

BE AT HOME,  
BE SAFE:  
JACQUELINE  
12 VIVACITY

## 73% CORONA DEATHS IN MEN

700 new cases, 30 deaths in last 24 hrs, total 4,500 +ve

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Out of every four COVID-19 patients, three are male. The Union Health Ministry revealed this on Monday — on a day when nearly 700 new cases surfaced in India. The highest number of single-day deaths stood at 30 in the last 24 hours taking the total tally to 109 fatalities.

Further, though 37 per cent deaths are reported from people below 60 years, approximately, 86 per cent of deaths amongst people with co-morbidities indicate that young people with co-morbidities are also at high risk of COVID-19.

He implied that if elders, because of their old age and co-morbidities were vulnerable so were those in the young age group having such conditions mainly related to lifestyle which results into weak immunity.

"While coronavirus is a bigger threat for the elderly, young people with co-morbidities also need to be protected," Agarwal added.

Similar trend was reported in China too where a 2.8 per cent death rate in men while only a 1.7 per cent death rate in women due to COVID-19, according to the data provided by Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While the number of people infected was almost equal in number, it were the women who had a comparatively more survival rate than men.

Agarwal emphasised that elders should be protected and every youth has to be careful that they maintain sufficient social distance to not pass infection to anyone in the family.



North MCD workers sanitise an identified coronavirus patients residence in the Model Town area during the ongoing nationwide lockdown in New Delhi on Monday

## UP, Telangana favour extended lockdown

**Precious lives can't be brought back, say CMs seeking PM nod**

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/HYDERABAD

Uttar Pradesh and Telangana on Friday hinted that the ongoing lockdown could be extended even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the country should be ready for a long "haul" to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Appealing Prime Minister Narendra Modi to extend the three-week lockdown beyond April 15, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on Monday said the nation can recover from the hit that the economy was taking but it's premature to say that lockdown could be lifted after April 14,

"The number of positive cases of Covid-19 is increasing day by day, hence it's premature to say that lockdown could be lifted after April 14," Additional Chief Secretary Avanish Awasthi said here on Monday.

He said that Tablighi Jamaat people were responsible for the rise in the number of positive cases. Of the total 305 cases in the State on Monday, 159 are linked to members of the jamaat. He said during the past 24 hours, 27 people were tested positive in which 21 are from the jamaat.

"This is a big concern for the Government," he said. "We have identified around 1,600 people of the Tablighi Jammat till now and quarantined 1,200 of them. Now the administration is tracing the people who came in touch with them besides others who formed the chain. This tracing would take



reach home without creating a chaos at the highways.

Awasthi said the Government is reviewing the situation. "The religious leaders too had suggested that lockdown is the only way to prevent the virus and hence if required it should be extended," he said.

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## After big cat +ve in US, India on high alert

Advisory issued to States asking them to keep tab for Covid-like respiratory signs in tigers



This undated photo provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society shows Nadas, a Malayan tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York AP

Zoos and tiger habitats across the country have been put on high alert after a big cat was found positive for deadly coronavirus at Bronx Zoo in New York in the United States. It is said to be the first known infection of the virus in an animal in the United States or anywhere in the world.

Not taking chance, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Central Zoo Authority (CZA), both statutory bodies under the Union Environment Ministry monitoring tiger reserves and zoos respectively, on Monday issued an advisory to the States asking them to keep a tab for Covid-like respiratory signs of nasal discharge, breathing problems or coughing among the animals.

There are around 2,967 tigers in the wild in 50 tiger

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## Prez, PM, MPs take 30% pay cut for 1 yr

## MPLAD funds suspended for 2 years, Opp slams decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Monday decided to "temporarily suspend" MPLAD funds for two years and approved an Ordinance to cut 30 per cent of salary and pension of MPs and former MPs.

The Opposition slammed the decision to suspend MPLAD scheme and Left parties said the decisions reflected the dire state of the Indian economy.

Citing the age-old adage that "charity begins from home," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar told media that President, Prime Minister, Ministers and Governors also decided voluntarily to take a salary cut. "The money will go to Consolidated Fund of India," said Javadekar.

There 788 MPs in Parliament (543 in Lok Sabha and 245 in Rajya Sabha). The one-year deduction of 30 per cent of the salary could save around ₹60 crore, according to officials. The pension reduction of all the former MPs will also

save around ₹100 crore, they said.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conducted through video conferencing.

The Cabinet approves Ordinance amending the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 reducing allowances and pension by 30 per cent w.e.f. April 1, 2020 for a year.

"The President, Vice President, Governors of States have also voluntarily decided to take a pay cut as a social responsibility. The Cabinet approves temporary suspension of MPLADS during 2020-21 and 2021-22 for managing health and adverse impact of outbreak of COVID-19 in the country," said the Government in a statement.

Every MP is allotted ₹5 crore per year in MPLAD fund to undertake constituency specific developmental and emergency works. ₹7,880 crore big fund usages is now suspended for two years, which is expected to seriously affect the development works in constituencies. The MP fund is preferred as it is very hassle free for development and construction works.

Many schools, hospital buildings, equipments in hospitals, and construction of small roads across India were created by using MPLAD funds.

While Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the decisions, the Congress and TMC were quick to oppose the decision to suspend the MNPLAD scheme.

"Parliament of the world's largest democracy stands together in these challenging times. I thank all the parties and MPs for their support," said Shahnawaz Hussain.

While supporting the decision to deduct the salary of MPs, Congress and Trinamool Congress criticised the suspension of MPLADS. The Left parties took a pot shot at also Centre and questioned the state of economy of the Modi Government which forced them to take such a decision. They also accused the Centre of fudging data.

Please note that MPLAD is meant to execute developmental works in the con-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the Central Ministers about COVID-19 via video conference in New Delhi on Monday PTI

stituency. Suspending MPLADS is a disservice step to the constituents and it will undermine their role and functions," said Congress party's chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala.

Senior Congress Ahmed Patel "welcomed" the Cabinet pay cut decision, saying "in difficult times it is necessary that we help citizens."

"As a Member of Parliament, I welcome the Government's decision to cut the salaries of MPs. In this dif-

ficult time, this is the least we can do to help fellow citizens," he tweeted.

Senior party leader and former Union Minister Jairam Ramesh went against the party's stand and welcomed the Government's decision on MPLADS.

"I welcome the decision on MPLADS. I have been arguing for long that the approximately ₹7,000 crore given to MPs & MLAs annually for developmental works should be used as a corpus for State funding of

elections," Ramesh said.

CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, however, accused the Government of "fudging data" and said it had pushed the economy "steeply downhill" even before Covid-19.

"Transfer of money to the Consolidated Fund of India, instead of being directed towards fighting COVID-19, shows that it is a measure to deal with the economic destruction caused in the past six years," Yechury said.

## 2 Mumbai hospitals shut after cases

## Doctors, nurses +ve after coming into contact with +ve mishap victim

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



Medical workers escort a suspected coronavirus patient to get in an ambulance, as he is shifted to an isolation ward for treatment during the nationwide lockdown in Mumbai on Monday PTI

ctors tested positive for COVID-19 during the past one week.

Earlier on Wednesday last, the Jaslok Hospital — acting on the directives of the BMC —

stopped new admissions and shut down its Outpatient Department (OPD) after one of its staff members tested positive for Covid.

## Be prepared for long battle against corona, says PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While indicating that the country should be ready for a long haul, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday assured that "power of light of 130 crore Indians" as reflected from Sunday night's togetherness has provided enough strength to "all of us" to prepare for a "long battle" against coronavirus pandemic.

The closure of Wockhardt Hospital was triggered by a tweet put by leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly Ramesh Chennithala, saying: "Called Maharashtra Health Minister Shri. Rajesh Tope ji @rajeshtope11 seeking urgent intervention to ensure safety of 40 Covid-19 positive Malayalee nurses working @ a pvt hospital in Mumbai."

Following closure, the hospital management has barred the entry and exit from its

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses on BJP's 40th foundation day in New Delhi on Monday PTI

importance of social distancing and contribute to PM-Care fund amid the coronavirus pandemic that has been impacting the country. He also asked each worker to help 40 people load Arogya app.

"We mark our party's 40th anniversary when India is battling COVID-19. I appeal to BJP karyakartas to follow the set of guidelines from our party president JP Nadda-ji, help those in need and reaffirm the importance of social distancing. Let's make India COVID-19-free," Modi said in a series of tweets.

The BJP was founded in 1980 on April 6 emerging from the Bhartiya Jansangh with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its first president. Modi said all BJP workers will provide one meal

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## CAPSULE

## KANIKA RECOVERS FROM COVID-19, DISCHARGED

Lucknow: Kanika Kapoor, the Bollywood singer who caught coronavirus and caused a scare among politicians who met her at a party, was on Monday discharged from hospital, cured of COVID-19. The Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences here let her go after two tests results came negative, officials said.

## MUKESH AMBANI'S NET WORTH DROPS 28%

Mumbai: The net worth of India's richest man Mukesh Ambani dropped 28 per cent or \$300 million a day for two months to \$48 billion as on March 31 due to the massive correction in stock markets.

## NO FRESH COVID-19 CASE FOR 2nd DAY IN NOIDA

Noida: No fresh coronavirus case was reported from Noida and Greater Noida for a second day in a row, with the administration now planning a door-to-door COVID-19 awareness campaign, officials said.

# CM dedicates disaster control centre

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Gearing up for a bigger battle, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath dedicated to people the Integrated Disaster Control Centre (IDCC) at the office of Relief Commissioner at Lal Bahadur Shastri Bhawan on Monday and hoped that it would act as the backbone for relief work and in exigencies, would play a big role in providing necessary facilities and benefits of governance schemes.

Yogi said that in view of the lockdown, all district magistrates should deploy a nodal officer at the control rooms in their respective districts and ensure that it operated 24 hours a day.

"Relief work should be run in a speedy manner through the control room. It should be better used to deliver information on quarantine wards, institutional quarantine, isolation wards, Level-1, Level-2, Level-3 COVID-19 hospitals to the common man and deliver food packets to the needy," he said.

The chief minister said that the IDCC had a big role in providing necessary facilities and benefits of government schemes to the needy without discrimination in the war against coronavirus.

He also lauded the Revenue department for connecting all districts in a short time through the Integrated Control Room.

Yogi expressed confidence that the control room would



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath dedicates to people the Integrated Disaster Control Centre (IDCC) at the office of Relief Commissioner at Lal Bahadur Shastri Bhawan on Monday

prove helpful in speedy delivery of relief in the state. It could also be used to provide relief to the needy at a fast pace in other situations of disaster, he added.

## Uttar Pradesh units ready to manufacture ventilators, PPE and masks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To bolster 'Brand UP', the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) department is gearing up to manufacture masks, personal protection equipment (PPE) and ventilators, whose demand has spiked in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Principal Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal said that the production of ventilators in a Noida-based unit could start in a day or two, while a dozen units had the expertise to manufacture PPE.

"Within days, these units will send the sample product for testing to Coimbatore-based lab and production could start once we get an approval from there. It may take a week's time," Sehgal told media persons in Lucknow on Monday.

Samples of body coveralls — surgical gowns and drapes — have to be sent to South India Textile Research Association (SITRA) in Coimbatore for testing and

Yogi said that every information should be compiled in the control room, made available to the right person and resolution of the problems should be ensured.

certification, as per specifications.

There is a shortage of vital equipment needed to protect healthcare staff from getting infected as the number of COVID-19 patients rise. The certification from SITRA is mandatory for allowing local units to start the production of PPE.

"The first sample model of PPE is ready and the consignment will be sent by air to the Coimbatore-based institute by tomorrow (Tuesday). We are expecting certification in the next three or four days," the principal secretary said.

Sehgal said that small-scale units were manufacturing cotton-based masks and there was no scarcity of masks.

"We have 35 units manufacturing masks and they make good quality masks and have almost filled the gap of demand and supply," he said.

Recently, at a meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had asked the MSME department to manufacture masks to bolster Brand UP.

Meanwhile in Bahraich, two Nepalese citizens who pedalled their way to Bahraich from Chandigarh to go to Nepal violating lockdown, were taken into custody by the police and quarantined on Monday.

The youths used to work at an eatery in Chandigarh and were left with no money after the lockdown was clamped in the city. They told the police that to get out of the precarious situation, they rode a cycle for seven days to reach Rupaidha border in Bahraich to go to their homes at Dang district of Nepal. The police on their part sent them to Gurgutta quarantine camp for a medical scan and isolation.

Meanwhile in Meerut, three persons were arrested by the police for spreading fake news about a Muslim man spitting to spread coronavirus infection.

Arun Kumar, Manoj and Tarun Gurjar wanted to spread hatred against the minority community and hence cooked up a story. A police team, while probing a different case in Lakhvaya village, were told that a local, Naimuddin, went to the shop of a Hindu trader and spit there to spread the virus.

After investigation, the three Hindu youths were detained and during quizzing it surfaced that they fabricated the story to spread tension.

A case was registered against them at Kankankhera police station and they were arrested under sections 153B (offence at place of worship), 186 (obstructing public servant from duty), 193 (punishment for false evidence), 270 (malicious act to spread disease) of Indian Penal Code (IPC) among others.

## Agra cops get self-tonsure to fight virus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

head.

On being probed by the local media, it surfaced that the band of bald cops was posted in Fatehpur Sikri police station of Agra.

Station House Officer of Fatehpur Sikri, Bhupendra Baliyan, said that the police personnel had shaved their heads to fight coronavirus with the pledge that they would keep themselves that way till the pandemic was over.

The SHO felt that the action of the cops helped them in fighting the virus as there were more chances of carrying virus in the hair as compared to other parts of body, which were mostly covered by clothes.

Doctors said that a person exposed to the virus could change clothes, wash his hands, but it would be very difficult to wash hair frequently so turning bald would help in checking the spread of the coronavirus or getting infected.

## BJP removes 'shooting' Mahila Morcha leader

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

the outfit.

As per reports, after lighting diyas at her home in Balrampur district, Mahila Morcha district chief Manju Tiwari fired in the air from her husband OP Tiwari's licensed revolver.

The video of the incident was soon uploaded on her Facebook account with the caption 'Firing to chase away coronavirus after lighting the diyas'. Soon the video went viral on various social media plat-

**As per reports, after lighting diyas at her home in Balrampur district, Mahila Morcha district chief Manju Tiwari fired in the air from her husband OP Tiwari's licensed revolver**

forms causing embarrassment to the BJP leadership.

Though Manju Tiwari was quick to tender an apology, the Balrampur police, ostensibly under direction from the top, registered a case under relevant sections against the leader and the licence of her husband's gun could be cancelled.

Her unconditional apology and assurance not to repeat such act in future failed to get her any respite from disciplinary action from the ruling BJP

and she was removed from the post of Mahila Morcha district chief and also suspended.

Meanwhile, UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu questioned the BJP government over the incident.

"BJP leaders and workers are violating all norms during lockdown. I also want to know what action will the chief minister take against the party leader, who made a mockery of the prime minister's call," he said.

As per reports, a video clip went viral on social media in which 50 odd cops were shown marching in the area to ensure lockdown in Agra. But what surprised everyone was that every cop had shaved his

## Priyanka advocates increased testing of COVID-19 suspects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra stressed the urgent need for carrying out more tests of COVID-19 suspects, saying that only early detection could help in checking the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

"To stop the spread of coronavirus, the only way is to go for maximum tests so that we can treat the affected. 'Do maximum tests, treat the patients', should be our pledge to fight the pandemic," Priyanka tweeted on Monday.

She also asked Congress workers to exert pressure on the local authorities to conduct more tests to check the spread of the virus.

After Priyanka exhorted partymen to step out of their



homes and help the authorities in fighting the pandemic, UP Congress started 'Sanjhi Kitchen' in several districts of

the state.

On Sunday, a 'Sanjhi Kitchen' to feed the needy was started at Congress headquarters in Mall Avenue.

Congress spokesman Brijendra Singh, after starting the kitchen in Lucknow, said that similar services were started in the party's district offices in Varanasi, Fatehpur, Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida), Bulandshahr, Hapur, Ghaziabad and over a dozen other districts on Monday.

Singh said that directions had been issued to all district and city chiefs of the party to make necessary arrangements so that no one in the state slept hungry.

He said that besides food packets, party workers were distributing sanitiser and masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party, alleging that the ruling party was pursuing its political agenda in the cover of completing 40 years of its foundation even as the whole country was suffering from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

"People across the country have closed their ranks in the hour of crisis and are following the directions of the government by remaining indoors during the lockdown period and the BJP cannot see beyond the next election and is busy in mobilising and influencing the voters through letter of thanks," the SP chief said, and added,

"The letter of thanks should have been issued by the government as the BJP and the RSS, claiming it as their effort," the SP chief charged.

but the BJP cannot see beyond the next election and is busy in mobilising and influencing the voters through letter of thanks," the SP chief said, and added,

"The letter of thanks should have been issued by the government as the BJP and the RSS, claiming it as their effort," the SP chief charged.

He said that the people in rural areas were starving and discrimination was rampant in the distribution of relief material.

Akhilesh Yadav alleged that

**"People across the country have closed their ranks in the hour of crisis and are following the directions of the government by remaining indoors during the lockdown period while the BJP has flouted all democratic conventions and is busy celebrating its 40th Foundation Day"**

Akhilesh charged that the SP workers taking food items and relief material for the poor and hungry people were being stopped at various places in the state. "This is not a healthy tradition in a democracy," he said.

The SP chief said that owing to the lockdown, people from other states had also come to their villages in large numbers. "Neither these workers have work nor do they have money for food. Their families are not able to have one square

meal a day. Many youngsters have lost their jobs," he pointed out.

Akhilesh Yadav alleged that during the BJP rule, unemployment had grown by leaps and bounds due to demonetisation and goods and services tax (GST). He said the lockdown had further aggravated the situation and the government should immediately make arrangements to make relief or aid reach the farmers, the poor people and the youth.

## CITYBRIEFS

### LU VC INAUGURATES COMMUNITY KITCHEN



Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University AK Rai inaugurated community kitchen at Nivedita Girls' Hostel in the presence of chief proctor Dinesh Kumar, chief provost Manuka Khanna, NSS programme coordinator Rakesh Dwivedi, IPPR director Durgesh Srivastava and hostel warden Amita Kanaujia. Rai said LU has been on the forefront of the battle against COVID-19. He said that the university's department of Chemistry has prepared indigenous hand sanitiser called LU-CHEM, and the Faculty of Ayurveda designed an immunity boosting drink called LU-RAM19. The community kitchen is another such initiative, he added. "Food

packets are being handed over to representatives of the district administration for distribution among those in need. Food will be prepared at the community kitchen twice a day," he said.

