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LUCKNOW, THURSDAY APRIL 30, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



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Govt paves 'way' for homecoming

Relief for 10 cr migrants, tourists as Centre allows States to transport them by roads; new lockdown guidelines from May 4 to give some dists leeway

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two days after the Centre opposed in the Supreme Court any proposal to allow the migrant workers to proceed home as it posed a risk of coronavirus spread, the Government paved the way for their "home coming". In a big relief to stranded people including migrant labourers, pilgrims, tourists and students, the Centre on Wednesday allowed the States to transport them to their homes by road.

In a letter to Chief Secretaries, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said the movement should be after appointment of nodal officers and proper registering the details of persons and mutual agreement by the sending and receiving States.

However, the Centre has not permitted the use of railways for transport of these stranded people. As per the rough estimates, more than 1 crore migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal are stranded in Delhi, nearby industrial areas, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Later, the MHA said a new set of guidelines to fight Covid-19 will come into effect from May 4, which shall give considerable relaxations to many districts. Details regarding this

shall be communicated in the days to come, said the MHA Spokesperson. "MHA held a comprehensive review meeting on the lockdown situation today. There've been tremendous gains & improvement in the situation due to lockdown till now. To ensure that these gains are not squandered away, the lockdown guidelines should be strictly observed till 3rd May," MHA Spokesperson tweeted.

The movement of migrants to hometowns will depend on the possibility of retaining job and transportation through buses will be a huge logistical issue, observe many officials handling relief camps.

Earlier in March last week, when migrants were struck on roads in Uttar Pradesh from Delhi, the Uttar Pradesh Government had sent 1,000 buses and it took around a week to collect the labours trapped in highways.

The number of migrant workers will cross more than two crore when consider those stranded in southern States like Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It will be a challenge to send so many workers by road to remote villages of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

The two-page direction by the Union Home Ministry insisted on health check-up by the sending States and contin-

ued monitoring of the health status by the receiving states.

"All States/UTs should designate nodal authorities and develop standard protocols for receiving and sending such stranded persons. The nodal authorities shall also register the stranded persons within their States/UTs. In case a group of stranded persons wish to move between one State/UTs and another State UT, the sending and receiving States may consult each other and mutually agree to the movement by road," said the Home Ministry.

The MHA insisted that persons would be screened and those found asymptomatic would be allowed proceed. "Buses shall be used for transport of groups of persons. The buses will be sanitised and shall follow safe social distancing norms in seating," said the MHA also directing to the States on the way to the destinations to facilitate the movement.

The MHA also directed the receiving States to keep monitoring the persons and take periodic status of the health parameters. "For this purpose, such persons may be encouraged to use Aarogya Setu App through which their health status can be monitored and tracked," said the Home Ministry.



Migrant workers from Lucknow walk along Mumbai-Nashik Highway to reach their native places during the nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus in Thane on Wednesday

PTI

3 cops hurt in stone pelting by migrant workers at IIT Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Peeved over denial of wages, hundreds of migrant workers working at IIT Hyderabad at Kandi in neighbouring Sangareddy district on Wednesday allegedly attacked some officials of construction companies and threw stones damaging a police vehicle and injuring a Sub-Inspector and two policemen.

Didi allows factories, shops to start business, buses to ply

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday announced lockdown relaxations in a number of areas, including partial resumption of bus services in green zones "where the buses will be allowed to ply following all the protocols with a maximum of 20 passengers. She also announced relaxation in neighbourhood shops like electronic outlets, hardware and paint shops. Besides the betel leaf and teashops will also open from Monday but that will only be for home delivery and gossiping in those shops will not be allowed.

Apart from this construction work particularly in road construction and those associated with the PWD and PHE Departments were also given relaxation.

Four new corona cases in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Four new cases of coronavirus infection were reported from the state capital on Wednesday, taking the city's tally to 205.

A vegetable vendor in Lalbagh, two persons in Nakkhas and the father of a COVID-19 patient in Topkhana Bazaar tested positive for the coronavirus on Wednesday.

A senior official said that Kandhari lane in which the vegetable vendor had his shop, had been sealed. He said 35 swab samples were taken for test from this area having more than 80 houses.

Principal Secretary (Urban Development) Deepak Kumar who is the nodal officer for Lucknow, inspected the hotspot areas in Kaiserbagh and Aminabad and checked the arrangements. He also found out whether the people there were getting essential commodities. He gave directions

for sanitisation the area and strict enforcement of lockdown.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said there were 18 hotspots in the district — nine in the red zone and nine in orange zone. He said there were 151 active coronavirus cases in the district. The chief medical officer's teams carried out a sensitisation in Race Course, Dilkusha, Subhash Marg, Lala Lajpat Marg, Pipraghat and Thela ground.

Meanwhile, the elderly in-laws of the city's first COVID-19 patient, a 35-year-old Canadian doctor, were discharged from the Command Hospital on Wednesday after they tested negative for the coronavirus infection.

Meanwhile, with five more coronavirus deaths, the fatality count climbed to 39 in UP, which reported 81 new cases on Wednesday.

Till now, 2,134 coronavirus cases have been report-

ed from 60 districts of the state.

Of the five deaths, two were reported from Agra and one each from Firozabad, Bareilly and Mathura. Both Bareilly and Mathura recorded their first coronavirus deaths.

Agra has reported the maximum 14 deaths in the state followed by six in Moradabad; five in Meerut; four in Kanpur; two in Firozabad; and one each in Bareilly, Basti, Bulandshahr, Lucknow, Varanasi, Aligarh, Mathura and Shravasti.

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme Joint Director Dr Vikasendu Agrawal, who is the state surveillance officer, said out of 81 new cases reported in the state on Wednesday, 29 were from Agra, 10 from Firozabad and four from Lucknow.

