Narvekar and Ram Wadkute quit the NCP to join the BJP before the Assembly polls in October last year.

The term of these two vacant seats is till mid-June. Maharashtra Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anil Parab told PTI that the decision to recommend Thackeray's name as MLC from the Governor's quota was taken at the state



Cabinet meeting. "Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari has been requested to appoint Uddhav Thackeray from one of the two vacant seats," he said.

Thackeray was not present at the Cabinet meeting which was chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar at the state secretariat. Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik told reporters that Thackeray had been advised not to attend the meeting, since the Cabinet was to recommend his name to the governor for appointment as MLC.

30 workers found living on terrace of a shop in Bengali Market, owner held

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An FIR was lodged against a pastry shop owner in Bengali Market here after his 30 workers were found living in unhygienic conditions and not adhering to social distancing norms to contain the spread of coronavirus, police said on Thursday.

The Bengali Market, along with 20 other COVID-19 hotspots in Delhi, was sealed after three members of a family tested positive for the deadly virus there.

As a preventive measure, police, along with a medical team, members from New Delhi Municipal Corporation and the District Magistrate, conducted home-to-home verification in Bengali Market on Thursday, a senior police official said.

Police found 30 workers of a pastry shop living either on



the terrace of the shop or behind it at shelters provided to them in unhygienic conditions without maintaining social distancing, he added.

Subsequently, An FIR was registered at Barakhamba road police station under section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and section 3 of the Epidemic Diseases Act against the shop owner, police said.

Kerala to start clinical trial of plasma therapy for COVID-19 treatment

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala is set to become the first state in the country to commence convalescent plasma therapy, which uses antibodies from the blood of cured patients, to treat critically ill COVID-19 cases on a trial basis.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has given its nod to the state government for the first of its kind project, initiated by the prestigious Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), a top official said.

SCTIMST, an Institution of National Importance under the Union Department of Science and Technology, is expecting to start the trials by this month end once the required approvals from the Drugs Controller of India and the Ethics committee are received.

"We have received the approval from the Indian



Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to conduct it as a clinical trial", Director of the city-based institute Dr Asha Kishore told PTI.

"This is a form of convalescent plasma therapy. The technique is to use (blood) plasma of patients who have completely recovered from COVID-19 as it will be rich in antibodies", she said.

In COVID-19, some small

studies have been done in China and United States where they had tried this treatment method -- taking the plasma of a patient who is cured and whose blood contains lot of antibodies to fight the virus, she said.

Their plasma is collected and infused into COVID-19 patients who are critically ill and whose immune system cannot fight the virus.

Mayawati demands action against BJP MP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

BSP supremo Mayawati on Thursday demanded strict action against a BJP MP who had allegedly beaten up a Dalit officer, saying such behaviour was "shameful".

Revenue officer Arvind Kumar was allegedly beaten by the BJP's Kannauj MP Subrat Pathak and his supporters on Tuesday.

"Manhandling and misbehavior with a dalit 'tehsildar, who was discharging his duty honestly, by the BJP MP in Kannauj recently is very shameful," Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

In a separate tweet she said, "It's saddening that instead of going to jail, this MP is roaming outside due to which dalit employees are agitated. In such circumstances, the chief minister should initiate strict action against this MP so that he does not repeat such an incident in the future."

"BSP demands strict action



against the MP so that such behaviour is not meted out to any other Dalit employee in the state," she said.

Kumar had alleged that Pathak was pressurising him to sanction some projects which flouted rules and when he refused, the leader verbally abused him on the phone and later arrived at his residence along with his supporters and beat him up.

Pathak, however, said the official had failed to properly distribute food among the poor and also misbehaved with his supporters.

Delhi HC suspends summer break to make up work loss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High court Thursday decided to suspend its summer vacation this year, slated from June 1 to 30, to make up for the loss of working hours due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown.

The high court has also cancelled the summer break of subordinate courts in June this year.

The decision was taken at a meeting by Delhi High Court Chief Justice D N Patel and other judges considering the severe hardship and difficulties being faced by litigants on account of the lockdown and consequent suspension of functioning of the courts that are currently hearing matters of extreme urgency only through video conferencing.



The high court has been hearing only urgent matters since March 16. Besides, all the interim orders passed by it and the trial courts earlier, which were to expire by March 16 or there after, have already been extended till May 15. The high court resolved Thursday that the courts shall continue functioning during the entire vacation

month of June 2020.

"This decision has been taken by the Full Court on April 9, to make up for the loss of court working hours and to ensure restoration of normalcy in the functioning of the courts at the earliest," said a statement issued by the high court.

The resolution said, "Since during the period of suspension of work, the hearing is limited to the matters of extremely urgent nature or urgent nature, there is negligible fresh filing of cases, lesser disposal and corresponding escalation in arrears, resulting in extreme hardship to litigants."

It said the September 16, 2019 notification, which had declared the period of the summer vacations for the high court and trial courts here in June this year, is modified.

A 'MOVING VILLAGE' STOPS: Rambo Circus faces heat amid coronavirus outbreak

PNS ■ MUMBAI

An empty tent is a circus group's worst nightmare but the nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus has compounded the problems of an already struggling business, says Sujit Dilip, the proprietor of Rambo Circus, who had to put out an appeal for help.

Dilip said he was initially "embarrassed" to ask for help but decided to reach out to public as they were grounded in Airoli, Navi Mumbai from March 13, when the state and later the nation announced the lockdown due to the pandemic.

With no shows possible and the responsibility of around 80 artistes and 20 animals, Dilip said they were staring at an uncertain future as the pandemic has taken away their chance to earn money during the peak



summer season.

"We were about to start our circus when the CM announced the lockdown from March 13 and we had to close. It'll take at least three-four months for the situation to settle down but by then monsoon will start and it'll be a bad time for us again," Dilip told PTI in an interview.

Circuses in the country, Dilip

said, have two primary seasons: the summers and Diwali.

Last year, Rambo Circus braved the Aurangabad floods—which damaged their tents and lights—faced heavy rainfall in Pune and finally arrived in the suburban Malad here during Diwali to make up for the losses.

"I had to sell off my flat to bail

With no shows possible and the responsibility of around 80 artistes and 20 animals, Dilip said they were staring at an uncertain future as the pandemic has taken away their chance to earn money during the peak summer season

out the circus. But even the festive period earning was hit. So we finally decided to focus on the summer of 2020. Who would've thought this would happen?" he wondered.

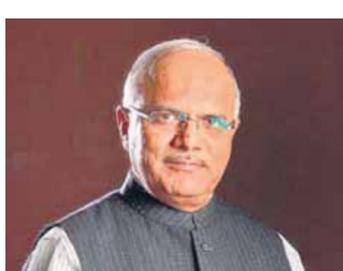
COVID-19 fallout makes Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' more relevant: ICCR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With people globally feeling "very lonely and frustrated" in the confinement of their homes amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICCR is contemplating offering classes on the basics of Indian philosophy as the credo of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is all the more relevant now, its president Vinay Sahasrabudde said on Thursday.

