

**OPINION 8**  
THE INVISIBLE  
PEOPLE

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STOCK MARKET TUMBLES,  
SENSEX SETTLES BELOW 28,000

**SPORT 14**  
FIH EXTEND PRO LEAGUE  
SUSPENSION

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12 VIVACITY

## India to go for quicker antibody test

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Come Saturday and India will introduce a new way of testing that would identify coronavirus infection through detection of antibody in a patient.

The rapid antibody tests, also known as serology test, will be carried out first in "hotspot" regions in urban and rural clusters. India has reportedly procured nearly 5 lakh such antibody-based rapid testing kits already.

This is not a confirmatory test but the result will come much quicker and will have to be confirmed by an RT-PCR test using throat or nasal swab to detect the presence of genetic material of the coronavirus.

In the antibody tests, blood testing is done to trace virus in the human body instead of the traditional testing of nasal or throat swab. The outcome will show whether a person had contacted the disease and recovered on his own.

The rapid tests will be conducted on symptomatic cases and even those with "milder symptoms". The decision follows concern regarding spread of the disease after the exodus of workers from cities to their villages and the recent spread of the infection through Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin area which the Government has identified as one of the 71 risk hotspots.

The Government told the Supreme Court that there is a



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

possibility that 30 per cent of these people are already carrying novel coronavirus infection.

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

Following decision by the empowered group, the Indian

Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had issued an interim advisory on Thursday on the use of the rapid antibody test and has finalised modalities in this regard.

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

China, and the other five are from the United States and Singapore. At present, symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel in the last 14 days, symptomatic contacts of positive Covid-19 cases and symptomatic healthcare workers are tested for coronavirus. Apart from this, on March 21, the Government and ICMR

revised its strategy to include all hospitalised patients of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) for testing.

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

ICMR.

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

Meanwhile, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has appealed to patients and their families not to create any obstacle in the path of doctors and expressed concerns over misbehaviour with doctors.

### US embassy staffer in Delhi corona +ve

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

## Modi: Light lamps to show solidarity in fight against Covid

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After clapping and beating of A utensils, now it is time to light up lamps to "show solidarity in the fight against Covid-19". Light candles, diyas and mobile torches at 9 pm this Sunday for nine minutes to energise self and the country to wage a decisive fight against coronavirus, says Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"This Sunday on April 5, we have to challenge coronavirus. I need your nine minutes at 9 pm. Switch off the lights of your house. Light up a candle, lamp or use the mobile torch. This light will show that we are together in this battle," said the Prime Minister in a nationwide address this morning.

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

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, Modi has been giving



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

tips to the citizens to cope with the situations emerging from the lockdown, in force since midnight March 25.

The PM's message came a day after he held a meeting with the Chief Ministers and asked them to "formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends" on April 14.

Continued on Page 4

### Opp slams PM, says expected financial plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Friday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for exhorting people to light candles on Sunday evening, saying they had expected him to announce a second financial package to alleviate the pain and anxieties of the people.

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said he listened to the "Pradhan Showman" where there was nothing about how to ease people's pain, their burdens, their financial anxieties.

While former Finance Minister P Chidambaram advised the PM to listen to the Opposition and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra asked Modi to "get real" and provide a fiscal package to protect poor workers. "Turn off lights and come on balconies," she asked in a tweet.

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## Tablighis walk naked before nurses in Gzb hospital, NSA slapped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Six member of the Tablighi Jamaat quarantined at a hospital in Ghaziabad misbehaved with the nurses, making lewd remarks, dropping their pants and walking naked around the wards, provoking the Uttar Pradesh Government to invoke the stringent National Security Act against them.

The Chief Medical Officer of MMG Hospital in his letter to the Ghaziabad Police stated, "The members of the Tablighi Jamaat who are kept at the isolation ward of the hospital, have been roaming in their wards naked."

Calling those involved in the indecent behaviour with female members of the nursing staff "enemies of humanity", Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "They will neither accept the law nor follow arrangements. Whatever they did with women health workers is a heinous crime... The NSA is being invoked against them."

Yogi directed that no women health worker or police personnel be deployed in ser-

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

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

Continued on Page 4

### Tablighi members not cooperating: Docs to Delhi Govt

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

## Cases shoot up to 3,000, toll 70

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Of these cases, nearly 650 are linked to the Nizamuddin event of Tablighi Jamaat. There have been nearly 70 deaths, of which at least 12 have been

reported in the past 24 hours. Nearly 9,000 people who attended New Delhi's Tablighi Jamaat congregation between March 10 and 15 have been traced across 14 States in India.

While the Ministry of Health confirmed 2,557 cases, the State-wise figure clubbed together placed the number of positive cases to 3,044, registering a massive addition of 500 new cases by 9 pm on Friday.

With 67 new cases detected

ed on Friday, number of coronavirus cases in Maharashtra jumped to 490 and death toll rose to 26.

Second place was Tamil Nadu which recorded 102 cases on Friday taking it overall tally to 441, while Delhi stood at the third place with 384 positive cases and Kerala was placed fourth with 295 cases.

Telangana recorded 75 new cases taking the toll to 229 followed by Uttar Pradesh which added 44 new cases to take the total to 172 cases, 34 of which have come from Noida alone.

As many as 647 COVID-19 positive cases were found in 14 States in the last two days are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation. Out of the 12 deaths reported in the last 24 hours some are related to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, Joint Secretary in the Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said in a daily media briefing.

The Joint Secretary said 647 positive cases of the coronavirus have been found in the last two days that are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, and these were reported from 14 States (and Union Territories) Andaman and Nicobar, Delhi, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir,

Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The Joint Secretary said that in the past few days the cases were coming at a particular level, which showed that lockdown aimed towards social distancing was working effectively.

The sudden rise it is due

to carelessness by some people, he said in an apparent reference to the Tablighi Jamaat.

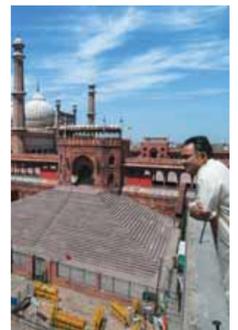
"We should understand that we are dealing with the infectious disease, he said underlining the importance of ensuring social distancing norms during the lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24, 2020.

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

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

Citing health bulletin report on coronavirus, the CM said Delhi has 384 positive cases, out of which 58 patients have a history of foreign travel while 259 patients are from the Markaz event and 38 cases are of the nature of local trans-



mission from foreign travel. 91 new positive cases were reported in the last 24 hours.

The CM also announced the COVID-19 WhatsApp helpline number to provide credible information at 8800007722. In Noida, a 55-year-old man and his son tested positive for coronavirus here on Friday, taking the total number of cases in Gautam Buddha Nagar to 50, officials said. "The two new patients are a man (55) and his son (25) from Sector 93B in Noida," a Health official said.

Continued on Page 4

## Sadar locality cordoned off after 12 test positive in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Kasaibada locality in Cantonment police station area was cordoned off on Friday afternoon after 12 persons staying at the Ali Jaan mosque were tested positive for coronavirus at Balrampur Hospital, where they were quarantined on Wednesday night. The police said they were mulling to register a case against these patients for hiding the information about their stay from the district administration.

The stay of these persons at the above-named mosque was detected on a clue given by those detained by the Lucknow

police during the checking of different mosques in Kaiserbagh, Kakori and Madaion on Wednesday evening. The checking was conducted in view of the gathering of Jamatis on the call of Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin in Delhi recently.

A spokesman said all the persons, belonging to Saharanpur, had visited the city on March 24 to take part in a religious congregation in Aminabad and was sent to Ali Jaan mosque in Kasaibada locality (Sadar) after the lockdown. "These persons could not return to Saharanpur due to lockdown and were staying at Ali Jaan mosque with no infor-

mation given to the district administration," he said.

After the test reports were obtained, a huge police force led by Joint Commissioner (Crime) Neelabja Chaudhary, Joint Commissioner (Law and Order) Naveen Arora, and senior officials reached the locality where they carried out an intensive checking. Later, the area consisting of a population of over 1,000 people was sealed for public movement. Heavy police force was deployed at the entry point and cops warned people asking them not to venture into the sealed area which was being sanitised by the officials of LMC and district administration. On Wednesday

night, the police had registered a case against foreign nationals staying at different mosques in Lucknow and also against the caretakers of mosques where they had stayed in Kaiserbagh, Kakori and Madaion.

A total of 23 foreign nationals, including 17 from Bangladesh, were found in three mosques in Kaiserbagh, Madaion and Kakori areas of Lucknow.

In Kaiserbagh, the FIR was registered against caretaker Ali Hasan and six foreign nationals in Madaion against caretaker Miraj, landlord Qadri and seven others, and in Kakori against 10 persons, including foreign nationals.

## Cops preventing collective namaz attacked in Kannauj

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Attacks on the men in khaki enforcing lockdown and social distancing in Uttar Pradesh continued unabated with a fresh case being reported from Kannauj where a police team was targeted after the cops tried to stop a group of people from gathering for namaz at Jama Masjid on Friday afternoon.

A police outpost in-charge and two cops were injured in the attack and had to be admitted to the district hospital.

area to offer Friday prayers in violation of the lockdown.

On getting information, a police team reached the spot and reminded the group of the danger of contracting and spread of coronavirus and asked them to return home and offer namaz there.

Irked by the police intervention, the group started pelting stones at the policemen, injuring a sub-inspector and two cops. The mob also damaged the motorcycle of a Local Intelligence Unit (LIU) personnel.

When the marooned cops sent an SOS, an additional force rushed to the area after which the trouble-makers beat

a hasty retreat.

A case was registered against 26 persons and six people were arrested.

Now the police have pressed drone cameras for continuous surveillance of the entire area.

Meanwhile, three persons were arrested in Rampur for pelting stones at police and administrative officers who were enforcing lockdown in Bhabhal Puri area. Three others booked in the same case are on the lam.

As per reports, Additional District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar, Tehsildar Mahendra Bahadur Singh and SHO Durga Singh were patrolling

the area with policemen on Wednesday evening when they were attacked. Luckily, the officers scampered to safety and were not injured.

Later, a case was registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Disaster Management Act against six people. Three of them — Mohammad Altaf, Mohammad Gulfam and Mohammad Nafees of Miyan Wali Masjid in Bhabhalpuri, — were arrested. A manhunt is on to nab the other three accused.

In Meerut, an imam was arrested and a case was registered against him and a dozen others for organising collective prayer in a mosque on Friday.

# Chief Minister asks officers to plan for phased lifting of lockdown

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Following directives from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officers to chalk out plans to ease lockdown in a phased manner after April 14 so that people stranded at various places could reach their destinations while ensuring social distancing.

He also declared that the state government would set up a Rs 1,000-crore Corona Care Fund. "If the lockdown is lifted from April 15, people stranded at different places will try to return to their homes, posing a challenge to maintaining social distancing. In order to deal with such situation, thrash out an action plan now," Yogi told officials at a meeting of COVID Team-11 at his 5, Kalidas Marg official residence in Lucknow on Friday.

The chief minister said that officers should prepare an action plan on when and how schools, colleges, markets and malls would reopen after the lockdown.

Yogi also announced that the state government would set up a Corona Care Fund of Rs 1,000 crore that would be used for upgrading testing labs and purchasing medical equipment like ventilators, masks, sanitizers, PPE (personal protection equipment).

"Efforts will be made to provide testing facilities in every division and all 24 government medical colleges," he said. "Not only will the government provide money for this fund, but help will also be sought from corporate houses under Corporate Social

## CM Yogi transfers two months' pension to 86.7L beneficiaries

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the click of the mouse, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath transferred Rs 871.46 crore into the accounts of 86,71,781 beneficiaries across the state as two months' pension.

The funds sent relate to old age, illiterate women, disabled and leprosy pensions. The money was transferred to the beneficiaries at a programme held at the 5 Kalidas Marg official residence of the chief minister in Lucknow on Friday. On the occasion, Yogi also interacted with the beneficiaries of Varanasi, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur, Moradabad and some other districts through video-conferencing.

The chief minister said that the world was fighting a battle against COVID-19 pandemic.

On the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a lockdown was enforced and people have been asked to

Responsibility," he said. Yogi further said that officers would have to work at two levels. "Develop strategy keeping in mind the current situation and the future condition. Operate community kitchens in every district and take help from voluntary organisations and others wanting to extend support. Establish a collection centre so that everyone does not go out to distribute food. Collect food there and



ensure social distancing, he added.

"At this juncture, when all economic activities have come to a grinding halt, we cannot leave the poor, the deprived and the destitute in a helpless state. The government stands by them. The administrative machinery of the state has carried forward various schemes for the poor in a time-bound manner," Yogi said.

The chief minister said that Rs 871.46 crore had

been transferred to the accounts of 86,71,781 beneficiaries getting pension through various schemes.

"For ordinary people, the amount may be very small but what it means to a poor person can be understood by looking at the glow on their faces. Besides, the amount of Divyangjan pension was Rs 300, which has been increased to Rs 500 by our government," Yogi said.

The chief minister said that his government had earlier sent Rs 1,000 to the accounts of more than 27.15 lakh construction workers.

"The process of providing free ration to MGNREGA workers, Antyodaya card holders and other people affected by unemployment due to the lockdown is in operation from April 1.

Besides, wages amounting to Rs 611 crore have been transferred to the accounts of 88 lakh MGNREGA workers," Yogi Adityanath said.

Yogi said.

The chief minister pointed out that during corona infection, anaesthetists, physicians, and women and child specialists were needed the most. "Make a list of such doctors in private sector with related expertise and train them. Similar training is also needed for paramedical staff and doctors of AYUSH department. Make a list of how many beds and ventilators can be made

available in private hospitals if needed," he said.

Yogi asked the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises department to ensure production of masks by units of the state. "It will lower the cost and their availability will also increase. Prepare masks using khadi that can be reused. For this, take help of women self-help groups. This will help in promoting khadi besides helping women get employment and users will be able to make it a habit if they get masks at cheaper rates," he said.

The chief minister asked officials to convey a message to those who violate social distancing in lockdown. "An incident like Indore should not happen anywhere in UP. File cases against such people under Disaster Act. Those who disagree with the government, keep a tab on them. Take stern action against all those who created chaos in the Ghaziabad hospital," he said.

"If someone runs away from quarantine, then make the administration there accountable. Use large buildings for such centres instead of primary schools. Make a list of people doing good work during lockdown. The government will honour them when the situation normalises. Strictly curb black marketing and hoarding. If the essential goods are available at a higher price from wholesale market, then take action against the accused," he warned.

Chief Secretary RK Tiwari along with other members of COVID Team-11 were present in the meeting and briefed the chief minister about actions taken by the team.

# 51 new corona cases reported in UP

## 47 attended Jamaat congregation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh on Friday reported 51 new coronavirus positive cases, 47 of them being members of Tablighi Jamaat who had attended a Nizamuddin markaz meet in Delhi in mid-March.

With the fresh addition, the total number of coronavirus positive cases rose to 172 in UP.

The 47 Tablighi Jamaat members have been quarantined in 14 districts of the state. Reports of the highest number of 12 cases of Jamaat members testing positive came from Saharanpur, followed by six from Kanpur, five each from Agra and Meerut, four from Firozabad, three from Azamgarh and the rest from other districts.

"We have ordered the sample test of all Jamaat members who attended the Delhi function or who came in contact with the attendees," Principal Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad told media persons in Lucknow on Friday.

Prasad also said that aggressive containment process was underway in affected districts while surveillance was

also underway to find out if there were any fresh cases.

"On Thursday, eight labs across the state tested 465 samples and soon testing facilities would start at Jhansi Medical College. Level 1 Covid hospitals have started functioning in all districts while six Level 2 Covid hospitals would be notified by Saturday," he said.

Meanwhile, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awasthi confirmed that till date 1,203 members of Tablighi Jamaat or those with links with them were identified across the state and the tests on 897 of them were conducted.

Awasthi further said that 297 foreign Tablighi Jamaat attendees too were detected and passports of 228 had been confiscated while 35 FIRs were lodged against them in 16 districts of UP.

The additional chief secretary said that a massive search was being made at all religious places and people from there were being taken out for test and to be quarantined. He said that in Lucknow too, the police sealed the Sadar Bazaar area and were searching for people at a local mosque.

Speaking on growing attacks on men in uniform for enforcing lockdown, Awasthi said that the government was very serious over the issue and strictest action would be taken against the offenders.

"All districts administrations have been asked to monitor law and order through use of drones and DMs and SPs would be held responsible for escape of any quarantined or isolated person," he added.

The additional chief secretary said that soon the chief minister would hold video conferencing with religious leaders from districts to seek assistance for ensuring lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

"A high-level committee headed by a senior High Court judge has decided to release 248 juvenile inmates jailed for petty crimes in UP," he said.