He said 510 coronavirus patients have recovered from the disease and there were 1,585 active cases in the state.



A team of medics collect swab sample of a resident for Covid-19 test in Ahmedabad on Wednesday

PTI

7,70,764 tests done; doubling rate of Covid now 11.3 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After facing massive criticism for low number of testing for Covid-19, India has now started conducting 60,000 tests per day. This will be ramped up to 1 lakh tests per day within next few days, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday.

Addressing a video conference here with the members of Lion Club International here, he said, "The Government is working to increase the testing capacity to 1,00,000 tests per day in the next few days."

However, additional tests will require more human resources for data entry, re-deploying automated and manual RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction) machines and optimising in-lab processes, such as RNA extraction, to reduce the turnaround time between sample receipt and testing, it said.

As on Wednesday, the ICMR said India had conducted a total of 7,70,764 tests

since the outbreak of the disease. However, there was no detail on the number of tests done on Wednesday. Health experts feel that India is yet to reach to its peak as sufficient number of people was not being tested and treated.

Currently, 288 Government laboratories are working along with 97 private labs chains with around 16,000 sample collection centres and around 60,000 tests per day.

He said since the last three days the doubling rate of Covid-19 cases has slowed to 11.3 days in the country, with a mortality rate of 3 per cent against the global average of 7 per cent.

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Aarogya Setu nod must for Central Govt staffers for arrival in offices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All Central Government employees must get a "clear all" from "Aarogya Setu" mobile application before they venture out for their offices.

The Government on Wednesday made it mandatory for all Central Government employees to download the Aarogya Setu app and to come to office when the app shows "safe" status for commuting.

"Before starting for office, they must review their status on 'Aarogya Setu' and commute only when the app shows 'safe' or 'low risk' status," an order issued by the Ministry of Personnel said.

"The officers and staff are advised that in case the app shows a message that he/she has a 'moderate' or 'high risk' calculated on the basis of blue-tooth proximity ("recent contact with infected person"), he/she should not come to office and self-isolate for 14 days or till the status becomes 'safe' or 'low risk', the Personnel Ministry said.

Continued on Page 6

CAPSULE

BORIS ANNOUNCES BIRTH OF HEALTHY BABY BOY

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and fiancée Carrie Symonds on Wednesday announced the birth of a 'healthy baby boy'. The birth is believed to be slightly premature but both mother and baby are said to be doing very well.

EX-FINANCE SECY RAJIV APPOINTED PESB CHIEF

New Delhi: Former Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar was on Wednesday appointed the chairperson of the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), the Government's headhunter for top level posts in public sector undertakings.

WHO: NEW POLIO OUTBREAK IN NIGER

London: The World Health Organization has said that Niger has been struck by an outbreak of polio, following suspension of immunisation activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

REFUND ₹733 CRORE TO VODA-IDEA: SC TO I-T DEPT

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted partial relief to Vodafone Idea Ltd by asking the Income Tax department to refund ₹733 crore to the telecom firm within four weeks.

Medical entrance only through NEET even for minority, pvt colleges: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admissions in the graduate, postgraduate medical and dental courses would also apply to minority, both aided and unaided and private educational institutions as there is no violations of their rights.

The SC said NEET, which qualifies the test of proportionality, is reasonable and the same is intended to check several maladies which crept into medical education, to prevent capitation fee by admitting students who are lower in merit and to prevent profiteering, and commercialisation of education.

Continued on Page 6

Holding rest of X, XII exams first possibility, declares CBSE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The board exams for class X and XII pending due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown will be conducted at the first possibility and there is no move to do away with the remaining exams, CBSE officials said on Wednesday.

The board is prepared to conduct the exams for class X and XII for crucial 29 subjects, while the HRD Ministry has directed States to start the evaluation process for the exams already conducted.

"Recently, there has been a lot of speculation regarding CBSE Board exams. There is no change in position. Exams will be conducted," Sanyam Bhardwaj, CBSE's Controller of Examinations said.

Continued on Page 6

White House unfollows Modi after 3 weeks

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump and the official Twitter handle of the President of the United States of America — The White House — has unfollowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the social media platform. Besides, Modi, the White House also unfollowed President Ram Nath Kovind and the Prime Minister's office. It has also unfollowed the Twitter handle of the Indian Embassy in USA.

Three weeks ago, PM Modi became the only world leader followed by the official Twitter handle of the US administration. The rare move by White House to follow PM Modi on April 10 was viewed as a reflection of the bonhomie and good rapport shared by the Prime Minister and US President Donald Trump.

AIIMS planning to conduct clinical trial of plasma therapy

New Delhi: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is planning to conduct a clinical trial of the convalescent plasma therapy in the treatment of Covid-19 and modalities of taking approvals from the Drug Controller General of India are being worked out.

The name isn't just Khan, but life itself

RINKU GHOSH ■ NEW DELHI

Oh, we forgot the camera... Remember this journey we took together till we reached land's end and there was nowhere to go? That was Irrfan Khan, playing teacher-father Ashok Ganguli in *The Namesake*, asking his onscreen son to relish life's best moments that are meant to be felt so deep within that no minute detail could ever be missed for a lifetime. And quite a journey we had with him through the years that saw him emerge as the "real Khan" who made everyday Indian maleness so profoundly delicate, believable, both loveable and abominable at times, but most important of all acceptable and acknowledged, warts and all.

His was a strength in upholding life's vulnerabilities and living with them. But beneath the twitch of the brow, the vacant stare into the horizon, the momentary burst of



IRRFAN KHAN
7 January 1967-29 April 2020

passion and then lassowing it back, the half curl of a smile, the wry humour, the long silence and the intensity of his gaze was a man who embodied the Indian soul. Fighting, subtle, gracious, all-absorbing and enduring. Self-effacing even. That's how the 53-year-old actor passed on, succumbing to a protracted battle with cancer on Wednesday.