On a day the India Council for Cultural Relations, India's cultural arm to strengthen its external affairs outreach, observes its 70th foundation day, Sahasrabudde told PTI that in the six years of the Modi government, this organisation has become more result-oriented and productive.

In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, all ICCR centres abroad have started e-tutorials on a variety of subjects



To a question if the ICCR is recalibrating its agenda due to the disruption brought by the pandemic, Sahasrabudde, who is also a senior BJP leader and a Rajya Sabha member, noted that people are likely to feel very lonely and frustrated in these days of remaining confined to the four walls of their homes

including yoga, classical dances, music and even Sanskrit and Hindi languages, he said.

In fact for music and dance classes, YouTube and Skypetype platforms are proving to be more effective at some places, he added.

To a question if the ICCR is recalibrating its agenda due to the disruption brought by the pandemic, Sahasrabudde, who

is also a senior BJP leader and a Rajya Sabha member, noted that people are likely to feel very lonely and frustrated in these days of remaining confined to the four walls of their homes.

COVID-19 has been a huge disruptor, he noted.

"In a situation like this, relationships become very important and Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the

world is one family) becomes all the more relevant. The uniqueness of our philosophy is, even while recognising individuality of personal space, we have been emphasising more on collectivism."

"The understanding of both these features have the potential of providing a healing touch in these circumstances and that is what is needed. May be, class-

es on basics of Indian philosophy could be an activity worth contemplating," he said.

Setting the bar high for the organisation going forward, he said when it comes to soft power, its efforts must be compared with that of British Council and American Center. If ICCR activities are looked at from that angle, then "we realise that we have miles to go further".

"And if we take a longer perspective and understand the enormity of this subject, we realise that strengthening soft power can't be left to an institution alone. All citizens, all government or non-government agencies with some connection with people abroad, can very well significantly contribute in this mission. Creating awareness about this collective responsibility is also one of our priority areas," he said.

Pak aiming to score narrow political goals thru Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan is aiming to score narrow political goals by attempting to bring India's initiatives to collectively fight the coronavirus pandemic in the SAARC region under the formal umbrella of the grouping, government sources said on Thursday.

On Wednesday, Pakistan boycotted a video conference of trade officials of the SAARC countries to discuss ways to minimise the economic cost of the pandemic.

Islamabad said such initiatives could only be effective if spearheaded by the group's secretary instead of India.

In such a scenario, the sources said, Pakistan will get a free hand to block India's initiatives and proposals by using the SAARC charter of provisions and rules of procedure.



highlighted the need to enhance the quantum of intra-SAARC trade as the pandemic is likely to have a considerable impact on the region.

The deliberations took place as a follow up to an India-initiated video conference of SAARC leaders on March 15. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had suggested in the conference that the member nations of the bloc should come together to jointly fight the pandemic.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a regional grouping comprising Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

All the SAARC member nations are reeling under adverse social and economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Ear to the ground

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



Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
 WHO DIRECTOR GENERAL

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

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

E-commerce to rescue

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



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

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

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

Varun Dambal
 Bengaluru

Light at the end of tunnel

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



AJOY KUMAR

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

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

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

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

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



be thoughtful rather than emotive in our response. One aspect of the fight against COVID-19 is the immediate decision to implement the lockdown, we cannot ignore the fact that cure runs the risk of causing more harm than the disease.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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



BSF Director-General
 —SS Deswal

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



Actor
 —Kay Kay Menon

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



US President
 —Donald Trump

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



Union Minister
 —Narendra Singh Tomar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Take the call soon

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

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

Varun Dambal
 Bengaluru

Locking India is the safest option

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

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

Make a phased exit plan

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

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

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



gion to engulf clusters of human populations overwhelmingly. It will become very hard to manage if "community transmission" takes place. In these difficult and unsettled times our collective efforts, marked by our rational and responsible behaviour, alone will overcome the killer virus. In the name of resumption of economic activities or economic renewal, we cannot afford to cast prudence to the winds and imperil lives.

G David Milton
 Maruthancode

of situation many Western countries are facing.

AL Nadwi
 Bengaluru

Putting heads together

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

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

Bal Govind
 Noida

Send your feedback to:
 letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A Catch-22 situation

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



MARKANDEY KATJU | DHRUTI KAPADIA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT THE WHO HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT IT WAS DESIGNED TO. WE JUST CAN'T CONTINUE TO PERMIT THAT TO GO ON.
 —US SECRETARY OF STATE
 MIKE POMPEO



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

Locked down with a predator

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



SIMI MEHTA | BALWANT MEHTA | ARJUN KUMAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



IN ITS EFFORTS AGAINST COVID-19, THE GOVERNMENT MUST ALLOW CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, COUNSELLORS, MENTAL HEALTH ORGANISATIONS AND PROVIDERS TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF THE WOMEN/GIRLS FACING DV/SEXUAL ABUSE. REACHING OUT TO WOMEN/GIRLS IN DISTRESS AND THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM NEED TO BE CLASSIFIED AS AN 'ESSENTIAL SERVICE' BY THE GOVERNMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Big Brother is watching behind COVID mask

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



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAPSULE



HMSI pledges financial support to dealers amid lockdown

New Delhi: Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) on Thursday said it has lined up a slew of measures, including buyback of unsold BS-IV stock, in order to support its sales partners during the unprecedented nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. The two-wheeler major said it plans to buy back the BS-IV inventory lying unsold with few dealers, majorly in Delhi-NCR area, and provide advanced payments of incentives and reimbursements across the three functions -- sales, service and spare parts. The company will also entirely bear the interest cost of BS-IV inventory (physical plus transit) with the dealers for the 21 days of the lockdown, it added.



JSPAL promoter companies repay Rs 391 crore debt

New Delhi: Three promoter companies of JSPAL have repaid an amount totalling Rs 391 crore to the lenders, said a company official. The companies are Opelina Sustainable Services Ltd, OPJ Trading Private Ltd and Gagan Infra Energy Ltd. "These promoter companies have repaid loans of around Rs 391 crore out of total debt amount Rs 747 crore as on December 3, 2019," the official said. The said promoter companies have also informed the exchanges about the development, he said. "With this repayment, the current debt at promoter level under loan against shares stands at only Rs 356 crore," he said. Part of the USD 25-billion OP Jindal Group, JSPAL has presence in steel, power, mining and infrastructure sectors.

Covid-19: Nasscom seeks govt help for BPM, GCCs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT industry body Nasscom has sought a relief package from the government, including allowing bench employees to be paid only minimum wages, to prevent job losses in business process management (BPM) and global capability centres (GCC) sectors.

Nasscom said BPM, GCC and parts of IT industry are operating at maximum 70 per cent capacity utilisation in wake of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the coronavirus infection in the country.

Assuming that 20 per cent of the industry is idle, salary costs would be huge for companies that employ lakhs of workers, it added.

Nasscom urged that they should be allowed to pay bench employees only minimum wages along with statutory entitlements.

"In the absence of work, it will be difficult for companies to pay regular incomes to the employees on bench. This will ensure such employees are paid as per the statutory requirements along with other



Nasscom said BPM, GCC and parts of IT industry are operating at maximum 70 per cent capacity utilisation

entitlements," it added. Employees on bench are those who aren't working on any project for the time being but remain on the rolls and receive regular salary from the company.