On Friday, an FIR was registered against 57 foreign nationals for attending Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi and withholding information from authorities.

Besides, 20 people from Saharanpur attended the event and they were quarantined in Delhi.

## Maya asks BSP MLAs to donate from LAD fund

**Lucknow (PNS):** Appealing for support to the government in the fight against the novel coronavirus, Bahujan Samaj Party supreme leader Mayawati on Friday said that in this hour of need, the party MLAs should provide Rs 1 crore to help the needy people.

Taking to micro-blogging site Twitter on

Friday, Mayawati said, "In view of the challenges that have arisen due to the coronavirus, it is my appeal, especially to the BSP MLAs of UP, that they should also provide Rs 1 crore from their MLA fund like the MPs of the party to help the needy people. Other BSP people should also take care of their neighbours."

# Guv apprise Prez, VP of corona situation in UP, steps taken

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Friday apprised President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu of the measures taken by the state government for fighting coronavirus and the situation prevailing in the state.

President Ram Nath Kovind spoke to Governors of all states through video-conferencing.

Patel said that 120 coronavirus positive cases were found in the state of which 17 had been treated and cured, 183 patients were in isolation wards and 1,344 were quarantined. Besides, she said, 54,708 persons were kept on surveillance.

The Governor said that as many as 3,124 samples of suspected cases were tested in eight labs while two deaths were reported across the state. She said that rigorous surveillance was being undertaken by forming clusters in Noida and Meerut, which reported the maximum cases.

A total of 5,767 isolation beds, 11,639 quarantine beds



**"A TOTAL OF 5,767 ISOLATION BEDS, 11,639 QUARANTINE BEDS AND 750 VENTILATOR BEDS HAD BEEN ARRANGED BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT SO FAR TO TACKLE CORONAVIRUS"**

and 750 ventilator beds had been arranged by the state government so far to tackle coronavirus, Patel added.

The Governor further said that isolation wards were set up in district hospitals and medical colleges. She said that the

state government had arranged three-tier dedicated COVID-19 hospitals and a 100-bed hospital for COVID-19 patients had been readied in every district while a total of 279 COVID-19 hospitals were made.

Patel also said that during

the lockdown, 6,562 FIRs were lodged and 20,444 individuals were named. She said as many as 11,000 prisoners were released on parole or bail from jails. She said that 569 people, who attended Tablighi Jamaat congregation in New Delhi were quarantined. Besides, she said, adequate security had been ensured for doctors and paramedics by the state government and strict compliance with lockdown was being ensured.

Discussing other details, the Governor said that food items, food packets and water were being distributed with help of religious organisations, NGOs, industries and employees outfits, resident associations, etc and food was also being provided to labourers through organisations.

On harvesting and procurement of wheat by official agencies, the Governor apprised the President that all facilities were being provided to farmers along with permission for harvesting while ensuring social distancing so that they did not face inconvenience.

# Speaker urges MLAs to donate Rs 1 cr to UP Covid Care Fund

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Hriday Naryan Dikshit has appealed to all MLAs to allocate Rs 1 crore from the Local Area Development fund for the procurement of essential equipment for fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

UP assembly has 403 MLAs. "UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set up UP Covid Care Fund. The fund will be utilised for procurement of essential equipment and testing kits at all the state-run medical colleges and district hospitals to fight the coronavirus pandemic," Dikshit said in a letter sent to all the MLAs on Friday.

He said, "The limit of spending Rs 25 lakh on one particular item from the Vidhayak Nidhi has been abolished by the chief minister and we can utilise the Vidhayak Nidhi for the procurement of the necessary equipment and testing kits."

"You are popular people's representative and on the strength of your popularity you have inspired people to take all precautions and preventive measures to fight the pandemic and doing so is also our national duty," Dikshit said in the letter.

"Whole world is struggling to fight the pandemic COVID-19 and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is leading the fight in India from the front. The prime minister has also appealed the people to practice social distancing and has also

## Nadda to BJP leaders: Do your bit in war against coronavirus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party national president JP Nadda asked party leaders from Uttar Pradesh to help the poor and destitute at a time when India and the world was fighting a decisive battle against the spread of coronavirus.

During a video-conferencing with BJP leaders from the state, Nadda said, "The governments at the Centre and in UP have launched several welfare schemes for the poor and destitute. Inform people about them. Help the numerous migrating workers kept at shelter homes. Provide them food and water and medical help, if necessary, immediately," he said.

The BJP top leader said that party

leaders should ensure that people wore mask and asked them to explain its importance to the masses.

"The women's wing of BJP should be asked to stitch masks and these should be distributed among the poor free of cost," he said.

Nadda was apprised that the BJP had so far provided lunch packets to over 40 lakh people and that party workers were working in sync with the government to ensure that people got essential commodities at maximum retail price.

BJP leaders of Uttar Pradesh who participated in the video conference included party state chief Swatantra Dev Singh, organising secretary Sunil Bansal, general secretaries and vice-presidents of the state unit.

declared nation-wide lockdown till April 14. UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath has also taken a series of measures to fight the menace of the corona virus and is fighting pandemic like a war", Dikshit said.

The Speaker expressed the hope that all the MLAs must be following the con-

cept of social distancing as their obligation towards the nation and also propagating the idea. He also expressed the hope that all MLAs are extending their cooperation to the doctor, officials of the district and police administration in fighting the menace of the corona virus.



Social worker distributing food to the poor and needy on Charbagh Road in Lucknow on Friday

## SP leader, aide gunned down by rivals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Despite the lockdown to prevent spread of coronavirus, a local leader of Bharatiya Janata Party and his aides opened indiscriminate fire on Samajwadi Party leaders, killing two and injuring four others in Gonda in broad daylight on Friday.

The assailants were alleged to be local zila panchayat member Atul Singh Paras, his brother and half-a-dozen cronies.

Senior officers rushed to the spot and initiated a probe into the killing after registering a case. The injured were shifted to the district hospital. Reports said that officials of MGNREGA scheme and APO, Tarabganj, called job card holders to record their statement at Sangampurwa primary school in Tarabganj Paraspati Majhdhar area of Gonda on Friday afternoon. They were busy recording statements about alleged irregular-

ities in MGNREGA payments made by Atul Singh's mother and sitting pradhan of Paraspati when Atul Singh, his brother and his cronies reached there on two vehicles and opened indiscriminate fire on former pradhan Devendra Pratap aka Lathi Singh and his group.

The incident sent shock waves and people started running in all directions to save their lives.

An eyewitness, who was playing volleyball there, said that soon after the firing stopped, the injured were shifted to district hospital where two of them were pronounced dead upon arrival. The deceased were identified as Devendra Pratap aka Lathi Singh and Kanhaiya Pathak.

A Samajwadi Party leader, Lathi Singh was earlier the pradhan of Paraspati and was a political rival of BJP leader Atul Singh Paras. Lathi's brother, Vijay Singh 'Tintu' is a student leader in

Lucknow University. He was critically injured in the firing.

Further investigations are on. Expressing concern at the daring shooting during lockdown in Gonda, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked the district magistrate and district police chief to arrest the assailants as soon as possible and invoke NSA against them. He also expressed condolences to the families of the deceased.

Meanwhile in Maharajganj, a doctor died while returning from duty on Friday morning.

Dr Nikhil, posted at community health centre in Basantpur, Bansi, was returning home after night duty when he suddenly lost control over his four-wheeler and it plunged into a pond at Kailad hamlet on Gorakhpur-Siddharthnagar on Friday morning. The locals somehow extricated him from the vehicle but he died on way to hospital.

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e-tendering website:- <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

**Notice Inviting Tender (Through E-tendering)**

**Tender Enquiry No. 87/MM-II/CHPEMC-421/GHTP/2020 Dt. 03-04-2020**  
E-tenders are invited from reputed and registered firms/ contractors for the following work:-

**Short Description of Work**

CHP-GHTP STAGE-I (2X210 MW) & STAGE-II (2X250 MW) Breakdown, Shutdown, Preventive & Routine Maintenance of Electrical system as per Tender specification under Coal Handling Plant/ Electrical Maintenance Cell on lump sum basis at GHTP.

**EMD: Minimum Rs. 2,16,000/-**  
**Last Date & Time for bid submission:** 04-05-2020 upto 11:00 Hrs.  
**Date & Time of opening of Fee Stage Bid:** 05-05-2020 upto 12:00 Hrs.  
Detailed NIT and tender specification can be downloaded from PSPCL website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from dated 04-04-2020 onwards.

**Note:**

- The prospective bidders can obtain clarification regarding tender specification from this office. For registration of digital signature and uploading of tender, information may be sought from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
- It is informed that in case the tender process is not completed due to any reason no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Detail regarding corrigendum may be seen on PSPCL official website i.e. <https://pspcl.in>.

**Di. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Mtc. Circle-II, O&M GHTP, PSPCL, Lehra Mohabbat, Distt. Bathinda (Pb.)-151111**

**GHTP-22/2020**  
RO 708-C

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# 34 test positive for coronavirus

## People going to mosque to offer prayers detained

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A total of 34 persons tested positive for coronavirus at King George's Medical University (KGMU) on Friday, with 33 being Nizamuddin contacts. Twelve of those admitted at Balrampur Hospital were also Nizamuddin contacts belonging to Saharanpur.

State surveillance officer Vikasendu Agarwal confirmed that those who tested positive and were admitted in Balrampur Hospital had attended the religious congregation at Nizamuddin in Delhi. He added that all of them were from Saharanpur and found in Lucknow.

Those at Balrampur Hospital and tested positive included a 32-year-old man, 47-year-old, 55-year-old, 18-year-old, 62-year-old, 75-year-old, 47-year-old, 27-year-old, 30-year-old, 48-year-old and 55-year-old men.

KGMU media spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said it was the largest number of samples which tested positive in a day. Others who tested positive included a 64-year-old, 57-year-old, 50-year-old, 44-year-old, 53-year-old and 27-year-old admitted in LLRH (Kanpur).



Police officers issuing ChAAllans to people defying lockdown at Thakurganj crossing on Friday

Pioneer

Others who tested positive included 68-year-old, 75-year-old, 28-year-old, 25-year-old, 41-year-old, 49-year-old men, and 22-year-old & 55-year-old women admitted in Sarojini Naidu Medical College (SNMC), Agra. A 35-year-old man, 23-year-old, 24-year-old and 26-year-old men admitted in Government Medical College (Azamgarh) also tested positive for coronavirus. A 23-year-old man from Pratapgarh, 30-year-old and 38-year-old men from

District Hospital (Hardoi) and a 48-year-old from Shahjahanpur also tested positive for coronavirus. Meanwhile, people going to a mosque in Kakori to offer prayers on Friday were detained by police for defiance of lockdown and violation of prohibitory orders. The district administration had issued orders asking people not to assemble in a way that violates the social distancing formula. The police used drone cameras

to detect if people were staying in lodges and mosques in the Old City area. A team, led by ACP (Kakori) Sayyed Mohammad Kasim Abdi, stopped nine persons on the way and near the mosque in Kazigarhi locality (Hata Gulam Safdar). Those detained were identified as Mohammed Iqbal, Mohammed Ikhlaiq, Mohammed Raees, Mohammed Ashraf, Kalim, Deen Mohammed, Asif

Mohammed, Mustafa, Abdal Salim and Moin. The police challaned the above-named persons for violation of the prohibitory orders.

Meanwhile, the police conducted intensive checking at different mosques in the city after the Kasaibada area of Sadar was sealed for public movement.

Sources said the police had been asked to remain vigilant to ensure people visiting the mosques may not overlook social distancing. "The state government had issued directives to the police to ensure social distancing in no uncertain terms. After the orders, the senior cops held a meeting to chalk out their plan," the sources said. They said the SHO had been asked to continue patrolling in the locality and keep a close eye on those defying the lockdown.

They said steps were being taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the city. "Public gathering may lead to the spread of COVID-19 as people usually do not keep social distancing in mind," they said.

Late in the evening, a huge police team, led by ADCP (West) Vikas Tripathi, conducted patrolling in Thakurganj, Chowk, Aminabad, Bazaarkhala, Saadatganj, Kaiserbagh and other localities. The policemen used public address system to make the residents aware of the importance of social distancing and lockdown. The police appealed to the residents to remain indoors for their own safety and also that safety of their kin.



(Top) Friday prayers were not held at Teele Wali Masjid as people remained indoors. (Above) A view of a road in Rajajipuram area during lockdown

Pioneer

## Focus on self-declaration by those having travel history



A deserted road stretch near Akbari Gate on Friday

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Divisional Commissioner Mukesh Meshram said on Friday that with the spurt in the number of coronavirus cases, there will be strict enforcement of self-declaration in a bid to stop the spread.

He said Lucknowites who have come from abroad after March 1 and from other virus-hit states across the country after lockdown was imposed on March 24 would have to inform the chief medical officer or they would be punished under sections 269, 270 & 271 of the Indian Penal Code

"It is mandatory for them to complete a quarantine period of 28 days, whether at home or at an institutional facility.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash, who held a meeting with his officials over the increasing number of coronavirus cases, said they should come up with a plan for shelter home or quarantine centres. "Currently, there are 22 shelter homes and 121 quarantine centres in the district. The suspected cases of coronavirus

can be kept in shelter homes. The shelter homes can also be used for those who have come from other parts of the country," the DM said. The DM also directed medical officials to make a plan and list out doctors, nurses, medical equipment, medicines, kits, and sanitisers to make sure there is no paucity of these essentials.

He also directed the ADM (Administration) to make a list of the number of persons who test positive for coronavirus in rural and urban areas and trace their travel history. He also directed the police to be present at shelter homes so that no one can run away.

Meanwhile, amidst rapid spread of COVID-19 and continuing challenges, the World Health Organization emphasised on a stronger society and government efforts in South-East Asia region to prevent a long haul with the pandemic and avert further loss of human and other resources.

"A more comprehensive approach is needed with communities at the centre of our response. Most importantly,

communities need to be engaged and empowered to take appropriate decisions and measures. The onus must be on each one. At this stage, everyone needs to contribute to minimise health as well as socio-economic impact of the pandemic," said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, regional director of WHO, South-East Asia.

"As physical distancing measures take effect and capacities are built, whatever the transmission scenario, with the right approach the virus can be contained. In areas where community transmission occurs, it can be suppressed and controlled," the regional director said.

"Every case, cluster and evidence of community transmission will need to be aggressively responded to. Basic public health measures such as active case detection, isolation, testing, treatment and contact tracing are among our most powerful tools. A strong surveillance is needed to assess and guide evidence-based measures," Dr Singh said.

## Doc advises caution for handling of groceries

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Medical experts have a word of advice for people regarding the handling of grocery items. Dr Ishwara Gilada says it's better to microwave your bread before using it as a precautionary measure to avoid contacting coronavirus.

"When you bring groceries home, discard packages or plastic carry bags. Wash vegetables thoroughly before using them, use properly cooked vegetables, peel off outer layers of carrots, snake-gourd, potatoes and other vegetables," he said.

"For poultry, seafood and meat discard packaging material, wash thoroughly, cook and then eat. Milk comes in plastic bags. For this, wash the bags thoroughly and then use the milk and discard the bags. For ice-creams, cheese and butter, discard packaging material or if you want to preserve it in refrigerator, wash the outer package thoroughly and



A police officer having a word with a general store store owner in Hazratganj on Friday

Pioneer

preserve," he said.

He said if food is supplied by a delivery man, ask him to keep it outside and leave. "Discard outer package, wash hands with soap & water, dis-

card inner package again, wash hands with soap and water and preferably reheat and eat. The bottom line is that good hand hygiene, clean surfaces with soap water or detergent or

sanitiser that are frequently touched, maintain cough and sneezing etiquettes, social distancing etc," he said.

Dr Gilada said that according to Centres for Disease

Control of USA and USEFDA, COVID-19 is not transmitted through food or eatables. "However, there are studies and advisories to tell us that coronavirus can stay alive on surfaces and packaging material. Hence, it is imperative that we should take added precautions as it's better to be safe than sorry," he added.

Dr Gilada said that after handling currency notes or coins, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

"Don't touch your face with hands before washing. It is advisable to use cashless transactions. While paying by credit or debit cards, do not hand over the card to the vendor, but swipe it yourself. After using keypad of swipe machine, sanitise your hands. It's a good hygienic practice to carry your personal sanitiser with you. Frequently sanitise your mobile phones, landlines, remotes, frequently used switches, door knobs etc," he added.

## Low-cost ventilator developed for COVID-19 patients

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

IIT-Roorkee has developed a low-cost portable ventilator that can be useful for survival of COVID-19 patients. It showcased the ventilator at CII webinar. Named as 'Prana-Vayu', the closed-loop ventilator has been developed in collaboration with AIIMS, Rishikesh, and is equipped with state-of-the-art features.