#### TRANSLATION

Indian National Science Academy (INSA) is carrying out translation of WHO advisories so that the message reaches a large section of society. The 'Myth Busters' received from WHO are being translated into several Indian languages. INSA consultant Dr Nautiyal said since the message in English language could reach only a minuscule population, its translation into regional languages was essential. "Several scientists have been involved in translating the material into Bangla, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil and Telugu," he said. He added that a number of INSA fellows were engaged in research on the virus and were active in development of its testing kits. "Prof Chandrima Shaha, former director of National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi, and current president of INSA, said they have a good database of fellows with relevant expertise. Considering the scarcity of information on this virus and disease, INSA is also involved in efforts to collate all the available recent research material on COVID-19 and making it available for researchers. Tata Institute for

Fundamental Research (Mumbai) and Indian Institute of Sciences (Bengaluru) have also shared information on covid-gyan.in. Recently, through a joint statement, the three national academies of sciences pledged to support the campaign of the government and cooperate in coordinating the expertise of fellows," said Nautiyal.

#### ₹11 LAKH DONATED TO CM RELIEF FUND

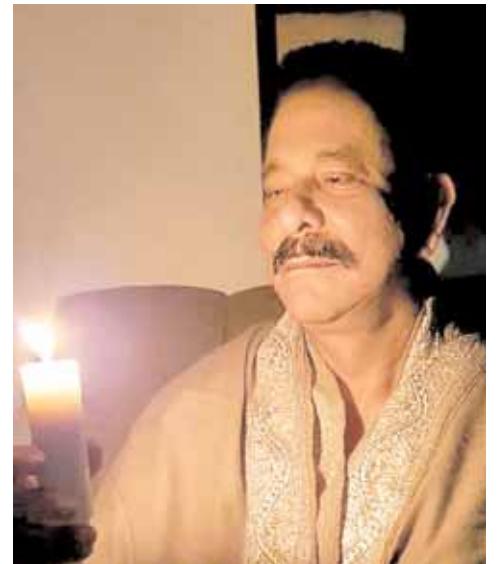


Uttar Pradesh has seen a surge in the number of COVID-19 patients and the government is taking numerous steps to combat its spread in the community. Despite tough times, the industry has come

forward to lend support to the fight against coronavirus, be it through community relief work, production of masks sanitiser & PPE, taking care of its employees or making contributions to relief funds. On Monday, another CII member company, CP Milk & Food Products Pvt Ltd, popularly known as 'Gyan', donated ₹11 lakh to the CM Relief Fund. The employees collected their one-day salaries (Rs 5.5 lakh) and an equal amount was contributed by directors of the organisation (former chairman of CII-UP Jai Agarwal and his brother Anuj Agarwal). Anuj Agarwal presented the token of support to agricultural produce commissioner Alok Sinha.

#### CZA DIRECTIVES FOR ZOO

Lucknow zoo has received directions from Central Zoo Authority (CZA) in the wake of a tiger at the Bronx Zoo (USA) testing positive for coronavirus. Zoo director RK Singh said they have been asked to remain on high alert and keep an eye on animals for any abnormal behaviour through CCTV cameras. "No caregivers and keepers should be allowed near the animals without protective gear. The tests for animals are carried out at three labs, mainly National Institute of High Security Animal Disease (Bhopal), National Research Centre on Equines (Haryana) and IVRI (Bareilly).



Sahara India Pariwar Managing Worker Saharsri Subrata Roy stands in solidarity by lighting the candle during the nation-wide pledge to defeat coronavirus.



## COVID-19 OUTBREAK

# 5 ultras killed, 5 jawans martyred in J&K ops

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The icy heights of Keran sector in North Kashmir's Kupwara district on Sunday witnessed a hand-to-hand combat between elite Para commandos, belonging to the same unit which had raided terrorist camps across the line of control during September 29, 2016 surgical strike, with a group of heavily armed terrorists in which all five terrorists, who had sneaked inside the Indian territory few days ago, were eliminated in one of the deadliest operations while all five commandos also laid down their lives.

According to field officers, posted in the region, "It was no less than a repeat of several hand-to-hand combat battles, which Indian soldiers had fought at the peak of Kargil war in 1999 to flush out the Pakistani Army regulars from their well fortified locations."

According to Col Rajesh Kalia, Ministry of Defence Spokesman based in Srinagar, "four soldiers under the command of a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) from one of the most professional Para SF Units were held dropped near the LoC after information on the infiltrators was received."

An intense hand to hand battle ensued and all five terrorists were eliminated". In this battle, however, Army lost five of its best soldiers, three on the site and two more succumbed while they were airlifted to a nearby military hospital", Col Kalia added.

The team of elite commandos were led by Subedar Sanjeev Kumar and included Havildar Davendra Singh, Paratrooper Bal Krishan, Paratrooper Amit Kumar and Paratrooper Chhatrapal Singh. Two of them belonged to Himachal Pradesh, two from Uttarakhand and one commando hailed from Rajasthan.

According to senior Army officers, "the foot-steps of the group of infiltrators were first reported in the Zurrhama forest area on April 1. Due to extremely difficult terrain and prevailing inclement weather conditions no engagement with the heavily armed group of infiltrators took place. While tight vigil was being maintained and foot patrolling was enhanced to plug the gaps in the region, security forces were mobilised in the area on April 4.

According to defence sources, "early Sunday morning, a small squad consisting of five soldiers started tracking the footstep and came dangerously close to the cornice—a mass of hardened snow at the edge of a mountain.

According to defence sources, before members of the squad could realise, it broke and they fell in to the frozen nallah close to where the terrorists were hiding.

Despite suffering a free fall, alert commandos engaged hiding terrorists in a hand-to-hand combat and eliminated all of them. According to defence sources, dead bodies of the soldiers and terrorists were found within 2-3 metres of each other and bore marks of bullet injuries clearly indicted fierce gun fight took place between the two groups.

Meanwhile, situation remained tense along the line of control in Poonch sector. According to Jammu based Defence Spokesman, Lt Col Devender Anand, Pakistan army violated ceasefire agreement by initiating small arms firing and shelling with mortars along the LoC in Mankote sub sector of Poonch around 5.15 p.m. He said, the Indian Army retaliated the fire befittingly. On Sunday also, Indian army inflicted heavy damages on the other side of the LoC while targeting notorious Pakistani posts.

## Maha: 7 more deaths, +ve cases at 838

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

The coronavirus reached the doorsteps of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday after a tea vendor operating near his private residence at Bandra (E) in north-west Mumbai tested positive for the pandemic, even as seven more persons succumbed to Covid-19 and the 120 fresh infected cases were reported. Confirming that the tea vendor had been infected, BMC spokesperson said: "The person has been shifted to the nearby HBT Medical College and Dr R N Cooper Hospital".

Acting swiftly, the BMC sealed off the area and began to take immediate steps to insulate the chief minister's private residence "Matoshri" from the pandemic.

What triggered anxiety among the staff members of the chief minister's office that some security guards of Thackeray used to drink from the tea stall run by the affected vendor.

With no let up in the large number of deaths and fresh infections due to the Coronavirus, the total number of the

pandemic deaths rose to 52 as seven more persons died, while the total infected persons in the state rose to a staggering 838 after 120 more persons tested positive for Covid-19.

Of the fresh deaths, Mumbai accounted four, while one death was reported from Thane, Navi Mumbai and Vasai-Virar. Of the deaths in Mumbai, two took place in Hinduridaya Samrat Bal Thackeray (HBT) Medical College and Dr R N Cooper Hospital, while one death was reported by private hospitals.

In a tragic development, a 30-year-old woman in her ninth month of pregnancy died at the BMC-run air Hospital on Saturday. Three other deaths – one each – belonging to Navi Mumbai, Ambernath in Thane district and another from Virarp-Vasai took place in Mumbai hospitals.

"Out of 17563 laboratory samples, 15808 were negative and 838 have been tested positive for coronavirus until today. 66 patients have been discharged till date after full recovery," a medical bulletin issued by the State Health Department said.

"32,521 people are in home quarantine and 3498 people are in institutional quarantine," the bulletin said.

Meanwhile, the BMC – in its daily bulletin – said that it had surveyed the city's 15 lakh population till date and identified 665 "contacts" which have been referred for testing. "We have also collected 1400 samples through five teams and through this process, 130 patients have tested positive for Covid-19.

"As many as 10968 people had been placed under quarantine. Of them, 3990 people have completed the quarantine period. In all, the BMC has declared 226 areas/buildings as containment zones in the metropolis.

As part of special screening campaign, the BMC has collected 112 swab samples.

In a related development, various nurses' unions and associations -- under the umbrella of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan -- wrote to Mumbai Commissioner Praveen Pardesi on Monday, raising safety concerns faced by nurses while treating the novel coronavirus patients.

Commissioner Suresh Kakani said the staffers of the hospital would not be allowed to go out of the premises until they tested negative for a coronavirus test.

Laying the blame at the door of the hospital management for its failure to take precautionary measures, Kakani said: "The hospital management failed to take precautionary measures. As a consequence, nearly 300 staffers have been quarantined. The BMC has set up a team to look into how the virus spread among so many people in a hospital setting," he said. Informed sources in the Wockhardt Hospital said two positive Covid-19 patients were brought to the hospital from Kasturba Gandhi Hospital on March 20 and they were kept along in a general ICU ward instead of isolation ward, and that too along with non-Covid-19 patients, which said to have resulted in large-scale infection in the hospital.

In a related development, the problem at the Jaslok Hospital came to light after a nurse working at the hospital put out a video message in which she said that one staffer had contracted Covid-19 - in social media which went viral. Taking serious cognisance of the video message, the BMC health officials held a meeting with the hospital management and ascertained what the nurse alleged was indeed true. Following the meeting, the Jaslok Hospital on Wednesday stopped the new admissions and closed down its OPD for an infinite period.

Meanwhile, as many as 92 staff members, including several doctors and nurses, in Pune's DY Patil Hospital were quarantined on Monday, after an accident victim, who was being treated at the facility, tested positive for Covid-19.

Confirming the development, Jitendra Bhawalkar, dean of the DY Patil Medical College and Hospital said that an autorickshaw driver, who had met with the accident on March 31, had been admitted to the emergency section of the hospital on March 31 after the accident. "The accident victim was operated upon and on the second day, he developed fever. The doctors got suspicious and his samples were sent for testing which came out positive for Covid-19," he said.

"For safety of zoo personnel we have asked all the zoos to coordinate with designated government agencies responsible for public health response and screening," said Yadav.

**2 MUMBAI HOSPITALS SHUT AFTER CASES**

premises. The hospital closure came a day after the BMC declared it as containment zone

BMC's Additional Municipal

## Sudden surge in cases baffles TN Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The sudden spurt in the number of corona positive cases in the State has baffled the Tamil Nadu administration. During the last week of March, the State had hardly 60 corona virus cases while Maharashtra and Kerala topped the table. But by April 1, the number of coronavirus cases in Tamil Nadu touched 200 and since then it was an unexpected surge.

By Sunday evening, it was announced by Beela Rajesh that the number of corona cases had crossed the 570 mark making Tamil Nadu the State with the second highest number of corona patients after Maharashtra. It is reported that the Government has ordered a detailed probe to find out the reasons behind the increase in the number of patients.

Out of the 570 patients tested positive for corona, more than 400 are either the returnees of the Tabligh Jamaat congregation held in Delhi or those who came into contact with them. The State administration is on a mission mode to prevent the disease reaching the Stage-3 (community transmission). But law breakers are having a field day in various parts of the State. Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi districts reported shop keepers openly violating prohibitory orders and selling meat.

Though there is a notion about the poor hygiene of the people of the State, Tamil Nadu has been doing well in waste management and disposal. The health sector too had registered impressive growth with many corporate hospitals opening branches in interior Tamil

**Out of the 570 patients tested positive for corona, more than 400 are either the returnees of the Tabligh Jamaat congregation held in Delhi or those who came into contact with them**

Nadu. The State is on its way to establish Government medical colleges in all the districts. South India's first All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is fast coming up at Madurai.

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy convened a media meet on Monday after his interaction with officials (both revenue and police) and appealed to the people to cooperate with government officials to prevent the spread of the disease.

"We have brought in laws to check the spread of the disease. But it could be implemented only with the cooperation of the people. The police are over worked and they have been instructed to be courteous with the people. Now it is for our people to reciprocate by obeying the guidelines, dos and don'ts," said Palaniswamy.

The video message aired by the Government of Tamil Nadu through news channels has caught the attention of the people. Doctors and nurses appeal to the people of the State to stay at home and not to come out. "It is patient who asks us to save his/her life. This is our turn to request you to stay home and stay safe by not coming out of your houses," says Dr Raghunathan, professor of medicine, in this one-minute message.

## TN positive cases climb to 621, Govt to import test kits

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

had attended the Delhi meet, could have contacted the virus from the latter, said the secretary.

The Government has intensified its efforts to check the spread of the virus. "Aggressive containment plans have been drawn out to prevent the virus reaching the stage-3, which could lead to community spread," she said. As part of the Government's all out war on coronavirus, the health department is importing one lakh rapid test kits from China. "These kits are expected to arrive in Chennai on April 9 and will be dispatched to all districts immediately," said Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy

while speaking to reporters after an extended meeting with senior government officials and doctors at Chennai on Monday. The rapid tests would begin in the state from April 10 and the results could be known within 30 minutes, he said.

The chief minister said there was no need to panic as the disease was well under control. "We have screened 2,10,538 passengers at airports in Tamil Nadu and of them, 90,541 are under home quarantine. 10,816 persons have completed the 28-day quarantine period," said Palaniswamy. He disclosed that there were 17 testing labs in government and private hospitals and the state government had sought permission for 21 more labs.

## J&K positive cases reach 109

PNS ■ JAMMU

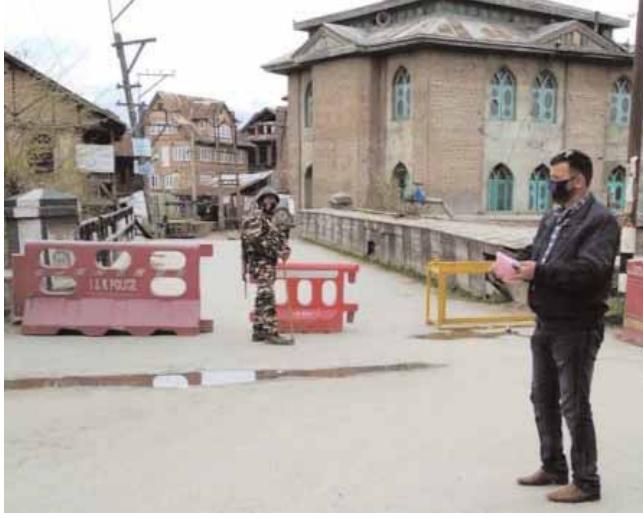
With only three patients testing positive in Kashmir division, the total number of Covid-19 cases in Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir Monday stood at 109, recording a jump of 57 patients in last five days alone.

From over 50 reported cases by the end of last month, the J&K reached a cumulative tally of 109 cases on April 6, the media bulletin reported.

The Bulletin said that till date 1708 samples have been sent for testing of which 1583 have tested as negative, and 16 reports are awaited till April 06, 2020.

Director SKIMS, Dr AG Ahangor Monday said, out of 283 suspected patients, 238 have been discharged and 24 positive patients who are under treatment are all recovering well.

The Kashmir Valley had



recorded its first case on March 18 when a 67-year-old woman from Khanyar Srinagar tested positive, two days after her arrival from Saudi Arabia after performing Umrah.

As per officials, out of these

There are 103 active cases—85 in Kashmir and 18 in Jammu.

14 fresh cases were reported on Sunday-five from Baramulla district, two from Budgam and an elderly couple from Shopian besides one each from Ganderbal, Bandipora and Srinagar districts.

Furthermore, till date 35243 travellers and persons in contact with suspected cases have been put under surveillance which include 10556 persons in home quarantine including facilities operated by government, 615 in Hospital Quarantine, 103 in hospital isolation and 17506 under home surveillance. Besides, 6463 persons have completed their 28-day surveillance period. Meanwhile, the district administration in Srinagar Monday sealed Chattabal area of Srinagar after several positive cases reported from the area.

## Tiff between BJP, Mamata on 'politicising corona'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With the BJP Information Technology cell charging the Bengal Government with hiding facts related to corona deaths, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday returned fire saying these were no time to reap political harvests.

Banerjee disclosed the number of Corona infected patients in the State but gave a curt reply to BJP leader Amit Malavia's allegations -- that the Government was fudging the number of corona deaths -- saying "some parties are playing politics in these hours of crisis... a party's IT cell is using fake news to maligned our health department... at a time when our doctors and health staff are doing their best to fight the disease. This is not the time for petty politics for which they will get plenty of time later on."

Claiming that she was "not finding faults in what the central government was doing while dealing with the crisis," Banerjee said "they may be more interested in politics by descending on the streets, ringing bells, clanging utensils... but we are not. We are more interested in serving the people."

Earlier, leaders like Malavia and even Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh questioned the Government was functioning in Bengal saying the "hospitals in the State are under pressure from the Chief Minister who is also the Health Minister to underplay the Corona related deaths." The BJP IT cell chief wondered as to why the State Government did not come out with medical bulletins on 2nd, 3rd and 5th April. He also questioned the reason "why the number of Covid-related deaths are missing in the bulletin released on the day."

Ghosh said the Government was doing so in order to save the insurance money worth Rs 10 lakh that the Chief Minister has promised in case of any death in the

medical fraternity for treating Corona. The Chief Minister has promised an insurance of Rs 10 lakh for the government staff involved in fighting the disease.

Not only the Chief Minister but also other opposition leaders slammed the BJP for politicizing the fight against corona by encouraging its supporters to burst crackers and light candles "as if this is a time to celebrate the crisis... as it they have won the battle."

While Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh supported bursting of crackers on Sunday night to express solidarity with 'corona warriors' saying "the locked down people were giving vent to their frustration... so there is no harm in it," State Minister Tapas Chatterjee said "in the name of showing solidarity the BJP was getting the people to celebrate its foundation day."

Congress MP Pradip Bhattacharya wondered whether Corona will go by lighting candles and bursting crackers. CPI(M) Legislature Party Leader said Sujan Chakrabarty "efficient tackling of the crisis and not publicity stunt is the need of the hour."

Elsewhere the police arrested 126 people for bursting crackers. Over enthusiastic supporters of Narendra Modi tended to overshoot the Prime Minister's appeal to switch off lights and light up candles only and hit the streets bursting crackers and flying hot air balloons.

Meanwhile, as per the updates made available by the Chief Minister on Monday the number of Corona infected patients in Bengal was 61 while the number of deaths remained at 3 whereas 13 patients have been cured thus far.

There were 6890 people who have been put under government quarantine, the Chief Minister said adding out of the 61 people infected 55 belonged to seven families with foreign travel history.

## UP, TELANGANA FAVOUR EXTENDED LOCKDOWN

some time for which we are going for total lockdown in some select areas," he added.

Meanwhile, Yogi Adityanath has ordered setting up of 14 more Covid-19 test centres at the medical colleges and sample collection centres in the district where there is no testing facilities.

Money collected from Corona Fund will be used in strengthening these centres. With this new testing facilities become operational, the total number of testing labs in the State would go up to 24. Presently, there are eight functional labs and two more - one at Jhansi and other at Prayagraj - would open shortly.

He further said that the districts where there is no testing centres the hospitals would facilitate collection of samples and will send these for test in the nearby testing centres. Opposition leaders are demanding that there should be increase in the testing facilities so that virus infected people are detected early.