Yes, he got under our skin. In the process, he also made us comfortable in our own skin. Something that Hollywood spotted way before, casting

him in meaningful roles than circumscribing him within Asian stereotypes. The likes of director Danny Boyle and actress Julia Roberts acknowledged his performances. He had worked with the Japanese and Netflix, too, making him our truly multinational artiste. Of course, one of the starry Khans realised the visceral depth of the actor's range that endeared him to both masses and classes, casting him as the protagonist in his home production *Billy*.

Continued on Page 6

Prez, PM, leaders pay tributes

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other political leaders across the country on Wednesday mourned the demise of actor Irrfan Khan, calling him a "rare talent" who will be greatly missed. "He will be remembered for his versatile performances across different mediums," Modi said. The 54-year-old actor lost his battle with a rare form of cancer and died in a Mumbai hospital on Wednesday. He was buried at the Versova graveyard.

UP to increase 52K isolation beds in Covid hospitals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to provide 52,000 additional isolation beds in dedicated Covid hospitals across the state and start community surveillance by engaging youths to serve people during the pandemic.

Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi told news persons in Lucknow on Wednesday that the government had asked Medical Health and Medical Education departments to increase beds in three levels of Covid hospitals.

While Medical Health department has been asked to increase 10,000 beds in Level-1 hospitals, 5,000 beds with oxygen in Level-2 hospitals and 2,000 beds with ventilators in Level-3 hospitals, the Medical Education department has been directed to increase of 20,000 beds in Level-1, 10,000 beds in Level-2 and 5,000 beds in Level-3 hospitals.

“The chief minister informed Medical Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh and Medical Education Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna about the decision and asked them to formulate a policy at the earliest,” Awasthi said.

Acting swiftly, the government notified an additional 75 new hospitals attached with Level-1 Covid hospitals by increasing the total isolation beds from 10,000 to 17,194. Similarly, quarantine beds too have increased to 21,569 from 15,000.

On the other hand, Yogi asked officials for starting community surveillance and to engage youths from Nehru Yuva Kendra, NCC, NSS and other outfits to serve the people in hotspots. Besides, women of self-



“The chief minister informed Medical Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh and Medical Education Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna about the decision and asked them to formulate a policy at the earliest”

help groups (SHGs) too are also to be engaged in producing face mask and other equipment.

There are around 381 hotspots in 57 districts of the state where lockdown is being strictly enforced.

Awasthi said that the chief minister ordered strict surveillance in hotspots, but also asked authorities of green zone to allow certain activities, like opening of construction material shops and other shops as per guidelines.

There are 13 districts in the state which have been declared red zones and have hotspots due to increasing number of coronavirus positive cases. In these districts, the rate of doubling of COVID-19 patients is less than four days.

Districts in orange zone are those where no cases of coronavirus have been reported in the last 14 days, while the green zone covers those districts where no coronavirus case has been reported or no new coronavirus

case has been reported during the last 28 days.

Awasthi said that 8,140 industrial units had started functioning and around 3.43 lakh workers were engaged there. Besides, he said, eight lakh workers were working in different projects across 27,000 gram panchayats and around 25,000 new jobs cards were issued to migrant workers, who returned to the state after lockdown.

The additional chief secretary said that the process of sending 15,000 students from Prayagraj to their home districts had started and 351 buses were used for the job till Wednesday evening. He said 30 students were being accommodated in every bus.

“Thus, more than 10,000 students have reached their homes. Also 150 more buses have been deployed for this. These students will have to undergo health tests and their medical test will be done in their home districts,” he said.

UP govt eyeing MNCs relocating from Wuhan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the wake of geopolitical and economic repercussions of Wuhan coronavirus pandemic across the world, Uttar Pradesh is eyeing to attract relocating investors to the state.

Multi-national Companies (MNCs) of Europe, USA and Japan are desperate to move out of China and relocate businesses and units to other nations.

Around a thousand foreign companies are contemplating to shift their manufacturing base to India. The companies are in discussions with the Indian government and at least 300 of them are actively pursuing production plans in sectors like mobile phone, electronics, medical devices, textiles and synthetic fabric.

Trying to cash in on this opportunity, the Yogi Adityanath government has stepped up efforts to attract investments to help revive the pandemic-hit economy. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stressed on the idea to attract investors pulling out of China during a high-level key meeting in Lucknow on Tuesday, in the presence of MSME Minister Sidharth Nath Singh and Industrial Development minister After the meeting, the MSME minister said, “Companies including big names from logistics, scientific instrumentation and electronic, automobile industries, have investments in China. I am hopeful we will be able to bring them to UP by highlighting the changes in our industrial and sectoral policy. Video-conferencing was held with over 100 US companies and they have shown interest”

The UP government has started reformulating its policies to attract fresh investors and has been eyeing the food processing industry which was in abundance in Wuhan before the virus outbreak.

The Yogi government has been pitching itself as an attractive investment destination in the past few years. Investors’ Summit in February, 2018, and Defence Expo in Lucknow in July, 2019 have attracted sizeable investments.

Some major infrastructural projects, such as upcoming Jewar airport in Greater Noida, Purvanchal Expressway and defence manufacturing corridor, have been planned to facilitate greater industrial investment in the state.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party MLC Madhukar Jaitley, who played an active role in negotiating with MNCs for FDI during Akhilesh Yadav regime, said, “The Union government has to make changes in several departments from FIPB, DIPP. The MSME minister seems to have jumped the gun that MNCs are coming to UP. After COVID-19 crisis, 56 companies decided to shift to Vietnam, Thailand and South Korea and only three decided to come to India due to lack of clarity in FDI policy and red tapism.”