Nasscom suggested introduction of a furlough scheme, like one in the UK where, during the period of lockdown, employee stay on the rolls of the companies without salaries. During this period, the government pays 50 per cent of the

employees' salary (no further contribution from company) and during that period, the accruals of the employee also cease.

This is required immediately to prevent job losses which will be the case after April 15, Nasscom argued.

It has also asked the government to expand its scheme for bearing employer and employee contribution towards Provident Fund for the next three months.

"This (present scheme) is for those establishments which have up to 100 employees and 90 per cent of them earn less than Rs 15,000. Suggest that this be extended to all establishments without the cap of 100 employees and 90 per cent of them earning less than Rs 15,000.

"Government may, however, cap the contribution of 24 per cent up to a wage amount not exceeding Rs 15,000," it said.

This will provide a significant benefit particularly to BPM / IT - e n a b l e d services/GCCs companies, it added.

The industry body suggested that an option be provided to employers for a one-time PF/ESI opt-out option to reduce the costs, without affecting take home salary presently. This, it said, will enable greater take home salary for employees as pay hikes are difficult.

The coronavirus outbreak across the globe has had a disruptive impact on businesses, demand and supply of products, services as also cash flow of firms due to slowing economic activity.

Covid-19 pandemic to hit MSME exporters more: Trade experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) exporters will be impacted more by the current lockdown on account of COVID-19 pandemic as the sector accounts for over 45 per cent of the country's total outbound shipments, according to trade experts.

They said the magnitude of the impact on MSME exporters can be gauged from the statement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which has projected that global trade in goods is set to decline steeply between 13 per cent and 32 per cent in 2020 as countries across the world are battling the pandemic.

The sector also contributes about 25 per cent to the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) from service activities and over 33 per cent to the manufacturing output of India. Biswajit Dhar, a professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said the government should immediately come out with an incentive package for exporters as the current crisis will 'severely' hit the MSME sector.

"India will suffer very badly and the biggest impact will be on the MSME exporters. They



The sector also contributes about 25 per cent to the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) from service activities

will also face issues in calling back their workers as several of them have migrated to their villages and towns," he said. He said several countries, including the US, Japan and Germany, have announced incentive packages.

"Incentives will help exporters to resume the work immediately after things start getting normal, otherwise they will not be able to restore their global buyers," Dhar added. Rakesh Mohan Joshi, professor at Indian Institute of

Foreign Trade (IIFT), said the outbreak of COVID-19 has put economies across the world on a virtual standstill.

"India's major export items such as petrochemicals, gems and jewellery, automobiles and auto components, cotton yarns and textiles, apparels, marine products, bovine meat among others are likely to receive a jolt primarily due to slump in demand in its major markets and disruption of supply chains which are integrated across countries," he said.

RBI hopes monetary, fiscal measures to spur eco activity

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

It said prior to the outbreak, the outlook for growth for 2020-21 was looking up.

The RBI noted that the bumper rabi harvest and high-



er food prices during 2019-20 provided conducive conditions for the strengthening of rural demand, the transmission of past reductions in the policy rate to bank lending rates has been improving, and reductions in the tax rates and measures to boost rural and infrastructure spending were directed at boosting domestic demand more generally.

Blue Dart cuts retail tariff rates by 25 per cent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Express logistics services provider Blue Dart Express on Thursday said it has reduced retail tariff prices by 25 per cent, aiding the country in its fight against the coronavirus crisis.

Blue Dart Express, part of Deutsche Post DHL Group (DPDHL), operates six dedicated Boeing 757 freighters each with a capacity of 34 tonnes.

These aircraft have been operating during the lockdown period across Indian cities enabling essential shipments like medical equipment and pharmaceutical products reach the first responders in hospitals and medical institutions with the promise of secure and timely deliveries.

Apparel retailers likely to offer huge discounts after lifting of lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apparel retailers are expected to offer large-scale discounts to clear old stocks and also perk up consumer sentiments once the lockdown is lifted, according to industry players.

A series of lockdowns around the world has severely impacted the fashion retail ecosystem as stores all over the world shuttered, resulting in cancellations of late Summer and Autumn merchandise and a build-up of unsold Summer 2020 within the business, they said.

Benetton India Managing Director and CEO Sundeep Chugh told PTI that although "there is certainly no specific discounting strategy post lockdown, as a brand we would want to uplift the sentiments of our consumers through a welcome-back strategy encapsulating season specific offers and engagements at our stores".



A series of lockdowns around the world has severely impacted the fashion retail ecosystem

Chugh further said, "We anticipate the lockdown would be lifted by/during mid-season, and that's the time when generally mid-season offers prevail and we would mostly align with the same as per the market ecosystem." Moreover, he said, "Benetton

is trying to fully adhere to government regulations and we want to take all decisions in tandem with the government's instructions."

Spykar Lifestyles CEO Sanjay Vakharia also said the situation would depend entirely on how long does the lockdown continue and when the restrictions would be eased.

"Also whether lifestyle businesses will be the last to open or they will open along with the rest is to be seen. But if the lockdown is lifted in this month we may be at the beginning of the Spring Summer season, not necessitating an early end of season sale. However, if opening is delayed, the Spring summer will be on discount then," he said.

Giving a global perspective, Forever New Country Manager Dhruv Bogra said COVID-19 crisis seriously disrupted the global supply chain for fashion early this year.

Worldwide semiconductor revenue to decline 0.9%

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Due to the impact of the coronavirus on semiconductor supply and demand, worldwide semiconductor revenue is forecast to decline 0.9 per cent in 2020, according to Gartner Inc.

This is down from the previous quarters forecast of 12.5 per cent growth, the research and advisory firm said.

The wide spread of COVID-19 across the world and the resulting strong actions by governments to contain the spread will have a far more severe impact on demand than initially predicted, said Richard Gordon, research practice vice-president at Gartner, was quoted as saying in a statement.

Cement industry to see successive decline

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic cement industry is likely to face yet another decline in demand in FY21 after posting negative growth last fiscal, India Ratings and Research said.

The ratings agency expects a "washout" in April 2020 due to the ongoing lockdown, followed by demand decline of around 40 per cent in May. However, it expects a gradual recovery thereafter.

The agency expects a low single-digit growth in Q2 (July-September) period and a significant recovery happening only in Q3 (October-December).

Cement demand had declined in FY20, which was



only the second instance of a decline in the past 15 years, after the demonetisation affected FY17.

India Ratings and Research expects successive declines in cement demand FY21, following the FY20 trend, with growth plunging to a historical low of negative 4-5 per cent you given the nationwide lockdown till 14 April 2020," it said.

Sensex rallies over 1,265 pts; Nifty reclaims 9,100 level

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex rallied over 1,265 points on Thursday, led by robust buying in auto, financial and IT stocks amid hopes of a second stimulus package from the government to mitigate the blow of the Covid-19 lockdown.