The 'Prana-Vayu' was presented to more than 450 industries in a webinar organised by

CII. "I am happy to share that we have received interest from multiple industries for its mass production. We are committed to augmenting the efforts of the government in tackling the pandemic. This low-cost ventilator will be highly useful for COVID-19 patients, especially when there is a shortage of ventilators," IIT-Roorkee director Ajit K Chaturvedi said. The ventilator is based on the controlled operation of the prime mover to deliver the required amount of air to the patient. The automat-

ed process controls the pressure and flow rates in the inhalation and exhalation lines. Besides, the ventilator has feedback that can control tidal volume and breathe per minute. The ventilator will be useful for a wide degree of congestions in the respiratory tract and is applicable for all age group patients, especially the elderly. The prototype has been tested successfully for normal and patient-specific breathing conditions. Additionally, it does not require compressed air for functioning and can be useful in

cases when hospital wards or open areas are converted into ICUs. It is safe and reliable as it is equipped with real-time spirometry and alarms. It can automatically limit high pressure with an alarm system. In case of failure, the circuit opens to the atmosphere which prevents choking. Some additional features are remote monitoring by health professionals, touch-screen control of all operating parameters, moisture, and temperature control for inhaled air. The manufacturing cost per ventila-

tor is estimated to be Rs 25,000.

The research team from IIT-Roorkee included Akshay Dwivedi and Arup Kumar Das with online support from Debendra Tripathi from AIIMS, Rishikesh. They teamed up only a week back by remote communication to develop a quick-time technology to help the distressed in the situation of COVID-19.

The research development on the ventilator started during the lockdown period necessitating the development of many parts like microprocessor-con-

trolled non-return valves, solenoid valves, one-way valve, etc using the facilities of Tinkering Laboratory, IIT-Roorkee.

"Prana-Vayu has been designed, especially for COVID-19 pandemic. It is low-cost, safe, reliable, and can be quickly manufactured. We have successfully achieved the ventilatory requirement on a test lung, and it can be used for both infants and even overweight adults," said Akshay Dwivedi, coordinator of Tinkering Laboratory, IIT-Roorkee.

## 'Metro vibrations may have led to collapse of Sibtainabad gate'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vibrations caused by Lucknow metro trains and activities of local tenants may have led to the collapse of main gate of Imambara Sibtainabad, as per the findings of a report submitted by Archaeological Survey of India on Friday. A senior official of ASI said that vibrations caused by metro trains in Hazratganj might have done the damage.

"Also, among the shops running in the gate, including a saloon, had a negative impact with all the drain pipes moving through the structure. These combined factors led to the collapse of the gate," he said. He added that the ASI would make an estimate and start the restoration work.

"We will have to see how the repair work can be carried out during the lockdown as

approximately 20 labourers will be required. We have also sent an email to LDA to evacuate the occupants," he said. He added that the repair was last conducted in 2010-11.

Historian Yogesh Praveen said that besides Amjad Ali Shah, the tomb has over 100 relatives of the king buried here. "It was built in 1842-46 by Amjad Ali Shah and the Britishers also held their prayers in the premises. It was used so often for prayers by the Christian community that many Christian communities settled around it," he pointed out. Meanwhile, heritage lovers expressed disappointment with Lucknow monuments being in a dilapidated state. "These monuments form our identity and this is the fate they meet with. There is an urgent need to conserve the monuments," a heritage lover said.



# Body of 5-yr-old girl recovered

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The body of a missing 5-year-old girl was recovered from a pond behind a brick kiln in Mohanlalganj on Friday, fuelling speculations that she was subjected to brutality. However, police rubbished the apprehension of villagers.

As per reports, the girl was playing outside her shanty inside the Sawan brick kiln where her parents work. Around 9 am on Thursday, she went missing and could not be traced despite hectic search by their parents and their colleagues. On Friday morning, some of the labourers working at the brick kiln spotted a piece of cloth floating in Simari pond and located behind another brick kiln in the area.

As the news broke, huge number of villagers, including

parents of the girl, reached the scene. Some of the villagers went into the pond to inquire about the piece of the cloth and pulled it out, only to find the body of the girl.

The identity of the deceased was ascertained by her parents. While the residents and labourers suspected foul play, the police said the girl drowned after she strayed her way to the pond. A police spokesman said the dress of the girl was found intact and there were no injury marks on the body. He said the body had been sent for autopsy and further investigation was underway. Locals expressed surprise over how the 5-year-old girl reached to the pond without being noticed by anyone. Parents of girl belong to Chhattisgarh and have been working at the brick kiln for a long time.

## CITYBRIEFS

### AAROGYASETU LAUNCHED

The Central government has launched a mobile app developed in public-private partnership to bring the people of India together in a resolute fight against COVID-19. The app called 'AarogyaSetu' joins 'Digital India' for the health and well-being of every Indian. It will enable people to assess themselves against the risk of contracting coronavirus infection. It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting-edge blue-tooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence. Once installed in a smartphone, the app detects other devices with AarogyaSetu installed that come in the proximity. The app can then calculate the risk of infection based on sophisticated parameters, if any of these contacts has tested positive. The app will help the government take necessary and timely steps for assessing risk of spread of COVID-19 infection, and ensuring isolation, wherever required. The app's



Kites, metal wire and manjha stuck in OHE

design ensures privacy first. The personal data collected by the app is encrypted using state-of-the-art technology and stays secure on the phone till it is needed for facilitating med-

ical intervention. Available in 11 languages, the app is ready for pan-India use from day 1 and has highly scalable architecture.

### BREAKDOWN

Kite flyers caused short-circuiting of the live 25,000 volt overhead wires, causing serious damage to the UPMRC property and putting their own lives at risk. UPMRC registered an FIR over the breakdown due to kite flying to safeguard the system. "UPMRC appeals to everyone to follow the instructions and guidelines of the government during lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect metro from any harm," a senior official said. "On Thursday, the overhead electrification near Badshahnagar was damaged by metal wire and Chinese manjha. The repair work was done in a special drive in the night and metal wires and kites were removed from the OHE," the official said.

### LT GEN CARIAPPA IS NEW GOC OF 1 CORPS

Lieutenant General Codanda Poovalah Cariappa assumed the coveted appointment of General Officer Commanding of the elite 1 Corps at Mathura on Friday. He took over the reins of the Mathura Corps from Lieutenant General Amardeep Singh Bhinder who, during his tenure led, 1 Corps to greater heights of professionalism. Lt Gen Cariappa, an alumnus of National Defence Academy and Indian Military Academy, was commissioned on June 9, 1984 into the 4th Battalion of the Rajputana Rifles. He is an expert in manoeuvre warfare, counter terrorism and operational art. The General Officer has also held varied coveted command, instructional and staff appointments. He has served in all types of terrain to include deserts, mountains and plains covering a wide spectrum of military operations that has given him an intellectual edge in understanding the nuances of complex

military operations both at operational and strategic levels. He is also an alumnus of prestigious Defence Services Staff College, Higher Command at Army War College and NDC at United States Army War College. The General Officer is Masters in Philosophy in Defence Studies & Management and Masters in Strategic Studies. He has commanded a Mountain Division and an Infantry Brigade, and has made valuable and laudable contributions while serving as part of the UN Peace Keeping Force at Mozambique (Africa) and Iraq - Kuwait. Prior to taking over command of elite 1 Corps, he was the Military Secretary to the President of India at New Delhi. He exhorted all ranks to continue working with the same zeal, enthusiasm and focus on operational preparedness with realistic training to achieve exceptional level of military professionalism so that 1 Corps continues to undertake its mandated role of defeating military mis-adventurism by enemy against India.

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports of three persons testing positive for Covid-19 in Mumbai's Dharavi slum, authorities are having sleepless night over a possible explosion of Covid-19 in Asia's largest slum, which is also the most densely populated place in the world.

Of the three cases reported from Dharavi, one is a 56-year-old man with no history of international travel — who tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday and passed away. The second one is a 52-year-old sanitation department worker of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). The third one is a 35-year-old doctor who practises near the slum.

The 56-year-old man who died on Wednesday night was the first to test positive from the sprawling shanty town in India's financial hub.

The incidence of a couple of Covid-19 positive cases in Dharavi should be seen in the

light of the fact that it is the most densely populated slum and the community spread of the pandemic in this slum may prove to be disastrous for Mumbai.

The Dharavi cases have raised fears that India may be in community transmission stage of the pandemic despite a countrywide lockdown since March 25.

Located between Western Railway's Bandra-Matunga and Central Railway's Sion-Matunga stations in north-central Mumbai, Dharavi is home to over anywhere from 60,000 to 70,000 families. The Mithi River slices through a portion of Dharavi into the Mahim Creek and then onto the Arabian Sea.

Spread over 240-hectare area, Dharavi has remained an ugly face and a dark underbelly of Mumbai — a largest slum which has been romanticised in Indian films over the years.

A mini-India of sorts where people belonging to dif-

ferent faiths live, Dharavi has 28 temples, 11 mosques, six churches, 50 banks, 60 Government schools, a mobile design museum, several slum tourism outfits, thriving criminal groups, and a tiny dilapidated fort.

Dharavi also has a small fort known as the Riwa Fort. Better known as Kala Qilla or Black Fort, it is currently in a dilapidated condition. It was built by the first Governor of Bombay, Gerald Aungier (1669-1677). It was part of the larger Bombay Castle, and marked the northern portion of British-held Bombay in the 17th century.

The castle was also used as a watchtower, guarding the territory against the Portuguese-held (and later Maratha-held) Salsette Island.

At that time, the entire area was a large swamp and primarily inhabited by Koli fishermen who made a living from the waters. As the legend goes, the British built a dam on the Mithi river because of which

there was no water to feed the temples, 11 mosques, six churches, 50 banks, 60 Government schools, a mobile design museum, several slum tourism outfits, thriving criminal groups, and a tiny dilapidated fort.

In fact they could be called the first settlers of the region.

As Mumbai turned into a hub for textiles in the post Independence era, thousands of men from north India moved in as well and the slum as we know it started to take shape. Slowly since the 60s, migrants - particularly those from south India started moving in - making what Dharavi is today.

Dharavi has several business units -- right from textiles to pottery to fabrication to leather industry. Plastic recycling and garbage segregation too is done here. Mainly a hub of cottage industries, it has an estimated 5,000 business entities and 15,000 single-room factories. Goods produced here go to Middle East, South-East Asia, United States and Europe and several other places.

Dharavi shot to international fame after British film-



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

maker Danny Boyle made "Slumdog Millionaire" in 2008. Set against the backdrop of Dharavi, the film had many children actually picked up from this slum. The film bagged 8 Oscars.

Following the success of "Slumdog Millionaire", some people from Dharavi initiated slum tours for international tourists who wanted to see what Asia's largest slum all about.

"It would be nightmare if Covid-19 begins to penetrate these slums where eight to 10 people sometime live in a single shanty. God will only save people here then," said a healthcare expert.

# Kerala CM welcomes PM's call to light lamps

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to light lamps on Sunday at 9 p.m. for 9 minutes to dispel the darkness caused by the coronavirus pandemic is a good act, as any display of brightness will always be welcomed.

Vijayan however said that following the lockdown lakhs of workers in Kerala employed in various sectors are finding the going tough and the 'brightness' in their lives has gone.

"Maybe, following the April 5th act, more 'brightness' might be on the way and let us all wait for the first 'brightness'," said Vijayan while addressing the media soon after the daily review of the Covid-19 measures in the State. IANS

# Maha leaders slam PM's 'light' call on April 5

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The ruling alliance partners in Maharashtra — the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena — slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday for his call to people to light candles, lamps or mobile torches on April 5 at 9 pm, by saying that the call was "irresponsible" and "stupid" and that it did not behave well for a Prime Minister to give such a call.

Reacting to the Prime Minister's call, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee and State Revenue Minister Balasaheb Thorat said: "The country is going through a tough time as the number of Coronavirus cases increasing each day. During such times, the Prime Minister is expect-

ed to take some firm policy decisions. Is it the Prime Minister's job to ask people to clap, light lamps etc? It is about time that PM gets serious about the issues at least now."

Dubbing the Modi's call is an act of stupidity, NCP leader and State Housing Minister Dr. Jitendra Awhad said: "Prime Minister of India asks the people to light lamps & candles. Is this some kind of a joke? Not a word on where the country stands in this war. It's preparedness, additional financial aid, new facilities created, diagnostic centres added, what his government proposes to do with gargantuan problem of stranded migrants. Shame!"

Shiv Sena MP and spokesperson Sanjay Raut

tweeted: "When people were asked to clap, they crowded the roads and beat drums, I just hope now they don't burn down their own houses, sir 'diva to jalalenge' but please tell us what the government is doing to improve condition."

"To fight the crisis, doctors, nurses, police, para-medical staff are all working by putting their lives at risk. The need of the hour is to stand firmly behind these people and give them the necessary help. What is required at this time is making available adequate number of ventilators, increasing the number of testing labs, providing doctors and their staff with PPEs, to provide financial assistance to states to fight this crisis," Thorat said.

# CORONA: 4 NEW CASES, 9 MORE CURED IN BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

Apparently losing her cool when asked to comment on how she would react to Modi's appeal to switch off power for nine minutes on Sunday, Banerjee retorted "Don't politicise the issue. It is a grave situation. I will not make any statement on

this... How can I say what you will do on what the Prime Minister says ... It is upon the people to decide as to what they will do ... whether they will follow his (PM's) advice or not ... If I will feel like sleeping I will sleep and if you feel like responding to his appeal you will do accordingly ... I am nobody to make a comment here. Let us not play politics."

Instead of dwelling on the Prime Minister's speech the Chief Minister questioned the attitude of "some political parties (read BJP)" for "doing nothing but taking all the credits." She alleged that "these people are saying that the Centre is providing ration to the people in this hour of crisis... In fact they have not even given a mask. It is the State Government which is bearing the huge costs of providing free

ration to the people." Questioning the "logic" behind the Prime Minister's appeal to switch off electric light one of the senior Ministers of Banerjee's Cabinet Subroto Mukherjee said he would follow the Prime Minister's advice if he were to be explained the reason behind doing what has been asked to do by Modi. "I will definitely follow his instructions but before that one has to explain the logic behind switching off electric light for nine minutes and lighting up candles," he said.

Disapproving of the Prime Minister's appeal Congress leader in Parliament Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said "if switching off power and lighting up candles or torches can solve the problem there is no need to do researches to discover medicine against the Corona virus."

# For a change, Yamuna flows cleaner & full

Agra: After a long while, river Yamuna is flowing full and cleaner at this time of the year.

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

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

The city too is largely pollution free, due to restrictions on movement of vehicles. Only an occasional ambulance or a police vehicle can be seen on the Fatehabad road, which has the largest concentration of hotels.

Water level in Vrindavan and Mathura had also seen a steady rise in the past few weeks.

In Agra, surplus water from the Ganga Jal Pipeline was also being released in the Yamuna. The two water works in Agra receive 140 cusec of water continuously from the 130 km long pipeline. The entire quantity is not used. The excess goes into the Yamuna, according to a local corporator Anurag Chaubey.

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## MODI: LIGHT LAMPS TO SHOW SOLIDARITY

Modi stated that many were worried about how many days this will continue, PM Modi said, "While this is a lockdown, don't think you are alone in this process. We are all together in this," he said thanking the people for their cooperation.

The Prime Minister thanked the States for supporting the decision of lockdown due to which India has achieved some success in limiting the spread of COVID-19. He praised how all the States have worked together as a team to check the spread of the virus. He, however, forewarned that the global situation remains far from satisfactory and informed about speculation of a possible second wave of spread of the virus in some countries.

Modi outlined that the common goal for the country is to ensure minimum loss of life. In the next few weeks, testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine should remain the areas of focus, he said a day before.

## OPP SLAMS PM

"Get real Mr Modi. Give India fiscal package worth 8-10 per cent of GDP. Ensure immediate wages to construction and other labour during lockdown -- laws exist permitting this. Stop gagging real press in name of curbing fake news," said the TMC leader. Chidambaram questioned why the Government had not announced a second Financial Action Plan for the poor amid the three-week nationwide lockdown to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

"What we expected from you today was FAP II, a generous livelihood support package for the poor, including for those categories of poor who were totally ignored by the Finance Minister on March 25," he tweeted.

"Every working man and woman, from business person to daily wage earner, also expected you to announce steps to arrest

## FROM PAGE 1

the economic slide and re-start the engines of economic growth."

He said people were disappointed on both the counts, adding that "symbolism is important, but serious thought to ideas and measures is equally important."

## 99 NEW CASES IN DELHI, TOTAL 384

Two other people who had earlier tested positive for COVID-19 were discharged from hospitals after treatment, taking the total number of cured patients to eight, the officials said.