Govt to add more teeth to Epidemic Diseases Act

Lucknow (PNS): Toeing the Centre’s line with the aim to protect corona warriors, the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to amend the Epidemic Diseases Act, making attack on frontline workers in the fight against coronavirus a stringent offence attracting seven years’ imprisonment and a fine of Rs 5 lakh.

An ordinance — the UP Epidemic Diseases Control Ordinance, 2020’ — would be brought to add the amendments to the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath discussed in detail the ordinance amending the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897, with senior officials of Team 11 in Lucknow on Wednesday. “The new law will have penal provision, including jail term and

fine, for fleeing from quarantine and isolation or violating lockdown norms. Besides, stringent punishment will be handed out for spreading the virus among masses.” Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi told news persons here on Wednesday. He said the new law would protect corona warriors, including doctors, nurses, other medical staff, sanitary workers and policemen, who have been trying to save people from coronavirus infection.

He said that the chief minister issued direction that the ordinance be brought immediately as it would boost the morale of the medicos.

Under the new law, people violating norms or attacking corona warriors could face jail up to seven years along with a fine

of Rs 5 lakh. Besides, attack on corona warriors would be a cognisable and non-bailable offence under the new law.

“The new law will also propose a punishment for spitting on corona warriors and insulting or attacking them. The law became a necessity after increasing attacks on corona warriors,” Awasthi said.

Recently, the Union government had amended the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 through an ordinance to protect corona warriors across the country with provision of jail and fine against the offenders.

As law and order is in the concurrent list, it is mandatory for states to bring their own provisions by making amendments to the prevailing Act.

Out for medicine, man chased by cops; drowns

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The inhuman face of the Gorakhpur police came to the fore when a middle-aged man, who went out to purchase medicine, was chased after which he chose to jump into a river and drowned on Wednesday morning.

As per reports, Shiv Kumar (50) of Banswari hamlet of Sant Kabir Nagar was undergoing treatment from a doctor having clinic in Sikriganj market of Gorakhpur.

Kumar was trying to get medicines but was unable to visit the doctor due to lockdown as it was situated two kilometres away from his house on

Gorakhpur-Sant Kabir Nagar border.

Facing problems, Kumar decided to collect the medicines from his doctor and left his house at 7 am on Wednesday. He crossed a bridge on Quano river dividing Gorakhpur and Sant Kabir Nagar but the police on the other side forced him to return home even after he narrated his ordeal.

A desperate Shiv Kumar later decided to swim across the river instead of taking the bridge. But as he crossed the river, he once again found cops on the river bank.

Upon seeing him, the cops chased Shiv Kumar and in order to save himself, he jumped

into the river and drowned midstream. Some locals jumped to save him and later rushed him to the community health centre (CHC) in Haiderbazar, where he was pronounced dead upon arrival. A case was registered, and the body was sent for autopsy. A probe is on.

Meanwhile in Mirzapur, two persons died after falling in wells in different localities.

Nagendra aka Kaushal (12) of Chandragarh Mudail hamlet in Haliya went out to graze cattle on Wednesday morning.

As he was drawing water from a well, he slipped into it and died. The locals alleged that water supply was affected for the

last fortnight and the charges were being looked into by the district authorities.

In another incident in Dewari Uttar locality of Lalganj, 70-year-old Sattani was going to ease himself when he slipped into a well and died on Tuesday night.

Elsewhere in Jaunpur, five persons, including four of a family, died in mishap.

Premchand Gupta of Sarsara hamlet of Barsathi (Jaunpur) constructed a wall which collapsed on Wednesday afternoon and Kapoora Devi (30), Akhilesh aka Bau (27), Lotadhari (35) and their neighbour Pankaj Bind (28) were injured.

Govt rolls the ball for uniform varsity syllabus

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government has asked vice-chancellors of all state universities to implement recommendations of a committee headed by Bundelkhand University vice-chancellor for a uniform syllabus in state universities. At a vice-chancellors’ conference in July, 2017, it was

decided to implement a uniform syllabus in all state universities while Ram Naik was then the Governor of UP and also Chancellor of all state universities. After this, the state government had set up a committee headed by the vice-chancellor of Bundelkhand University (Jhansi) to make recommenda-

tions on the issue. The report of the committee was referred to UP State Higher Education Board by the state government, and it approved the recommendations. The government has now directed all state universities to implement the recommendations for a uniform syllabus.

जलकल विभाग, नगर निगम जोन-7, इंदिरा नगर लखनऊ

प0सं0—14 / एलजेएस / ईई—7

दि0 29.04.2020

अल्पकालीन निविदा सूचना

जलकल विभाग में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से नीचे दिये गये विवरण के अनुरूप कार्य कराने हेतु इस कार्यालय के प0सं0 2269 / एलजेएस / ईई—7, दि0 19.03.2020 द्वारा निविदायें समाचार पत्रों के माध्यम से दिनांक 26.03.2020 के सायंकाल 04.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की गई थी, परन्तु कोरोना संक्रमण पर लाकडाउन होने के कारण कार्यालय बन्द होने से कोई निविदा प्रपत्र बिक्री न हो सका। अतः पुनः निविदायें दिनांक 07.05.2020 के सायंकाल 04.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा प्रपत्र किसी भी कार्य दिवस में दिनांक 07.05.2020 को 01.00 बजे तक निविदा मूल्य का नगद भुगतान कैश काउन्टर पर करके निविदा प्राप्त किये जा सकते हैं। भरी हुई सील्ड निविदायें उसी दिन अधोहस्ताक्षरी के कार्यालय में सायंकाल 03.30 बजे तक निविदा बाक्स में प्राप्त की जायेगी। निविदा बाक्स से प्राप्त सभी निविदायें उपस्थित निविदादाताओं के समक्ष सायं 04.00 बजे खोली जायेगी।