After hitting a high of 31,225.20 during the day, the 30-share BSE barometer ended 1,265.66 points or 4.23 per cent higher at 31,159.62.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty soared 363.15 points, or 4.15 per cent, to 9,111.90.

Mahindra and Mahindra was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging over 16 per cent, followed by Maruti,



Titan, Bajaj Finance, HDFC, Bajaj Auto and Hero MotoCorp.

On the other hand, HUL, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank and Nestle were the lag-

gards.

"Indian markets started trading on a positive note taking upbeat cues from its Asian peers in the morning session as policymakers discussed the

practice of reopening the global economy as data showed a slowing spread of Covid-19," said Narendra Solanki, Head-Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi.

During the afternoon session, market further strengthened on back of expectations of second stimulus package estimated at around Rs 1 lakh crore and focus on helping small and medium businesses, which led to both broad-based buying and also triggered some short covering, he added.

A Bank of America Securities report said the Centre may soon announce another fiscal package which may be almost similar to the Rs 1.75 lakh crore stimulus unveiled last month.

NIIT's free course to fight against Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Skills and talent development company NIIT Ltd on Thursday said it has specially designed and launched a "Remote Work Excellence Kit" course to support the fight against Covid-19 crisis. Aimed at helping facilitate remote working for adults, the Remote Work Excellence Kit is suited for corporate executives, small and medium businesspersons, and management students, a statement said.

The online course covers areas such as how to set up a remote office, establishing a remote presence, setting up and running virtual meetings, time management while working from home, remote business etiquettes, and also best

practices, it added.

"It is abundantly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic not only poses a massive health challenge, it will also lead to economic slowdown and a change in how businesses are conducted worldwide," NIIT Ltd Vice Chairman and Managing Director Vijay Thadani said. In the immediate term, work from home is important to not only maintain social distancing but also as a means of keeping the economy ticking, he pointed out.

Going forward, it has the potential to become a norm rather than an exception and the team has been able to quickly develop this useful and timely Remote Work Excellence kit, Thadani said.

'Ready to fight invisible, invasive Covid-19'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF is all geared to "fight the invisible and invasive enemy" in the form of the coronavirus pandemic in the country, the chief of the force said on Thursday.

In a communication to his troops on the occasion of the 'Valour day' of the force, CRPF Director General (DG) A P Maheshwari asked them to be strong and fit for serving the country during these tough times.

"Dear friends, when going gets tough, the tough gets going. Toughness is our trademark..."

"Today, the entire nation is facing a tough time due to COVID-19. I am happy that being tough yourself, you all have geared up to help people fight the invisible and invasive



enemy," he said.

The DG said "all programmes related to the day are for the time being suspended" in view of the viral outbreak.

"However, we in our thoughts and ethos uphold the dignity of the day," he said.

It was on April 9, 1965 at Sardar Post in Gujarat that only two companies of CRPF heroes proved tough enough for a full

brigade of Pakistani army, making them bite the dust, Maheshwari said.

"We are and will always be proud of their valour and sacrifice for the motherland," he said.

President Ram Nath Kovind said the Central Reserve Police Force men, who were killed in action, wrote a "golden history" on this day with their

CRPF DG AP Maheshwari asked them to be strong and fit for serving the country during these tough times

extraordinary bravery, patriotism and sacrifice.

He also paid his tributes to the martyrs in a message issued over Twitter.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also lauded the bravery of the force.

"The courage of @crpfIndia is widely known. On CRPF Valour Day today, I salute this brave force and remember the bravery of our CRPF personnel in Gujarat's Sardar Patel Post in 1965. The sacrifices of the brave martyrs will never be forgotten," the PM tweeted.

Union home minister Amit Shah wished the force, saying a small contingent of the force

created history by defeating the invading enemy army that was several times larger than them.

"Congratulations to everyone and salute to our brave martyrs of CRPF. 'Shaurya divas' is a symbol of indomitable courage, valour and sacrifice," Shah said on Twitter.

The fight-back by the force, which was posted for border guarding duties that time, is mentioned as one of the glorious chapters in military history of the nation when only two companies (about 150 personnel) of the force stood their ground and repulsed the Pakistani attack.

Godrej Consumer partners Zomato, ShopKirana, Zoomcar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG major Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) on Thursday announced partnership with food delivery app Zomato, B2B supply chain startup ShopKirana and car rental company Zoomcar for delivery of essential goods during lockdown.

Zomato will deliver GCPL products directly to consumers at their doorsteps while ShopKirana will deliver them to individual retailers by connecting with GCPL directly, said a statement.

Zoomcar, self-drive mobility platform, will facilitate timely delivery of various



essential products under the personal care, hair care, home care and household insecticide categories, to distributors, it added.

Earlier three FMCG makers - ITC Foods, Marico and Britannia - had announced partnerships with several firms to get their products delivered at consumer's doorsteps by using the service of app-based

aggregators.

"We have embarked on three unique collaborations to empower communities and contribute to the greater cause of curbing this pandemic's spread," GCPL CEO - India & SAARC Sunil Kataria said.

GCPL's home delivery initiative will be listed under Zomato's new app feature 'Zomato Market'.

Lockdown 'tails' TIPS TO KEEP PETS ENGAGED

Most of the world is under lockdown right now to control the spread of Coronavirus. But one thing that plagues the minds of people is the health of their dogs. The lockdown has not only brought human's life to a grinding halt, but also that of our furry friends. **K RAMYA SREE** talks to pet parents and vets to find out how we can keep our pets safe and entertained at home

Ever since India entered lockdown, people have been worried sick over the impact of confining their pets at home. The dogs and cats which were accustomed to going to pet parks and for long evening walks, are now having to make do with just a short walk, enough to just attend nature's call, as pet parents prefer returning home as soon as possible. Animals, both the ones at home and strays, need your love during these trying times. This 21-day lockdown period is a golden opportunity for pet parents to teach their furry friends new commands and tricks. But a few burning questions on pet health that has been haunting people are: Can you take them outside? How can they exercise? Are they susceptible to contracting and spreading the virus?

Answers to these questions are still unclear as medical professionals search for solutions. While there is nothing much one can do than staying home, we spoke to a few pet lovers and activists on steps to ensure that your furry friends' health does not get affected during the lockdown. Sajjan Chowdhary, member of an animal welfare board and parent to a German shepherd and Indie says, "It's been proven time and again that pets aren't carriers. So why quarantine them? One can take safety measures like wiping their paws with a sanitiser or a medicated soap but the onus mainly lies on humans as we have this standard habit of spitting on the roads. This can in turn end up sticking to their paws and can enter your home." Sajjan makes sure his pets are

being vaccinated routinely even during these distressing times. "Showering your pet with treats and love is not enough. Without exercise, pets, especially the larger breeds, tend to get obese easily," he adds.

return home. Wash your pet's paws when you return home." "If you are scared to venture on to the streets even for 30 minutes, making your pets run or play fetch on your building's terrace or parking lot is also a good option," she adds.

Speaking about ways to keep one's pet active despite avoiding walks, T Anusha Reddy, a pet parent and an actor by profession says, "Pets are curious in nature and love challenges, especially ones that reward them. Try hiding treats or stuff their favourite food inside one of their toys. They also like games like hide-and-seek. Try to entertain them by playing such games."