They added that the total number of active cases now stands at 42 in the district. Gautam Buddha Nagar adjoining Delhi in western Uttar Pradesh is one of the hotspots for coronavirus in India and in the State.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal said the situation of corona outbreak in Delhi is under control. The national Capital reported a total of five corona deaths, one new death of the patient, who was taken out of the Markaz, has been reported in the last 24 hours.

"Information on HRCs, COVID-19 symptoms, measures taken by the Delhi Government to deal with the pandemic and all other information can be gathered from this number," he said. Urging people to follow lockdown, he said efforts of the Delhi Government, the Central Government and the people have been able to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Delhi, as a result of which the cases of local transmission have been just 38.

He said out of all the patients who have been admitted to the hospitals, two patients have been put on a ventilator, and the rest of the patients are stable.

"The COVID-19 lockdown announced by the Prime Minister should be followed strictly. We have to learn from other nations and follow social distancing and lockdown norms stringently," Kejriwal said.

"I am holding regular meetings with the health department of Delhi and the doctors. God forbid, if there is an outbreak of corona, we are fully prepared to handle the situation," he said.

Lauding the AAP's effort, he said the Delhi Government has taken several measures to provide relief to the marginalised, who have been affected by the lockdown the most. "72 lakh people are being provided 7.5 kg ration each at our distribution shops and around 60 per cent of people have already received ration and the remaining will receive soon. We have also devised a scheme to provide ration to those who do not have ration cards, and in a few days, we will start providing ration to them as well," Kejriwal said.

He said, "Around 8 lakh senior citizens, widows, and differently-abled have received Rs 5,000 as under the different pension schemes. Rs 5,000 will further be provided to them in the next week, or in another 10-15 days. Construction workers have also been provided Rs 5,000 as relief assistance and all the public service vehicle drivers, including auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws, gramin-sewas, RTVs, etc, will also be provided relief assistance of Rs 5,000 each."

"To ensure no person in Delhi goes hungry, 1780 HRCs have been opened in Delhi, and lunch and dinner are being provided at these HRCs. Yesterday, these 1780 HRCs provided lunch for 6,52,850 people and dinner for 6,30,000 people. 328 shelters have been opened in Delhi for migrant laborers and people from outside Delhi. These shelters can accommodate 57,270 people, and 11443 people are living in these shelters," he added.

Kejriwal, Education Minister Manish Sisodia and experts will interact with the 44 lakhs students of Delhi on Saturday at 3pm. These students are studying in Government, private and MCD schools.

"Our Government and private schools have around 44 lakh students, and I am sure they have a lot of questions now that they are sitting in their homes. Tomorrow at 3 pm, I, Manish Sisodia, and a few experts will interact with all students and parents of Delhi. Children have too many questions about corona, its symptoms and nature. We will address the children and parents on 'parenting in the times of corona' and try to answer all the questions," Kejriwal said.

## Tablighis walk naked

From Page 1 The nurse added that they were neither taking their medicines nor following social distancing norms.

The Ghaziabad police said the Jamaat members were booked for indulging in ugly acts and passing lewd remarks against the women staff members at the hospital. A case was registered against them at the GT Road Kotwali on receiving a complaint from the chief medical officer. The NSA allows preventive detention up to 12 months without a charge if the authorities are satisfied

that the person is a threat to the national security or law and order.

Ghaziabad Senior Superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani said stringent action will be taken against them. Police have registered the case under Sections 269, 270, 271, 294 and 354 of the Indian Penal Code, the SSP said. The sections relate to sexual harassment and actions which spread disease. The NSA Over 150 members of the Jamaat have been quarantined at different hospitals in Ghaziabad.

# Six Jamaatis test positive for virus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Six members of Tablighi Jamaat, including two foreigners, who returned from Nizamuddin markaz in Delhi, have been found to be coronavirus positive. With this, seven persons have tested positive for the virus in Kanpur so far.

An elderly man who had returned from the US to NRI City here had earlier tested positive for coronavirus.

On receipt of their test report from the King George's Medical University in Lucknow on Friday, panic prevailed among the officials of the health department and district administration here.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Ashok Shukla shifted all these coronavirus positive patients from Naraina Medical College to COVID-19 Hospital at LLR (Hallet) hospital.

It may be recalled that the search for the Tablighi Jamaat's Nizamuddin markaz conclave participants had started across the country a few days ago. On Tuesday and Wednesday, police and health officials in Kanpur, had traced 31 of these Tablighi Jamaatis and caught them from Babupurwa mosque, Golaghat area of Cantonment and Baripal village in Sajeji police area. They were admitted to the isolation ward of UHM hospital and Covid-19 hospital of the Hallet hospital. They included seven foreigners from Iran, Afghanistan and England.

On Wednesday, 22 samples from Hallet and nine from UHM Hospital were sent to KGMU in Lucknow for testing. On Thursday, the negative test report of 18 Jamaatis, including four foreigners, was received by the administration. Subsequently, all of them were



Four coronavirus positive Tablighi Jamaat members being shifted to Covid-19 hospitals at LLR Hallet hospital in Kanpur on Friday morning

shifted to Naraina Medical College.

On Friday morning, the test reports of nine persons, including eight Jamaatis and a woman (who died during treatment at the Covid-19 hospital on Thursday morning) was received from KGMU. The reports of five other coronavirus suspects is likely to be received by late Friday evening, according to officials.

In the test report of eight Jamaatis received on Friday morning, four were found coronavirus positive. The test report of two foreigners received in the afternoon was also positive.

They include Mohd Hamid (57) of Nausari (Gujarat), Naseem (27), Islamuddin (53), Roaf Miya (50) of Delhi, Mehmood and Abdul Rahim of Afghanistan.

# DM: Pvt, social organisations should join govt system in supply of essential items

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma emphasised that private, social and voluntary organisations should join government system in view to provide food and essential items to needy people in both urban and rural areas during lockdown period. At a meeting of senior officers here on Friday, he stressed the need for such system so that the helpless and poor can get essential items easily. Meanwhile, the normal life in the city continued to remain paralysed as the nationwide lockdown entered tenth day in view to prevent spreading of worldwide coronavirus pandemic. The markets continued to wear a deserted look except a few places especially at vegetable markets where some residents are still not maintaining social distancing effective-

ly. DM said that in the food distribution system, people living in slums and daily wage labourers who could not reach the places where the essential items were distributed should also be covered. He instructed the ADMs to distribute food and essential items through police stations associating the local ministers, MLAs and other public representatives and complete the distribution process within 2-3 days. He also asked the details of food distributions from SDMs of Pindra, Raj Talab and Sadar and instructed them to distribute the rest of kits of essential items to needy people. He also said that the regular food should be provided to 936 persons being quarantined at 21 centres.

Meanwhile, the district administration heaved a sign of relief when even the second

report of first positive COVID-19 patient of the district was found negative. The 30 years old and a resident of Chitaura village, under the Badagaon police station, who came here from Dubai (UAE) was admitted to Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital and his report was found positive. The report about his fully recovery gave a relief to the administration and Health department. However, it is said that by Saturday evening he would be kept at the hospital for observation and then he would be discharged.

However, the administration is still in confusion about the real number of people returned after taking part in Tablighi Jamaat Markaz as some of them reached nearby districts of Azamgarh and Jaunpur reportedly found positive. Earlier, it was said that five persons came here and all of

them, along with family members, are being quarantined at present. On Thursday, the administration was shocked when a resident himself came forward from Madanpura area and informed that he along with 11 other locals after taking part in Markaz event returned here in a bus from Delhi on March 30 last. They included five from Jaitpura and three each from Lohta and Madanpura areas. As the bus was packed, the collection of details of all would be a tough task until the people themselves came forward. So far as many as 17 such persons of Varanasi and Mirzapur districts are being quarantined at DDU Hospital.

Earlier, in view to make its action more stringent, the district police lodged FIRs against 20 persons for violating the lockdown on Thursday.

So far, 23 persons were

arrested under Section 151 CrPC apart from two shopkeepers of Kandhva and Pahadi Gate under Manduadih police station for selling essential items at higher prices. During checking at 14 border points and 49 police barriers, 1051 vehicles were challaned apart from seizing of nine vehicles.

Meanwhile, in view to help the people get medical services, Tele-OPD has been launched on Friday as two doctors would give their duties in two shifts at Integrated Control Room, Siga. From 8 am to 2 pm. Dr Nishant Chaudhary (mobile number 9839089512) and from 2 pm to 8 pm.

Dr. Vikas Srivastava (9839360161) would provide tele-medical services to the patients, who can also get the consultation by ringing 0542-2508585 and Toll Free No. 1077.

# 889 prisoners released on parole

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The subordinate courts of UP, in compliance of the Supreme Court's direction have released 889 prisoners on parole and 7,816 prisoners on bail upto April 2, 2020. The process of release is still in continuation and the figures of released prisoners is likely to increase in near future.

The Supreme Court, keeping in view the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 23, 2020 had issued direction to all the states to consider releasing some prisoners either on bail or parole to reduce overcrowding in prisons.

The Supreme Court ordered constitution of a High Powered Committee in each state to determine which class of prisoners can be released on parole or interim bail for such period as may be appropriate. The High Power Committee was to work in consultation with the State Legal Service Authority for deciding on the release of prisoners.

As per the order, prisoners convicted or charged with offenses having jail term of up to seven years were to be given parole.

In compliance of the Apex Court's Order a High Powered Committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Justice P.K. Jaiswal, Senior Judge, Lucknow Bench, which decided the modalities for the release of prisoners.

The modalities were communicated to all the courts subordinate to the High Court for taking necessary steps in the matter.

# NCR meets requirement of masks, sanitisers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Large-scale inhouse production of mask and sanitiser were done by North Central Railway (NCR) to meet requirement of all frontline staff. Approximately 13,000 meals served to needy during lockdown period.

Indian Railways, the biggest transport utility of the country, has been taking a series of proactive measures to fight COVID-19 pandemic besides sustained efforts to run goods and parcel trains to ensure adequate supply of essential commodities across the length and breadth of the nation.

North Central Railway one of the most important Zonal Railway is providing connectivity between North to East, West and South has been on the forefront in this unprecedented endeavour of Indian Railways against coronavirus. Following steps/ initiatives taken on North Central Railway were reviewed by General Manager NCR & NR Rajiv Chaudhary in video conference here on Friday.

# Babu Maharaj performs Ganga aarti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A special Ganga aarti was performed by chief of Gangotri Sewa Samiti at Dashaswamedh Ghat Pt. Kishori Raman Dubey 'Babu Maharaj' on Thursday evening, respecting lockdown restrictions and social distancing, in view to pray the Almighty to help the world defeat coronavirus and help the people overcome the prevailing fear from the pandemic. After two decades, Babu Maharaj had performed the special Ganga aarti himself as there are total ban on the movement of people and visit of tourists due to 21-day long lockdown. On the occasion, Babu Maharaj also offered special Shodshopchar Pujan to please Goddess Ganga. Besides, on the occasion, a good number of diyas (earthen lamps) were also offered into the sacred water of holy Ganga. Babu Maharaj said that the special programme was done for world peace and helping the people fight against coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, chief of Shree Kashi Agrawal Samaj and leading jewellers of the city Ashok Agrawal and his son Shashank Agrawal donated ₹ 10 lakh for the Prime Minister Relief Fund. They handed over the cheque to District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma to forward the same to the PM in his fight against coronavirus pandemic. They also appealed to the people to come forward and help the needy people during the ongoing 21-day lockdown. Besides, the Samaj continued distributing packets of essential items to the people apart from medical and other facilities.



Babu Maharaj offering special Ganga aarti at Dashaswamedh Ghat in Varanasi on Thursday evening

Earlier, under the auspices of NER Divisional Women's Welfare Organisation, its chairperson Manisha Panjari and other office-bearers distributed packets of essential items to 140 poor, helpless safai employees and contract labourers at Manduadih railway station. They also advised the beneficiaries to maintain social distancing and wash their hands regularly with soaps. Besides, under the leadership of Divisional Security Commissioner Rishi Pandey and RPF Inspector of Manduadih, essential items were distributed among the poor people at a slum locality between Manduadih and

Hardtupur railway stations apart from some other places in Varanasi division of North Eastern Railway (NER).

The Congress workers led by its district spokesperson and Mrs India International Roshani Kushal Jaiswal distributed essential items among the labourers and poor people at Ramnagar, Shivpura, Chatrupur, Parao, Rajghat, Kashi railway station, Chandpur, Lalapura, Ranipur and Bajardiha. Roshani said that the food packets were given to the people after helping them to sanitise their hands. Meanwhile, Orange Café continued its efforts and according to Ajay Patel during the last four days

800 food packets were distributed among the needy people in slum localities of Assi Nalla, Nawabganj, Lanka and Bhelupur areas. They also provided food packets to 10 families of Jharkhand and some rickshaw pullers who have no work these days due to lockdown. Besides, Parao Ashram continued its bid to provide 500 packets of essential items among the people daily on the instructions of chief of this leading religious institution Gurupad Sambhram Ram. The members of Ashw Sanstha led by its chief trustee Sarika Singh provided food and milk packets among the poor families in Kandhva area.

# Bootleggers having a field day during lockdown

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The arrest of dozens of people involved in surreptitious sale of liquor has brought to light a 'syndicate' that has been making the quick buck from the addiction of boozers during the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus in Kanpur.

While there was no blanket ban on the sale of liquor, the restriction on movement and the shuttered shops for most part of the day in view of lockdown gave rise to bootlegging in the city. The bootleggers were operating across the length and breadth of the city, using SUVs and vans used for delivery of LPG refill cylinders to carry liquor bottles to their customers, of course at a premium.

Prominent areas where

bootlegging shot up and arrests were made by the police include Naubasta, Bilhaur, Nawabganj, Jubi and many surrounding areas. The very early morning assembly of people in areas where the liquor vends were run was clearly an indication that there was a massive demand for liquor and bootlegging had shot up manifold.

Latching on to the 'virus sent' opportunity, a bootlegging syndicate suddenly became active and started delivering liquor to the boozers especially at the dead of the night when there was hardly any movement on the streets. The deserted roads and dark, unlit bylanes provided an ideal set-up for the bootleggers and the boozers to strike their daily deals.

It was a stroke of luck that some policemen on patrol

became suspicious and checked a milk vendor carrying lots of cans on his motorcycle. They found the milk cans dry and hay spread on the base of four big cans. When quizzed, the person admitted that he had delivered liquor bottles to customers and was returning home. The police were unable to arrest him as there was no evidence or recovery of any liquor bottle from the person.

Similarly, a man carrying LPG cylinders was stopped by a picket, only to find that two cylinders were cut open from beneath and stuffed with liquor bottles. The best part was that as the liquor bottles were of plastic, there was less chance of breakage.

Several kabaris (scrap dealers) are also reportedly bootlegging to "make hay while the sun shines".

# Team of doctors treating virus patients replaced

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Nodal officer and Chief Medical Superintendent Dr RK Maurya said the team of doctors which had been working in the COVID-19 wards for the past fortnight had been withdrawn and replaced by a new team.

He said this team had been treating suspected COVID-19 patients and was replaced as a precautionary measure as there were chances of the doctors too being contracting infection because of their constant contact with the suspected coronavirus carriers. Dr Maurya said these doctors had been put in quarantine for 14 days and they would go to their respective homes if their swab tests were negative.

However, there was no official confirmation if this facility had been provide to nurses and paramedical staff as well who have been working with these doctors for the past around two weeks.

Meanwhile, GSVM Medical College Principal Dr Arati Lalchandani disclosed that a requisition for purchase of RTPCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) machine

made to the government had been approved and referred to the Kanpur District Magistrate Dr BR Tiwari.

The machine will be set up in the hospital very soon and thus save the time wasted in sending the samples to KG Medical University in Lucknow and getting the results. With its installation, all coronavirus tests would be done in the city itself and this will help in starting early treatment of positive cases.

**DONATED:** Young entrepreneur Sharad Tripathi of P Road has donated ₹5 lakh to the PM Cares Fund on Friday. He said the amount had been digitally transferred to PM Cares Fund. Tripathi said he was very much impressed from the relief measures launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the poor and daily wagers during the lockdown. His efforts to save the lives of people from dreaded coronavirus were also commendable. Under the circumstances, it was duty of all citizens to lend their support to the PM in cash or kind to uphold the country's image. Tripathi said the life of everybody in the country was very precious which should be protected at

any cost with the joint cooperation of all capable of it.

**FOOD DISTRIBUTED :** Activists of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) are also equally alert in cooperating with the campaigns of district administration during the lockdown period. Like many other NGOs, social organisations and industry houses, ABVP activists also distributed cooked food to poor people, destitutes and abandoned labourers on Wednesday. They served the lunch packets to slum dwellers in Govind Nagar slum, and poor people in Rakhi Mandi and Ghantaghar. Prominent activists heading the drive were Rituraj Misra, Raj Chaurasia, Jai Chaurasia, Vivek and Harshit Gupta.