क्र0 सं0	कार्य का विवरण	निविदा का मूल्य	घरोहर धनराशि
1	जोन-7 इंदिरा नगर के अन्तर्गत सेक्टर 10 भवन सं0 10 / 274 के पास एवं सेक्टर 19 में भवन सं0 19 / 208 के पास 300 एम0एम0 व्यास ए0सी0 पाइप लाइन लीकेज मरम्मत का कार्य।	150.00	2550.00

नियम एवं शर्तें : निविदा प्रपत्र में दी गई हैं, जिन्हें देखा जा सकता है। विस्तृत जानकारी अधिशासी अभियंता जोन-7 के कार्यालय में सम्पर्क कर किसी भी कार्य दिवस में प्राप्त की जा सकती है। निविदा बिना कारण बताये निरस्त करने का अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरी / महाप्रबन्धक में निहित है।

अधिशासी अभियंता
जोन-7 जलकल विभाग

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

Tender Notice No.: 0520202021

E-Tendering Tender Notice

Dated: 27.04.2020

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to 13:30 hrs. on 17.06.2020. The details of the tender are as under:-

S N	Tender No.	Name of work	Approx. Cost of work (₹)	Earnest Money) (₹)
1	25	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone Central for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/Str./CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	1,15,00,000/-	2,07,500/-
2	26	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone HQ & CETA for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/HQ/CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	1,00,00,000/-	2,00,000/-
3	27	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone North for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/CP/CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	90,00,000/-	1,80,000/-
4	28	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone South for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/JuH/CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	90,00,000/-	1,80,000/-
5	29	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone West for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/SpH/CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	90,00,000/-	1,80,000/-
6	30	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone from GOY (excl.) to 1066 Km. for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of ADEN/Line/CNB.	90,00,000/-	1,80,000/-
7	31	Annual civil maintenance and minor new works in Zone Kanpur Anwarganj for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/CPA/CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	90,00,000/-	1,80,000/-
8	32	Annual maintenance in Electric Loco Shed Electric Training center and Tractor Motor Shop (TMS)-for period ending 30.06.2021 in the section of SSE/W/JuH/ CNB under ADEN/HQ/CNB.	53,00,000/-	1,06,000/-

Cost of Tender form: ₹ 5000/- for each tender. Completion Period: 12 Months for each tender. Date of Opening of Tender: 17.06.2020 for each tender. Similar work for Eligibility Criteria: Any Civil Engineering Work for each tender. Note: 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders is available on website www.irops.gov.in upto 13:30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 17.06.2020. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with digital Signature Certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4. The Tenderers shall submit a notarized affidavit on a non judicial stamp paper of Rs. 100/- as given in tender document in standard format, for Tender No. 25,26,27,28,29,30,31 & 32 having advertising value more than 50 Lakh. 5. The supplier/contractor of goods and/or services would be subject to GST Act and Rules as applicable from time to time. 6. Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 7. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in 8. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of e-tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 9. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 10. Tender on line can be submitted up to 13:30 hrs. on 17.06.2020. 11. Along with other instructions given to Tenderers, Tenderers are required to pay special attention on Para 12.1 (a) Note-(ii) of Tender Document for EM Deposit and Para 13.0 (h) of Tender Document for Rate quoting and Performance Guarantee submission. 490/20(K)

North central railway

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NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

E-Procurement Tender Notice No. 01/P-69/2020-21/TMC/HQ/NCR/Prayagraj

Dated: 25.04.2020

OPEN TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Engineer, North Central Railway, Subedarganj, Prayagraj-211015 invites the following E-Procurement Tenders: (The complete information along with tender document of this E-Procurement Tender are available in website on <http://irops.gov.in> upto 15:00 hrs. of the due date of tender opening).

S N	Tender No.	Brief Description	Quantity	Tender Value	Earnest Money
1	TMC 0012021	Hydraulic Pump, Crawler Motor. Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document. [Acceptable Make: Ameca or Equivalent Branded]	As per Section IV of tender document.	4,67,162/-	Exempted
2	TMC 0022021	Hydraulic Proportion valve, Pressure Regulator, Valve. Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document. [Acceptable Make: Plasser, Rexroth, Plasser or Equivalent Branded]	-Do-	18,86,988/-	Exempted
3	TMC 0032021	Ultrasonic Digital Testing Equipment, Digital Ultrasonic Double Rail Tester. Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document.	-Do-	36,58,000/-	73,200.00
4	TMC 0042021	Relay, Shock Absorber for Pendulum, Battery, Various types of Electronic Items. Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document. [Acceptable Make: Plasser or equivalent Branded, Exide, Prestolite, Amco, Standard furukawa, Plasser, HI-Lux, Auto Pal, JMI, Hella, TVS-Luxas, SCI, SG, Havells, Lapp India, Dowel, Escom, Parker, Elcom, Schrader, Bosch, KSS, Lockit, AKG, Faizer only]	-Do-	61,35,838/-	1,22,800/-
5	TMC 0052021	Various types of Spares Parts. Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document. [Acceptable Make: Plasser, or Equivalent]	-Do-	6,88,658/-	Exempted
6	TMC 0062021	Meggi Spring Details of description, make and quantity as per tender document. [Acceptable Make: Plasser, or Equivalent]	96 Nos.	1,75,694/-	Exempted

Date of opening: 02.06.2020 for each tender. Note:- 1. The complete information along with Tender document of above E-Procurement Tender is available on website <https://irops.gov.in>. Up to 15:00 hrs. On the due date of tender opening. 2. Following condition has been included in Tender Document vide Railway Board letter No. 2001/RS(g)/779/7 Pt I Dated: 29.06.2017 "Whenever tender is floated with purchase restriction from sources approved by nominated authorities and there, exists a suspected cartel situation by approved sources or the rates available from approved/sources are adjudged unreasonably high, despite fair efforts as permissible, the purchaser reserves the right to place order on firms outside the approved vendors list, without any restrictions". 3. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with class III digital signature certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 4. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 5. Allocation for Security deposit and Earnest Money is "Deposit Misc stores 00844523. 6. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 492/20(K)

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All houses in hotspots to be sanitised

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to control further spread of coronavirus across the state, the Uttar Pradesh government has ordered that all houses located in the hotspots be sanitised. There are around 381 hotspots in 15 districts of the state and all houses in these areas will be sanitised on a war footing.