While the question still remains if animals can contract the virus, Dr RP Singh, a veterinarian tells us steps to ensure the pets are safe. He said, "Avoid taking your dog to places where there are many people. Even if you are taking them for walk, take them during uncommon hours. Ensure you wipe their paws and clean their coat. Also ensure you avoid taking them to places where there is grass and moisture. Social distancing is necessary for pets too."



K Navya

parent to a Pomeranian and a techie by profession talks about ways to keep one's pet healthy. She says, "One of the most common ways to exercise your dog is taking them for a walk. If you're healthy enough, walking and running your pet is recommended. When you go outside, avoid touching unnecessary surfaces and wash your hands as soon as you

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- ❑ Entertain your pets with toys or anything possible. Don't let them remain idle.
- ❑ Keep your pet supplies in stock
- ❑ Train your pets to urinate in the backyard if you are unable to go out completely
- ❑ Keep two metres distance while taking them for a walk and avoid crowded places
- ❑ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds when you return home.
- ❑ Don't let your pet lick surfaces outside. (With inputs from Shikha Duggal)



Anusha Reddy



Meet the brothers LIFTING SPIRITS with short videos

Hyderabad-based brothers Sandeep and Phanideep started a YouTube channel — **Telugu Geeks** — to help people deal with psychological issues, finds **V SATEESH REDDY**



Inspiration pushes people to achieve their goals and guides them to reach heights. Many people give up easily on what they've started without realising the power they possess in achieving their dreams. This Hyderabad-based youth who is suffering from MND (Motor Neuron Disease) is fighting the disease every day and is setting an example to many people that nothing can stop them from achieving what they desire. Inspired by the way his brother is fighting the disease, Sandeep along with his brother Phanideep started a YouTube channel **Telugu Geeks** and are making short videos to encourage and motivate people around them.

Speaking about his brother Phanideep, who suffers from MND that left him paralysed, Sandeep says, "We are a happy-go-lucky family. All of a sudden, MND struck my brother. Doctors told us

that he can survive only for six months left. But Phanideep defied destiny and is living happily for more than seven years since the disease hit him. He is an inspiration to many who give up on life. He can't converse or move properly but is doing all he can to inspire people through our YouTube channel." On how 'Telugu Geeks' took shape, Sandeep shares, "We wanted to encourage and motivate people around us that are suffering with various issues. We started the channel in 2016 and have been making short videos about various psychological issues and how to deal with them in life ever since. We believe that when we open up about our issues with someone, there is a sense of relief. Thus, we share stories of people who defied all odds to succeed in life."

The duo reads many inspirational and self-help books to collate and summarise important points from them and use these

points to make a ten-minute video. "We read real-life stories of people and understand how they overcame various problems before attaining success. We compile important points from their lives and summarise the book. Later, we work on how to make put these points into a video format and then work on preparing the script. My brother Phanideep helps with the editing while I do the voice-over," Sandeep explains. The brothers also narrate biographies of people like Steve Jobs and other prominent ones who are an inspiration to many. "All our efforts are aimed at removing negativity from people and inspiring them to take up what they want to achieve in life. We have been receiving good feedback from our audience. They tell us our videos helped them get over certain issues in their life. It gives us utmost satisfaction knowing our efforts have been fruitful," Sandeep concludes.

Muskurayega Hyderabad!

While people are locked inside home and are exposed to news that is creating panic about the ongoing pandemic, some bloggers in the city are using social media platforms to spread smiles and a message of hope, finds **SHIKHA DUGGAL**

As the world battles the Coronavirus pandemic, people are bombarded with sad and negative news often. Most of the news covered daily tends to spread fear, panic, and hopelessness. And at a time when half-world is locked up indoors for weeks together, this is the last thing one would want to hear and feel. To address this, bloggers from the city came up with a unique concept to bring smiles on people's faces. Aply titled 'Muskurayega Hyderabad', the idea is to boost the morale of Hyderabadis and let them know that "this too shall pass." Muskurayega Hyderabad is the brainchild of city bloggers Namrata Sadhvani and Shweta Parihar, who aim to encourage their fellow citizens to write about

their delightful moments during these times of distress and panic with a picture that represents hope. Namrata Sadhvani tells us, "We want people to extend their support to each other in times



of crisis. The idea serves as an excellent way to spread smiles." Shweta seconds her saying, "People are fed up with negative news and as social media influencers, we're making the right use of our

popularity by widening the chances of hope." *Sab Saath Hasenge tabhi toh #MuskurayegaHyderabad* is inspired by

#MuskurayegaIndia campaign, reminding people of all the happy times they've seen and that we'll all get through this too, soon. Motivated by Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's

speech, both the bloggers believe social media must propagate more positivity. "All we know is that hope is the most powerful component in these times of suffering and we are all in this together. We will be over this, soon," says Namrata. In an attempt to bring positivity amid this virus, Muskurayega Hyderabad is sending out a message that every person, whether rich or poor, regardless of their religion, can contribute and overcome this pandemic. "It's a way to show solidarity while also spreading hope and smiles," they say. To participate in the #MuskurayegaHyderabad, all you have to do is post a happy picture of yourself in quarantine on your social media handle with the #MuskurayegaHyderabad and mentioning that one thing you're looking forward to indulging in, once the lockdown ends.



Kanika returns home, no one she came in contact with tested +ve for Covid-19, says brother



Singer Kanika Kapoor, who had tested positive for Covid-19 last month, has finally returned home after treatment Kanika was being treated at a Lucknow hospital for almost two weeks.

Kanika's brother Anurag confirmed the news. "Yes, Kanika is back. We all are very happy. She is doing fine now," he said. He added that she has not been advised any precautions by her doctors and is doing well.

Anurag also mentioned how no one that she came in contact with since her return from UK has tested positive for the disease. "We are glad Kanika has recovered and what's even better is that none of the people who she came in contact with have tested positive," he said.

Kanika was discharged from hospital on April 6 after her sixth overall and second negative test for Coronavirus. She will now be interrogated by the Uttar Pradesh Police after she completes the 14-day quarantine period, as advised by the doctors.



Honey Singh to come up with a bilingual song

His new track *Loca* is wowing the fans, and pop star Yo Yo Honey Singh is already all set to come up with his next song, titled *Moscow Suka*. The upcoming number, featuring Neha Kakkar, will be a mix of Punjabi and Russian language. "Moscow Suka coming on April 12. You gonna love it," he wrote.

The Russian vocals were given by Ekaterina Sizova.

Earlier on Wednesday afternoon, Honey Singh shared that he is coming up with a new bilingual song and asked fans to guess which international language he has used in the track.

"The song I am dropping is going to be a Punjabi and international collaboration....coming soon," Honey Singh posted.

Honey Singh gained instant stardom with hits such as *Main shara-bi*, *Angrezi beat* and *Lungi dance*.

He was missing from the limelight around 2016-2017 but he made a stunning comeback with the hits *Dil chori* and *Chhote chhote peg* in the film *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweetie*.