## AFTER BIG CAT +VE IN US, INDIA ON HIGH ALERT

Nayak. The NTCA advisory states tigers must be observed for Covid-like respiratory signs of nasal discharge, coughing and laboured breathing through direct observation to the extent possible, and also through camera trap images for visible symptoms.

**2 MUMBAI HOSPITALS SHUT AFTER CASES**

premises. The hospital closure came a day after the BMC declared it as containment zone

BMC's Additional Municipal

# First positive corona case reported in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The first positive case of coronavirus was reported in Prayagraj here late on Sunday evening. The report of one of the three Indonesian youths who came from Nizamuddin's Tablighi Jamaat came here late Sunday evening was found corona positive.

As soon as the report was received, he was admitted to the isolation ward of the Community Health Centre in Kotwa, Prayagraj.

It may be pointed out here that on the last Tuesday night, over 37 people were caught from the mosque in Shahganj, who were hiding here. All were quarantined at Karel's guest house. Out of them, samples of a total of 11 people, including seven Indonesians, were sent to KGMU Lucknow for test. The report of eight came negative on the second day but samples of three Indonesian suspected youths were sent to labs in Pune. As soon as a positive report was received from there, the patient was taken to Kotwa CHC from the Karel guest house. He is currently in normal condition. If the situation becomes serious, he will be admitted to Tej Bahadur Sapru (Beli) Hospital. However, reports of one other, including two Indonesian youths, are yet to come.

The Indonesian young man who has been confirmed with the coronavirus has been in the city for a long time. Now the search for such people has started, with whom he has come in contact. It is expected that many other people including the medical team have come in contact with him.

CMO Dr GS Vajpeyi said that so far the sample of total 23 suspected patients from the district were sent to KGMU for

## Two more test +ve in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Two more persons, including a Jamaati and one other who came in his contact, were tested corona positive on Monday. With this, the number of corona positive reached to 10 in the city. These included the eight members of Tablighi Jamaat alone. On the other hand, the elderly person who was earlier tested corona positive, has recovered from his ailment as his second report was found negative on Monday. The Jamaati and the person who came in his contact found corona positive on Monday were in quarantine at the Naraina Medical College, Panki, and Rama Medical College of Mandhana respectively. They were now being shifted to the isolation ward of Covid-19 hospital at the LLR (Hallet) Hospital.

It may be recalled that the district administration with the officials of Health department and police had impounded 88 Jamaatis from different parts of the district who had

returned from the Nizamuddin Markaz a few days ago. These also included the persons who had come in their contact and all were kept in isolation wards of Covid-19 hospital, UHM hospital, Naraina Medical College of Panki and Rama Medical College of Mandhana. In the first phase, of the 31 suspects, six were tested corona positive and admitted in Covid-19 hospital of LLR (Hallet) Hospital. In the report of 22 suspects of the second phase, one Jamaati was tested corona positive admitted in the isolation ward of Sarsaul PHC. In the report received from SGPGI Lucknow on Monday morning, a 20 years old Jamaati and a person (53) of Baripal village (Sajeti) who came in his contact were tested corona positive. Their identity could not be ascertained. CMO Dr Ashok Shukla said he had received test report of 35 suspects from SGPGI Lucknow on Monday morning which revealed two persons corona positive. They were being shifted to Covid-19 Hospital of LLR (Hallet) Hospital soon for treatment, he informed.

test. Of them, 19 patients tested negative, while one Indonesian report was found positive. The report of three is yet to come. He said that the number of people travelling to corona affected countries was 845, in which 806 people have been tested and quarantined. The remaining 39 are being searched.

Meanwhile, 19 regular and seven contract employees have been absent from CMO office for the past several days. They have been asked to give clarification within three days otherwise stringent action will be taken against them.

**KAUSHAMBI RECEIVES FIRST CORONA POSITIVE CASE:** After Pratapgarh and Prayagraj, now neighbouring district Kaushambi has also received the first positive case of corona here on Monday.

Coronavirus infection has

also spread in both Prayagraj and adjoining districts. Three patients have been found in Pratapgarh, one in Prayagraj and one in Kaushambi infected with coronavirus.

The test report of a young man from a village in Sirathup area in Kaushambi was found positive. He came back home from Haryana last week. The other seven youths from the village who came in contact with him were home quarantined. The administration has also sealed the village.

The youth worked in Haryana and he had reached his village on March 29 last. The villagers informed the administration about it and then he was kept in a quarantine centre made outside the village. The young man's condition deteriorated and he was admitted to the isolation ward of the district hospital at

Manjhanpur three days ago. When suspected, his blood sample was sent for test.

The test report on Sunday night confirmed the coronavirus in the young man. The first positive case of corona virus in the district stirred the Health department and the district administration.

Thereafter, seven people who were quarantined in the village with the young man were also admitted to the isolation ward of the district hospital on Monday. Blood sample of seven people who came in contact with the youth was sent for test. The infected youth is being sent to Covid Hospital Kotwa in Prayagraj. As a precaution, the village of the infected youth has been sealed. Police has put up a barricade on the way to the village. And people have been appealed to stay in their homes.



Road in Varanasi wears deserted look during lockdown on Monday

Pioneer

## Second COVID-19 patient recovers in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A midst the continuous flow of negative news about the spreading of worldwide coronavirus pandemic, yet another positive development has been seen in the district when the second positive COVID-19 patient has also been recovered well. The first positive COVID-19 patient after getting fully recovered has already been discharged from Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital a few days ago. The report of this patient belonging to Chatrapur, under the Shivpur police station who also came here from United Arab Emirates (UAE) by a direct flight from Sharjah on March 20 and reached his home by a taxi was also found negative and according to hospital management, he would be discharged after keeping in observation for 48 hours.

The patient reached DDU Hospital on March 27 last with some throat related problems where he was admitted for quarantine and his blood sample was sent to Microbiology department in Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) for testing. Later after receiving his report positive, his treatment was started keeping him in an isolation ward. Even before reaching hospital this 30 years old youth had quarantined himself at home as he could not even visit to see his wife at a private hospital where she gave birth to a baby.

Earlier, the first ever positive COVID-19 patient aged around 30 years and a resident of Chitaura village, under the Badagaon police station, who also came here from Dubai (UAE) via Delhi and was admitted to DDU Hospital, was already fully recovered



Bajardiha continues to remain sealed after finding of a positive COVID-19 patient in Varanasi on Monday

Pioneer

and discharged. So far, seven positive COVID patients were admitted to the hospitals in the city here and out of them, two have recovered, while one died. The rest of four are still being treated. Meanwhile, there is yet relieving news that out of 29 suspected persons from Tablighi Jamaat Markaz (Delhi), the reports of 22 were found negative, while the reports of five are still awaited apart from two positive whose treatment is going on at isolation wards. However, even those who reports have been found negative are still being quarantined.

Besides, in all the four areas from where positive cases came into the light, the restrictions of lockdown have been strengthened there for making red zones there and sealing them completely. The residents are only being allowed for half an hour each in morning and evening hours to come out one by one to the barricades in view to get essential items. Only medical staff is being allowed to go there and the areas are being watched through drone cameras. All these areas including Madampura and Bajardiha, Gangapur and Lohta are regularly being sanitised. According

to the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, the restrictions would remain effective for 72 hours in these four areas.

In Bajardiha, thermal scanning of 305 people living in 13 houses adjoining to affected positive COVID-19 patient was done apart from keeping 52 persons for home quarantine. In Gangapur, the areas adjoining to 120 houses have been sanitised apart from 198 thermal scanning and home quarantine.

A positive patient of the area had already died. In all, so far 15,611 persons are being home quarantined and thermal scanning of 50,810 persons were done. Meanwhile, the normal life in the city continued to remain paralysed as the nationwide lockdown entered 13th day. The markets continued to wear a deserted look.

## NTPC expresses solidarity with govt in fight against coronavirus



General Manager NTPC Auraiya, Diwakar Kaushik releases the truckload of social protective equipment prepared by NTPC to be delivered to Auraiya District Magistrate on Monday



Rimjhim Ispat MD Yogesh Agarwal hands over cheque of ₹ 11 lakh to Kanpur District Magistrate on Monday

1,000 three-layered face masks were ready to be handed over to the district magistrate.

In view of the lockdown, the NTPC is distributing 100 lunch packets daily among the poor and the needy, according to General Manager Diwakar Kaushik and Manager (HR) Vandana Chaturvedi.

**RIMJHIM ISPAT:** Rimjhim Ispat is one of the leading manufacturers of iron building material and has always been in the forefront on corporate social responsibility (CSR). Understanding the need of the hour, it donated ₹ 11 lakh to the Chief Ministers

Distress Relief Fund. In an official statement, the company said that its Managing Director Yogesh Agarwal along with Rohit Agarwal and Sanjeev handed over a cheque of ₹ 11 lakh to Kanpur (City) District Magistrate BR Tiwari.

Yogesh appealed to the people of Kanpur to strictly follow the lockdown and maintain social distancing in their own interest.

He said it was the duty of every individual to strengthen the hands of the Central and UP governments in the hour of crisis.

## Complete lockdown in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

### City heading towards milk crisis?

**KANPUR (City):** District Magistrate Dr BR Tiwari on Monday clarified that although there was a blanket ban on coming out on roads or lanes and bylanes for the next few days as directed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, there was no restriction on movement of vehicles for which passes had been issued for doorstep delivery of essential commodities.

He said all police personnel and officials monitoring the enforcement of complete lockdown had been asked to ensure that the doorstep deliveries were made following social distancing in strictest terms.

Tiwari said shops had been listed in every locality and they could be contacted for supply of essential commodity. He said if any store refused to provide doorstep service, a complaint could be made on the helpline number and action would be taken against the owner of the shop.

The district magistrate said all vehicles involved in the movement of essential commodities would not be stopped like trucks, pickup vans, loaders, hand-carts etc.

He, however, warned that there was a strict ban on movement of four-wheelers and

two-wheelers and those caught would not only be punished but also slapped a fine of ₹ 5 lakh.

He said milk supply was the most important and it would be supplied at the doorstep by the listed stores along with essential commodities.

He said Naubasta and Chakarpur mandis would remain open.

Tiwari said front-line staff in the fight against coronavirus, along with employees of

other institutions like banks, production units who are on duty would be allowed to report on duty on the basis of their identity cards, passes and also vehicles passes. He added that the timings of such persons should be specified.

He said vehicles that were allowed to move, if found carrying passengers would not only be fined but also impounded.

They would ensure that social distancing norms were strictly followed. He said those at the shop would stand a minimum of 3 metres apart and obtain their medicines in turns without flocking the counters.

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**CONNECTING FARMERS WITH MANDIS**

# Centre may go for 'truck aggregators'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a cue from app-based cab services, the 'Centre may go in for 'truck aggregators' to connect farmers with mandis. Preparing for managing a staggered post-lockdown scenario, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday suggested harnessing technology and encouraging exploration of innovative solutions like 'truck aggregators' while interacting with his Council of Ministers whom he asked to prepare a list of 10 major decisions and 10 priority areas of focus after April 14.

Stressing that lockdown measures and social distancing must go hand in hand, Prime Minister said that it's essential to strategize for emergent conditions once lockdown ends.

The Centre has asked states and union territories to ensure smooth harvesting and sowing operations and exempted agricultural activities from the 21-day lockdown enforced to combat coronavirus. It has also allowed shops of agricultural machinery and its spare parts to remain open during the period.

Modi said that welfare of farmers is of high importance and affirmed that his government would provide all possible help to farmers in the harvesting season.

He also asked the Ministries to prepare a Business Continuity Plan and be ready to fight the economic impact of COVID-19 on war footing.

He said it is imperative that the leaders communicate exhaustively with the state and district administration, especially in the districts which are hotspots for the pandemic, to be apprised of the ground situation and also provide solutions to the emerging problems.

He noted that a graded plan to slowly open departments where hotspots aren't existing should be made and that the crisis offers an opportunity to become self-dependent in the medical sector.

It is also important to ensure there is no crowding at PDS centres, maintain effective monitoring, take action on complaints and prevent black marketing and rise in prices of essentials, he said.

While mentioning that due to the emergent challenges, the country needs to lessen its dependence on other nations, he asked all departments to maintain an objective index on how their work will promote Make in India.

Modi asked relevant Ministries to continuously monitor and ensure that benefits of 'Garib Kalyan Yojana' keep reaching intended beneficiaries in a seamless manner and tasked his Ministers to popularize Aarogya Setu app in the rural areas and grass root institutions.

# NBA expresses concern over threat to scribes for Tablighi coverage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) on Monday expressed concern over threats received by anchors and reporters of news channels for their coverage of the role of Tablighi Jamaat in the spread of coronavirus.

The association appealed to the government and law enforcing agencies to take immediate preventive action against 'anti-social elements'.

"This particular trend has

been noticed after electronic media recently exposed the role of Tablighi Jamaat in the spread of coronavirus, resulting in a nationwide spurt in the number of positive cases and subsequent deaths. Anchors and reporters working in news channels are being specifically targeted through social media platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Twitter," NBA president Rajat Sharma said in a statement.

The association also took note of some of the recent

trends in India on Twitter. "There are videos circulating on social media in which some religious preachers are naming some TV news anchors and threatening attacks on the reporters of those channels. NBA strongly deplores this pernicious trend in a section of society and appeals to the Government and law enforcing agencies to take immediate preventive action against such anti-social elements," the statement read.

# Tourism Ministry comes to rescue of foreign tourists post lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Tourism Ministry has come to the rescue of a number of foreign tourists including an American, two Costa Ricans and an Australian family stranded in India. As many as 769 foreign tourists have reached out to the Government for help and support amid the 21-day nationwide lockdown to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

The foreign tourists registered themselves on the Tourism Ministry's portal [strandedinindia.com](http://strandedinindia.com), launched five days ago. The portal has been launched to identify, assist and facilitate foreign tourists who are stranded in various parts of India.

Every State Government and Union Territory Administration has identified a Nodal Officer for assisting such foreign tourists and the 5 Regional Offices of the Ministry of Tourism are constantly coordinating with the Nodal Officers.

While the Tourism Ministry Regional Offices are coordinating with the Bureau of Immigration and FRROs regarding Visa issues being faced by the stranded foreigners, requests for move-



ment within the country/ state and for transfer to home country of such tourists are also being coordinated with the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and with the respective Embassy/ High Commission/Consulate.

The stranded foreign tourists are being contacted over e-mails, telephones and also in person depending on the nature of support required by them.

"A lady, who is an American citizen, was stranded in Supaul district of Bihar amidst the COVID-19 lockdown, while her son was undergoing a surgery at Delhi. The portal facilitated the required inter-ministerial, inter-departmental and State-Centre coordination and

secured her a special transit-permit to travel to Delhi. She has safely reached her destination and expressed her gratitude for the efforts put in by all the concerned agencies," the Ministry said.

It also cited the examples of helping out two Costa Rican and an Australian tourist who was stranded with his family in Ahmedabad.

"The tourist has epilepsy and ran out of medication prescribed by Australian doctors due to the lockdown. The portal led to the tourist being reached through the office of the District Collector. He was provided with sufficient medication and was also offered food and local transportation. Now, they are comfortable and safe," the statement added.

Among the risk groups she identified are pregnant women who need antenatal care but are unsure whether to attend a clinic, and women in abusive relationships trapped at home during the lockdown.

Data available on the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women is currently limited, with no suggestion of increased susceptibility or of vertical (mother-child) transmission.

and girls need these services most."

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Data available on the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women is currently limited, with no suggestion of increased susceptibility or of vertical (mother-child) transmission.

However, aid organisations working in so-called "weak health systems" – defined by a high maternal mortality ratio (MMR) – are drawing lessons from the 2014-16 Ebola epidemic in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. A huge surge in MMR was recorded during and after the outbreak, as women stayed away from medical facilities due to quarantine restrictions or misconceptions about virus transmission, and were forced instead into riskier home births, said the statement from

the UNFPA here.

Rising tensions due to economic losses could lead to a spike in domestic violence behind closed doors – during a period when counselling and support services may be stripped back to a minimum. At a time when nations across the world are implementing "stay at home" measures, the UNFPA warned that women are more likely to shoulder higher proportions of the domestic burden during lock-down.

# Smart City control rooms now Covid-19 war rooms

## Centre asks State Govts to ensure supply of medical oxygen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the number of positive Covid-19 cases continues to surge across the country, the Centre on Monday asked the State Governments to ensure supply of medical oxygen needed for ventilators to treat critical patients of coronavirus that causes acute respiratory problems.

For its part, in a bid to meet the shortage of the Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE), the Centre opened up supply lines from abroad with receipt of 1.70 lakh PPE coveralls which were donated from China to India.

After the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, these ICCCs have been turned into a coronavirus war rooms, which are equipped with CCTV surveillance of public places, GIS Mapping of COVID positive cases,

GPS Tracking of healthcare workers. They have facilities of telecounseling, tele-medicine, real time tracking of ambulances, virtual training facilities to doctors and healthcare professionals.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which is the nodal agency for the Smart City Mission, said that Pune Smart City Command and Control Centre is using Geospatial Information System for tracking and monitoring the areas and create buffer zones where patients are diagnosed positive with Covid-19. This helps to implement containment plan as per the government guidelines. The Centre has mapped each case using geo-spatial

These command and control centres were developed under the Smart Cities Mission have so far been used for various municipal functions, including 24-hour water supply projects, property tax collection, traffic management, street lighting, monitoring bus movement and CCTV for security. As SARS-CoV-2 hit India,

these command and control centres have diversified.

Since these command centres have been planned more like hitech control rooms to see the functions of municipalities at the click of a button on several screens, all that was required was minor tweaking.

The war room of Tumau



plied by a Singapore based firm will be available from April 11 with 2 lakhs, followed by 8 lakhs more in a week.

The Government said that within the consolidated guidelines issued time to time to the States, manufacturing units of medical devices, their raw materials and intermediates; manufacturing units of their packaging material; transportation of essential goods and medical supplies and mobilisation of resources, workers and material for augmentation and expansion of hospital infrastructure have been permitted.

positive case using GIS, tracking health care workers using GPS and drawing up containment plan using heat mapping technologies. The date-wise, zone-wise, hospital-wise, age-wise and gender-wise details are maintained at the war room and published on a day to day basis.

**Superstitions and hearsay cannot weaken our battle against COVID-19: Vice-Prez**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cautioning that superstitions and hearsay cannot be allowed to weaken our battle against COVID-19, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu has described the spread of misinformation, especially on social media, as a "virus" that needs to be checked.

Observing that free flow of authentic information to quell rumours and misinformation is critical, Naidu in a Facebook post said the war on virus cannot be won if we have inadequate or faulty understanding of the magnitude of the problem.

Referring to irresponsible flouting of the precautionary social distancing guidelines in some states and exemplified by the recent congregation in New Delhi, the Vice President underscored the need for greater dissemination of guidelines and stricter implementation.

Citing some instances, they said in Punjab, an organisation called 'Guardians of Governance' comprising 4,200 ex-servicemen, are assisting in data collection from all the villages. The Chhattisgarh Government has employed some retired soldiers to assist the police. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh all the District Collectors have asked for retired veteran volunteers.