“These hotspots have over six lakh houses that are inhabited by around 36 lakh people. They are being provided with all essentials at their doorstep,” said a senior officer on Wednesday.

In addition, the government has also ordered pool testing after the state witnessed a sudden surge in coronavirus cases. “Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered strict enforcement of lockdown and maintaining of proper hygiene in the state. The government has decided to get every house sanitised in hotspot areas. Orders have also been issued for setting up quarantine centres with large capacities,” said Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi in Lucknow on Wednesday. Principal Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said that 11,487 people were put in quarantine and 1,769 in isolation.

On Tuesday, 75 additional isolation beds were added to Level-1 hospital and with this, the number of isolation beds increased to 17,194 and of quarantine beds to 21,569. Besides, the number of Level-1 hospitals in the state reached 155, Level-2 hospitals to 78 while the number of Level-3 hospitals increased to six. On Tuesday, 3,799 samples were sent for testing.



LMC workers carrying out sanitisation in Chhitwapur area of Lalkuan on Wednesday



Pioneer

KGMU seeks ethical committee nod for clinical trials of plasma therapy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

King George's Medical University has submitted papers to the ethical committee for approval of the clinical trials of plasma therapy. A senior doctor said every institute has a registered ethical committee consisting of both medical and non-medical officials who give the nod to clinical trials.

“Only after we get a nod from the ethical committee

that clinical trials will be carried out, as per the ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) guidelines, on coronavirus patients,” he said.

The doctor pointed out that plasma therapy is being used for the first time for treatment of Covid-19 and only the institutes which have permission from ICMR can do that.

“It's a new line of treatment for coronavirus and hence investigational in nature, there-

fore, permission is given to those with required infrastructure. Many other institutions from Uttar Pradesh applied to the ICMR for plasma therapy but did not get the permission,” he said. He added that treatment would be given as a part of the trial.

Elaborating on the process, the doctor said that ethical committee is given a proposal, which is a detailed information of how the experiment will be carried out and what are

the advantages and disadvantages. “Experts in the committee review the same and if they give their consent, the experiment is carried forward. This experiment is called a trial,” he explained. He added that clinical trials were carried out on a number of patients.

Meanwhile, the condition of a patient from Orai who was given plasma therapy was said to be stable. “We will be slowly withdrawing his ventilator parameter,” the doctor said.

Government asks CMOs to start immunisation programme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has asked chief medical officers to launch immunisation programme in their respective areas by the end of this week. “Because of COVID-19 pandemic, the focus was shifted to prevention and protection of people from this dreaded disease due to which the immunisation programme was hampered. We have now asked the CMOs to start immunisation programme at the earliest,” Principal Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said here on Wednesday.

He said that there had been delay of a month-and-half and according to experts it

would not be much detrimental. Talking about starting emergency services in selected hospitals, mostly private, Prasad said that training programme of the nodal officers of private hospitals was conducted on Wednesday on how to follow the protocol to prevent infection in hospitals.

“Now, these hospitals are authorised to commence the emergency services,” Prasad said. However, he clearly stated that it was not compulsory for all patients admitted in the emergency to undertake COVID-19 test. “Only those patients will be asked for the test who have the symptoms. Others will not be forced to undertake the test,” he said.

He said that pool tests were done in 12 labs and on Tuesday 332 pool tests of 1,612 samples only 15 were positive while the rest were negative.

A total of 73,716 samples have been sent for testing of which 2,134 were found positive while 70,436 were negative and results of 1,146 were awaited. “On Wednesday, the department held a training programme for smart sample collections as per the guidelines of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). In the past we have observed that several samples were returned from the labs as they were not properly taken or preserved. The training was given for such things,” he added.

Kanika pleads innocence in statement given to police

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Sarojininar police recorded the statement of Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor through her lawyer on Wednesday. She was served a notice on Monday and asked to record her statement by April 30. Kanika pleaded innocence and said she landed in India from the UK on March 10 when there was no government advisory on self-quarantine. She insisted that she committed no offence and violated no rules. She said she got herself tested and no one who came in her contact tested positive for coronavirus.

Earlier, her counsel called the police and requested them to send a team to her house in Shalimar Gallant Apartment in

Mahanagar where she handed over her statement in writing to the police. Sarojininar SHO said law would take its own course. “We have recorded the statement of the singer and it will be attached with the probe report,” he said.

On April 9, the Lucknow police had started preparing a questionnaire to quiz Kanika Kapoor after her isolation period was over. On Monday, she was served a notice. The singer was admitted to SGPGI from where she was discharged after testing negative for Covid-19 twice. A case was lodged against the singer a few weeks back for hiding her travel history and attending parties after returning from London. She was charged under IPC sections 269/270 by the Sarojininar police.

Pandemic a chance to change lifestyle: Doc

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Medical experts say that lifestyle will have to be redesigned when the lockdown opens because things will not be the same for quite some time. Head of KGMU's Respiratory Medicine department Dr Surya Kant Tripathi said that in Covid-19 pandemic, people have a big opportunity to change their lifestyle.