**FIGHT FOR COVID-19 :** RB, leading consumer Health and Hygiene Company, has launched the RB Fight for Access Fund to improve access to health, hygiene and nutrition for all. As part of this fund, an additional ₹32M has been mobilised to address the urgent collective fight against the spread of Covid-19 by breaking the chain of this fast-spreading infection.

# Jagruti women making homemade masks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst the reports of black-marketing of masks when coronavirus pandemic continued creating pandemic across the world and in country, the cases have jumped up sharply during the last few days, the members of a local Self Help Group (SHG), Jagriti of Sajoi village, have taken a positive step when they started sewing of homemade masks for the needy people. The members like Ritujia Kushwaha, Geeta, Suman Vibha and others are busy in making masks and decided to distribute the same free-of-cost among the people. These are cotton made masks for the common man.

Last month, when COVID-19 had started spreading in many countries including India, huge number of people had purchased various types of masks and the markets witnessed shortage of even surgical and N95 masks.

There were several reports that even the doctors and paramedical employees were facing scarcity of such surgical masks whereas the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) clearly said it does not recommend that the general public wear N95 respirators to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The CDC further stated that in settings where face masks are not available,



SHG woman sewing masks for the people in Varanasi on Friday

homemade face masks can be used as a last resort. Jagriti being run with the

support of Human Welfare Association (HWA) is making homemade masks under

Kashika Programme. The Director of HWA Padma Shri Dr Rajani Kant said that if requires, the SHG can produce masks in a large scale and provide the same to the people at their home. 'Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal, Jagriti members comprising mainly of women of weavers' community are learning new techniques of sewing for the last eight years and trying to give their contributions in these hours of crisis.'

Meanwhile, on the instructions of Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and Railway Board, Varanasi Division of North-Eastern Railway (NER) has decided to convert as many as 32 coaches into isolation/quarantine wards and the work is being done by Carriage and Wagon department.

The first of such isolation ward has already been made at Manduadih Coaching Depot in parliamentary constituency of PM.

There are eight isolation cabins with latest facilities to treat COVID-19 patients. The coach has been sanitised both from outside and inside. There is one doctor cabin, one store room, three toilets with latest fittings apart from one bathroom and wash basins. To check mosquito menace, nets have been installed at windows. The work on converting other coaches out of 32 by the division is going on at Manduadih and Chhapra Junction railway stations.

## 36 quarantine centres set up: DM

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

District Magistrate Amit Singh Bansal said that total 36 quarantine centres had been established in the entire district. He told 'The Pioneer' that 7,315 labourers had returned from places like Mumbai, Surat, Delhi, Noida and Ghaziabad to their villages after the announcement of three-week-long lockdown in the country. These quarantine centres had been made at 36 schools and 376 gram panchayats in the district. DM Bansal said that the



DM Banda Amit Singh Bansal

labourers had started reaching

here after March 25. These labourers had gone to metro cities in search of jobs. All such labourers were first taken to government hospitals for their health check-up. After health examinations they labours had been kept in quarantine centres for 14 days.

DM Amit Singh Bansal said that 75 labourers made an attempt to flee but were caught and brought to these centres. Bansal said that a first information report (FIR) had been registered against a labourer who ran away from

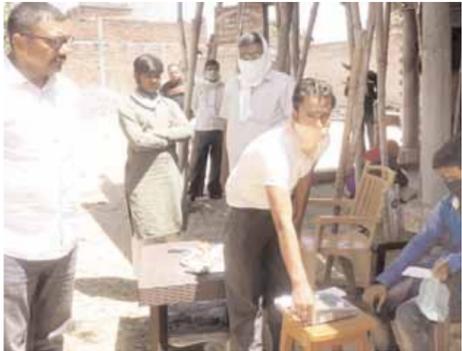
Kasturba Gandhi School Tindwari on March 30 night. However he was caught by the police from Banda city area on April 1. DM said that he had issued instructions to Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) Banda Harish Chandra Nath to issue notices to all such labourers who tried to run away from quarantine centres. DM said that efforts were being made to get the lockdown implemented successfully in the entire district. DM made an appeal to the people to stay at home for their well-being.

## Maintain social distancing: DSO

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONEBHADRA

District Supply Officer (DSO) Rakesh Tiwari said that in order to ensure that no poor, helpless person or daily wagger in the district faced any ration-related problem directives have been issued to ensure distribution of foodgrains from April 1 to 10. The fair-price shopkeepers had also been directed to make arrangements for soap and water in the shops and follow social distancing norms so that the beneficiaries could wash their hands and before feed their fingerprints into the e-pos (point of sale) machines. Nodal officers had been appointed for the distribution of foodgrains, he said.

Free foodgrains would be distributed among all Antyodaya beneficiaries, cardholders of eligible households,



District Supply Officer Rakesh Tiwari inspecting distribution of free foodgrains in a village in Robertsganj, Sonbhadra

if they were in the list of active MNREGA workers or were registered construction workers in the Labour department,

daily wagers registered in municipal bodies, rickshaw-pullers, pedlars etc. on submission of MGNREGA job

card and registration certificate, he added. Reports said that the district administration under the leadership of District Magistrate S Rajalingam was sensitive towards the problems of the common man and poor in the district in view of the ongoing three-week-long nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus pandemic and trying to find a solution to them. A control room has been set up at Collectorate, Lodhi, for solving the problems of the people.

The rules of the lockdown were being followed and efforts were being made to ensure that the benefits of the welfare schemes of the government reached the people. Besides continuous inspection was being done to ensure distribution of foodgrains among the people.

## Extensive arrangements to combat coronavirus

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The North Eastern Railway (NER) administration is fully committed to preventing Covid-19 infection. To meet this challenge extensive arrangements have been made in North Eastern Railway headquarters Gorakhpur-situated Lalit Narayan Mishra Railway Hospital and Divisional Hospital, Badshahnagar (Lucknow), Varanasi and Izzatnagar. Adequate ventilators, hand gloves, full bodysuit

as well as masks have been provided in these hospitals. Five more ventilators will be installed soon in Gorakhpur-situated Lalit Narayan Mishra Railway Hospital, three in Divisional Hospital, Badshahnagar, Lucknow, five in Izzatnagar and three in Divisional Hospital, Varanasi. For medical and paramedical staff 17,435 gloves had been provided in the headquarters and all the three divisional hospitals. Besides, 27,000 more gloves will be made available

soon. Similarly, there are 357 N95 masks and 36,750 of other categories in these hospitals. As many as 2,700 N95 masks and 49,200 masks of other category will be available soon. There are 73 full bodysuits in these hospitals and 2,700 more will be available. As many as 4,000 masks and 220 litres of sanitiser had been produced in all the three divisions, including at the North Eastern Railway headquarters, and the mechanical workshop at Gorakhpur and Izzatnagar.

## Driver beaten up, deprived of ₹20,000

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

In a daring incident some unidentified miscreants thrashed the driver of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) MLA from Khajni Sant Prasad and deprived him of ₹20,000 late on Wednesday night. On the other hand, Sikariganj police registered a case of assault and loot against the miscreants in this connection following a complaint lodged by the driver on Thursday and had started investigating the matter, last reports received here said.

According to the information received here, the driver of Khajni MLA Sant Prasad was going via Mahadeva Bazar and Hariharpur Road on Wednesday. It is alleged that the some miscreants lying in ambush lying in ambush overtook him on an Alto car. After thrashing him they looted ₹20,000 which kept in the jeep and escaped from there. When contacted Sikariganj police station incharge said that a search had been launched for the miscreants and they would be arrested soon.

## BEATEN TO DEATH

One man was beaten to death by his friends who had called him on the pretext of a party here recently. The wife of the victim had registered a case against five persons, including a history-sheeter of the village, in this connection. According to a report received here Vinod Dubey (40), son of Harish Chand Dubey, originally a resident of Sahuakhor under the Uruva police station, was given land by his aunt belonging to Bhilora village under the Belipar police station. He lived in Bhilora for a long time. However, a few months ago, he started living in a rented room in ward number 10 in Sahajanwa town. He was involved in the property business. According to his wife, Manju Devi, two youths from Bhilora village had taken him from the house in the evening in the name of party. She said that whereabouts of her husband could not be traced since then. It is learnt that around 8 pm someone called up on her neighbour's telephone and said that Vinod lying in an injured state near Zero Point in Kalesar. When the family members rushed there they found him in critical state near the dhaba located in Gida Sector 15 a little distance away. He was rushed to the community health centre (CHC) in Sahajanwa but from there was referred to the district hospital after first aid. However he succumbed to this injuries while being taken there. His wife filed a case against five persons, including a history-sheeter in this connection.

## Wheat crop destroyed in fire

CORRESPONDENT ■ HAMIRPUR

Standing wheat crop was destroyed when a fire broke out in a field in an area under the Maudaha Kotwali here on Thursday. According to a report received here, the fields of Mujibur Rehman and Sahadat, residents of Upraus Mohal in Maudaha are situated in Kunehta Road. The wheat crop sown in their fields had to be harvested. A spark in the high-tension wires led to the fire in the afternoon as a result of which out of the wheat crop caught fire. Fanned by strong winds it destroyed wheat crop standing on around 10 bighas of land. The people present there tried to douse the flames but could not control them due to the winds. On getting information the fire brigade reached the spot and controlled the flames. Meanwhile a devastating fire



Standing wheat crop on around 10 bighas of land was destroyed when a fire broke out in Hamirpur

suddenly broke out in a shop situated in Sarila due to a short circuit. The flames soon spread to an adjoining hotel as a result of which valuables worth lakhs of rupees were lost. According to a report

received here, Mahesh Vishwakarma, has a welding shop at Mamna stand in Sarila town under the Jariva police station, where the fire broke out due to a short circuit around 5.30 pm in which the valuables

kept there, including a big welding machine, two small ones welding machines, two big pipe cutters, one LCD, four hand grinders, three fans and other items were lost. Besides the valuables kept at the hotel of Kalka Prasad, a resident of Kheda Shilajit village situated along the roadside next to it too was destroyed around 4 pm on Thursday.

Owing to the three-week-long nationwide lockdown it was closed. On getting information about the incident Sarila outpost incharge Ajit Singh, reached there and said that the fire was extinguished with the assistance of locals with the help of a tanker. The fire was later brought under control and Iekhpal Pankaj was assessing the losses. He said that blaze caused a loss between ₹1.5 lakh and ₹2 lakh. The Sarila outpost staff and JE Electricity Anil Kumar were present there. The site.

## Youth tries to end life

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

A 20-year-old youth tried to commit suicide in this house in Khurhand village. According to a report received here, Pravesh, son of Ramjor, tried to commit suicide in his house with the help of a rope. However his family members immediately got him admitted to District Hospital for treatment. They told the police that he was fed up due to the ongoing lockdown and had asked his guardians to allow him to go to Banda city. When they refused to grant permission to him for doing so as they denied he made this attempt of suicide. In another incident, Anita (27), a resident of Parashuram Talab under City Kotwali and Shivpujan (22), a resident of Pachnehi village under Dehat Kotwali consumed some poisonous substances and were admitted to District Hospital Banda. EMO District Hospital Banda Dr Vineet Sachan said that both the victims was were out of danger.



To check the spread of novel coronavirus Mughalsarai city in Chandauli district was sanitised. PDDU Nagar Palika Chairman Santosh Kharwar said that there was a plan to sanitise all wards of the city.

## Thieves target two houses

CORRESPONDENT ■ HAMIRPUR

Some unidentified thieves broke open the locks of two houses and decamped with the booty at night. The victim of one of the houses informed the police personnel deployed at Rath police station. Reports said that Safina Khatoun, wife of Suvedar, a resident of village

Toonka under the Rath police station area, has been living in a rented house for about nine years in the town. On Wednesday evening Safina Khatoun had gone to her sister's place who stopped here only. On finding the moment opportune on Wednesday night, the thieves targeted it, broke open its locks

and stole gold and silver jewellery besides ₹10,000 kept there. They also targeted the house of Chandrashekhar Kushawa, who worked in Delhi as a labourer as was stuck there due to lockdown, broke open its locks and took away all the articles from there. On receiving information the police reached the spot.

## School donates ₹1 lakh to DM Relief Fund

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAU

The Delhi World Public School (DWPS) management came forward to extend help to fight against coronavirus pandemic. The school management donated ₹1,00,000 to DM Relief Fund. They handed over to the cheque to District Inspector of Schools (DIOS) Bhagwat Patel who appreciated this gesture of theirs. DIOS Bhagwat Patel made an appeal to the social workers and school managements to come forward and helping the people to fight against coronavirus. Hari, Ashwini and Manoj Rajput were present on the occasion.



DWPS management presenting the cheque to DIOS Bhagwat Patel in Orai.

## Lunch packets, water bottles distributed



Chairman Ramshree Public School Achal Nigotia and Principal Anurag Julius Massey at Shahed Bhagat Singh Chauraha in Orai on Thursday

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAU

The Ramshree Public School distributed lunch packets

and water bottles among police personnel and mediapersons at Shahed Bhagat Singh Chauraha, Sankta Mandir,

Ambedkar Chauraha, Ghantagar and other prominent places of the town on Thursday. Chairman Ramshree Group Achal Nigotia said that they had taken this initiative to show their appreciation towards the police personnel and mediapersons who were working hard for the welfare of people. Principal Ramshree Public School Anurag Julius Massey said that that they were prepared to fight against coronavirus pandemic and would continuously distribute lunch packets, water bottles and essential items among the needy. Inspector Shiv Gopal Verma, incharge Kotwali Orai police station, and other policemen was also present.

## Food items given to poor

CORRESPONDENT ■ SHAHJAHANPUR

In order to help the poor and daily labourers hit by the nationwide lockdown to check the spread of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) infection principal of Gandhi Faiz-e-Aam College Prof Jamil Ahmed distributed food among poor families in compliance with social distancing norm. He said that the families of daily

wager are facing a difficult time. People should come forward to extend help to them and make them aware about novel coronavirus and the ways to prevent it. He appealed to the affluent people to extend their support to the Prime Minister and Chief Minister Relief Funds. He told the people to stay inside their houses and follow the lockdown guidelines to prevent

the spread of coronavirus. While stressing on use of sanitiser and masks. While meeting any person they should maintain social distancing norms. While coughing or sneezing, we should cover our mouth with a tissue or handkerchief, he said. Besides if one should contact a doctor immediately in case one had fever, cough and difficulty in breathing, he added.

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Vishambhar Prasad Nishad distributed 100 lunch packets among the family members of the labourers at the quarantine centre established at Fatma Girls Inter College Chilla recently. MP Nishad also inquired of the health of these labourers from their family members. He assured them all possible help during lockdown period. MP Nishad said that efforts were being made to distribute 500 lunch packets daily in the district.

On the other hand, district president Akhil Bhartiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal (ABUVM) Manoj Jain and general secretary Amit Seth Bholu distributed 700 lunch packets among labourers at Kushwaha Nagar and Atarra ootroi. District president ABUVM Manoj Jain told 'The



Rajya Sabha MP Vishambhar Prasad Nishad distributing Lunch packets among the family members of the labourers at Chilla town in Banda

Khare, Umesh Gupta Daya and Santosh Khaira. Meanwhile, district president of District Congress Committee, Rajesh Dixit, distributed 500 lunch packets among the labourers at Kalu Kuwan, Khutla, Rahuniya, Atarra ootroi. District president ABUVM Manoj Jain told 'The

uted masks among the farmers and labourers on Thursday. SO told 'The Pioneer' that in order to check the spread of novel coronavirus he decided to make available masks free of cost to farmers and labourers working in their fields and barns. Singh said that he had provided masks to more than



District president Akhil Bhartiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal Banda Manoj Jain distributing lunch packets among the poor in Banda city

Pioneer' that the demand for lunch packets was increasing daily. Jain said that the lunch packets were being distributed among the poor and needy people. District president said that he had received the names of 300 more poor people from different areas of the city through his members. Jain said that thus there would be requirement for 1,000 lunch packets on a daily basis during the lockdown period. District President Jain said that he was making it possible with the support of his colleagues like Amit Seth Bholu, Sudhir Gupta, Veerendra Goel, Sanjay Nigam Akela, Pradeep Jadya, Babul Shivhare, Amit Gupta, Manish, Naeem Neta, Rohit Jain, Ajay Pratap Vijay Pratap Gupta, Hemant Rai, Nishant

Prominent among those present on the occasion were Seema Khan, Santosh Kumar

four dozen people in Sikahula village and asked them to wear it before him. SO Singh said



President District Congress Committee Rajesh Dixit distributing lunch packets

Dwivedi and Veerendra Tiwari.