In Uttar Pradesh, all Zila Sainik Kalyan Adhikaris are in touch with District Control Rooms and retired Army Medical Corps personnel have been identified and kept ready. In addition, Sainik Rest Houses are being readied in Uttarakhand to act as isolation/quarantine Centres if need arises.

In Goa, a control room has been established and veterans asked to remain on standby for any assistance to the local administration.

Another chief area of concern is the medical frontline, where women make up an estimated 70% of the world's global health and social sector workforce. In many cases, their safety is being compromised through contact with high-risk environments and a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). Adequate psychological support is also essential at a time of high stress for health workers, the UNFPA said.

antennal and postnatal care, access to modern contraception and emergency contraception, and safe abortion and post-abortion care "to the full extent of the law" in all areas where services are likely to be impacted.

The organisation is calling for priority testing of pregnant women with COVID-19 symptoms, isolation of pregnancy wards from confirmed COVID-19 cases, an elevation of care for all pregnant women with respiratory illnesses, and extra care for all women in delivery,

# 500 NCC cadets deployed in corona fight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

## IAF Sergeant tests corona negative

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pitching in the national effort to fight coronavirus pandemic, nearly 500 National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets are now deployed on duties like ensuring supply chain management, property tax collection, traffic management, street lighting, monitoring bus movement and CCTV for security.

The IAF Sergeant, who had visited the Nizamuddin area during the time of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation last month, has tested negative for coronavirus in the preliminary tests. However, he will continue to remain in quarantine till all other tests mandated for the pandemic are conducted. This, even as investigations are on to determine if the Sergeant actually attended the congregation.

Giving details about the deployment of the NCC cadets, defence ministry officials said here on Monday civil and police administration have started requisitioning for services of senior division cadets in fight against Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Some of them have also been mobilised to meet the current challenge with many of them already assisting various state governments.

Giving details about the deployment of the NCC cadets, defence ministry officials said here on Monday civil and police administration have started requisitioning for services of senior division cadets in fight against Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Some of them have also been mobilised to meet the current challenge with many of them already assisting various state governments.

Union Territory of Ladakh has requisitioned for employment of eight cadets in supply chain management. Neemuch (Madhya Pradesh) Superintendent of Police has requested Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh NCC Directorate for services of 245 cadets in supply chain and traffic management.

Sixty-four senior division cadets including seven women have already been employed. Collector of Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh) has requested for service of NCC volunteer cadets for training in COVID-19 preventive measures. These cadets are being imparted training for the job ahead.

Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh (PHHPC) Directorate has received requisition by Deputy Commissioner of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh for services of 86 cadets till April

14 to assist the police in ensuring social distancing in the city localities.

District Police of Kancheepuram (Tamil Nadu) has also approached district nodal officer on COVID-19 for services of NCC cadets. Fifty-seven cadets including two women have assembled and are being employed. In all, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Andaman Nicobar Directorate has provided services of 75 cadets in Tamil Nadu and 57 in Puducherry.

With Balrampur district administration in Uttar Pradesh

also asking for services of volunteer cadets from NCC Headquarters Gorakhpur, some cadets are being employed there.

In north east, 80 cadets in East Khasi Hills district are assisting the Meghalaya Police in monitoring of ration distribution and sensitisation between April 06-08.

The types of tasks envisaged for cadets include manning of helpline/call centres, distribution of relief materials, medicines, food/essential commodities, community assistance, data management and queue & traffic management and manning

of CCTV control rooms.

According to the employment guidelines, state government/district administration has to send the requisition of employment of volunteer cadets through state NCC Directories. Details will be coordinated at Directorate/Group Headquarters/Unit level with state government/local civil authority. It should be ensured that ground conditions and laid down requirements are met before the cadets are deployed for the duty. Officials also specified that cadets above the age of 18 years are eligible for these responsibilities.

As regards mobilizing ex-servicemen, they said in Punjab, an organisation called 'Guardians of Governance' comprising 4,200 ex-servicemen, are assisting in data collection from all the villages.

The Chhattisgarh Government has employed some retired soldiers to assist the police. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh all the District Collectors have asked for retired veteran volunteers.

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In addition, Sainik Rest Houses are being readied in Uttarakhand to act as isolation/quarantine Centres if need arises.

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ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

When it comes to mounting an immune response against Covid-19 infections, women may seem to be a stronger sex as reflected in various data, but, ironically, they bear the brunt of the pandemics in the form of domestic violence and maternal mortality because of disruption of accessibility to vital health and gender-based violence services and social support.

Flagging the deeper crisis

owing to the lack of support amid Coronavirus crisis, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) on Monday said that the present situation could also exacerbate existing financial inequality between men and women.

Dr Natalia Kanem, executive director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), warned that the coronavirus outbreak has "severely disrupted" access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services "at a time when women

and girls need these services most".

Among the risk groups she identified are pregnant women who need antenatal care but are unsure whether to attend a clinic, and women in abusive relationships trapped at home during the lockdown.

Data available on the impact of COVID-19 on pregnant women is currently limited, with no suggestion of increased susceptibility or of vertical (mother-child) transmission.

However, aid organisations working in so-called "weak health systems" – defined by a high maternal mortality ratio (MMR) – are drawing lessons from the 2014-16 Ebola epidemic in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. A huge surge in

MMR was recorded during and after the outbreak, as women stayed away from medical facilities due to quarantine restrictions or misconceptions about virus transmission, and were forced instead into riskier home births, said the statement from

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Rising tensions due to economic losses could lead to a spike in domestic violence behind closed doors – during a period when counselling and support services may be stripped back to a minimum.

At a time when nations across the world are implementing "stay at home" measures, the UNFPA warned that women are more likely to shoulder higher proportions of the domestic burden during lock-down.

Kanem said that preparedness will be key in dealing with the pandemic's knock-on effects. The UNFPA is pressing for the full maintenance of sexual and reproductive health services during the COVID-19 outbreak, which should include

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## Masking India

The aftermath of Corona will see many behavioural changes, few might be noticed more than better personal hygiene



Once the Coronavirus passes, there will be innumerable scientific studies about what happened and why some countries dealt with the viral epidemic so much better than others. Some of the questions will have answers to ones that many of us are curious about. Such as how Germany prevented the full impact of the virus when Italy, separated by just a tiny Switzerland in between, was devastated? How could China mysteriously keep the strange Wuhan fever from devastating other major Chinese cities such as Beijing and

Shanghai? At the same time, New York City, halfway across the planet from Wuhan, is getting its healthcare system pulverised. Yet, other questions might have simpler answers, such as how come Japan and South Korea prevented the full force of the attack from hitting them (so far)? One answer being offered is the high prevalence of face masks and the overall discipline among the populace in these countries. Indeed, ever since the initial SARS epidemic hit the country 15 years ago, it did not spread to the Western world but ravaged East Asia. The aftermath of those events inspired not just Hollywood movies but also established among its citizens a healthy habit of wearing surgical masks or even simple face masks when they venture outside their homes. Initially, the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has covered itself with all the ignominy during this crisis, had said that only those who displayed symptoms or tested positive had to wear the masks. It had made it clear that healthy people need not wear them. But political leaders across the world were confused and global leaders increasingly ignored the directive of the WHO, which covered up China's mishandling of the outbreak. Wearing masks seems to have become a standard piece of advice being given by Governments to the public. Rightly so, the Indian Government, too, issued an advisory this week, asking all citizens to use "hand-made reusable face cover" when they step outside. The fact appears that wearing masks may not completely prevent the disease but it can considerably reduce its spread. This is a good thing as nations struggle to contain the outbreak. Just like citizens in several east Asian countries have become accustomed to masks in public, so will the general citizenry in India and the rest of the world. And one need not have a top-notch N95 mask, a simple home-made mask, made out of old clothes, would suffice. Given the global shortage of personal protective equipment, we must reserve them first for our medical professionals, who are at the forefront of the COVID-19 infection. Agreed, home-made masks may not be as efficient as N95 but they can reduce transmission significantly.

The genie has left the bottle and we cannot completely stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus until scientists find a preventive vaccine. Nor can we be dependent on hypothetical studies about the hot weather preventing the spread or that those inoculated with the BCG vaccine are more "immune" to the disease. A vaccine might still be a year or more away at the very least and India should not forget the impact the last global pandemic had on its population a century ago. So until a preventive vaccine is developed, wear a mask, wash your hands and maintain general social distancing. This is the least that we can all do in this fight and save each other.

## The Bhilwara model

Aggressive door-to-door screening and testing have put the epicentre town of Rajasthan on the road to recovery



Much has been written about how China stifled the Wuhan contagion by aggressive containment and sealing the city so that nobody could leave it, thereby confining and choking the virus in the hotspot. Of course, one wonders why China could not have shown the same military aggression when cases started multiplying, under reported them instead, turned down world virologists and WHO and erred on saving the world a disaster. A bigger success story is of Taiwan next to China, which has had pos-

itive cases but deaths in single numbers. That's because it adopted an aggressive protocol since the last week of January, with senior Government officials travelling to China, inspectors keeping a watch on board flights, the Government suspending flights from China and then tracing, isolating, testing, treating and re-testing each citizen with a travel history, monitoring his/her every move. This topped up with an emergency protocol should there be a flood at anytime. This is perhaps the model that Bhilwara has adapted and applied rigorously to contain the spiral of the disease. Even as the number of Covid-19 cases in India are leaping through the charts, there have been no new cases at Bhilwara, although it was a hotspot with cases spreading from a hospital. The last Coronavirus case in Bhilwara was reported on March 30 when the total positive cases in the district were 26 with two deaths. It is difficult to believe that what was once considered the epicentre of Rajasthan has turned around an intractable situation. The Bhilwara administration acted fast, enforcing a curfew and sealing district borders on March 20, even before the national lockdown. After quarantining the entire hospital staff and patients, it went for aggressive testing, conducting a door-to-door screening of its 28 lakh population to detect any signs of community transmission. It allowed bare essential shops and medical stores to stay open for limited hours while the administration home-delivered ration, fruit and vegetable supplies through local booths. The administration is now contemplating home-delivering milk and medicines so that nobody steps out at all and even cancelling curfew passes. The police are enforcing the curfew through regular patrols. The confinement has minimised the possibility of spread as nobody has been allowed to even walk the streets, leave aside crowding markets. Although it has tested 300 to 400 samples every day, the authorities are planning to ramp that up to 4,000 over the next few days. Not only that, since the samples were being sent to Jaipur, which is about 250 km away and identification took time, the town will have its own testing set-up this weekend. In effect, the entire district is under watch, cut off from the world. And till it is an all-clear, it will continue the rigour.

Perhaps, this is what the Health Ministry is considering as trends clearly establish that 80 per cent of the infection has occurred in 62 districts. And while the lockdown may be eased in low-density parts of the country, the hotspots could be subjected to an aggressive testing and containment protocol along what has come to be known as the Bhilwara model. In fact, India's fight against COVID-19 can only be tackled if it is decentralised down to the unit level and policy-makers let specific geographies and local dynamics decide how things could work best at a cluster. The non-pharmaceutical intervention is the best way to contain the crisis given India's non-existent health infrastructure and Bhilwara has shown how to bring the virus out of hiding. The faster we do it, the easier it will be for us to get back on the road to recovery and get the economy going.

# India's super spreaders

At a time when the Union and State Governments and institutions are working with the single determination to contain COVID-19, the Tablighi Jammat has turned out to be a spoiler



A SURYA PRAKASH

The latest estimates of the Union Health Ministry indicate that over 35 per cent of the COVID-19 cases that are springing up in the country have their origins in the conference organised by the Tablighi Jammat, an Islamic evangelical movement, in New Delhi in the second half of March, which was in gross violation of State Government orders. At a time when the Union Government, State Governments and every national institution is working with single-minded determination and focus to contain the pandemic that has affected over a million patients globally and claimed over 50,000 lives, the Tablighi Jammat has turned out to be a spoiler.

Displaying gross irresponsibility by flouting the orders of the Delhi Government, the Jammat held a conference of thousands of its members. The congregation continued even as devotees were barred entry in the most popular temples, including the Balaji Temple in Tirupati, the Siddhivinayak Temple in Mumbai, the Sai Baba temple in Shirdi, the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer and the Haji Ali Dargah in Mumbai. Lakhs of other temples, churches and religious places remained closed as per Government orders in their areas.

Also, it is said that probably for the first time after the birth of Christianity, churches around the world will be closed in the week leading up to Easter, which is regarded as the most spiritually enriching week for the faithful. Fr Filipe Neri Ferrao, the Archbishop of Goa, asked the clergy to use technology and livestream church services. It quoted him as saying: "The faithful are dispensed from the obligation of participating in the mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. In order to prevent community transmission of the virus, the faithful are advised not to go for daily mass, unless it is strictly necessary."

If this is so with other faiths, why did the Tablighi Jammat defy the Government's orders? What do we do with these Muslim clerics, who lack basic civic sense, violate the law and even throw a challenge to the authorities? Also, this writer has seen several videos of Muslims violating the lockdown orders and social distancing norms and congregating in large numbers in *masjids* in different regions in the country in the initial days of the lockdown. This happened because these mullahs pooh-poohed social distancing and virtually laughed at the world that was groaning under the Corona epidemic.

It is now almost two weeks since the authorities suspended prayers in Mecca and Medina. Similarly, several important mosques in India have remained closed. The Kerala Governor, Arif Mohammad Khan, was the other day reciting verses from the *Quran* in which Allah tells the believers not to go to the mosque but to pray from home, when the circumstances are not conducive. Yet, none of this matters to some



Muslim clerics in India, who are hell bent on challenging the system time and again on the specious ground that Islam is under threat (*Islam khafre mein hai*). In fact, this was the theme of the address of the chief of the Tablighi Jammat, Maulana Muhammad Saad, to his audience at the headquarters of the Jammat. As per an audio clip of his "sermon" that is in circulation, he asked Muslims to ignore the orders for closure of mosques because there was no better place to be than a mosque.

Second, this Coronavirus scare was a conspiracy to keep Muslims away from each other and to weaken Islam. They should, therefore, not fall a prey to this propaganda. Finally, he declared that there was no better place to die than a mosque. This is absolutely horrendous. It shows that despite his long years of Indian citizenship, nothing in the Indian Constitution, the nation's democratic and fraternal traditions has rubbed off on him. He seems so maladjusted to the nation's secular, liberal traditions that he renders himself unworthy of the citizenship of such a great democracy.

Every word that he has uttered does violence to the core values in the Constitution and to the deep and abiding faith that all of us have in the principles laid down by our nation's founding fathers.

It is indeed ironical that this *maulana*, who delivered this chilling advice to his audience and even said no one can

escape from the wrath of Allah, has in recent days gone into hiding. It is so sad that all this bombast does not equip him to face the mundane authorities of the Delhi Government.

Meanwhile, JP Nadda, the president of the BJP, rightly exhorted his party colleagues to ensure that the sins of the Tablighi are not pinned on the entire Muslim community. He has advised them to ensure that this does not become a communal flash point. This is very important. We must sift the wheat from the chaff. It is also important that Muslim political leaders must speak up. Unlike the Hindus, who have hordes of objectors in their ranks against fundamentalists and fringe elements, Muslim politicians hesitate to call out those who threaten the nation's secular fabric. They must change tack if they wish to preserve the Constitution that enables politicians of all hues to be elected to public office.

There are trouble-makers like Maulana Saad and some other clerics. If we wish to preserve our Constitution and protect the health of 1,500 million citizens, such people must be dealt with in the most severe manner. Just when we thought we were getting to grips with COVID-19, the *maulana* and other leaders of the Tablighi have triggered a monumental spread of the disease. The Government must send out a strong message that those who play around with the lives of millions of citizens, will be made to pay.

The Indian Penal Code (Sections 168-170) deals with persons, who commit nuisance and spread epidemic diseases, but the punishments under these sections are too mild.

The Government must go beyond this. Several States, including Delhi, have already invoked the powers vested in them under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

The Delhi Government's regulations required foreigners and persons with travel history to self-quarantine. On March 13, it prohibited assembly or 200 or more people. The Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, slashed this to 20 on March 19. Each of these orders and regulations have been violated by the Nizamuddin gathering.

But the punishments prescribed in these Acts and even in the National Security Act (NSA) are too inadequate for this dastardly and unpardonable sin. Those who violated the curfew, behaved irresponsibly, contracted the disease and spread it to others are one category. But those who are involved in the diabolical act of deliberately spreading this disease should be classified as mass murderers.

What should be the punishment for endangering the lives of millions?

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal.)

## SOUND BITE

India should commit 5-6 per cent of its GDP for a stimulus to be meaningful and effective. Extraordinary situation calls for more than ordinary response.

Congress leader  
—Anand Sharma

I haven't seen my father for three weeks. Nirvan hasn't seen his father for three weeks. We are scared and we are saying it with full bravery.

Actor  
—Salman Khan

We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: We will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again.

British Monarch  
—Queen Elizabeth

Tablighi Jamaat leadership should have cancelled their event that led to a spike in COVID-19 cases across the country. The community stands exposed by its deeds.

RSS Joint Gen Secretary  
—Manmohan Vaidya

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Shun gimmicks

Sir — Addressing the nation via video conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear that the Coronavirus threat could only be combated with the full cooperation of the people, a token demonstration of which, he said, would be to light candles, lamps and mobile torches for nine minutes on April 5 at 9 pm for nine minutes. Many are now wondering, when the world is busy fighting COVID-19 and scientists are trying to make a vaccine, why did we first bang *thalis*, then blow conch shells and then were asked to light candles.

People have always shown solidarity with the Government in times of any national calamity or crisis — be it the devastating 2004 tsunami or the global economic meltdown in 2008 or the massive floods in Uttarakhand in 2013. Even now, millions of migrants, left jobless, have reconciled themselves to the situation. People do not need gimmicks to prove their collective will, India's history is a proof. Countries such as South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore undertook a massive testing programme to identify, isolate and

### Politics amid pandemic

Ever since the Prime Minister ordered a complete lockdown of 21 days, the nation has been in a state of utter chaos. While the public has been trying to make sense of the pandemic that is only evolving into something more menacing with every passing day, the Government has been conspicuous by its inability to rein in the confusion that has thrown life completely out of gear. Though the spread of COVID-19 has for the moment pushed any thoughts of an imminent war with our neighbour into the realm of fantasy, it is the preparedness to tackle the virus that has created mayhem.

With the lockdown in place, the Government's emphasis has been on "staying indoors." Attempts at identifying the problems that assail the country during this period of closure and envisaging ways to address them have gone for a toss. Social distancing and the "stay home" dictum by the Prime Minister may sound sweet but the problems associated with this "enforced" confinement have not been pain free to. By and large, countrymen have been left to bear the brunt of the crisis. With the lockdown in force, food scarcity should have been anticipated and necessary steps to ensure the unhindered supply and distribution of essential goods and services should

have been well thought of and planned. But in many parts of the country, an ineffective public distribution system has brought no solace to harried residents. The massive disruption caused by the lockdown has brought the country on the verge of an unprecedented economic catastrophe. However, it is shocking to have political grandstanding by our leaders eclipsing the humanitarian disaster arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pachu Menon  
Margao

treat infected patients and have been successful in containing the virus. The Government must demonstrate its dedication through such actions and not count on banging *thalis* or lighting candles.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee  
Faridabad

### Economic fallout

Sir — Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy was undergoing turbulence on account of disruptions in trade flows and attenuated growth.