“We have changed certain things because of lockdown and the need of the hour is to continue with them. For example, avoiding handshakes and washing hands have to be strictly followed. Latest findings show that shoes can cause the spread of the disease as the virus stays on shoes for the longest (five days). Hence, the shoe rack must be kept outside the house along with hand-washing arrangements. This is something which the grand-

mothers have been saying since time immemorial,” he said.

“Before Covid-19 happened, most of people may not be washing their hands before taking meals, and it was a regular feature to see people shaking hands in parties while eating. It is now important that there should be a handwashing area in dining spaces even in commercial places,” he added.

Dr Tripathi asserted that one should not wait for medicines or vaccine for coronavirus but focus on increasing their

‘Just the right time to get rid of addiction’

Lucknow (PNS): The current lockdown is just the right opportunity for getting out of addiction, head of KGMU's Respiratory Medicine department Dr Surya Kant Tripathi said, adding that those addicted to tobacco and alcohol should use the lockdown period for de-addiction.

Those having any kind of addiction should first of all confess to their family members about the problem. “Ask your family members to support you for getting rid of addiction,” he said.

He said whenever an addict has the urge, he could begin exploring the talents of his family members. “He can

tell his wife to sing, tell his father to narrate a story, or ask his children to cook, play some musical instruments to divert his mind,” he said.

Dr Tripathi said that the urge could also be negated by diverting the mind to activities of liking. “If you like dancing, begin dancing when you get the urge or if you like reading or watching serial, do that just to avoid the craving. Watch your favourite films, shows, play games and chess and adopt some method of diversion,” he said. He added that one could also improve the will power through meditation.

immunity. “Don't convert your children into burger-munchers, try to make them eat as much vegetables as possible. Also, give one hour to yourself and do meditation and ‘pranayam’ because it helps increase immunity,” he said.

Medical expert Dr Ishwar Gilada said everything would change, be it the commuting pattern or living in the house when lockdown opened.

“Seats in buses and trains will have to be properly spaced out with different patterns. In

Uttar Pradesh, it is often seen that over 20 people sit in a tempo with a capacity of 8-10. Now, people cannot afford this as it poses a major health risk,” he pointed out.

He added that one would have to think with respect to every person being a coronavirus suspect. “For the visitors coming home, you have to open and close the doors for them. For marriages, there has to be minimal gathering, and the use of the masks will be a must,” he added.



Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Naveen Arora inspected the hotspots in Nakkhas, Birhana and Karheta under Chowk, Naka and Bazaarkhala police stations, respectively, to take stock of the situation. The JCP briefed the cops about their duties. He also motivated the personnel on duty and gave masks, sanitisers and energy drinks to them

Pioneer

Domestic help found hanging in employer's house

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 20-year-old domestic help was found hanging at her employer's house in Mahanagar on Wednesday morning. Though police said she ended her life, they failed to explain the reason. She was a native of Bahraich while her parents live in Sarvodaya Nagar locality in Lucknow. Her father works as a labourer and the family's financial condition was said to be very poor.

As per reports, she got the job at the house of Prashant Amarnani of Basera Palace in New Hyderabad through Sapna placement agency. She started her job at Prashant's house in January earlier this year and would stay in a room on the top floor.

Around 10:15 pm on Tuesday, Prashant and his family members had dinner after which the domestic help worked in the kitchen and then left for her room upstairs. Prashant told the police that when she did not wake up by 11 am, his aunt gave her calls but the latter did not respond.

“My aunt pushed the doors and was shocked to see the maid hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around her neck,” Prashant told the police.

The police said the maid was found hanging from a pipe stretched between two walls. “Since we did not find any suicide note, it is not clear as to why she ended her life.

THOUGH POLICE SAID SHE ENDED HER LIFE, THEY FAILED TO EXPLAIN THE REASON. SHE WAS A NATIVE OF BAHRAICH WHILE HER PARENTS LIVE IN SARVODAYA NAGAR LOCALITY IN LUCKNOW

We have informed her parents while the body was being sent for autopsy,” the police said. A spokesman said the probe had been assigned to sub-inspector Abhay Pratap Singh.

Interestingly, the police did not quiz the employer and his family members to know why the maid ended her life.

Meanwhile, in another case, a class XII girl student ended her life at her house in Indira Nagar some time on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday. The girl, identified as Roshni (16) of Jarhara village in the area, retired to her room after having dinner on Tuesday. On Wednesday morning, her brother Roshan found her hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around her neck. He called his father Shyam Sunder Sah, who is a mason, and later informed the police. The cops said they were trying to find out the reason why she chose to end her life. However, he ruled out the possibility of foul play.

Brother duo nabbed for selling drugs to addicts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Defying police vigil in view of the lockdown, two brothers were found selling ganja and smack illegally from their shop in Barikala locality in Thakurganj. Police said they were providing psychotropic substances to addicts in lieu of the ornaments which they would either purchase from the customers at throwaway rates or keep the same as mortgage.

Some residents tipped off senior police officers about the same and a special team of JCP (Law & Order) worked on the case. A team led by Dharma Kushwaha conducted a raid and nabbed the brother duo. They were identified as Sumer (40) and

Rakesh (50), both of Barikala. The police recovered 1.4 kg ganja, 96 gram of smack, a country-made pistol & two live cartridges, an electronic balance, two IMFL pints, a pair of silver anklets, a gold mangalsutra and a gold lock-et besides Rs 26,250 in cash.

The police said since the accused also violated prohibitory orders, they were challaned for the offence. While the police remained evasive when asked to shed light on the recovery of ornaments, sources said the accused used to take the same from drug addicts to give their their dose.