## LEAFLETS DISTRIBUTED

Station Officer (SO) Jaspura Alok Singh distrib-

that he also distributed leaflets on which steps to be taken to prevent coronavirus were mentioned. SO said that these farmers and labourers were advised to wear masks while

said that she was preparing a list of all those people who were deprived of the ration cards. On the occasion she said that she had spoken to District Supply Officer (DSO) of Banda for getting the formalities completed so that these poor people could be issued Ration cards so that they could also take the benefits of government schemes. Gupta added that these people were advised to maintain social distancing. She said that apart from this about 200 poor people had called her on her mobile number 9415497135. She said that they were also given ration kits at their homes by party workers. Gupta further added that the distribution of ration kits would continue during lockdown period.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

# All medical devices brought under DCA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Till now, the Government had been regulating only 24 classes of medical devices.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

digital thermometers, CT scan, MRIs, dialysis machines - will be regulated under the DCA.

As per the notification, four medical devices, cardiac stents, drug eluting stents, condoms and intra uterine devices (Cu-T), are scheduled medical devices for which ceiling prices have been fixed. These four medical devices are under price control.

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

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

## Relief and rescue operations

# Armed Forces deploy warships, aircraft, helicopters as standby

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Besides this, the Armed Forces are running six quarantine facilities at Mumbai, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Hindon, Manesar and Chennai. These centres have so far catered to 1,7037 of which 403 have been released so far. Three positive COVID cases - two from Hindan and one from Manesar - were referred to Safdarjung Hospital in the national capital for further treatment. In addition, 15 other facilities are being kept ready as standby for use, if required.

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

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

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kanpur, Jaisalmer, Jorhat and Gorakhpur.

Also, special flights of IAF have evacuated people and carried medical supplies. A C-17 comprising crew, medical team and support

staff has carried 15 tonnes of medical supplies to China and airlifted 125 persons, including five children comprising Indian nationals and few citizens from friendly countries on its return.

The C-17 Globemaster

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday released ₹11,092 crore to States for Covid-19 related rehabilitation works after many Chief Ministers raised the issue of immediate release of the money from State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) during their video-conferencing session with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday. Earlier in the morning, the Group of Ministers headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and comprising Home Minister Amit Shah, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar carried out a detailed review of the overall healthcare delivery system as well as situation arising out of the 21-day nation-wide lockdown.

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

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

deaths so far.

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

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

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

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

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

### States told to issue passes to representatives of Insurance companies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday expressed concern over the incidents of attacks on doctors, health workers and police personnel in some parts of the country and the gathering of migrant workers in Anand Vihar and congregation of Tablighi Jamaat in Nizamuddin in Delhi even as Vice President Venkaiah Naidu called upon the Governors and Lt. Governors of States and Union Territories to motivate spiritual and religious leaders to advise their followers to not hold any congregations and observe social distancing norms to prevent the transmission of the pandemic.

The President and the Vice President held the second round of interactions with the Governors, Lieutenant Governors and administrators of all states and union territories via video-conferencing to discuss measures to combat against COVID-19. The conference was a sequel to the video conference held on March 27 with the Governors/LGs of select States/UTs on the issue.

The President emphasized the need to ensure that no one remains hungry during the

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

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

Naidu pointed out that though the Central Government and the State Governments were taking adequate measures to alleviate people's suffering, it would serve eternal human values for social elites to come forward and support the poor and most vulnerable sections in this crisis.

In the conference there was unanimity that there is no scope for laxity or complacency in fighting the invisible enemy, a Rashtrapati Bhawan communiqué stated.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"The app will enable people to assess themselves the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

rowing capacity of the States.

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

dem feeds on such conditions of the people.

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

## 'Gangtva' can cure coronavirus: Team of Indian Army veterans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Gopal Sharma, founder of Atulya Ganga said: "The Ganges bears a nectar element

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

The group claimed that Ganga water has been proven to be capable of defending against various bacteria and viruses.

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

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

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

Atulya Ganga is a team of ex-military officers who earlier announced a walk along the banks of the Ganges from Gomukh, the origin of the Ganges, to the Bay of Bengal, in what they claim was world's first ever Mundaman Parikrama. The walk is expected to begin in August this year.

Organisations like Google and premium education institutes like IIT Delhi are also partners of the Army veterans in the journey.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Refinement of the CoroFlu vaccine concept and testing in laboratory animal



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

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

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

"We are going to modify M2SR by adding part of the coding region for the coronavirus spike protein that the virus uses to latch onto cells and begin infection," said Gabriele Neumann, a senior virologist in Kawaoka's lab and co-founder of FluGen. "CoroFlu will also express the influenza virus hemagglutinin protein, which is the major influenza virus antigen, so we should get immune responses to both coronavirus and influenza."

CoroFlu, like M2SR, will be delivered intranasally. This route of administration mimics the natural route of infection by coronavirus and influenza and activates several modes of the immune system.

Intranasal delivery is more effective at inducing

## Validity of CGHS cards extended till April 30

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

PNS

multiple types of immune responses than the intramuscular shots that deliver most flu vaccines.

"Ninety percent of our vaccines are sold in lower middle-income countries with affordable pricing being core to our business model. We will fervently work toward the successful development of an efficacious COVID-19 vaccine," said Dr Ella.

# The food challenge

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

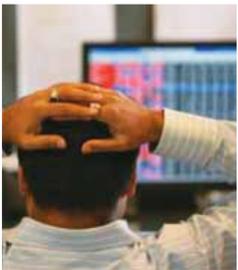


The country may have sufficient foodgrain stocks in Central and State warehouses as reserves to tide out an emergency but the breakage of supply chain management due to the lockdown has also meant that they are not reaching beneficiaries. The Government claims that we have nearly 10 times the emergency reserve needed for this time of the year and the fair price shops can go on an overdrive to meet our nutritional requirements. But these are just dry rations, such as rice, wheat, sugar and pulses. Farm supplies have been badly hit because of sudden closure. Even if there are vegetables waiting to be loaded, varying curfew protocols by different States and the still patchy system of curfew passes for truckers mean that there is no movement. Police harassment has only complicated transit. States like Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Delhi, Maharashtra and West Bengal have issued curfew passes promptly and set up police task forces to facilitate smooth movement. But virus hotspots States like Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan have totally closed their borders and even sealed their drop point depots. Although the Government is contemplating a staggered release from lockdown, mainly to ensure the April harvest from the fields, the exodus of daily labourers has meant that there are far fewer hands available to manage field work. There are also reports of truck drivers joining the migrants. The second biggest bottleneck is of manufactured, processed and packaged food items. With consumers hoarding anything with a shelf life, the sudden gush of demand, the flight of labour at units rolling them out and the supply chain gaps have meant that our breakfast platters are beginning to look different. Fast-moving consumer good (FMCG) companies are already registering an upswing in demand from urban centres, indicating the hoarding spiral. The retail network has completely collapsed, its earnings now down to 15 per cent. A longer lockdown would mean that sector players would have to shut down and let go off their staff by June. It is, of course, the neighbourhood stores and grocers, who are back in business, having just enough capacity to serve their ecosystem and, therefore, able to smoothen some shocks given their scale. The online delivery platforms have already collapsed with the supply chain breakdown, running out of stocks, delaying deliveries and some of them not signing up new customers at all. The less said about the poultry sector the better; eggs are still available though chicken and meat are mostly off the shelves because of the zoonotic virus. Even dairy products could be affected as a report said that the Aarey dairy has just enough fodder for the cattle to last a week or so.

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

## Business unusual

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



Where will businesses stand in a post-Coronavirus world? Even as countries make plans to extend their lockdowns, both Government officials and citizens have no clue when the world will return to normalcy. There are those who are looking into the aspects as to where things may stand once everything settles down. However, one thing is certain: Things will not be the same as they were before the Wuhan contagion swept the world. Of course, there will be a lot of families and individuals who will be devastated by

the fallouts. Every passing day, it appears more and more likely that several businesses, which were swimming fine until the outbreak of the virus, will now sink into the depths of bankruptcy, with or without Government intervention. And those that survive will be fundamentally different. One of those differences will be driven from the "work from home" culture that has begun in many industries.

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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

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

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

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

# The invisible people

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SOUNDBITE

Dear @narendramodi, we will listen to you and light *diyas* on April 5. But in return, please listen to us and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists.



Congress leader —P Chidambaram

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



Megastar —Amitabh Bachchan

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



Congress leader —Shashi Tharoor

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



Chief of Defence Staff —Gen Bipin Rawat

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Relief in times of crisis

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

AMS Nadwi  
Lucknow

### Strengthen ties

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

or twice a week as it relaxes the mind and reduces stress and anxiety. Sharing Modi's tweet, Ivanka Trump, the daughter of the US President, expressed her appreciation of the initiative, especially during a time of crisis when the

COVID-19 outbreak has put many countries in lockdown.

Ivanka Trump recently visited India along with her family where Modi welcomed them by organising a "Namaste Trump" event. Clearly, Modi has fascinat-

ed Trump and his family. One hopes that this bond between the heads of the two countries reflects in the US' development plans for India.

Munawwar Khurshid  
Mumbai

### Learn from Kerala's preparedness

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

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



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

Haridasan Rajan  
Kozhikode

### Address food problems

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

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

Ashok Pal  
New Delhi

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

FIRST COLUMN

## The social media pandemic

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



PRAKRITI PODDAR

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

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

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

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

The nature of social media is such that anyone can share any fake or unverified information on their timeline which can cause anxiety among the people who see it. This has led to deterioration of their mental health as they are living in perpetual fear of the disease and resorting to measures which will certainly not prevent the Coronavirus but can potentially harm their health.

Thankfully, Governments are cracking down on such irresponsible behaviour and imposing fines as well punishment for people spreading misinformation. The Indian Government has written to top social media companies, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, ShareChat and Twitter, to control the spread of misinformation on COVID-19. In an advisory the Government asked social media platforms to start awareness campaigns, remove misinformation from the platform and promote authentic information on the Coronavirus so that wrong information does not add to the people's stress. So what can we really do to protect ourselves from this dreaded virus? Healthcare professionals have recommended several precautionary and hygienic measures, which include avoiding hospitals unless there is an emergency and as far as possible avoiding direct contact with healthcare professionals. They also advocate washing of hands regularly especially after direct contact with sick people or their surroundings. People must also stay clear of farm as well as wild animals.

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

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

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

(The writer is a mental health expert and Director of a well-known company)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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



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

# Economic cost of the lockdown

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



BARUN DEB PAL

SANJIB POHIT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The lockdown will affect various sectors differently. As Modi's speech indicated, only production and distribution of essential commodities and services have been allowed to be operational. That includes food supply, goods transport, manufacturing of medical equipment, pharmaceutical, medical facilities, communication and financial services. Therefore, workers will definitely suffer income loss if they are engaged in the locked down sectors.

Another 40 per cent casual labourers are engaged in the construction sector, which will surely be closed for 21 days leading to income loss to the respective workers. A further 10 per cent of casual workers are engaged in manufacturing industries, where almost 90 per cent of economic activities are closed for now. The assumption of 90 per cent shut down of manufacturing is based on the output share of food and medical equipment sectors in total production.

The estimate is based on the 2016 Supply Use Table (SUT) of the CSO, which indicates that foodgrain processing and medical equipment contribute to about 10 per cent of the total GDP of the manufacturing sector. Thus, about 45 million casual workers (i.e. 50 per cent of total casual workers) will be vulnerable, provided agriculture and allied sectors con-

tinued to provide job opportunities to the rest of the workers. This is a reasonable assumption for the agriculture sector as harvesting of Rabi crops usually starts in most of the States in late March/early April, coinciding with the complete lockdown period in the country. Hence, the aggregate income loss of the casual workers will be ₹0.3 lakh crore per week during the lockdown period if we consider their per week income earning to be of the same level as in the third quarter (October-December 2019) of 2019-20.

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

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

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

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

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

As per estimates, the shutdown will cause a loss of ₹5,261 per casual worker, which is nearly equivalent to the income support given by the Government to the farmers through the PM-KISAN scheme (i.e. ₹6,000 annual income support to farmers). It makes sense to extend this scheme to the casual labourers engaged in the non-agricultural sector.

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

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

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

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

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

# Police excesses during shutdown not justified

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



ISHA SINGH

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

of the threat of COVID-19?

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

On the other hand, a lockdown is a relatively long-term measure, requiring the closure of public and private establishments, schools and religious places in order to restrict the large-scale movement of people. As essential services continue to operate, a lockdown is less restrictive than a curfew. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines, issued under Section 10(2)(1) of the Disaster Management Act (DMA), 2005, despite having the effect of a lockdown, do not use the term curfew or lockdown. Moreover, the guidelines do not specifically state that people cannot venture out of their houses. Even in States which have

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Stock market tumbles, Sensex settles below 28,000

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

After hitting a low of 27,500.79 during the day, the 30-share BSE barometer ended 674.36 points or 2.39 per cent lower at 27,590.95. The NSE Nifty shed 170 points, or 0.06 per cent, to finish at 8,083.80.

cated week, the Sensex lost 2,224.64 points or 7.46 per cent, while the Nifty sank 576.45 points or 6.65 per cent.

Bank stocks came under heavy selling pressure on Friday after Moody's Investors Service changed the outlook for Indian banking sector to negative from stable due to the coronavirus crisis.

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

With fresh cases of novel coronavirus mounting by the day, concerns over a looming

economic recession kept investors on the edge, traders said. The Asian Development Bank warned on Friday that the Covid-19 pandemic could cost the global economy USD 4.1 trillion as it ravages United States, Europe and other major economies. It also said that India's economic growth rate will slip to 4 per cent in the current fiscal.

"The Indian markets opened and stayed negative, with reduced volatility. A ratings downgrade for the Banking sector, due to the impact of Covid-19 and ensuing stressed asset concerns, impacted the financial stocks.

"The slide in the markets, after a brief interlude of short recovery, continued during the

course of this week, but it is comforting to see that the pace of the fall is relatively feeble now.

"...Businesses which have good cash flow and who have good cash levels and cash equivalents with them, and also entities who have leadership positions especially in the market share may see good interest from investors. Higher intrinsic value compared to the prices at which assets are available may act as a spur for discerning investors," said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research - Emkay Wealth Management.

BSE banked, finance, auto, IT, tech and metal indices ended up to 5.39 per cent lower, while healthcare, oil and gas, utilities, FMCG and telecom closed with gains.

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI has reduced the trading hours of debt as well as currency markets from Tuesday in view of the lockdown following the outbreak of coronavirus. The revised market timings will be effective during April 7-17, 2020, the central bank said in a circular on Friday. The market will open at 10 am instead of the current 9 am and closing timings too have been revised to 2 pm for all segments. The lockdown has adversely impacted the functioning of

financial markets, the RBI said.

The market timings have been revised in order to "minimise these risks" and to ensure that market participants maintain adequate checks and supervisory controls while optimising thin resources and ensuring safety of personnel, it said. As per the circular, timing of the Government Securities (Central Government Securities, State Development Loans and Treasury Bills) market has been revised to 10 am to 2 pm from the existing 9 am to 5 pm.

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee settled 53 paise lower at 76.13 against the US dollar on Friday amid a significant rise in coronavirus cases in the country and weak domestic equities.

Forex traders said heavy selling in domestic equities dragged the local unit amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown.

Moreover, strengthening of the American cur-

rency in the international market also weighed on the domestic currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 75.97. During the day, it lost further ground and finally settled at 76.13, down 53 paise over its previous close.

The rupee had settled at 75.60 against the greenback on Tuesday.

Forex markets in India were closed on April 1 for the annual closing of banks and on April 2 on account of Ram Navami.

## Fitch sees India GDP growth in FY21 dropping to 2%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India may post in 2020-21 a GDP growth of 2 per cent, the slowest since the economy was liberalised 30 years back, Fitch Ratings said on Friday, as it joined a chorus of international agencies that have made a similar cut in growth estimates in recent days on concerns about the fallout of COVID-19 outbreak.

(ADB) sees India's economic growth slipping to 4 per cent in the current fiscal (April 2020 to March 2021), while S&P Global Ratings earlier this week further slashed its GDP growth forecast for the country to 3.5 per cent from a previous downgrade of 5.2 per cent.

India Ratings & Research too has revised its FY21 forecast to 3.6 per cent from 5.5 per cent earlier. Moody's Investors Service last week slashed its

estimate of India's GDP growth during 2020 calendar year to 2.5 per cent, from an earlier estimate of 5.3 per cent and said the coronavirus pandemic will cause unprecedented shock to the global economy.

These growth estimates compare to an estimated 5 per cent growth rate in 2019-20 fiscal that ended on March 31. Indian economy also grew by 5 per cent in the 2019 calendar year.