The situation has now been aggravated due to disruptions in demand and supply chain inflicted by the spread of the virus that has forced nations to impose lockdown. Once the pandemic is brought under control, the speed of recovery in the US and China

will be the key factors determining the nature and traction of the global economy. While India is currently focussed in securing the health of its people, we also need to think about the long-term consequences the current lockdown will have on the economy. Apart from providing a safety net to the vulnerable, ensuring job continuity is essential. There's an urgent need to mobilise resources to stimulate the economy.

Mahima Jain  
Guwahati

### Deteriorating situation

Sir — The congregation of the Tablighi Jammat in New Delhi has created adverse conditions in the country. It has also led to the possibility of community transmission of Coronavirus in most States where its members travelled. A blame game has started to evade responsibility. But in these times of crisis, a collaborative approach between the Centre and the States is required.

Sritoma Mukherjee  
Via email

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

## FIRST COLUMN

## An opportunity taken in a crisis

Dictatorship was clearly where Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán was heading — and now he has arrived with the passage of an 'emergency' law



Gwynne Dyer

Hello, dictator!" said Jean-Claude Juncker cheerily to Hungary's leader, Viktor Orbán, at a European Union summit a couple of years ago. The president of the European Commission was only joking, of course, but it was gallows humour. Dictatorship was clearly where Orbán was heading — and now he has arrived.

Recently the Hungarian Parliament passed a new law, allegedly to deal with the Coronavirus crisis. The law declares a state of emergency and allows Orbán to rule by decree for the duration of the crisis — but it doesn't say when that state of emergency will end. That will be decided by the man who has just been granted supreme power. Orbán's spokesman, Zoltán Kovács, helpfully explained, "Just as in wartime, a state of emergency could extend until the end of hostilities. Today we confront not a military power but are in a war-like state to defend our people against a pandemic the likes of which we have not seen in a century."

"Never waste the opportunity offered by a good crisis," as Machiavelli allegedly said 500 years ago. So is what we are seeing in Hungary now the tip of the iceberg? Will governments in other democracies whose leaders have dictatorial ambitions use the Coronavirus crisis as an excuse to give themselves absolute powers? Will Rodrigo Duterte take "emergency" powers to get around the one-term Filipino presidential limit that obliges him to quit in two years' time? Will Narendra Modi copy Indira Gandhi's 1975 "Emergency" and set up as the "temporary dictator" of India? Will Recep Tayyip Erdogan destroy what remains of Turkey's democracy to save himself if his popularity declines further? For that matter, will Donald Trump use the great wave of American Coronavirus deaths in the coming months and an alleged threat of mass disorder as an excuse for postponing the November election, especially if his prospects for re-election are not looking bright? It's a toss-up with Duterte, who is responsible for so many murders that he can never safely retire. But for the rest, the answer is almost certainly "no."

Both Modi and Erdogan have created solid blocs of religious supporters, who practically guarantee their political futures (at great cost to the unity and future prospects of their respective countries). They don't need to destroy democracy to survive. As for Trump, whose "base" is too narrow to assure him a political victory in November if other elements of his victorious 2016 coalition defect, he doesn't really have the option of cancelling the election. Americans' loyalty to their ancient Constitution is still too strong to let that happen. In any case, Trump probably won't need such extreme measures to hold on to office. He is already re-writing the script so that his heavy responsibility for the silent carnage that awaits the country is erased in the public's mind by his last-minute swerve towards a strong policy of social distancing that averts a much greater loss of life. Hail the saviour!

Which leaves us, then, with the question of why Orbán is going to such political extremes when he already had all the power he could possibly want. He has already fiddled with the Constitution so that his party can win a two-thirds majority of the seats in Parliament on only 44 per cent of the votes.

Hungary is effectively a one-party State and the media and the judges both serve Orbán's Fidesz Party, not the general public. He even had a "state of emergency" in place already, declared in 2016 during the great refugee flood of that year (though none of the refugees came to Hungary) and he has never rescinded it. True, he can now hand out five-year prison sentences to Hungarians who spread "false" information but the courts were already giving his critics multiple shorter sentences if they got too noisy. Why go to this extra trouble when it might even tip the European Union into expelling Hungary as a non-democratic country (although I wouldn't hold my breath on that one)?

I once spent a day with Orbán in Budapest, when we were both much younger men. He was a student leader who had just got famous for defying the Communists with a fiery nationalist speech and I had spent the summer in the Soviet Union interviewing the emerging democratic Opposition. (We were introduced by Hungarian-born philanthropist George Soros, then Orbán's mentor and later a prime target of his rabid anti-Semitism.) We had much to talk about and I enjoyed his company. What struck me, though, was that he really thought like a lawyer. Maybe a radical one and certainly later a corrupt one. But a lawyer by character and by training. So maybe what he's doing now is just tidying up the law. Hungary was already a dictatorship in practice. Now it's also one in theory.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

## Hardly an elevation for a former CJI

Both 'Mr Gogoi' and 'Justice Gogoi' have not broken any law. Still, perhaps Justice Gogoi may have dropped the ball on the way to the Rajya Sabha and allowed the common man to question the independence of the judiciary



Robin David

Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi demitted office in November 2019 and four months later he was nominated by the President under Article 80 of the Constitution as a Member of Parliament (MP). His nomination has raised many questions. Why did Gogoi accept the nomination to the Rajya Sabha (RS)? Did he not decide cases where the Government was a party? Is the judiciary independent? Only an independent judiciary can direct the Government to enforce rights and one of the most important objects of the Constitution is to secure justice to all its citizens.

The State comprises three organs

— the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. It is envisaged that the State and the executive are to be separate from the judiciary which is independent. This independence and impartiality is essential for the Supreme Court and the High Courts to direct the Government to enforce the fundamental rights of citizens and order the Government and its functionaries to respect individual liberties.

Liberty, fundamental rights and freedom are essential for existence and the Constitution recognises this. It vests unfettered and independent jurisdiction on the Supreme Court to pass any order in public interest to do complete justice. Independence of the judiciary is an integral part of the Constitution as is expected of a sovereign democratic nation. The power of the apex court to direct the Government is essential in our democracy, considering the immense powers that the Government has. Justice Khanna says that independence of the judiciary is also linked to essential human rights and civil liberties and the rights are needed because

while you want to enable the Government to control the governed, you also want it to control itself.

However, the Government is the biggest litigator in India and about 37 million cases are pending in the District Courts and High Courts. As on March 1, over 60,469 cases were pending in the apex court and according to the Department of Justice in 2017, approximately 46 per cent of the total pending cases in courts pertained to the Government.

The courts are bound to decide millions of cases where the Government is a party. The independence of the judiciary is perceived by the common man by the conduct of the judges. The confidence of the citizens will be diminished if the judges are seen too close to the executive and it is the responsibility of the judges and lawyers to ensure that this trust is not lost.

The CJI's Office is the highest and most respected positions in the judiciary. The importance of this position can be appreciated by the fact that on January 26, 1950, the Chief Justice MK

Kania administered the oath of office to Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India. Later, in 1969 Chief Justice M Hidayatullah was briefly made the President.

In the higher courts when a lawyer becomes a judge, they are referred to as "justice" after that. The judge's oath is to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and duly, faithfully and to the best of their ability, knowledge and judgment perform the duties of the office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will uphold the Constitution and laws. Disrespect to a judge or court is contempt of court and punishable to protect the dignity of the institution of justice. Under the Constitution, a judge of the Supreme Court is prohibited from practising in any court after retirement. The first Law Commission headed by India's first Attorney-General, MC Setalvad presented a report on Judicial Reforms in 1958. It was recommended that a Supreme Court judge should be totally barred from accepting any employment under the Union or a State after retirement.

Setalvad's recommendation to ban all post-retirement employment makes good sense for the preservation of the independence and dignity of the judiciary. However, it may not be fair to prohibit a retired judge from working. United States (US) Federal judges are

appointed for life or up to when they choose to quit. The Supreme Court judges in the United Kingdom (UK) retire at the age of 70. Considering that the Government is the largest litigant with millions of cases being heard, a cooling-off period of two to three years is called for in the interest of justice.

In Justice Gogoi's defence, by accepting the RS nomination he has not broken any law. And this is not the first time that a retired judge has been elected to the Upper House. Further, being a MP may not be an employment with the Government.

The experience and skills of retired judges in India are a great resource and should not be wasted. Perhaps the questions arising from the issued raised by the nomination of Justice Gogoi will encourage lawmakers to seriously think about the independence of the judiciary and the enhancement of the retirement age of judges from 65 years to 70 years, with a ban on all post-retirement employment. Our judges are extraordinarily hard-working and highly experienced and this wealth of knowledge

would be put to productive use if they are allowed to continue for a few more years beyond the age of 65.

In a recent interview, Justice Gogoi said that he could be addressed either as "Justice Gogoi" or "Mr Gogoi".

Justice Gogoi as CJI held a high position in the order of precedence till November 2019. Now as an MP, he is about 10 to 15 places down in the hierarchy. As the CJI he was protected by the Constitution and respected in accordance with the finest traditions at the Bar. The Judiciary and the Bar consider the CJI to be the head of the family.

The Bar always holds retired justices in high esteem. Coming down the protocol ladder and getting jeered during his oath-taking ceremony in the RS may have hurt the institution of justice. Both Mr Gogoi and Justice Gogoi have not broken any law. Still, perhaps Justice Gogoi may have dropped the ball on the way to the RS and allowed the common man to question the independence of the judiciary.

(The writer is Advocate Partner at Dua Associates)

## analysis

09

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

STATES HAVE TO STOCK UP ON KEY MEDICAL SUPPLIES THAT THEY'RE RUNNING SHORT OF. THE FEDERAL STOCKPILE IS A BACK-UP FOR THEM.

—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



THERE'S NO WAY THAT WE COULD STOCKPILE IN ANTICIPATION OF A PANDEMIC. BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DOING PRECISELY THAT.

—ILLINOIS GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER

## Serve up a fresh NFS

The 80 crore people the Govt currently targets for giving subsidised foodgrain under the Food Security Act includes millions of higher-income beneficiaries who don't deserve it



Uttam Gupta

The Finance Minister, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a ₹1,70,000 crore package under the PM-Gareeb Kalyan Scheme (PMGKS) to address the plight of tens of millions of workers in the "informal" sector affected by COVID-19, on March 26. The most crucial component of this package was giving five kg of rice/wheat per person per month for "free" to around 80 crore people through the public distribution system (PDS), plus one kg of preferred and region-specific choice of pulse per household for three months. To understand the full implications of the relief — estimated to cost about ₹40,000 crore — let us capture the basics of the food security system in India. Under the National Food Security Act (NFS), 2013, a quota of five kg of cereals per person per month is made available at a subsidised price of ₹3 per kg rice, ₹2 per kg wheat and ₹1 per kg coarse cereals to 67 per cent of India's population or over 80 crore people. It is a matter of shame that even decades after Independence, when the NFS was enacted, our rulers still felt that more than 80 crore people were so poor that they needed to be given food at a throwaway price. The belief as embedded in this law (in fact, the prices were mentioned in the Act and were to remain valid for a period of three years from the date of its commencement) also mocks at the official claim that India has achieved big success in bringing a large number of people above the poverty line; that the number of poor people is just about 25 per cent of the population.

Be that as it may, the Government continues to believe that the interest of the poor can be fully safeguarded by not allowing any increase in the price. This is abundantly clear from a statement by Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Ram Vilas Paswan in 2017 that, "The Government will not affect any increase in issue prices for foodgrains under the NFS." This was made at a time when even the Act didn't prevent a hike. True to that commitment, till date, the price remains unchanged. But has this safeguarded the poor? The answer lies in taking cognisance of a vital fact which often gets ignored.

The supplies under NFS barely cover 50 per cent of a person's requirement which is 10 kg per month, as estimated by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). This forces him/her to buy the balance quantity from the market at a much higher price. Being linked to the cost of procurement, handling and distribution (in case of rice, at least ₹35 per kg), the market price is more than 10 times the subsidised price.

As a consequence, whatever benefit the Government gives by keeping the price low on sale of certain quantity, that is more than offset by their having to pay many times more on purchase of the balance five kg from the market. Thus, for buying 10 kg — being his/her requirement for a month — they have to spend a total of ₹190. The effective price paid by him/her is ₹19 per kg instead of ₹3 per kg — a sense one gets by a plain reading of the NFS. The underprivileged are also getting hit in another way.

All along, the Government has taken recourse to increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP). While this is meant to incentivise farmers produce more, this leads to a collateral damage. The increase in MSP leads to increase in the cost of supplying food, which triggers a hike in the mar-

ket price, implying that the poor will need to spend more on the quantity bought from the market. The decision of the Government to give five kg of rice/wheat per person per month to 80 crore people for "free" over and above the five kg they are already getting under the NFS can help remove this anomaly. Having got all of 10 kg at an effective price of ₹1.5 per kg, s/he need not buy any from the market. But this is a mere coincidence (an offshoot of the Corona-crisis); it was never intended as a conscious policy move. In any case, the additional five kg for free is available for three months only. Thereafter, it will be back to square one.

Can the Government consider giving 10 kg per person per month at the subsidised price of ₹1/2/3 per kg? In case it is given to all the 80 crore people, this will be at a huge cost, as then the food subsidy (excess of the cost of supply over the issue price multiplied by total quantum of sale under the NFS) will increase sharply from an already whopping ₹2,19,000 crore during 2019-20 to ₹2,53,000 crore expected during 2020-21. This is unconscionable.

How can the food requirement of the needy be met in full without entailing additional burden on the exchequer?

How can the two objectives be reconciled? What is the way forward?

To get there, we need to recognise that the 80 crore people — the Government currently targets for giving subsidised foodgrain under the NFS — includes millions of higher-income beneficiaries who don't deserve it. This was duly accepted in early 2015, when a committee headed by Shanta



Kumar, senior BJP leader, recommended a reduction in coverage under the NFS from the existing 67 per cent to 40 per cent, restricting the eligibility of subsidised food at ₹1/2/3 per kg only to the poorest of the poor under the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AYY), plus increasing their entitlement from five kg to seven kg per month and making the rest pay 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers. Reduction in coverage by 27 per cent can remove 35 crore people from the scheme. That will release 175 crore kg per month, which can be used to give an additional five kg per month to those under the AYY. The number of families under the AYY being 2.5 crore or 12.5 crore people (five per family), five kg extra for each will consume 62.5 crore kg per month. Even after this, there will be a monthly surplus of 112.5 crore kg or 1.125 million tonnes. In other words, the Government need not undertake distribution of 13.5 million tonnes of grain annually, which will result in corresponding saving in subsidy.

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These maladies are germane to the existing dispensation of controls on almost every aspect of the food supply chain. When subsidised food is available at a fraction of the market price, there is huge incentive for dubious operators to siphon off. When handling and distribution cost (besides MSP paid to farmers) is reimbursed to agencies on "actual" as food subsidy, inefficiency and inflated cost claims (including bogus) are inevitable. When millions of the rich/better-off are also made beneficiaries under the NFS, subsidy is bound to balloon.

The implementation of the committee's package could have made some headway in addressing these maladies but still it would be far from eliminating them as it does not alter the fundamentals of the existing dispensation.

To achieve drastic outcome in terms of higher efficiency and lower cost in handling operations, prevention of misuse and saving in subsidy, there is an urgent need to remove all controls, allow participation of private entities in procurement and distribution and make way for competitive markets. The subsidy should be restricted only to the poor (about 25 per cent of the population) and given directly to the beneficiaries using the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism.

Will the Corona crisis wake the political class from its deep slumber into implementing this reform? Only time will tell.

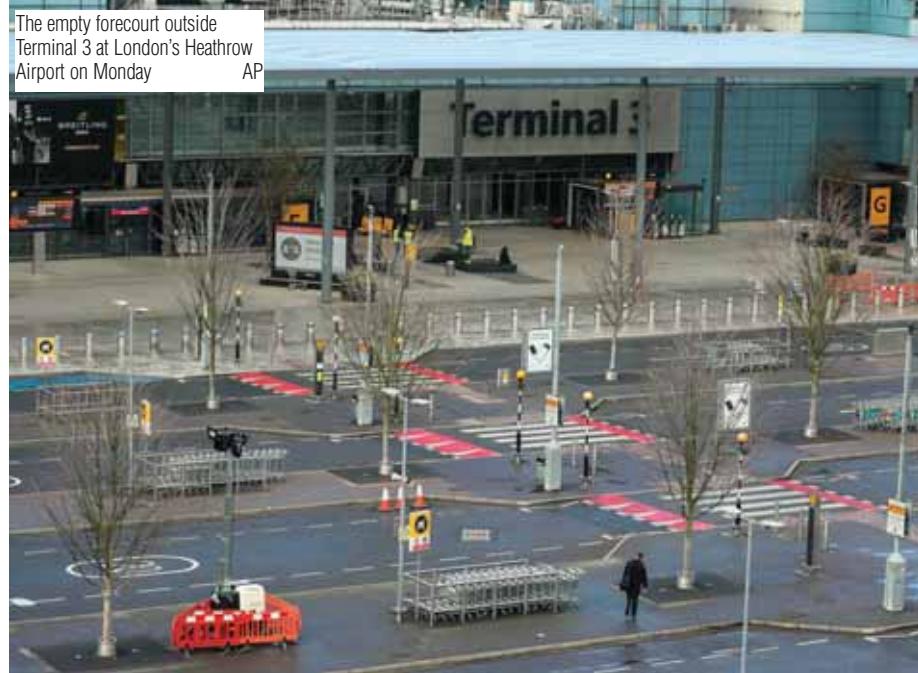
(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst)

**COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

# 'HARDEST' WEEK AHEAD

**British PM hospitalised; more than 1.3 million cases globally, over 72K deaths worldwide; Spain records deaths down for 4th straight day**

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	3,52,160	10,369
Spain	1,35,032	13,169
Italy	1,32,547	16,523
Germany	1,01,178	1,612
France	98,010	8,911
China	81,708	3,331
Iran	60,500	3,739
UK	51,608	5,373



## Debate heats up over using an anti-malaria drug for COVID-19

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump and members of his administration are growing emphatic in promoting an anti-malaria drug not yet officially approved for fighting COVID-19, even though scientists say more testing is needed before it's proven safe and effective against the virus.

Trump trade adviser Peter Navarro promoted the drug, hydroxychloroquine, in a television interview Monday, a day after Trump publicly put his faith in the drug to lesson the toll of the coronavirus pandemic.

"What do I know, I'm not a doctor," Trump told reporters Sunday. "But I have

common sense."

The administration's promotion of the drug comes after a heated Situation Room meeting of the White House's coronavirus task force on Saturday, in which Navarro challenged the top US infectious disease expert Dr Anthony Fauci over his concerns about recommending the drug based only on unscientific anecdotal evidence.