His latest number *Loca* has garnered over 84 million views on YouTube at the last count.



Rahman, Prasoon Joshi upset with recreated version of Masakali

Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman and lyricist Prasoon Joshi don't seem happy with a new recreated version of their 2009 gem, *Masakali*. The duo had created the song for Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's film *Delhi-6*, and on Thursday joined a growing band of social media users who have conveyed their disappointment over the new number.

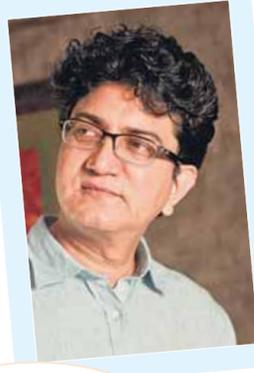
Without mentioning the name of *Masakali 2.0*, Rahman tweeted: "No short cuts, properly commissioned, sleepless nights, writes and re-writes. Over 200 musicians, 365 days of creative brainstorming with the main aim to produce music that can last generations. A team of a Director, a Composer, and a Lyric supported by actors, dance directors and a relentless film crew."

Along with it, Rahman shared a link of the original song, which makes it

obvious what he is referring to.

Sonam Kapoor, on whom the original song was picturised, retweeted Rahman's tweet.

Lyricist Prasoon Joshi urged fans to stand for originality. "All songs written for #Masakali close to heart, sad to see when original creation of @arrahan@prasoon-joshi_&singar @MohitChauhan insensitively utilised," Joshi wrote.



Varun Dhawan in online talent hunt show

Bollywood star Varun Dhawan will be hunting for the best talent among youngsters across the nation through an online talent hunt show titled *Entertainer No 1*.

Sharing the details of the show, Varun said, "Through this new show, we are seeking to entertain millions of fellow Indians as we bring in some much-needed positivity. I'm looking forward to delivering the best entertainment in collaboration with people from across India. Our country is a

treasure trove of talent and I truly believe that anyone should have the opportunity to showcase their entertainment skills."

The stay-home reality show is launching on Flipkart video in collaboration with Varun. The actor believes that such conceptual shows are important to stay positive as the world is going through a tough time due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Anyone who is 13 years or above can record their performance video and upload the video directly in the Flipkart

video section and over the period of eight weeks Varun, along with a panel of judges, will go through the process of deciding upon the best talent.

Varun said, "Given the unique format of the show, I'm looking forward to some exciting entries from across India and can't wait to get on this entertaining rollercoaster ride that begins next week"



FUN

ARCHIE

WHY'D YOU BRING JUGHEAD? HE DOESN'T KNOW A BARBELL FROM A BAR OF SOAP!

HE NEEDS THE EXERCISE! I GOT HIM ONE OF THOSE BALANCE BALLS FOR STARTERS!

I TOLD HIM TO WORK WITH IT AWHILE AND THEN WE'D MOVE UP TO SOMETHING MORE CHALLENGING!

I THINK I'M GETTING IT, ARCH!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

LOOK, HOBBS, I GOT A MODEL AIRPLANE. WANT TO HELP ME BUILD IT?

SURE.

WOW, A PHANTOM JET! I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S DONE!

LOOK AT ALL THE LITTLE PIECES.

HERE, YOU PUT THOSE PIECES TOGETHER, AND I'LL DO THESE. THEN WE'LL STICK YOURS ON MINE, OK?

SHOULDN'T WE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS?

DO I LOOK LIKE A SISSY?

GARFIELD

I'M UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE

BUURRRRRP...

NOW, NOT SO MUCH

REALITY CHECK

SURE I BUILT THE WALL - BUT I HAD THE CHICKENS PAY FOR IT!

SPEED BUMP

I COULD ONLY FIND A COUPLE OF PILLOWCASES.

CROSSWORD

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

NANCY

I DON'T LIKE LOOKING AT NEGATIVITY ON THE INTERNET

BESIDES IT'S PROBABLY ALL BOTS ANYWAY

OK BUT YOU CAN'T DISMISS ALL CRITICISM AS COMING FROM BOTS

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- Graveyard
- In the lead
- Shelf
- Pay attention
- Threesome
- Yours and mine
- An old fortified building
- Racket
- Mirror reflection
- A jewellery item

DOWN

- A game played on a squared board
- Infuriate
- Story
- Jockey

SOLUTION

S	E	N	T	E	N	C	E	W
L	O	V	E	E	X	P	A	N
E	C	D	L	E				
C	U	R	V	E	W	A	G	E
T	I	I	T					
I	R	I	S	H				
O	I	T	H	O				
N	E	T	T	L	E			
L	O	A	M	E				
F	R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R



Chay-Parasuram film to roll NEXT YEAR



Parasuram has assured Chay that he will be directing the actor come what may next year, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**

With Parasuram set to direct superstar Mahesh Babu up next, rumours about his proposed project with Naga Chaitanya (tentative title Nageswara Rao) shelved completely have done the rounds sometime back. Chay fans were particularly unhappy with the fact that the director gave a cold shoulder to their actor after formally announcing the project last December. However, we have learnt from multiple sources that the director will be working with Chay — immediately after he wraps up Mahesh's film. While ideally directors who work with stars of Mahesh's standing tend to do their next with stars of similar repute, Parasuram has assured Chay that he will be directing the actor come what may next year. A source close to the development tells us, "It was an unfortunate situa-

tion that Parasuram saw himself in earlier this February. He got the nod of Mahesh for a project last year itself but as the actor was committed to Vamshi Paidipally's next after he

THE DIRECTOR INFORMED CHAY THAT THERE IS NO WAY THAT HE WOULD MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DIRECT HIM, AS THE STORY OF NAGESWARA RAO IS DEAR TO HIM

wraps up *Sarileru Neekevvaru*, he told Parasuram that he can direct a new film in the interim and can come back to him towards the second half of 2020. However, little did he think that Mahesh would reject Paidipally's

script and would approach him later! As it has been his wish to direct a star of Mahesh's stature for the past two years, he accepted the offer."

The next stop for Parasuram was to have a word with Chay to ensure his smooth transition to Mahesh's film. "It wasn't as if the director accepted Mahesh's offer without informing Chay. Being a gentleman that he is, he met Chay multiple times and told him about his wish of taking the next leap in his career. Chay understood it. At the same time, he informed Chay that there is no way that he would miss an opportunity to direct him, as the story of Nageswara Rao is dear to him. They both mutually agreed to team up next year for 14 Reels Plus. So the question of Nageswara Rao being shelved altogether doesn't arise," the source concludes.



MEGA BROTHERS bond over Lord Hanuman

In a series of tweets, Megastar Chiranjeevi, who has taken to social media like a fish to water, explained his connect to Lord Hanuman on Hanuman Jayanthi. "I won a picture of Lord Hanuman in a lottery in 1962. I've preserved it and it is with me the way it was when I first won it. When my dad saw the picture, he told me that its facial features resembled to mine. Decades later in 2002, Babu (director)

gifted me a Hanuman picture. He told me later, 'I could draw only your features as I started drawing it. Which is why, I didn't change it'. I reproduced his picture on a marble stone and got it placed in my prayer hall," Chiru, an ardent devotee of Lord Hanuman, posted going down the memory lane. His posts were an instant hit as they received many likes and re-tweets.