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

The trade between China and India fell 12.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 12 billion in the first two months amid the coronavirus outbreak, according to the latest data from Chinese customs.

From January to February, China's exports to India were 67.1 billion yuan (USD 9.5 billion), down 12.6 per cent on a yearly basis and imports from India dropped 11.6 per

cent to 18 billion yuan (USD 2.5 billion), the state-run Global Times reported on Friday.

Bilateral trade fell by 12.4 per cent to 85.17 billion yuan (USD 12 billion) in the first two months, the report quoted Chinese Customs data.

The lockdowns in both the countries due to Covid-19 is expected to badly affect the bilateral trade which declined by three billion dollar last year to USD 92.68 billion

from USD 95.7 billion in 2018.

The declining trade was largely attributed to the slowdown of the economies of the two countries.

The trade deficit for India continued to be high amounting to USD 56.77 billion in 2019.

The trade deficit has become a major irritant in India-China bilateral relations, figuring high in the bilateral discourse.

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

IANS ■ MUMBAI

As the Indian stocks markets areels under the coronavirus crisis, a report by Motilal Oswal said India's share in the global market capitalisation is below the historic average. Currently, it is at 2.2 per cent below its historic average of 2.5 per cent.

The 'Bull & Bears' report also noted that India's market cap has declined more, compared to the fall in the world market cap in the past 12

months.

"Over the last 12 months, the world's market cap has decreased 12.3 per cent (\$9.6 trillion), while India's market cap is down 31 per cent," it said.

The report also noted that the market cap-to-GDP ratio of India has declined swiftly from 79 per cent as FY19 to 54 per cent (FY20EGDP), much below its long-term average of 75 per cent and closer to the levels last seen during FY05 and FY09.

### NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	8356.55	8356.55	8055.80	8083.80	-170.00
SUNPHARMA	343.95	389.80	340.00	376.45	32.90
CIPLA	425.00	454.70	416.25	448.00	34.25
ITC	167.90	182.75	167.00	177.50	11.10
GAIL	77.00	82.00	75.15	80.75	5.00
ONGC	69.00	71.00	66.50	69.80	4.05
BPL	301.00	326.00	287.15	317.00	14.05
M&M	274.00	290.00	271.35	281.40	8.55
ZEE	123.00	125.95	119.05	124.40	3.50
TECHM	513.55	537.15	510.10	524.00	12.80
INFRATEL	158.00	161.60	154.20	157.95	2.85
DREDDY	3085.00	3218.85	3025.10	3146.85	51.85
POWERGRID	156.55	160.45	151.75	156.45	1.85
LT	791.10	791.10	762.80	783.00	8.65
IOC	81.00	82.10	76.60	79.60	0.65
RELIANCE	1134.45	1134.45	1056.30	1088.00	7.55
BHARTIARTL	432.00	432.00	410.00	424.10	2.75
BAJAJFINSV	4560.00	4646.00	4430.00	4520.05	18.15
BIANFINNIA	2588.95	2610.00	2475.00	2572.00	7.15
VEDL	64.00	64.45	62.20	63.00	0.15
JSWSTEEL	143.25	148.15	132.50	143.00	0.00
ADANIPORTS	246.00	252.80	238.90	244.20	-0.60
BAJFINANCE	2268.80	2343.70	2183.05	2211.00	-8.35
NTPC	82.05	82.10	78.85	80.30	-0.70
HCLTECH	418.90	428.60	399.30	409.85	-3.70
HINDUNILVR	2234.00	2254.10	2127.95	2153.00	-26.65
COALINDIA	138.60	139.90	131.80	137.75	-1.70
BAJAJ-AUTO	2051.10	2056.30	1957.55	2020.00	-31.10
UPL	306.15	307.50	295.00	300.00	-5.75
KOTAKBANK	1181.65	1183.00	1087.00	1158.20	-23.45
HDFCBANK	843.00	844.00	810.00	811.00	-18.65
ICICI	603.50	606.00	582.15	588.50	-14.30
TCS	1740.00	1740.00	1650.00	1659.00	-49.75
EICHERMOT	13060.00	13099.90	12600.00	12615.00	-386.60
HEROMOTOCO	1623.00	1643.15	1589.00	1589.00	-50.65
HINDALCO	92.10	93.45	88.80	88.80	-2.85
ULTRACEMCO	3189.00	3191.00	3025.00	3032.95	-107.70
TATAMOTORS	66.90	66.90	64.80	65.45	-2.50
NESTLEIND	15939.70	15939.70	15005.00	15070.00	-584.55
TATASTEEL	267.70	268.90	251.00	254.35	-12.00
GRASIM	473.00	477.70	451.20	453.10	-23.05
WIPRO	188.00	189.60	177.75	180.15	-9.35
ASIANPAINT	1615.10	1616.00	1517.25	1522.00	-81.20
HDFC	1575.50	1578.80	1482.25	1499.75	-83.75
MARUTI	4250.00	4267.00	4011.00	4011.50	-234.85
SBN	187.55	188.20	175.10	176.00	-10.55
SHREECEM	16661.20	16698.45	15410.00	15500.00	-1049.65
TITAN	930.00	930.05	855.95	870.00	-66.05
ICICIBANK	309.50	309.50	281.50	288.00	-21.50
INDUSINDNBK	350.00	350.00	310.20	313.75	-28.50
AXISBANK	362.20	362.30	324.00	326.90	-31.75

### BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP
RELIANCE	1130.00	1131.60	1057.00	1078.20
SBI	187.50	188.00	175.00	175.55
ICICIBANK	311.00	311.00	281.60	286.50
BAJFINANCE	2250.00	2341.75	2185.00	2207.35
HDFCBANK	841.00	846.55	810.00	813.50
INDUSINDNBK	350.80	350.80	310.40	313.25
KOTAKBANK	1183.00	1183.65	1090.20	1158.35
ITC	168.20	182.65	167.30	177.80
AXISBANK	360.45	362.70	324.00	325.60
RBLBANK	141.50	141.50	109.35	110.95
HDFC	1584.40	1584.40	1483.15	1499.40
TCS	1731.30	1740.00	1650.00	1654.40
AUROPHARMA	352.95	417.00	333.35	382.35
SUNPHARMA*	344.00	384.90	340.50	375.90
MARUTI	4255.00	4255.00	4002.00	4011.65
CIPLA	425.00	452.70	417.10	449.10
HINDUNILVR	2225.00	2253.25	2128.65	2153.55
BPL	303.00	326.20	287.05	317.20
HINDPETRO	185.70	192.80	175.60	184.25
INFY	604.10	606.65	582.35	588.25
APOLLOHOSP	1090.00	1216.35	1070.15	1191.20
ADANIPORTS	266.45	268.45	251.05	253.85
TATASTEEL	786.30	790.00	763.00	774.85
LT	4255.00	441.60	416.30	422.25
ONGC	69.35	71.00	66.50	69.85
BHARTIARTL	423.00	429.65	415.70	423.95
DELTACORP	72.15	72.15	72.00	72.15
LUPIN	580.30	665.00	578.60	654.80
TITAN	936.75	936.75	856.60	862.70
JSWSTEEL	143.00	148.05	132.50	140.90
BAJAJFINSV	4515.50	4646.00	4437.00	4529.05
ESCORTS	610.00	610.00	559.45	594.70
TATAMOTORS	68.00	68.00	64.80	65.30
JINDALSTEEL	74.00	74.80	62.10	63.20
ASIANPAINT	1624.00	1624.00	1512.30	1521.30
NESTLEIND	15706.00	15861.90	14989.10	15150.80
M&M	275.00	290.00	271.45	280.90
SRTRANSFIN	630.00	630.00	515.35	520.90
AMBUJACEM	157.00	157.00	151.70	151.75
IBULHGFIN	99.35	99.35	93.55	96.70
PBEL	936.30	936.30	872.00	912.45
INDIGO	1008.25	1008.25	915.70	952.30
IOC	79.10	82.05	76.70	79.45
ICICIRUP	344.55	353.50	326.05	338.15
TECHM	519.90	532.50	510.20	520.65
DIVISLAB	1890.00	1939.80	1824.15	1903.50
BIANFINNIA	2590.00	2627.65	2475.10	2561.10
HDFCLIFE	1319.00	1319.00	1197.10	1216.40
HDFCAMC	1624.00	2224.45	2140.00	2175.80
DREDDY	3095.00	3218.55	3027.55	3150.70
COALINDIA	139.75	139.75	131.85	138.00
PVR	1075.00	1075.00	954.50	1010.00
IDEA	3.08	3.08	3.03	3.15
HEROMOTOCO	1619.95	1619.95	1544.90	1583.65
BANDHANBANK	198.00	198.00	180.10	181.60
BHOCCL	278.50	295.80	278.30	290.90
HCLTECH	427.50	428.10	399.65	408.00
BANKBARODA	51.65	51.70	48.50	49.70
BOSCHLTD	9236.00	9236.00	8725.00	881.00
GAIL	76.05	81.95	75.50	80.80
ULTRACEMCO	3248.95	3248.95	3029.00	3040.70
LIGHSFIN	233.00	234.35	216.10	218.85
DLF	132.65	136.00	130.50	132.65
L&T	51.00	51.35	48.25	48.90
GODREJCP	562.00	562.00	525.15	530.90
GLENMARK	195.30	219.50	195.30	213.35
ASHOKLEY	41			

Around the Globe

# US, UK AND SPAIN DEATHS MOUNT

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

US President Donald Trump has tested negative for the novel coronavirus for a second time and is "healthy" and not displaying any symptoms for the deadly disease, the White House physician has said. Sean Conley, Trump's physician, did not provide any context for the second test

Just when Americans need it most, a US newspaper industry already under stress is facing an unprecedented new challenge. Readers desperate for information are more reliant than ever on local media as the coronavirus spreads across the US. They want to know about cases in their area, where testing centers are, what the economic impact is. Papers say online traffic and subscriptions have risen — the latter even when they've lowered paywalls for pandemic-related stories. But newspapers and other publications are under pressure as advertising craters. They are cutting jobs, staff hours and pay, dropping print editions — and in some cases shutting down entirely

China will observe a national day of mourning on Saturday for martyrs, including the "whistleblower" Dr Li Wenliang, who sacrificed their lives in the fight against the coronavirus outbreak and the over 3,300 people who died of the infection in the country. During the commemoration, national flags will fly at half-mast across the country and in all Chinese embassies and consulates abroad, and public recreational activities will be suspended across the country, official media reported on Friday. At 10.00 am on Saturday, Chinese people nationwide will observe three minutes of silence to mourn the deceased, while air raid sirens and horns of automobiles, trains and ships will wall in grief

Researchers have created a web application that provides an overview of the coronavirus pandemic across the globe, in a way that is more interactive than other maps and statistics. The app titled 'COVID19' is based on data from Johns Hopkins University in the US, the Danish National Serum Institute in Denmark, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations. "We began working on the app as a pet project, to deal with our boredom and inability to physically meet up. While skipping one day, we wondered why we couldn't find a graph that portrayed the evolution of coronavirus cases in Denmark," said Phillip Bredahl Mogensen from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, one of those behind the app

Iran on Friday announced 134 more deaths from the novel coronavirus, bringing the officially confirmed total to 3,294. Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahangpou told a news conference that 2,715 new infections had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 53,183

Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday warned Australians not to travel during Easter and follow social distancing policies to contain the spread of the coronavirus that has killed 28 people and infected over 5,300 others in the country. The number of known COVID-19 cases has reached one million worldwide and more than 51,000 deaths have been reported across more than 175 countries and territories, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally



AFP ■ LONDON

Experts warn that the more than one million cases of COVID-19 confirmed globally are probably just a small proportion of total infections, as testing is not widely available. With more than 55,000 dead, the threat has never been more stark. Deaths from the global coronavirus epidemic accelerated again on Friday as

the US, Spain and Britain grappled with their highest tolls yet and the world economy took a massive hit. Prosperous countries in Europe and North America are currently bearing the brunt of the disease but — with infections also reported in war zones and refugee camps — there are fears of a new explosion among the world's most vulnerable.

"The worst is yet to come," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, referring to countries beset with fighting like Syria, Libya and Yemen. "The COVID-19 storm is now coming to all these theatres of conflict." For the moment, the United States accounts for around a quarter of confirmed cases, but Europe is far from being out of danger — Spain reported more than 900 deaths

in 24 hours on Friday, for the second day running.

While Italy still leads the world in fatalities, France, Belgium and Britain have also been hard hit. The UK Government opened a 4,000-bed field hospital on Friday ahead announcing a its highest one-day toll of 684.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is himself entering a second week of isolation with a high temperature after testing positive for the virus, but Queen Elizabeth is to make an historic address to Britain and the Commonwealth nations on Sunday.

The public health battle being waged across the world ebbed and flowed, with Germany saying the rate of new infections is slowing but once confident Singapore closing schools and workplaces to fend off a possible renewed upsurge in cases.

The virus has now killed more than 10,000 people across Spain, but it spared 29-year-old Javier Lara, who has returned home after being treated in an overburdened intensive care unit and told AFP of his suffering.

"I was panicking that my daughter would get infected. When I started showing symptoms, I said I wouldn't hold her or go near her," he said, describing facing death with an eight-week-old as the "worst moment in his life".

The world economy has

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	2,65,506	6,786
Italy	1,19,827	14,681
Spain	1,17,710	10,935
Germany	89,838	1,230
China	81,620	3,322
France	59,105	5,287
Iran	53,183	3,294
UK	38,168	3,605



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

The US economy shed 7.01,000 jobs last month, its worst since March 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis, boosting the jobless rate to 4.4 percent for the first time in 45 years. Things were no better in Europe, where analysts from IHS Markit warned that business activity in the 19-nation eurozone had suffered its worst crunch ever recorded, and the central bank of eurozone member Ireland said its output could be slashed by 8.3 percent this year.

Financial ratings agency Fitch predicted both the US and eurozone economies would shrink this quarter by up to 30 per cent and the Asian Development Bank warned on Friday the global economy could take a \$4.1 trillion hit — equivalent to five percent of

worldwide output. China's central bank became the latest to announce special stimulus measures Friday when it cut reserve requirements for smaller banks in order to release around 400 billion yuan (\$56 billion) in liquidity. The outbreak began last year in China, which announced a day of national mourning on Saturday for those who died fighting against the disease. Fourteen deceased frontline workers will be celebrated as "martyrs" of the epidemic.

Australia took the extreme step of banning the 15,000-strong crews of virus-stricken cruise ships from coming ashore — dealing the world's teetering tourism industry another blow.

Even in the world's richest country, the US, healthcare providers are under pressure. New Yorkers like COVID-19 survivor Diana Berrent are donating blood plasma in the

hope their hard-won antibodies can be used to treat future victims.

"We can be superheroes," the 45-year-old photographer told AFP. "These are unprecedented, frightening times where everything is beyond our control — except we as survivors can help." The virus has chiefly killed the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions, but recent cases of deaths among teenagers and babies have highlighted the dangers for people of all ages.

In Kenya, the health ministry said a six-year-old boy had died and in Spain, mothers like 34-year-old Vanesa Muro who gave birth with COVID-19 are warned not to touch their newborns without wearing gloves and masks.

Meanwhile, in northeast Nigeria, aid workers say the virus could rampage through camps for 1.8 million people displaced by a decade-long Boko Haram insurgency.

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

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on Friday extended his feud about coronavirus money with EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in the pages of a Roman newspaper. Conte wrote a letter to Italy's La Repubblica in response to an apology that von der Leyen had published in the same paper on Thursday. "I am sorry," von der Leyen had told Italians. "The EU is with you now." Conte sounded unimpressed in his letter. "Dear Ursula," he wrote. "I hear ideas (from you) not worthy of Europe." He told her it was time for the EU "to show more ambition, more unity

and more courage". At issue is billions of euros that Italy wants from the European Union to help fight the novel coronavirus pandemic that has killed nearly 14,000 people in Italy and shattered the country's economy. Conte wants the EU to start issuing lots of joint debt — dubbed "coronabonds" — that could let countries such as Italy address the crisis more cheaply. Von der Leyen has sided with Germany and some other northern European countries' suspicion of pooled risk because it could raise their own borrowing costs at the expense of more indebted countries. AFP

### Trump, Macron discuss convening P5 meeting

Washington: US President Donald Trump and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Friday discussed having a meeting of five permanent members of the UN Security Council on a collective fight against coronavirus, the White House said. The P5 or the five permanent members of the UNSC are the US, the UK, China, France and Russia. "President Trump and President Macron discussed convening P5 leaders soon to increase UN cooperation on defeating the pandemic and ensuring international peace and security," the White House said. AFP



An aerial view of the Athens University headquarters building and a deserted Panepistimiou street, in Athens. Deserted squares, padlocked parks, empty avenues where cars were once jammed bumper-to-bumper in heavy traffic. The Greek capital, like so many cities across the world, has seen its streets empty as part of a lockdown designed to stem the spread of the new coronavirus

### German virus data offers 'hope' but premature to ease curbs: Merkel

AFP ■ BERLIN Latest figures which show the spread of the coronavirus slowing in Germany give "hope", Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Friday, but warned it was still too early to relax curbs on public life. "It's true that the latest figures, as high as they are, give us a little bit of hope," said Merkel in her weekly podcast, adding that it was however "definitely much too early...to think about loosening the strict rules we have given ourselves."