Navarro, who has no formal medical training, erupted at Fauci, raising his voice and claiming that the reports of studies he collected were enough to recommend the drug widely, according to a person familiar with the exchange who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the

Situation Room blow-up.

Fauci has repeatedly said that current studies provide only anecdotal findings that the drug works. Navarro told CNN on Monday, "I would have two words for you: 'second opinion.'" Hydroxychloroquine is officially approved for treating malaria, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, but not COVID-19. Small, preliminary studies have suggested it might help prevent the new coronavirus from entering cells and possibly help patients clear the virus sooner.

Two reports have mixed results. A series of 11 patients in France found that an antibiotic-malaria drug combo did not improve how fast patients cleared the virus or their symptoms.

In London, Prime Minister Boris Johnson remained in hospital on Monday but was in "good spirits" after being admitted for tests for "persistent" coronavirus symptoms.

The Prime Minister had a comfortable night in St Thomas' Hospital in London and is in good spirits, Johnson's spokesman said, adding that the 55-year-old British prime minister remains "under observation". Johnson tested positive for the virus 10 days ago, and despite his hospitalisation his housing minister Robert Jenrick said the leader was still "in charge" of the Government as the country grapples with the continuing crisis.

It was a mixed picture in Europe, where countries already ravaged by deadly COVID-19 outbreaks reported lower numbers of new infections and, in Austria and Italy, began thinking about easing lockdown restrictions.

The new coronavirus has reached almost every corner of the planet, confining nearly half of humanity to their homes and turning life upside down for billions.

About three quarters of all deaths have been clocked in Europe, and the US now has the most recorded cases of any country — along with a steadily rising death toll.

"This is going to be the hardest and the saddest week of most Americans' lives, quite frankly," US Surgeon General Jerome Adams told *Fox News* ahead of what is expected to be a tough week for already hard-pressed American healthcare providers.

Italy's daily coronavirus death toll shot up to 636 on Monday, just one day after dropping to its lowest level in over two weeks, the civil protection service said. The number of fatalities had fallen to 525 on Sunday, the lowest since March 19. Italy's total number of deaths officially attributed to COVID-19 rose to 16,523, more than in any other country.

In Spain, nurse Empar Loren said, "The situation is more stable. The number of patients in intensive care is not growing much anymore, and we are starting to discharge quite a few."

Hard-hit Spain recorded deaths down for a fourth straight day on Monday — but still logged 637 fatalities.

At a field hospital set up at a Madrid conference centre, staff applauded whenever a patient was healthy enough to be sent home. The effective mothballing of the global economy is beginning to hit hard with analysts warning millions of jobs will be lost despite unprecedented stimulus programmes.

Germany announced that the Government would guarantee loans for small businesses but France was gloomy, with Finance Minister Bruno le Maire estimating that the 2020 crunch would be "far beyond" the previous post-1945 worst case.



Despite the gloom, heartwarming examples of humanity around the globe have lifted spirits, with ordinary people doing what they can to help those on the medical front line. In a Barcelona restaurant, chefs flipped burgers to deliver to nurses and doctors.

"When you deliver the food and you see they're happy, that makes us happy and it makes us stronger," said delivery man Daniel Valls.

And in the southern Italian city of Naples, a street artist lowered a "solidarity food basket" from his balcony, holler-

ing, "If you can, put something in. If you can't, take something out." "We started by putting a piece of bread, a bag of pasta, a box of peeled tomatoes," said English-language tutor Teresa Cardo, who also lowered a basket.

## Around the Globe

CHINA stepped up border control measures on Monday as the number of imported coronavirus cases rose sharply to 951 while the asymptomatic cases also surged, raising fears of a second wave of the COVID-19 infections, mainly from Chinese returning home from abroad despite drastic containment efforts. A health official in Beijing warned that the Chinese capital, Beijing, will probably remain under long-term coronavirus epidemic control.

The trajectory of coronavirus infections in IRAN appears to have started a "gradual" downward trend, the Government said on Monday, but it warned the disease is far from being under control. The COVID-19 outbreak claimed 136 lives in the past 24 hours, bringing Iran's overall death toll to 3,739, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a televised news conference. Iran registered 2,274 new cases of infection over the same period, he said, putting the total number at 60,500 across the country.

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP is confronting the most dangerous crisis a US leader has faced this century as the coronavirus spreads and a once-vibrant economy falters. As the turmoil deepens, the choices he makes in the critical weeks ahead will shape his reelection prospects, his legacy and the character of the nation. The early fallout is sobering. In the White House's best-case scenario, more than 1,00,000 Americans will die and millions more will be sickened.

THE UNITED STATES on Monday WARNED CHINA not to take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to exert itself in the South China Sea after Vietnam said Beijing sank a trawler. Amid the global focus on fighting COVID-19, China has ramped up self-described research stations and landed special military aircraft in the dispute-rife sea, according to the State Department.

A MAN who TRIED TO WALK FROM FRANCE TO SPAIN TO BUY CHEAP CIGARETTES WAS RESCUED in the Pyrenees mountains — only to be fined for flouting anti-coronavirus regulations. The man had initially set out by car on Saturday from Perpignan in southern France to La Jonquera in Spain, but was stopped at a checkpoint, and decided to make his way on foot across the mountain range that separates the two countries.



## Japan PM proposes state of emergency over virus, \$1-trillion stimulus

AFP ■ TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister on Monday proposed a state of emergency for several major regions seeing a sharp rise in coronavirus cases, as well as a stimulus package worth \$1 trillion to cushion the impact on the world's third-biggest economy.

The official declaration of the state of emergency would likely come as soon as Tuesday. Shinzo Abe told reporters, as the country grapples with a recent spike in coronavirus cases, especially in the capital Tokyo. "Currently, we are seeing rapid increases of new infections particularly in urban areas like Tokyo and Osaka," said Abe.

The declaration hands regional governors the power to ask residents to stay inside, seek the closure of businesses that attract large crowds and commandeer land and buildings for medical purposes.

But it falls far short of the sort of lockdown measures imposed in parts of Europe, where police have patrolled the streets and fined offenders.



"We envision, for a period of about one month, that we will ask further cooperation of the Japanese people to reduce person-to-person contacts that lead to infections," said Abe.

The measure does not include legal powers to enforce requests for people to stay inside, or punishments for people who fail to do so. "In Japan, even if we declare a state of emergency, we will not close cities as seen in foreign countries. Experts have told us that there is no need for such a step," said Abe.

Nadia, a 4-year-old female Malayan tiger at the popular Bronx Zoo here has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, probably infected by an asymptomatic employee, in what is believed to be the first known case of an animal infected with COVID-19 in the US, raising new questions about human-to-animal transmission of the deadly virus.

The tigress, her sister Azul, two Amur tigers and three African lions had developed a dry cough late last month with decrease in appetite, said the Wildlife Conservation Society, which manages the zoo.

Nadia, along with other

big cats, is thought to have been infected by the zoo keeper who has not been identified, it said in a statement on Sunday, adding that all the animals are expected to recover.

"Though they have experienced some decrease in appetite, the cats at the Bronx Zoo are otherwise doing well under veterinary care and are bright, alert, and interactive with their keepers," the CNN quoted the zoo as saying.

It is not known how this disease will develop in big cats since different species can react differently to novel infections, but we will continue to monitor them closely and anticipate full recoveries," it said.

The test result has stunned

zoo officials. "I couldn't believe it," zoo director Jim Breheny said.

The coronavirus, first detected in humans in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, is believed to have spread from animals to humans, and a handful of animals, including two dogs, have tested positive in Hong Kong.

The pandemic has been driven by human-to-human transmission, but the infection of Nadia raises new questions about human-to-animal transmission.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), no other animals at the zoo are showing symptoms.

A worker sanitises the Ponte Dei Sospiri (Bridge of Sighs), in Venice, on Monday.



IANS ■ LONDON

An environmental researcher from Aarhus University in Denmark and health researchers from Italy have claimed there could be a link between the high mortality rate seen in northern Italy and the level of air pollution in the same region.

Environmental scientist Dario Caro from Department of Environmental Science, and two health researchers, Professor Bruno Frediani and Dr Edoardo Conticini from the University of Siena in Italy found yet another

small piece in the puzzle of understanding the deadly disease that has killed nearly 16,000 in the country.

They focused on examining why the mortality rate is up to 12 per cent in the northern part of Italy while it is only approx 4.5 per cent in the rest of the country. In research project published in the scientific journal Environmental Pollution, they demonstrated a probable correlation between air pollution and mortality in two of the worst affected regions in northern Italy: Lombardy and Emilia Romagna.

"The population of the northern Italian regions lives in a higher level of air pollution, and this may lead to a number of complications for patients with COVID-19 in the regions, simply because their bodies may have already been weakened by the accumulated exposure to air pollution when they contract the disease. "There are several factors affecting the course of patients' illness, and all over the world we're finding links and explanations of what is important. It's very important to stress that our results are not a counter-argument to the find-

ings already made," said Caro. "Our considerations must not let us neglect other factors responsible of the high lethality recorded: important co-factors such as the elevated medium age of the Italian population, the wide differences among Italian regional health systems, ICUs capacity and how the infects and deaths has been reported have had a paramount role in the lethality of SARS-CoV-2, presumably also more than pollution itself," he explained.

The two northern Italian regions are among the most air-polluted regions in Europe.



**COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

# Virus can last on face masks for a week, banknotes for days: Study

PTI ■ BEIJING

The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 can remain infectious on face masks for up to a week, and last on banknotes, stainless steel and plastic surfaces for days, according to a study. However, the virus can be killed by household disinfectants, bleach or frequent hand washing with soap and water, said the researchers from the University of Hong Kong (HKU).

The study found that the



COVID-19 virus can stick to stainless steel and plastic surfaces for up to four days, and to the outer layer of a face mask for a week, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported on Monday.

The report, published in The Lancet journal, adds to a growing body of research about the stability of SARS-CoV-2 — as the novel coronavirus is formally known — and what can be done to prevent its transmission.

"SARS-CoV-2 can be highly stable in a favourable environment, but it is also susceptible to standard disinfection methods," said the researchers, including Leo Poon Litman and Malik Peiris, both from HKU's School of Public Health.

The researchers tested how

long the virus could remain infectious at room temperature on a variety of surfaces.

On printing and tissue paper it lasted less than three hours, while on treated wood and cloth, it had disappeared by the second day. On glass and banknotes, the virus was still evident on the second day, but had gone by the fourth, while on stainless steel and plastic it was present for between four and seven days.

"Strikingly," the researchers said, there was still a detectable level of infection on the outer

layer of a surgical face mask after seven days. "This is exactly why it is very important if you are wearing a surgical mask you don't touch the outside of the mask," Peiris said.

"Because you can contaminate your hands and if you touch your eyes you could be transferring the virus to your eyes," he was quoted by SCMP.

On all surfaces, the concentration of the virus reduced quite rapidly over time, the study said. The researchers said that the results did "not

necessarily reflect the potential to pick up the virus from casual contact," as the presence of the virus in the study was detected by laboratory tools, not fingers and hands as would be the case in everyday life.

A study by American researchers on the environmental stability of the coronavirus published last month in the journal Nature also concluded that it can remain infectious on some surfaces for days.

They found the virus was present on plastic and steel for up

to 72 hours, but did not last more than four hours on copper or 24 hours on cardboard. The findings from HKU add to the conversation about public health and hygiene, and what kinds of precautions people should take when bringing items like groceries into their homes.

People who were particularly concerned might prefer to leave non-perishable items in their shopping bags in the kitchen for a day before handling them, he said. "That would reduce the viral concentration a lot. But the most important message is wash your hands," he said.

If you want to protect yourself just maintain good hygiene, wash your hands often and try not to touch your face, your mouth or nose without cleaning first," he said.

People who were particularly concerned might prefer to leave non-perishable items in their shopping bags in the kitchen for a day before handling them, he said. "That would reduce the viral concentration a lot. But the most important message is wash your hands," he said.

## IMF encouraged by recovery in China, but pandemic could resurge

**Washington:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday cited limited but encouraging signs of recovery in China, the first country to suffer the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, but said it could not rule out a resurgence of the pandemic in China and elsewhere.

In a blog, top IMF economists said the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus had pushed the world into a recession that would be worse than the global financial crisis, and called for a global, coordinated health and economic policy response. "The economic damage is mounting across all countries, tracking the sharp rise in

new infections and containment measures put in place by governments," the IMF experts wrote. The total confirmed cases of COVID-19 around the world jumped to more than 1,288,000, with 70,600 deaths reported, according to a Reuters tally.

China was seeing a modest improvement in its purchasing manager surveys (PMIs) after sharp declines early in the year, and daily satellite data on nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere - a proxy for industrial and transport activity - showed a gradual decline in containment measures, the IMF experts wrote. "The recovery in China, albeit limited, is

encouraging, suggesting that containment measures can succeed in controlling the epidemic and pave the way for a resumption of economic activity," the authors wrote.

"But there is huge uncertainty about the future path of the pandemic and a resurgence of its spread in China and other countries cannot be ruled out," they added. European countries such as Italy, Spain, and France were now in acute phases of the outbreak, followed by the United States, while the epidemic appeared to be just beginning in many emerging market and developing economies.

Agencies

## France heading for worst recession since WWII: Minister

Paris: France is likely to see its deepest recession since the end of World War II this year because of the coronavirus crisis, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire warned on Monday. "The worst growth figure in France since 1945 was -2.2 per cent in 2009, after the financial crisis of 2008. We will probably be very far beyond -2.2 per cent" this year, Le Maire told a Senate panel.

"It's an indication of the amplitude of the economic shock we're facing," he said. France imposed a nationwide stay-at-home order from March 17 after shuttering all nonessential businesses. Officials have said the lockdown will last until at least

A wave of French blue-chip companies have abandoned their profitability targets for the year, while employers' associations have warned that hundreds of smaller firms and shops risk bankruptcy. AFP

## Stock markets rebound on easing virus crisis but oil dips

**London:** Asian and European equity markets rebounded Monday as some of the world's worst-hit countries reported falling death rates, providing much-needed hope in the battle against coronavirus, but oil prices sank after a meeting of top producers was delayed.

While deadly COVID-19 continues its deadly sweep across the planet, with more than 1.25 million now declared infected and nearly 70,000 dead, news out of Europe that the rise of fatalities was easing has lifted spirits on trading floors.

Italy reported its lowest daily death toll in two weeks, while Spanish officials said deaths fell for the third straight day and France reported its lowest daily toll in a week.

In early afternoon euro-zone deals, Frankfurt stocks rallied 4.5 percent, Paris won 3.7 percent, Madrid gained 3.0 percent and Milan added 3.2 percent. "European markets are trading higher because investors are shrugging off the pessimism," said AvaTrade analyst Naeem Aslam.

"They are focused on more optimistic things: the slowing death rate caused by coronavirus. Italy, Spain, France, and Germany have all seen declining numbers." London jumped

## business

# Mukesh Ambani's net worth drops 28% to \$48 bn in 2 months

PTI ■ MUMBAI

**The** net worth of India's richest man Mukesh Ambani dropped 28 per cent or USD 300 million a day for two months to USD 48 billion as on March 31 due to the massive correction in stock markets, a report said on Monday.

The chairman and managing director of the diversified Reliance Industries saw his wealth decline by USD 19 billion in February-March period, taking his global ranking down eight places to 17th, the Hurun Global Rich List said.

Other Indian businessmen who have seen a major drop in wealth include Gautam Adani whose wealth eroded by USD 6 billion or 37 per cent, HCL Technologies' Shiv Nadar (USD 5 billion or 26 per cent) and banker Uday Kotak (USD 4 billion or 28 per cent), it said.

All the three have dropped

### COVID-19 IMPACT

off the top 100 list, leaving Ambani as the only Indian in the league.

The Indian market has corrected by 25 per cent in the last two months as the economic costs and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on companies led to a sell-off across the world.

"India's top entrepreneurs have been hit by a 26 per cent drop in the stock markets and a 5.2 per cent drop in the value of the rupee compared with the US dollar. For Mukesh Ambani, it has been a perfect storm, with his wealth down 28 per cent," Hurun Report India Managing Director Anas Rahaman said.

Ambani is the second biggest wealth loser globally, after French fashion giant LVMH's chief executive Bernard Arnault, whose wealth



last two months and is followed by Bill Gates with a fortune of USD 91 billion (down 14 per cent). Buffet and Arnault.

Chinese billionaires were among the few gainers in the last two months, and included

promoters of video conferencing and pork meat producing companies, it said.

While India lost three rankings in the top-100 rankings, China added six billionaires in the league, it said.

### Economic recovery to take at least 2-3 quarters: PE funds

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

**T**he situation during the ongoing COVID-19 will be grim and the recovery thereafter will also take time as private equity experts fear that more people will die from hunger than pandemic in India most people underestimating the gravity and period of impact, which at the very least will take two to three quarters.

At a private equity webinar, Shailendra Singh, Managing Director at Sequoia Capital flagged that fear that more people will die from hunger than pandemic in India.

He added that most people are underestimating gravity and the period of impact, which will be at the very least two to three quarters.

Singh said they are validating every portfolio to revalidate the 5 critical assumptions their business hinges on. "You will be surprised that how many of them have actually changed/could change in long run (Zivame)," he added. They have also advised companies to look at adjacent markets or alternative business models.

Singh said that economic recovery will not start before Q3/Q4 of this financial year. Most countries will move manufacturing towards domestic markets especially in healthcare & R&D and reliance on China will go down. Anuj Ranjan of Brookfield said that cycles are inevitable, it will come back but will take time. After 9/11, no one thought they would ever get on a plane again. But they did and it was much stronger than before, but in 22 months. Air travel started but the security changed forever.

**Tariff hike to buoy wireless telcos' revenue in March qtr; full impact expected in Q1FY21**

New Delhi: Revenue and EBITDA for wireless telecom service providers are expected to improve sequentially during March quarter 2019-20 fuelled by tariff hike in December, but the full impact is likely only in first quarter of the current fiscal when majority users come for recharge, according to Axis Capital.

Axis Capital, in its recent report outlining Q4FY20 pre-view, has also anticipated a soft quarter for infrastructure providers, impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The report said Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel are expected to benefit from the price hike as well as subscriber addition, while subscriber loss is expected to continue for

### Banks to witness spike in credit costs, non-performing assets in 2020

PTI ■ MUMBAI

**B**anks in the country are likely to witness a spike in their non-performing assets ratio by 1.9 per cent and credit cost ratios by 130 basis point in 2020, following the economic slowdown on account of COVID-19 crisis, says a report.

In its report titled "For Asia-Pacific Banks, COVID-19 Crisis Could Add USD 300 Billion To Credit Costs" S&P Global Ratings said, it expects the non-performing assets (NPA) ratio for the Chinese banking sector to increase by about 2 per cent in 2020, and credit losses, to increase by about 100 basis points.

On India, the report said "the NPA ratio in India is likely to fare similarly to China's (1.9 per cent vs 2 per cent) but

the credit costs ratios could be worse, increasing by about 130 basis points," the rating agency's credit analyst Gavin Gunning said in the report.