On Thursday, replying to his elder brother's tweet, Pawan Kalyan shared an interesting anecdote. "Hanumanji

worship came into our home through my brother-Chiranjeevi garu; & that made my father to transform from an atheist & communist to Lord Rama Devotee. I used to recite Chalisa 108 times in certain days of my teen age. Jai Hanuman (sic)," he posted on Twitter.

Meanwhile, Chiru has informed that food essentials—raised through funds from Corona Crisis Chairty—are being door delivered to the daily wage employees of the industry with due care.



MARUTHI dismisses reports about his next with Ram

Speculations about Maruthi Dasari doing his next with Ram Pothineni have been rife for the past one month or so. With Ram too not announcing his next yet, having wrapped up the shoot of *Red* sometime back, speculations only gained further momentum. However, the director chose to put a lid on all rumours. Talking to Twitter, he clarified that he is still penning the script of his next and hasn't met any actor in this regard. "Saw few articles about my next film in a section of media. Thanks for the interest but I am

THE DIRECTOR CLARIFIED THAT HE IS STILL PENNING THE SCRIPT OF HIS NEXT AND HASN'T MET ANY ACTOR IN THIS REGARD

still writing script and it will take some time to finish it. I will let you know once I am done with it. This is the only news I have," the director posted.

The director, who has delivered his biggest hit last year with *Prathiroju Pandage*, is believed to collaborating with GA2 Pictures and UV Creations again.



MOHAN BABU distributes 2 tonnes of veggies

Doing his bit to help people who have been hit badly by Coronavirus, actor Mohan Babu has donated vegetables weighing two tons to three villages of Andhra Pradesh. With the help of his staff from Vidyanikentan educational institutions, which he runs in Tirupati, the actor distributed vegetables in Rangampeta, Pullaiahgaripalli and Ramireddy Pally panchayats recently.

NIDHHI AGERWAL wants to have an arranged marriage

Like many actors, *iSmart Shankar* girl Nidhhi Agerwal admits to be missing film sets. "I am missing shoot so much you have no idea.. I cannot wait to get back on set.. my happy place (sic)," was the actress reply when a fan asked her if she is missing shooting. She participated in a *#AskNidhhi* season on Wednesday evening where she engaged with her fans on her personal life, com-

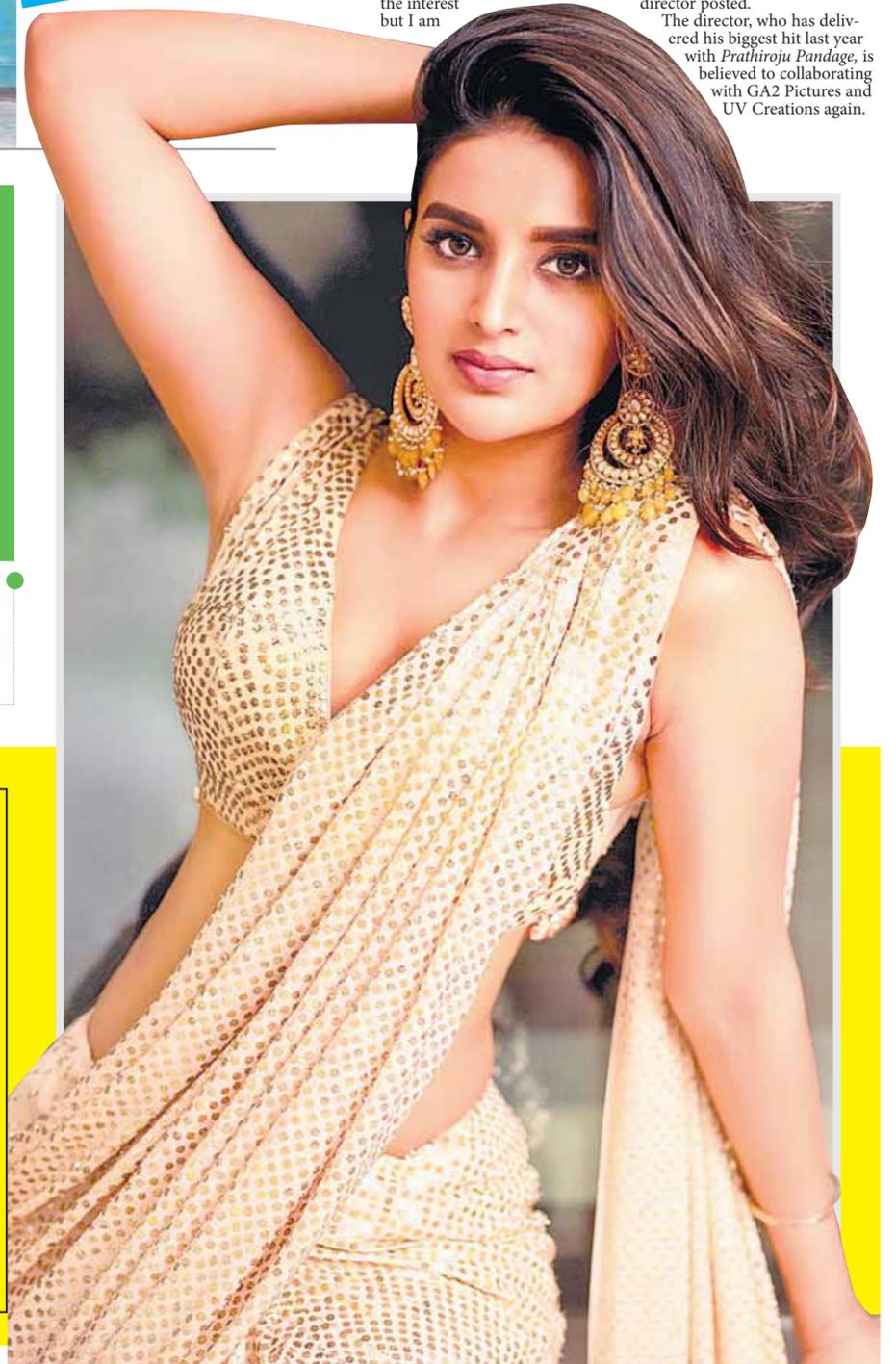
petition and much more. Insisting that she is 'single', the actress informed to one of her fans that she would prefer an 'arranged marriage' in life.

When asked about her

go-to fashion item, she stated, "A good pair of shoes.. give a girl the right pair of heels and she can rule the world. to be precise I'm obsessed with @LouboutinWorld."

To a question as to who she feels is her competitor in Telugu cinema, she wrote, "There are so many talented actresses in Tollywood.. but I think our only competition is ourself. Everybody has their own goal and path." She also revealed that her stint with modeling had something to do with landing a chance in films. "Modelling was a way of getting into movies. It has always been only the MOVIES (sic)."