### Corona beer producer halts brewing over virus

AFP ■ MEXICO CITY The Mexican brewer of Corona beer said Thursday it was suspending production because of the health emergency in the country over the COVID-19 pandemic. Grupo Modelo — whose brands also include Pacifico and Modelo — said the measure was in line with the Mexican government's order to suspend all non-essential activities until April 30 to slow the spread of coronavirus. "We are in the process of lowering production at our plants to the bare minimum," the company said in a statement,

adding it would complete the suspension in the following days. Mexico's government has said that only key sectors such as agribusiness will be able to continue to function. Grupo Modelo said it was ready to operate with 75 percent of its staff working remotely to guarantee the supply of beer, if the Government agreed. Mexico's other major beer producer Heineken — which makes the Tecate and Dos Equis brands — could also stop activities on Friday, the Reforma newspaper said, although the company did not confirm the report. On Wednesday, the north-

ern state of Nuevo Leon, where Heineken's Mexican operations are based, said it would stop the production and distribution of beer, which led to panic buying. Since the start of the virus crisis, Corona beer has been the punchline of jokes and memes, and an online rumour said sales in the US dropped by around 40 percent after the outbreak. However, in late February, Constellation Brands, which owns the Corona label, denied the rumour and said sales had stayed strong in the US even as the virus has spread internationally. Mexico has so far reg-

istered over 1,500 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 50 deaths.



### UN chief: Ceasefire appeal backed by parties in 11 nations

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday that warring parties in 11 countries have responded positively to his appeal for a global cease-fire to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, but turning words into peace is enormously difficult and fighting has escalated in major conflicts including Yemen, Libya and Afghanistan. He called on all governments, groups and people with influence "to urge and pressure combatants around the world to put down their arms," saying

the need is urgent because "the COVID-19 storm" is now coming to all conflict areas. Guterres told a briefing at UN Headquarters in New York that his appeal 10 days ago was rooted in the recognition that "there should be only one fight in our world today: our shared battle against COVID-19." The UN Chief said the appeal is "resonating" across the world, citing a growing number of endorsements for the cease-fire from 70 countries, civil society, religious leaders including Pope Francis,

and more than 1 million people in an online petition organized by Avaaz. He said parties to conflicts in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen have also expressed their acceptance. But Guterres said: "There are enormous difficulties to implementation as conflicts have festered for years, distrust is deep, with many spoilers and many suspicions." AP

### AI can predict corona patients' risk if they need ventilators

AIANS ■ LONDON As companies the world over commit to make ventilators to meet the demand, researchers are now developing computer models based on artificial intelligence (AI) that calculate the risk of an individual patient's need for a ventilator or intensive care. Several non-health companies are now scrambling to produce vents as more and more critical COVID-19 cases are showing up globally. "With these AI models, hospitals will be able to know — for example — that 40 per cent of their 300 hospitalised patients will probably require a ventilator within one week. This allows them to plan and deploy their resources in the

best possible way," said Mads Nielsen from University of Copenhagen in Denmark. According to the researchers, algorithms will harvest vast amounts of data from multiple sources. The data consists of X-rays, tests and measurements taken of patients at the time of their admittance to the hospital, along with their electronic health records. "All data will go to a supercomputer where, within minutes, our model calculates how likely a specific patient is to require a ventilator, and how many days will go by before such a need arises. That's our goal," Nielsen said. Although the models will not be used as a basis for treating individual patients, they will be used as a planning

tool that can still make a big difference for hospital staff. In doing so, doctors hope to identify shared traits among the most severely affected patients. This may turn out to be the number of white blood cells, the use of certain pharmaceuticals or something else. Researchers said they are aware of certain things that increase risk, such as age, smoking, asthma and heart problems, but there are other factors involved. "After all, we hear about young people who end up on ventilators and older people who do well without understanding why. So let's get the computer to find patterns that we aren't able to see ourselves," explained Espen Solem, Chief Physician, Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospitals.

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

AFP ■ PARIS Research on the prevention of treatment of COVID-19 in poor and developing nations is urgently needed to avert a "complete breakdown" of health services, a coalition of more than 70 scientific bodies said on Friday. The pandemic is currently hitting Europe and the United States the hardest, straining even their health sys-

tems to the limit. But there are growing fears that widespread coronavirus outbreaks in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia could prove even more catastrophic. While there are over 600 clinical trials focused on COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccines, there are virtually none planned in resource-poor countries. With hundreds of millions of people lacking easy access to clean water and sanitation and

with many overcrowded urban settings unable to implement social distancing effectively, the stakes are huge. In addition, many health workers lack the necessary protective equipment and training in handling infectious diseases. "Disruption or complete breakdown of those healthcare systems would result in high direct and indirect mortality since care of all illness would be affected," said the authors of a letter published on Friday in The Lancet. The COVID-19 Clinical Research Coalition — an unprecedented consortium of scientists, policymakers, public health experts and researchers — is to make it easier for developing nations to access research data to help inform their response.

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

Sarina Renz kisses one of the eight Siberian Steppes camels, of the stranded Renz Circus in Drachten, northern Netherlands. The circus fleet of blue, red and yellow trucks have had a fresh lick of paint over the winter. But now, as coronavirus measures shut down the entertainment industry across Europe, they have no place to go. "It's catastrophic for everybody," said Sarina Renz, of the German family circus that has been in existence since 1842



SHORT CIRCUITS



TAMANNAAH BHATIA

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



VIR DAS

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



DARSHAN RAVAL

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



SRITI JHA

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

DJ DIPLO

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



IMMERSIVE 30 MINUTES

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

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

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

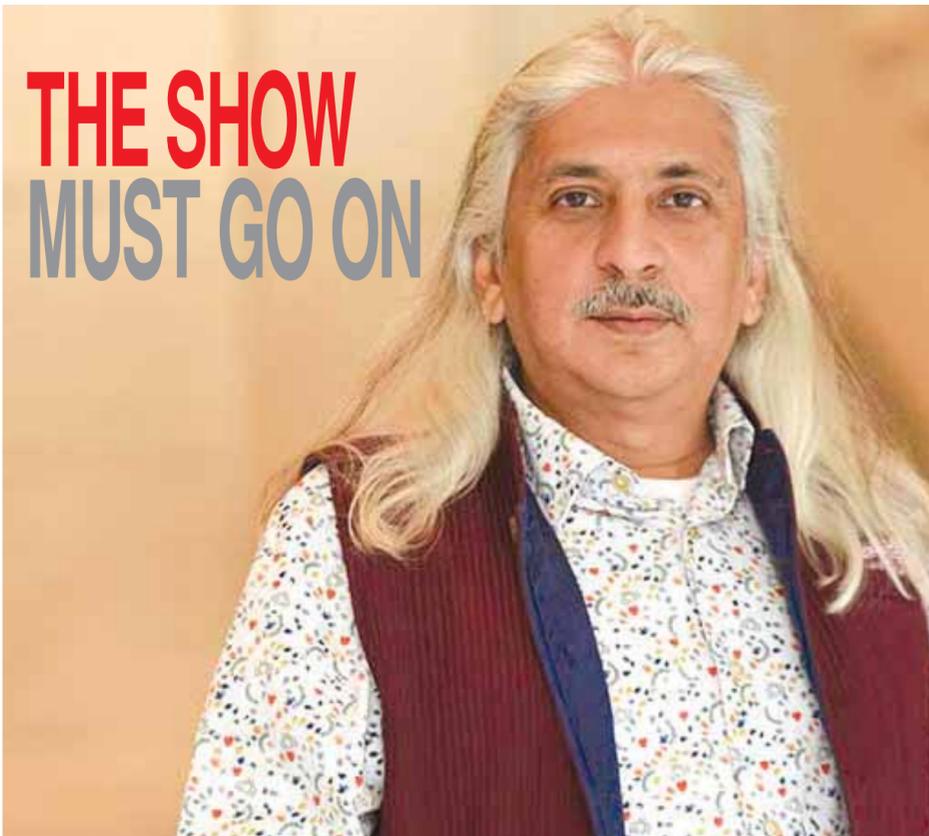
However, it is not just this particular session but the others as well that are relevant to current times. When we are constantly hooked on to our phones all the time, another conversation is relevant where writer and broadcaster Bee Rowlett will explore the need to protect the "forum internum" — our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

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

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

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

When we connect over a phone call to



understand more of the move, he is his erudite self. He enquires how newspapers continue to publish in current times and goes on to quote examples from the world to elaborate upon his understanding of the situation. "A report that I read said that the financial losses of this on sports, arts and more has been gauged at one trillion. And you are looking at events like Dubai Expo, Olympics and more. By the way, this calculation is just for May-June! So there is no way we would be able to compensate this through online business. But every crisis ensures that Man tries to paddle furiously to stay alive and afloat like newspapers are doing by going online and what we are also doing," he says.

The change naturally would bring about drastic transformation in the world the way we know it. "The consequences would be two or three-fold in the Indian scenario where social distancing norms will be in place till October," says Roy who is at pains to point out that, "We fail to see the pandemic outbreak as primarily a

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STUDIO CHAT 15 MINUTES



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

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

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

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

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

TO SHARE OR NOT

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



multi-hit, Grammy-nominated 2014 debut *Montevallo* was named after the hometown his wife grew up in — talks about getting deep on songs and testing the waters with

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

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

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

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

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

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

or I could ever put out.

**Your wife is playing the piano on the song?**

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

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

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

**What was it like trying out recording sessions with pop and hip-hop producers?**

I wanted to branch out and find some new inspiration. One of the beauties of writing with the same two people for a long period of time

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

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

**Who were some of the people you worked with?**

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

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

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

CONVERSATION 60 MINUTES

# FOR FUN, LAUGHTER AND RELIEF

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The show is streaming on ALTBalaji and ZEE5).

WRITER'S BLOG 30 MINUTES

# When hope is her decision

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

We are living in a world where hope seems to be dwindling each day and very soon we may find ourselves without it. Through the eyes of a teenager, this seems all the more terrifying and dismal because this is their future. *Bleak Hope*, a collection of poetry written by teenage author, Anwesa Chaudhury, as she lives in anguish and views the destruction of the world with a heavy heart has been published by Notion Press. Excerpts of the interview:

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

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

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

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



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

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

All these are inspired from real life incidents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Which authors have influenced you?**

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

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

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

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

Cooped up at her Bronx home with her daughter and a niece because of the coronavirus pandemic, Mexican writer Valeria Luiselli says she has lowered the "volume and speed" of her life. She is arranging books in alphabetical order, planting legumes on her balcony and listening to old recordings from Argentinian author Julio Cortázar. Her rhythm has slowed but not the accolades and awards for her latest novel, *Lost Children Archive*, which last week was honored with the British Rathbone Folio Prize. The book, Luiselli's third novel, is part fiction part documentary: A family's American road trip mixed with the stories of migrant children along the Mexico-US border.

Luiselli accepted the prize at a ceremony held online because of Coronavirus pandemic. The 36-year-old writer said she's sad that she could not be in London to receive it in person but grateful to see people keeping the faith in books. "The fact that the literary community is still in full swing, even from their homes, and behind their screens, is moving and encouraging," she said, speaking in Spanish. "I think it is my duty, and the duty of every writer, whether is a science-fiction writer, a journalist, a poet, each at their own pace and within their own capacities, to document this moment," she said.

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

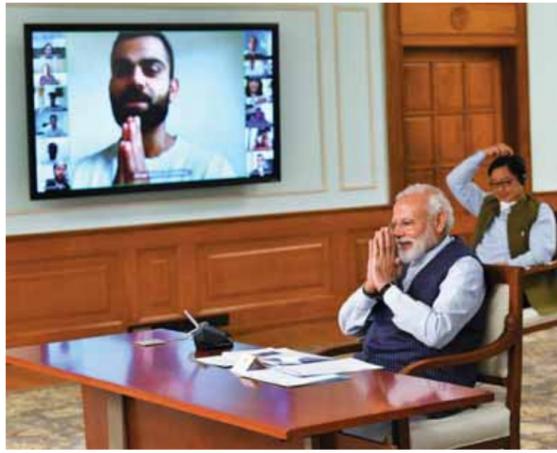
Cricketers formed a major chunk of the participating list.

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

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

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

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



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chats with Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli via video conferencing MIB\_Hindi/Twitter

out revealing the names of the chosen athletes.

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

"I suggested that as much as possible, I will use our way of greeting — saying Namaste instead of shaking hands, even after we overcome this pandemic," Tendulkar said after the interaction.

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

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

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

everyone to be united in the fight to combat the pandemic.

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

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

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

The Prime Minister said the ability to face challenges,

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

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

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

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

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

"(He) told us that athletes are stronger mentally and have the quality to adapt to different conditions and in unknown territories. So he wanted us to spread the positive and encouraging message since this is also an unknown territory (fight against coronavirus)," she said.



UEFA Champions League trophy UCL/Twitter

## Clubs risk CL axe if seasons not completed: UEFA

AFP ■ PARIS

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

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

The Champions League and Europa League — both of which are frozen in the last-16 stage — could be completed once the domestic seasons are finished, and "stopping competitions should really be the last resort after acknowledging that no calendar alternative would allow to conclude the season."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The letter concluded: "UEFA reserves the right to assess the entitlement of clubs to be admitted to the 2020/21 UEFA club competitions."

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

## SA cricketers symptom-free after returning from India

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

the players their training programmes.

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

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

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

## Life is most important now, IPL can wait: Raina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

Raina has already done his bit in this fight against the deadly virus by donating ₹52 lakh.

Ask him about the IPL, which has been postponed to April 15 but is unlikely to take place in the near future, Raina says "it is all about life" at the moment.

"Life is most important at this point of time. IPL can surely wait. We all need to follow the government guidelines on lockdown else we all face the consequences. When life gets better, we can think about the IPL. So many people are dying at the moment, we need to save lives," Raina said.

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



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

"It was a nice camp. I was there for two months but then this happened. Got to spend some time with Dhoni. He was batting so well in the nets, he had the hunger of a youngster. In one session, he batted for three hours at a stretch," recalled Raina.

## Indian badminton goes online



Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in action BWF/Twitter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With courts out of bound due to the lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian badminton has gone online with chief national coach Pulela Gopichand handing out tips through videos to the country's top shuttlers.

Staying away from the game can affect fitness of the players and so Gopichand has started putting in place a program for the shuttlers, albeit, through WhatsApp, an application which allows users to send text, voice and video messages.

"We can only do fitness (training) because nobody has access to courts so we are doing what we can. I am sending the players videos of what to do in our WhatsApp group," Gopichand said.

"It is a generic program but it is tuned in such a way that it caters to the people (Olympic bound) who are important," explained the 46-year-old, who is waiting for his three-week isolation to be over on Saturday.

Apart from Gopichand, Jamshedpur-born trainer Dinaz Vervatwala, who has worked with London Olympics Bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal, is also taking fitness classes for the Indian shuttlers via Zoom app, a platform for video communication.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Everyone keen for IPL to go ahead: Cummins

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The costliest foreign player in Indian Premier League, Pat Cummins says everyone, including his team Kolkata Knight Riders, is still hopeful of the 13th edition of the T20 event to go ahead sometime later.

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

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

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

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

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



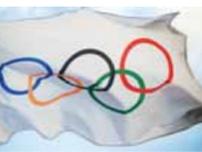
Pat Cummins AP

## IOC announce new deadline for Oly qualification period

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## FIH extend Pro League suspension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has been forced to extend the suspension of FIH Pro League's second edition due to the COVID-19 pandemic and now plans to hold the ties in July and August, provided the current situation improves.

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

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

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

## Ancelotti wants fair play on season restart date

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Before the Premier League restarts it must ensure all clubs resume training on the same day, Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti told French newspaper L'Equipe in an interview published on Friday.

The Premier League is on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic. It was scheduled to resume on April 30, but club chairmen were meeting by video conference and were expected to push that the date back.

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



Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti PL

are capable of being physically ready within a fortnight."

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

## Wimbledon chief fears 'no more tennis this year'

AFP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"But we all know that's probably tenuous at the moment. Earlier, the president of the Spanish tennis federation, Miguel Diaz, said he hoped the sport could return to the courts "in the last quarter of the year."

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

## Farah has no qualms over Tokyo delay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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