Gunning said there are concerns that the coronavirus will spread faster, further, and for longer. "This will deepen the economic pain we already anticipate for 2020. Financing conditions may likewise sour as investors become more risk averse. This would hit bank credit," he said.

The report noted that an additional USD 300 billion spike in lenders' credit costs and a USD 600 billion increase in (NPA)s will occur in 2020 due to the adverse impact of coronavirus pandemic.

While banks are not as exposed as the corporate sector during the initial stage of

the pandemic, the strain on lenders could ultimately be profound. Banks face a second-order hit compared with the corporate and household sectors.

The report said the economic storm created by COVID-19 will test the ratings resilience of the region's 20 banking sectors.

"The resilience of banks' asset quality in 2020 hinges in part on the success of governments' and regulators' policy responses. These measures are in early stages. Some have started, some are in planning, and we suspect many more may be in the wings," Gunning said.

Asia-Pacific Governments, central banks, and supervisory authorities have rolled out diverse measures to address COVID-19.

**MTNL pays March salary, looks at resolving debt now**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**S**tate-owned telecom firm MTNL has cleared all pending salaries till March and is now looking to resolve debt issues through asset monetisation, a top company official said on Monday.

Meanwhile, BSNL has cleared salary of employees due till February and is yet to make payment for the month of March, an another official told PTI.

MTNL has seen reduction of over 60 per cent wage load post voluntary retirement of 14,378 employees that left it with the workforce of around 4,000 in Delhi and Mumbai.

According to official data, MTNL has a debt of around ₹20,000 crore.

### COVID-19 pulls India's service sector activity into contraction mode

New Delhi: India's services sector activity contracted during March as the COVID-19 pandemic dented demand, particularly in overseas markets, while public health measures aimed at stemming the outbreak curtailed discretionary spending, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The IHS Markit India Services Business Activity Index was at 49.3 in March, down from February's 85-month high of 57.5, as the new coronavirus pandemic pulled the service sector into contraction.

The headline figure fell by over 8 points, undoing the strong gains in growth momentum seen throughout 2019, the survey said. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 means contraction.

### Moody's: G20 economies likely to contract in H1 2020

**N**ew Delhi: As the coronavirus crisis severely impacts the global economy, a report by Moody's Investor Service said that the economies of G20 countries may witness a contraction in the first half of 2020.

The forecast gains significance as G20 comprises of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies representing over two-third of the world population. India also is a member of the group. The other members of the G20 are the US, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey and the European Union. The report noted that the economic effect of the pandemic includes impact on demand, supply disruption and shock to the financial markets.

The Moody's report said: "The global economy will experience an unprecedented shock in the first half of 2020."

**SBI say govt must monetise deficit**

PTI ■ MUMBAI

the country, while globally it has killed tens of thousands and infected over a million, mostly in the US.

The 21-day lockdown will cost the economy at least Rs 8 lakh crore, according to a report by SBI Research, which says at least 70 per cent of the economy is on a standstill because of this.

The estimate shows that over a 60-year period, global GDP has declined only once annually in 2009 by 1.7 per cent. But many analysts have pegged the global contraction at over 1.9 per cent but some independent estimates suggest a contraction of as much as 4 per cent to the global economy.

The pandemic has taken

the lives of 109 people and infected 4,069 as of Monday in

al GDP currently is 3.5 per cent. "We estimate another 1.7 per cent impact on real GDP because of the 21-day lockdown in FY21 resulting in at least 70 per cent of the economy at a standstill."

"We

## Trend Blazer

### B'wood brings short film on Coronavirus

Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, a slew of celebrities, including **AMITABH BACHCHAN, RAJINIKANTH, CHIRANJEEVI, PRIYANKA CHOPRA, RANBIR KAPOOR** and **ALIA BHATT** among many others, have come together to create awareness about COVID-19 through a short film, titled *Family*.

Conceptualised and virtually directed by Prasoon Pandey in collaboration with Big B, the film will show that staying at home, staying safe, maintaining hygiene, working from home and maintaining social distancing can be productive and should be taken in one's stride.

*Family* will be premiered across Sony Network on Monday at 9 pm.



**'It is not only Corona that we are tackling. We are also dealing with something much bigger that's affecting the world economy, the food that people are getting, our daily wage earners and just everyone. But we're in this together. So I think the best thing we can do right now is just be at home, be safe, and keep donating.'**

—Jacqueline Fernandez

Actor **MUGDHA GODSE** says that lockdown has given us time to reboot ourselves.



Talking about daily wage earners, she said, "Once this lockdown is over, the economy is going to topple and there is going to be a huge recession. Many companies are going to have backlog and things are going to change. I don't know the exact ratio but it's going to hit the market severely. I do agree daily wagers are suffering now but once everything is stable, I am sure the government will take care of them. There are also many NGOs which are coming forward and doing the needful. The economy will need time."

### 'My time in India was unforgettable'

Hollywood star **CHRIS HEMSWORTH** says he was "incredibly excited" about coming to India to celebrate his forthcoming Netflix film *Extraction*.

The actor was scheduled to reach Mumbai on March 16 to promote the film that has been shot in India. The tour was called off due to Coronavirus pandemic.

In a *desi* way, Hemsworth sent his love to India in a video, "Namaste India! Chris here, all the way from Australia. As you may have heard, I was incredibly excited to come to India and celebrate this film where it was filmed. My time in India during production was unforgettable and I was looking forward to returning," he said.

The film releases on April 26.

# MUSICAL NOSTALGIA

Singer, composer, and multi-instrumentalist **RAGHAV SACHAR** pays tribute to his favourite video game Super Mario Brothers in his signature style. By **AYUSHI SHARMA**

Can you recall those days when engaging with Super Mario's adventures, typically in the fictional mushroom kingdom, after school was our prime entertainment? Mario was often joined by his brother Luigi, and occasionally by other characters. The player runs and jumps across platforms as well as atop enemies in various levels of the game. For sure, by now the 90s kids must have pictured every bit of the video game, right up to the dragon and rescuing the kidnapped princess Peach from the primary antagonist, Bowser.

Undoubtedly, Super Mario has been one of the most influential games for multiple generations. And singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist Raghab Sachar has paid a tribute to it in his signature style where he is dressed as Mario and Luigi. The main instruments used are the alto, soprano and tenor saxophones along with some other woodwind instruments like piccolo and flute. The trumpet adds bass, and all of this is blended in with electronic instruments like the guitar, seaboard and the keytar.

#### ♦ How did you first conceptualise it? What was the idea behind?

I always wanted to create my own rendition of the Super Mario Brothers theme as it was such an amazing melody. It had a lot of nostalgic value for me and, I am sure, for every child born in the 80s and the 90s. The idea was to do my best to showcase the variety of instruments that I play to emphasize the different stages and melodies of the game. To take things a notch further, I am even dressed up like Mario and Luigi playing various instruments in the video. I wanted the audio to sound larger than life and ended up creating a massive wind symphony of the music. It's my tribute to the makers of the game and the creator of the theme who composed it only with 8bit sound as that was the only thing available then.

♦ Since Mario was a video game of the 90s primarily, do you aim to cater to that age group only? If not, how do you think rest of the audience will relate to it?

Mario has been developed over the years and a new cooler version is available for the millennials to play. It does not have the same theme though but they might be able to relate to the character. However, it will hold a lot more nostalgic value for the people who have played the original game because my rendition is a tribute to that version. I hope that the youngsters and musicians see my video from the point of view of a musical extravaganza.

♦ You have used various instruments for this composition. How difficult was it to synchronise them together so that one doesn't overshadow the other?

I have recorded over 100 audio tracks and featured 11 different instruments. It was crucial that I identify which section would feature which instrument in the foreground. Since it is a wind symphony, woodwinds like saxophones and flute along with trumpet (brass) take centre stage with drums and percussion keeping the energy alive and electric instruments giving the modern vibe. Synchronising all the instruments was very difficult. Mixing and mastering 100 live tracks and making everything heard at the right place was tiring and cumbersome. I would do a mix and hear it on



various systems like my car, headphones, small speakers and more. It took many attempts and days before I was satisfied with the final video.

#### ♦ What is peculiar about the video that you have created?

The most peculiar thing would be that the game is a part of the video. I wanted it to evoke that feeling of nostalgia among viewers when they hear and

watch it. The editing process took ages because finding the right clips and then inserting the sound effects of the game along with multiple other screens of me playing so many different instruments was a huge task. The process of creating this audio and video took more than six months, which is the longest that I have taken to create anything so far.

#### ♦ You do a lot of film tracks often, how is your creative process for them different from the songs for albums?

Private albums and single are an artistes' true calling because he/she is not directed to create it. Creation of Mario has been a passion project for me and it took much more time than I had initially anticipated purely because it's musically very challenging and complicated.

Film work is very different and is very 'agenda' oriented. The makers always need a 'HIT', which frankly no music director can confirm 100 per cent. I feel when you approach music from a commercial point of view rather than a creative point of view, there's a lot of imbalance and the process is more mechanical rather than being organic and intuitive.

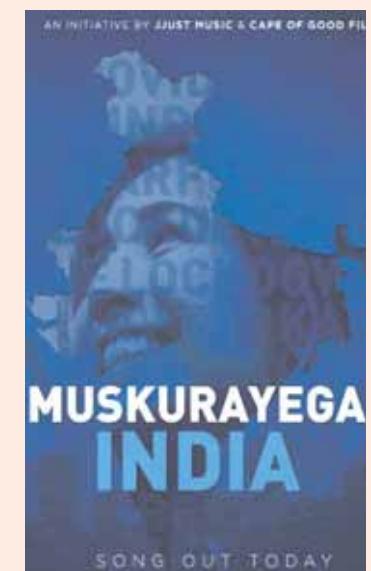
#### ♦ Most of the industries are suffering because of the pandemic. Do you think the music industry is affected by the songs are already online?

This is an unprecedented situation that no one had foreseen. Frankly no one has any answers to what's going on and when will it end. The industries worldwide have been hit and it will take a really long time for all of us to bounce back to our regular routines and for the fear to go away. Music as an industry has the highest demand during this time. In fact, it can easily be classified under essentials because people rely on it to relax themselves, meditate, feel spiritual, reinforce love, experience heartbreak and become positive in their overall outlook towards life. Creating music and releasing it is not as difficult if you are a producer like me who pretty much is self sufficient. If I want any singer to record on my audio, then I can send files to them via internet and mostly everyone who is engaged in making music has a small setup at home. It is also easier to release audio tracks without videos because it can literally be done from home and does not require manpower. We don't do that as much in India because every artiste wants a video to go along with the audio and that costs a lot more money and time while involving many more people.

#### ♦ Is there a specific reason you planned to release it now amid this global crisis? Do you think it will affect its viewership?

This track was supposed to release in March with a big press conference and a performance on various instruments by me for the media to capture. Initially, I wanted to wait and release it after the lockdown but then when I realised that there is uncertainty about how long we will be stuck like this, I decided to entertain the audience while they have fewer distractions. I think it will be a very uplifting video for many and I am expecting huge viewership because the game is not limited to India. It was a huge success worldwide and there are many communities who love Mario. I wish the circumstances were different but life still goes on...

**THE MOST PECULIAR THING WOULD BE THAT THE GAME IS A PART OF THE VIDEO. I WANTED IT TO EVOKE THAT FEELING OF NOSTALGIA AMONG VIEWERS WHEN THEY HEAR**



## NEW ANTHEM OF HOPE

**M**usic heals." This would definitely sound like an old saying but that's the symphony that the nation needs now to win the Coronavirus battle. With this thought, some eminent Bollywood names have come together to bring about positivity and contribute towards a nationwide initiative through *Muskurayega India*. It's a special track, released yesterday, which aims to give strength to Indians in these testing times.

Actor Akshay Kumar took to social media and shared the poster. He wrote, "At a time like this when our days are clouded with uncertainty and life has come to a standstill, bringing you a song of hope."

Jackky Bhagnani also announced about the song. He said, "Phir hogi Subah, Phir jagayega India. Hum sab agar saath dein, toh Jeet jayega India. #MuskurayegaIndia"

He added, "This song is a humble tribute to bring smiles to the faces of all Indians. I personally felt the only thing that helps in times of uncertainty is hope so we came up with this song. A big thank you to all our friends who helped us bring this together. All proceeds from this song will go into supporting the central and state governments' efforts to fight the virus. This is just a small tribute to the spirit of our country, to the power of 1.3 billion Indians."

Hinting at the silver lining, the song marks the coming together of the film fraternity for a cause.

Commenting on the same, Akshay shared, "With the help of this song, we want the people to be certain of one thing — everything will go back to usual. All we need is a united stand against COVID-19. Aur phir Muskurayega India!"

Curated by Jackky's music label JJust Music and composed and sung by the talented Vishal Mishra, *Muskurayega India*'s lyrics have been penned by Kaushal Kishore. The anthem is being presented by Cape of Good films And Jackky Bhagnani.

Other names like Tiger Shroff, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Bhumi Pednekar, Kartik Aaryan, Kriti Sanon, Ayushmann Khurrana, Kiara Advani, Rajkummar Rao, Sidharth Malhotra, Rakulpreet Singh, Shikhar Dhawan, and Ananya Pandey have also been a part of the song.

go to the parlour, adopt this method to make your skin glow." Dr Blossom too is in favour of digging into the kitchen for self care. "Personally, the reason why I feel it is the best time is because I can use things from my kitchen which are really fantastic and are filled with minerals and vitamins. Natural ingredients have no substitutes."

Even for hair care we should use natural things like curd. "Do not use detergent-based shampoos and regularly massage your scalp for naturally shining hair," says Dr Blossom.

#### KILL THAT DEAD SKIN

The season is changing and there are higher chances of dead cells accumulating on the surface of your skin leading to dull skin. Though we usually use an exfoliator to remove dead skin cells, here is a face pack by Aashmeen for different skin type. "For dead skin, add half teaspoon each of semolina and bran and mix with a teaspoon of gram flour to make the skin glow.

If the skin is oily, then add rose water to this mixture. If the skin is normal, then mix with curd and if your skin remains very dry, make a pack with mustard oil. Vary the ingredients according to your skin type while keeping the gram flour, semolina and bran constant. Apply and leave for sometime. Remove the pack by moving your hands in circular motion. Keep moistening the pack by adding water in between. It helps in improving the blood circulation, makes the skin glow and also gets rid of dead skin."

#### SWITCH TO NATURAL INGREDIENTS

#### DIY RECIPE BY DR BLOSSOM

#### Method:

#### Ingredients:

#### Preparation:

#### Benefits:

#### Conclusion:



pioneer

# HEALTH

THE PIONEER 13

LUCKNOW | TUESDAY | APRIL 7, 2020

## GeneticSay

Delivering drug to the foetus as it develops in the womb may one day treat Usher syndrome, a genetic disorder characterised by deafness and progressive vision loss, suggests new research. The findings suggest an avenue to treat and prevent intractable genetic disorders before birth



## WORLD HEALTH DAY

## DOCYARD

DR PRAMOD TRIPATHI



Founder

FREEDOM FROM DIABETES,  
PUNE

## Dos and don'ts for Diabetics

April 7 of each year marks the celebration of World Health Day. Ever since its inception, the celebration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organisation. Over the past 50 years this has brought to light important health issues. The celebration is marked by activities which extend beyond the day itself and serves as an opportunity to focus worldwide attention on these important aspects of global health.

This year on World Health Day we are facing the challenge of COVID-19. It is observed that Diabetics are at high risk of having infection from Corona Virus as compared to normal people. Also because of the lockdown, it is becoming difficult to follow optimal diet and exercise patterns, hence special attention to Diabetics is needed so that they can gain health, build immunity and fight the pandemic.

Here are few do's and don'ts for Diabetics during the time of COVID-19.

Firstly, they should mentally adjust with the dietary and exercise constraints happily rather than complaining.

## Do's:

- Dietary innovations: 25% grain, 25% daal and 50% cooked vegetables

- Intermittent fasting with proper insulin/ medicine dose adjustments

- Eat diet low in glycemic index which helps keep the blood sugars in normal range.

- Add anti-diabetic food items in diet — *bhindi* (okra), *tendli* (kundru), cabbage, garlic, onion, cucumber and *methi* as is available.

- Eat dal-based roti instead of grain.

- Start meal with clear soup or methi soup.

- Filtered mustard oil, coconut oil, sunflower oil, groundnut oil, rice bran oil and gingelly oil are preferred. Olive oil can be best used for salads.

- Ensure eating food at the appropriate time, in appropriate amounts and in proper frequency.

- Drink sufficient amount of water.

- Sleep before 11 pm, maintain a proper sleeping time and time period.

## Don'ts:

- Do not eat white bread, chips, and pastries, which quickly increase blood sugar.

- Avoid processed foods as they are rich in salt and oil.

- Restrict fried and fatty foods.

- Do not watch too much of TV especially while eating food.

- Avoid table salt and restrict the use of salty processed foods.

- Do not miss your medication.

- Restrict refined and starchy food items such as *maida*, *rava*, white bread, potatoes, other tubers, processed foods and meats.

- In shortage of stevia, do not use artificial sweeteners beyond the recommended quantity. If possible drink tea/coffee without sugar.

- Drink sufficient amount of water.

- Sleep before 11 pm, maintain a proper sleeping time and time period.

- Exercise is must. Try to concentrate more on exercise than diet in this lockdown phase.

Being homebound means less activity, less mobility, less exercise thus increases the risk to other health problems because of lack of movement. Thus one should include certain homebound easy exercise to be physically active like super brain yoga and chair *suryanamaskar*. This is the best time to master *pranayama* and deep breathing exercise.

## SUMMER COOLERS

**ZUCCHINI:** The zucchini or courgette is a summer squash which is usually harvested when still immature. It has a good amount of potassium, 8 per cent of the recommended daily value. Potassium can help control blood pressure because it lessens the harmful effects of salt on your body. It can also help in reducing stroke risks.

Zucchini is also high in the antioxidant Vitamin C, which may help the lining of your blood cells function better,

lowering blood pressure and protecting against clogged arteries. It also help to boost immunity.

Adding zucchini to your diet can help improve digestion including reducing the incidence of constipation and other digestive issues. Zucchini is rich in fibres and nutrients that promote digestive health.

Scrub your hands and feet at least once a week with a good exfoliating agent to get rid of any dead skin. Take a teaspoon each of sugar, olive oil and mix it well with the juice of half a lemon. Rub this on your hands and feet for five to 10 minutes. Wash off with lukewarm water and pat dry.

If you have cracked heels use honey or even coconut oil. Do this till crack disappears.

## MANAGE COVID-19

Time and again, doctors are highlighting the importance of having strong immunity to keep coronavirus and other infections away. ARCHANA JYOTI tells you more



## Secrets to high immunity

To enhance the body's natural defence system during the COVID-19 crisis, these are the measures suggested by the AYUSH ministry:

- ◆ Drink warm water throughout the day.
- ◆ Daily practice of yogasana, pranayama and meditation for at least 30 minutes.
- ◆ Use turmeric, cumin seeds, coriander and garlic in cooking.
- ◆ Take 10 gm chyavanprash in the morning.
- ◆ Drink herbal tea/decoction (kadha) made from tulsi, cinnamon, black pepper, dry Ginger and

munakka — once or twice a day. (Add jaggery, natural sugar, and/or fresh lemon juice to your taste if needed)

- ◆ Golden milk — Half teaspoon turmeric powder in 150 ml hot milk, once or twice a day
- ◆ Nasal application — Apply sesame oil/coconut oil or ghee in both the nostrils (Pratimash Nasya) in the morning and evening.