SHE PARTICIPATED IN A #ASKNIDHHI SEASON ON WEDNESDAY EVENING WHERE SHE ENGAGED WITH HER FANS ON HER PERSONAL LIFE, COMPETITION AND MUCH MORE



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

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

PTI ■ HOBART

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kapil rejects Akhtar's proposal for Indo-Pak series

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



World Cup-winning former captain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fallout of the Newlands Test was huge.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gloucestershire call off Pujara deal



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

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

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

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



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

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

AFP ■ MILAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Tennis needs unity, Paris acted out of fear, making a mistake. But they have recognised this."

All this will depend on the virus which has infected over 1.5 million with the United States and Europe hit hard.

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

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

"In this way three Slams and six Masters 1000 would be played (there are also Shanghai and Bercy) and the season would be 70 percent safe."

"Of course, if the whole American slot were to skip, the difficulties would increase tenfold."

Gaudenzi said the options were being examined in conjunction with the ATP Player Council including Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

He stressed it was hoped to maintain the ATP Finals, scheduled for London in November 15-22.

"The 02 Arena is only available in the week already fixed. I don't like closed doors, it's the last resort."

Rangers blast plans to end Scottish season early

GLASGOW: Rangers strongly criticised plans to terminate the divisions below Premiership, warning of "severe consequences for the Scottish game".

With play halted due to the coronavirus, the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) announced proposals to determine final placings by points per game in league matches played to date by each club.

The resolution, to be voted on by clubs, also recommends the top tier remains postponed for the time being, although final placings would be determined by the same system if the SPFL's board determines matches cannot be played.

That would see Celtic crowned champions for the ninth successive season and Hearts relegated, but the immediate impact of the plans would be relegation for Partick Thistle from the second-tier Championship and Stranraer from League One.



Rangers stadium.

Steven Gerrard's second-placed Celtic, 13 points behind Rangers, said in a statement they would oppose "in the strongest possible terms" any attempt to railroad changes to existing rules.

They said they would immediately propose a member's resolution that would release prize money to be distributed to all clubs throughout Scotland urgently.

Rangers said forcing through change "without due care and attention" would have severe consequences for the Scottish game.

Partick, bottom of the Championship, said they would not accept the proposal as it stood, adding it needed more scrutiny and debate.

Dundee United would be promoted to the Premiership if the resolution passed, while Raith Rovers would move up to the Championship and Cove Rangers would join League One. AFP

Boucher optimistic about rebuilding strong SA side

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's ODI series victory over Australia was the "light at the end of the tunnel" for Team Director Mark Boucher, who remains optimistic about rebuilding a strong Proteas side despite a tough summer.

The former wicketkeeper-batsman took over in mid-December ahead of the England tour which saw South Africa lose a Test and T20 series while drawing a rain-affected ODI.

The Proteas then suffered a home T20 series defeat to Australia before a young Quinton de-Kock-led side registered a 3-0 win over Aaron Finch's men in the ODIs.



"If I look back over the summer and reflect on the team's performances and progress, especially against England and Australia, I think it was quite disappointing

to be honest," Boucher told *Cricketer South Africa*.

"Especially against England, we didn't perform like we wanted to perform. In saying that I think we, as a new coaching staff, asked some questions and I think we got some answers. Some were good and some were bad."

The 43-year-old is delighted with the team's performance in the shorter formats of the game but reckons the Test side needs rebuilding.

"The nice thing for me about the whole summer was the light at the end of tunnel, especially in our short formats. I think we have a lot of work to do with our Test cricket still, there's probably a lot of rebuilding in that respect."

Tour de France racing against time, and losing

PARIS: For the Tour de France, one of the last of the summer's major sports events still standing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the stop-watch is ticking.

While the Tokyo Olympics, the Euros, tennis and golf majors and the Giro d'Italia have already been postponed or even cancelled, the Tour is still scheduled to start on June 27.

Christian Prudhomme, the Tour director, made clear that before the race he wants "two months of exposure for the riders."

That means training rides and races and with most prospective competitors confined, the chances of their getting back on the road by

late April look slim. The race also needs France to end its lockdown, not just so the riders can ride but because the Tour attracts 10 to 12 million spectators who stand by the roads to watch.

Last week, when he announced the postponement of the Dauphine, an eight-day Tour warm-up stage race in the southeast of France due to start on May 31, Prudhomme said: "The most important word in Tour de France is France, and health concerns come first."

The situation across Europe suggests that a postponement is increasingly likely.

Prudhomme is not prepared to discuss alternative plans in public,



but said: "As of today, the dates of the Tour de France are maintained. But it would be a lie to say that we are not studying other hypotheses." Behind the scenes, it is learnt, the organisers have sounded out

cycling teams as well as French politicians and broadcasters about a postponement to August.

Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu talked of banning spectators. But the idea seems to have died.

The Tour is fuelled by its fans and it would be hard to prevent people coming out of their houses when the race passes by.

Welshman Geraint Thomas, the winner in 2018, and Julian Alaphilippe, France's hero of the 2019 Tour after wearing the leader's jersey for 14 days, used almost identical words. "Without the fans, it wouldn't be the Tour de France," was how Thomas put it. AFP

Mid-May possibility for League clubs to return to training: EFL

LONDON: Clubs outside the Premier League cannot resume training till "May 16 at the earliest" due to the coronavirus pandemic but the season can be completed in "56 days" English Football League chairman Rick Parry informed them in a letter.

The 72 clubs have been kicking their heels since the EFL suspended the campaign in the Championship, League One and Two on March 13.

All 24 sides in the Championship still had nine matches to play.

Some clubs in League One have 12 games remaining, while in League Two, teams have either nine or 10 matches remaining to complete the regular season.

However, Parry said following a EFL board meeting on Thursday they were confident



once there was a resumption the league fixtures and the promotion play-offs could be completed within two months.

"The EFL Board determined that to provide a level of certain-

currently estimate that the League will require 56 days approximately to complete the outstanding matches in the season (including Play-Offs)."

Parry said it is probable the matches will be played behind closed doors due to the British Government's social distancing measures.

"It is our working assumption at this stage that matches will be played behind closed doors when we eventually return," he said.

His letter also suggested the delayed resumption of the present season could impact on the start of the 2020/21 campaign.

"We will ensure there is a suitable break between the two, so as to allow clubs and staff sufficient time to regroup and prepare accordingly," he said. AFP

Labbadia succeeds Klinsmann at Hertha

AFP ■ BERLIN

Bruno Labbadia will succeed Jurgen Klinsmann as head coach of Hertha Berlin, the Bundesliga club announced on Thursday, confirming earlier reports in the German media.

"With Bruno, we have someone who knows the Bundesliga well from his many years as a player and a coach and has shown that he can stabilise teams and lead them back up the table," sporting director Michael Preetz said.

According to newspaper *Bild* and football magazine *Kicker*, 52-year-old Labbadia will sign a contract until 2022 to oversee preparations should the German league resume next month after being halt-



ed on March 13.

The former Wolfsburg and Hamburg coach will be the fourth different person to occupy the Hertha dugout this season, and will be charged with saving a miserable season for the capital city club.

Hertha, who are backed by a wealthy investor, are 14th in the table, six points from the relegation places with nine games left.