◆ Oil pulling therapy — Take one tablespoon sesame or coconut oil in mouth. Do not drink, swish in the mouth for 2 to 3 minutes and spit it off followed by warm water rinse. This can be done once or twice a day.

◆ During sore throat/dry cough, steam inhalation with fresh mint leaves or *ajwain* once a day; clove powder mixed with natural sugar/honey can be taken two-three times a day. It is best to consult a doctor if symptoms of dry cough and sore throat persist.

Eat a healthy diet: It is very important to take healthy and nutritious diet in order to maintain healthy and beautiful skin. It is essential to take proper diets that are rich in vitamins and protein. Include green leafy vegetables and fruits, nuts, eggs and berries in your diet to boost your skin.

Stay hydrated: Try to stay hydrated all the time to avoid forming dry and parched skin. Drink enough water which will automatically make your skin soft as dry skin. It is recommended that one should drink two-three liters or at least eight-10 glasses of water regularly. Also, drinking caffeinated beverages like coffee can also increase the risk of getting dull skin. Therefore, make sure that even if you take coffee it should be very limited.

Do regular exercises: As most of the time we are at home, it is significant to move your body in the form of exercise and workout. It not only helps in the blood circulation but also make your skin glowing. You can do yoga and meditation for around 20-25 mins regularly to achieve beautiful skin.

Use natural ingredients: You can try several home-made remedies to make your skin and hair more beautiful and smooth. Natural ingredients have always been considered as the best option to treat skin problems. Lemon juice, aloe vera, turmeric powder, cucumber and tomato are some of the best soothing and anti-inflammatory agents that can be applied to achieve beautiful skin.

Apply hair mask: Hair masks can be applied to make your hair look shiny and healthy. During this lockdown phase, you can different home-made masks such as egg white, honey and lemon mask to treat dry and rough hair.

The writer is Dermatologist and Aesthetic Physician, founder-director, ILAMED

## Mask it



Maharashtra has made it mandatory for people to wear masks when out in the public places. Now that there are 10 days left to a lifting of the lockdown here is what people need to do when it comes to wearing a mask according to WHO guidelines:

■ If you are healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person with suspected 2019-nCoV infection.

■ Wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing.

■ Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

■ If you wear a mask, then you must know how to use it and dispose of it properly.

ing, and avoid visiting busy and crowded places. Performing *agniho-traya-yaga* or burning *havan samagri* (a mixture of herbs) keeps home and environment free from germs," adds Dr Chauhan.

## Guide to baby's good night sleep

## SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP

Author: Kerry Bajaj

Publisher: Harper Collins

Price: ₹299

Pages: 264

*"Kerry's guide is a must-read for every parent!" Sona Ali Khan*

We all know the importance of a good night's sleep. As adults, if we don't get proper rest, we are unable to do our work to the best of our ability and in all probability we are in a bad mood the entire day taking out our anger on others. So why should babies be any different? If your baby is otherwise healthy and yet cranky and irritable, there is a possibility that he has not had a good night's sleep.

Believe it or not, the same holds for school-going kids. For a child to be attentive in class it is important that he has had sleep for at least eight to nine hours. Most doctors would tell you the same thing — that for humans to realise our potential we need those many hours of sleep. But how does a country that stands at No 2 when it comes to being sleep deprived, get a good night sleep?

It is something that we need to inculcate in our kids from the time they were babies. Kerry Bajaj's book *Sleep, Baby, Sleep* gives you a sneak peek into how one can ensure that your baby is tucked away in bed at 8 pm and sleeps till 8 am without much fretting. What is interesting about this book is that it takes

In order for the baby to have a good night sleep, it is important to create a spa-like environment — dim lights, sweet smell and soft music — during nap time

you step by step on how parents whose babies and kids are not getting as much sleep and keep parents up till late into the night can actually put them to sleep so that the next morning their kid is fresh and ready to tackle the day with a smile.

A smile that is so important to us. If our child is cranky, the parents are worried and harassed. It also means that until the child is old enough to be left on nannies, parents have almost zero social life because the child would not let the parents be.

The language used here is simple so that parents can follow the advice that has been to a T. The sentences are not too long and hence easy to remember.

The book tells you that in order for your child to have a good night sleep, it is important to create a spa-like environment. Just live adults instantly relax the minute they enter a spa — with its dim lights, sweet smell and soft music, the same way parents need to create that environment during nap time.

It also advises parents that it is them who decides when and where the baby will sleep and not the baby. Once the parents have set a time and space for the baby to sleep, it is important to stick to it and shuffle the baby around.

Routine matters and parents needs to stick to it is the mantra to a baby's good night sleep.

— Shalini Saksena

## DadiKaKehna

Due to lockdown all salons are closed but there are several alternative home remedies that one can follow for soft hands and feet, says ROSHNI DEVI



Clean under your nails with a nail brush on a regular basis. When you wash your hands, use a good quality nail brush to gently scrub beneath your nails and remove any dirt that may be stuck there.

Being homebound means less activity, less mobility, less exercise thus increases the risk to other health problems because of lack of movement. Thus one should include certain homebound easy exercise to be physically active like super brain yoga and chair *suryanamaskar*. This is the best time to master *pranayama* and deep breathing exercise.

Scrub your hands and feet at least once a week with a good exfoliating agent to get rid of any dead skin. Take a teaspoon each of sugar, olive oil and mix it well with the juice of half a lemon. Rub this on your hands and feet for five to 10 minutes. Rinse off with lukewarm water and pat dry.

If you have cracked heels use honey or even coconut oil. Do this till crack disappears.

Zucchini is also high in the antioxidant Vitamin C, which may help the lining of your blood cells function better,

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**P**eople have this habit of writing me off every now and then but it does not affect me," says veteran wrestler Sushil Kumar, quashing talk of retirement and insisting that postponement of Tokyo Olympics has given him a very good shot at qualifying for his fourth Games.

The 36-year-old was struggling to make cut for Olympics, postponed to 2021.

The showpiece, originally scheduled for July-August this year, was expected to be a swansong for veterans such as Sushil and tennis ace Leander Paes. But the one-year delay seems to have caused a change of plans.

Set to turn 37 next month, Sushil said, "I am not going anywhere as of now. I have got more time and more time means better preparation."

Making a comeback at the 2019 World Championship, Sushil showed glimpses of the form that made him look invincible in his prime before he lost steam and made an early exit.

That disappointment is, however, already behind him.

"Wrestling is such a sport that if you manage to remain injury-free, practice well, set a target and work on that, you can have a shot at your goal," said Sushil, the only Indian to win two Olympic medals.

"I am still practising twice a day. Obviously I am not hitting the mat but I am trying to be in shape and God willing, I will be able to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics," he added.

Sushil competes in the 74kg category in which India is yet to lock quota. Will he be able to beat the slowing reflexes?

"People were saying similar things in 2011. I know how to handle this. It's my

# NOT OVER YET

Unfazed by people's opinion Sushil preparing for 2021 Tokyo Games



Sushil Kumar (in red) attempts to drag down his opponent during 2019 World Wrestling Championship match in Nur-Sultan

daily job to manage it."

Sushil was referring to doubts cast in 2011 over his ability to repeat his Beijing's Bronze medal-winning show at the 2012 London Games. However, he ended up winning a Silver in London.

The delay in Olympics has also brought Sushil's old foe Narsingh Yadav into the equation since his four-year doping ban will be over in July, making him eligible to take a shot at Oly qualification.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has already said it will allow Narsingh to make a comeback.

Narsingh was preferred over Sushil for the 2016 Games but it all ended in disaster when the former failed a dope test. Sushil's demand for a trial was turned down by the federation as well as the Delhi High Court and he was even accused, without a shred of evidence, of sabotaging Narsingh in some quarters.

When asked about possibility of a face off, Sushil said, "We will see when the time comes. What can I say now about this.

Jitender Kumar is also doing a decent job as he recently won a Bronze in 74kg at the Asian Championship.

Sushil, it seems, does not consider any of the compatriots his real rivals.

When asked about the competition he is likely to face from fellow Indians, he said, "If you think small, you will achieve nothing. I am thinking about the international wrestlers, who are my likely rivals.

"Like there is one Uzbekistan guy, who won Asian Games Gold (Bekzod Abdurakhmonov). He is really good, my preparations are keeping in mind these wrestlers.

"I am keeping an eye on everyone. I am analysing everyone. If I think about the small targets, it won't lead me anywhere," he signed off.

If there is a bad ball, it must be hit: Shafali

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

he might be all of 16, but India's latest cricketer sensation Shafali Verma means business. Going into the World T20 in Australia as a youngster in the Indian team filled with heavyweights like Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana, Shafali stamped her authority to even rise to the top of the T20 rankings for batswomen during the tournament. But she says the journey has just begun.

After winning accolades for her performance in the World T20, Shafali said that the road ahead will only get steeper and she will look to rise to every challenge that comes her way in taking the women's team to becoming world beaters.

"Just didn't go our way that day. But sports is all about winning and losing. There will be other opportunities that will go our way. What happened we cannot change, but what will happen is in our hands and we will not leave any stone unturned as we look to be the best in the business," she said.

But what about her own scintillating show that won her applause from present as well as former cricketers? She says the trophy would have felt much better.

"My job is to go out there and score runs and put India in an advantageous position. It obviously feels good when people appreciate your performance, but the trophy in the hand would have felt so much better," she rued.

For a youngster to say this after scoring 163 runs in 5 games at a strike-rate of 158.25 says a lot about how she puts team performance over individual glory.

Speaking about the team, Shafali says that this unit doesn't believe in any senior-junior divide and that helps. "You know, there is nothing like seniors will speak and junior have to listen or things like those. It is a very relaxed atmosphere and in fact not just seniors like Harmanpreet Kaur or Smriti Mandhana, everyone is looking to push the other the extra mile. And we have a really amazing coach in WV Raman sir," she said.

"The best part about Raman sir is that he always has solutions ready and helps out whenever we are stuck. If there is an issue I am facing, I can always go up to him and get clarity on how to work my way out. He just has a brilliant mind and can easily instil confidence."

So what was the general discussion when she went out to open with another explosive batswoman like Mandhana? For Shafali, it is all about playing one's natural game.

"We would keep it simple. If there is a bad ball, it must be hit and there is no two ways about it. So, when I get a bad ball, I hit it and same works for her. And when we get a good ball, we try and steal a single out of it. Nothing beats staying true to your game. Trying to curb your natural instincts don't work I feel," she pointed.

Having won hearts with her performance in her maiden World T20, what is her next goal? For Shafali, the only goal is to win.

"Win more games for India. I should be able to put India in a position of strength when I go out to bat. The goal will always be to contribute to India's success," she signed off.

## Dhoni owns Malinga in IPL battles: Styris



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former New Zealand all-rounder Scott Styris believes the IPL rivalry between Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians pits the game's best finisher, M S Dhoni, against the best death bowler, Lasith Malinga, in which the former India captain owns the veteran Sri Lankan.

Super Kings have made 8 finals in 10 editions they have played in and Mumbai five in 12 editions, having won four out of those summit clashes.

"It's about consistency, CSK have never missed the final series, have won

the most knockout matches, it's the expectation and reliance on these IPL teams to produce Indian players and CSK have produced the most uncapped players for India and it's a real desire that they have to continue to develop players in that regard," Styris told Star Sports.

"It's about the best finisher in the game against the best finisher bowler. Dhoni vs Malinga and Dhoni owns Malinga," he said.

Chennai may be the most consistent side in IPL history but of late Mumbai Indians have managed to gain an upper hand, feels

former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar.

Reigning champions Mumbai Indians have won the IPL four times and Chennai Super Kings thrice.

"...When we look at winning percentage, which is a good way of looking at teams, a good winning record, CSK is right up there, but of late, there's been a surge by Mumbai Indians coming through the ranks, winning titles as well," Manjrekar told Star Sports.

"Mumbai Indians have won 4, CSK has won 3 but they have played less IPL (they were banned for two seasons). When you look at that, Mumbai Indians is emerging as a team that was already reeling due to the after effects of ball-tampering controversy.

The legendary fast bowler, who is also the bowling coach of Pakistan team was speaking in context of his country not being able to win even one Test match since 1995.

"I am not trying to take away any credit from India, they played well and they are a very good side. But yes at same time when they won in Australia, there is no doubt that Australian cricket was going through a turmoil and there were problems in their dressing room. And they were without Steve Smith and David Warner," Waqar said during a video conference.

Mumbai had pipped Super Kings in the final of the previous edition.

"When MI come to the final, they tend to win it, CSK not as much. When you look at the entire IPL, CSK go first, but of late, may be Mumbai Indians have managed to gain a slight edge."

## India's win in Aus because of Smith, Warner absence: Waqar

PTI ■ KARACHI

Former Pakistan captain Waqar Younis feels that India's Test series victory in Australia back in 2018-19 could be largely attributed to the absence of Steve Smith and David Warner from a team that was already reeling due to the after effects of ball-tampering controversy.

The legendary fast bowler, who is also the bowling coach of Pakistan team was speaking in context of his country not being able to win even one Test match since 1995.

"I am not trying to take away any credit from India, they played well and they are a very good side. But yes at same time when they won in Australia, there is no doubt that Australian cricket was going through a turmoil and there were problems in their dressing room. And they were without Steve Smith and David Warner," Waqar said during a video conference.

Waqar himself is not sure as to what has been the reason behind Pakistan's failure Down Under.

"I really don't know why we have not won Tests their all these years. At times, we went there with top bowling attacks yet lost. To me it was a case of when the bowling worked the batting didn't put up enough runs or when the batters put up enough runs the bowlers didn't come



Aus Test skipper Tim Paine chats with Indian captain Virat Kohli cricket.com.au

through," Waqar said.

For example the tour of 1999, when the bowling attack had Waqar himself, the iconic Wasim Akram, fiery Shoaib Akhtar, along with all

Waqar not in favour of cricket in empty stadiums

KARACHI: Pakistan bowling coach Waqar Younis said he is not in favour of cricket resuming before empty stadiums amid the COVID-19 pandemic as he feels the desperate plan would end up creating more problems.

"No I don't agree with this suggestion that cricket activities should resume soon even before empty stadiums," he said during a video conference with journalists.

"I think maybe in five or six months' time. When things are under control around the world and we get back some normalcy in life, we can think about match-

Some former cricket stars and officials of cricket boards have said that the game can resume slowly and matches can be held in front of empty stadiums with the proper precautions in place for teams, officials and other ground staff.

"At some stage we need to think about these choices but not this month or next month...The situation is not right for any cricket activities," he added.

Oz will struggle to dominate in sub-continent till spinners are encouraged: O'Keefe

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The just-retired Steve O'Keefe has rued that spinners are not allowed to win matches in Australian cricket, saying the country will struggle to dominate in the sub-continent until the issue is not addressed.

O'Keefe, the New South Wales left-arm spinner who took 301 first-class wickets at 24.66 and earned nine Test caps, ended his first-class career recently after being denied a new contract by his state.

After calling it quits, he has urged that spinners be given more opportunities to shine.

"We have so much talent in this

country, spin-bowling depth. I look across at the top two spinners in each state that I really think there's so much quality," O'Keefe was quoted as saying by ESPNCricinfo.

"The problem is that they aren't being encouraged enough to be given a ball in the first ten overs and being told to win a game of cricket. The conditions haven't allowed them to express themselves."

On their last Test tour of India, Australia were thrashed by Virat Kohli's team and even though they came from behind to win an ODI rubber before the 2019 World Cup, the Aussies finished second best in the 50-over face-offs earlier this

year.

"When you want to win overs, spinners are the ones who have to win you games. But go back and have a look at Shield cricket.

"I'm the leading wicket-taker this year with 16 wickets and played five games. I've not had a match-winning role in any of the games," O'Keefe said.

"When you go to these places, it's all on your spinners; they have got to be people who are mentally tough and have the skill. It is a matter of urgency, if we are going to win over there to make sure we encourage these guys."

O'Keefe's last of his nine Tests came in 2017.

FC Bayern Munich players practice at the club's training ground on Monday AP

## Bavarians resume training

AFP ■ BERLIN

Bundesliga leaders Bayern resumed training on Monday for the first time since the German league was suspended due to coronavirus but the players were put through their paces in small groups and maintained social distancing measures.

Bayern asked fans to stay away from the Saebener Strasse complex, where hundreds of supporters usually turn up to see their heroes.

Other clubs also cautiously resumed training Monday, after the league's ban on doing so until April 5 passed, amid hopes the league will resume in early May.

Bayern are four points clear in the Bundesliga table.

At the training ground of their closest rivals Borussia Dortmund, the players also did not shower or eat on site after a session that focused on running and shooting.

"It was a very unusual feeling to hold a training session in small groups, but it was nice to see the boys in person again," said Neuer after Bayern had previously held training sessions online.

After arriving at staggered times to limit contact — with no greeting hugs or handshakes — the 21-man squad was split into five groups, each containing a maximum of five players.

When they changed, the players were kept four metres apart in the changing rooms at the club's state-of-the-art training complex in southern

## Cummins prioritises T20 WC over IPL

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

With cricket facing an uncertain future due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian pace spearhead Pat Cummins would like to see the T20 World Cup at home being held over the lucrative IPL in which he would enter as the costliest foreign buy.

Cummins became the most expensive foreign buy in the IPL at the auction in December when Kolkata Knight Riders shelled out a whopping ₹15.50 crore for his services.

Once training was over, the players left to shower at home, where they ate food provided by the club in lunch boxes.

Keeping at least 1.5 metres from each other, players including captain Manuel Neuer, Robert Lewandowski and Thomas Mueller trained together for the first time since the Bundesliga was halted on March 13.

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When they changed, the players were kept four metres apart in the changing rooms at the club's state-of-the-art training complex in southern

## F1 in 'very fragile state', warns McLaren boss

AFP ■ LONDON

McLaren boss Zak Brown on Sunday said that the coronavirus pandemic has plunged Formula One into "a very fragile state", warning that as many as four teams could even be driven out of business.

Other clubs also cautiously resumed training Monday, after the league's ban on doing so until April 5 passed, amid hopes the league will resume in early May.

Bayern are four points clear in the Bundesliga table.

At the training ground of their closest rivals Borussia Dortmund, the players also did not shower or eat on site after a session that focused on running and shooting.

"This is potentially devastating to teams, and if (it is devastating) to enough teams then it's very threatening to F1 as a whole," Brown told the BBC on the eve of a meeting planned to discuss cost-cutting in the sport.

The only clubs in Germany's top flight not planning group training this week are Freiburg, whose players continue to work individually, and Werder Bremen, where the city's senate still prevents training in groups.

Brown insisted that all</