“During lockdown, drug addicts who come from poor families were also selling ornaments to purchase psy-

chotropic substances,” they said. Kushwaha said the accused were also booked under Epidemic Act apart from Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act. He said the accused used to force drug addicts to bring jewellery if they ran short of cash.

Meanwhile, the Kakori police arrested four persons on the charges of theft and recovered huge quantity of stolen goods from their possession on Wednesday. Those arrested were identified as Mohit and Pradeep Verma (both of Thakurganj), Nagendra of Kakori and Fakhruddin of Hardoi. The police claimed that the accused were arrested near Joggers' Park in the area.

LDA extends last date for payment of installment

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) on Wednesday extended the last date for paying monthly installment to June 30 and decided to resume civil work at the Samajwadi Housing scheme at Devpur in Para area.

The decision was taken at a special meeting which was presided over by LDA Vice-Chairman SK Dwivedi. He said although the LDA administration had resolved to resume the civil work, it would start only after the district administration gave permission. He said the housing towers were 99 per cent ready and only finishing touches were required. Chief engineer IS Singh has been asked to negotiate with the district administration officials so that the project could be completed and flats handed over to buyers as soon as possible.

LU holds e-symposium with Brazilian university

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow University, in association with Federal University (Ceara), on Wednesday organised an Indo-Brazilian e-symposium on solid state properties of pharmaceuticals. Head of Physics department Poonam Tandon said both the universities have a long-term collaboration in this field.

Several researchers participated in the e-symposium along with LU Vice-Chancellor Alok Kumar Rai, and Brazilian coordinator of the workshop Alejandro Pedro Ayala from the University of Ceara.

Head of international cooperation, Department of Science and Technology, SK Varshney said the primary function of the research-based pharmaceutical corporations was to create value by discovering and producing effective

medicines, vaccines and services that improve patients' well-being.

“Both India and Brazil are the emerging economies and should work on co-development of new pharmaceutical molecules in order to not only cut down on the cost but also to save time. It is an appropriate time for this Indo-Brazilian e-symposium. Solid state properties of pharmaceuticals such as polymorphism, formation of hydrates and solvates, degree of crystallinity, and mechanical properties have profound effects on the quality of drug substances and drug products,” he said.

He said that the study of such properties are important during quality control testing of drugs with respect to solubility, dissolution, bioavailability, and stability.

Future of film shootings in city appears to be bleak

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Line producers in the city or those who make arrangements for film units coming to the state capital from other parts of the country see a bleak future in terms of resumption of shootings. Though shootings may revive, no big stars would come as only ad films with lesser known actors were likely to be shot in near future, they opined. While some said this year would go waste and the situation would change by next year, others were of the opinion that they were looking at August and September for

shootings to revive, if the state government gave its nod.

However, majority of line producers admitted that social distancing, which looks to be an important aspect for quite some time to come, would be difficult to manage in film shootings. “However bad the things may appear for showbiz, but as Raj Kapoor said that the show must go on,” a producer said. Line producer Amber Saxena, whose last film in the city was ‘I am Draupadi’, said it was a dismal scenario but he would stick to the profession which he has given so many years. He said

he got a few queries for shooting of an advertisement film before the first lockdown was extended but since then, there had been no offers.

“We have no salaries and we are dependent on the work we get, and there are so many people who are associated with us such as lightmen and actors who left their jobs in private companies to work here but now they are jobless. We are trying to support them but for how long,” he wondered. Amber said it was true that shooting in the aftermath of coronavirus would be very difficult. “A few years

back when a South Indian film was being shot here, Lucknow was facing the problem of swine flu, and one of the staff members contracted the infection because of which shooting was impacted. This unit had over 200 people. It was a small issue but we faced so many problems because of that,” he said, adding that big film stars were unlikely to come for shooting and that there was no scope of shootings for a year.

“The least we can do is shoot a web series which requires 30-40 people from the staff to be present,” he said. He

said he was not thinking of changing the profession because he had been too long in the field to leave.

“However, I have started dabbling in writing stories and found a financier for them,” he added.

Another line producer Arun Singh said that he was expecting the scene to get better in August. Singh last wound up shooting for ‘Bhool Bhulaiyya-2’ on March 13 while others continued to shoot for other films till March 21. “We wound up the shooting because my technical recee for a web series, which had to

be shot in Lucknow, got cancelled and we realised that coronavirus was becoming a big issue,” he recalled. He pointed out that people were still inquiring about shooting venues and it was surprising.

He said shooting with social distancing was possible because most of the people in the unit stand at a distance. “Except for the crowd scenes, things can be managed. Epidemics have happened in the past and things have improved,” he said, adding that he would continue with his profession and was not thinking of giving up.

Three more corona positive cases found in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

This holy city is facing a serious threat in the manner a medicine wholesaler spread the COVID-19, becoming a dangerous carrier of coronavirus pandemic. Three more corona positive patients have been found here on Wednesday and all of them came into the contacts of the wholesaler. With this, the number of corona patients has increased to 52 in the district. The most dangerous aspect of this new development is the spread of the virus in a large number of new areas whereas earlier, the episode of Tablighi Jamaat Markaz (Delhi) was mainly concentrated in 2-3 areas. This new serious twist has forced the local administration to increase the number of hotspots from eight to 17 during the last two days. Besides, realising the dangerous turn of situation, the district administration has totally sealed the entire Nagar Nigam areas during the days and due to this, even the biggest foodgrain market of Purvanchal (eastern UP), Visheshwarganj, which generally saw rush of retailers during morning hours since the lockdown has imposed, wore a deserted look.

According to the District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma, the three new COVID-19 patients are a medicine seller (aged 45) from Mehmoorganj, who supplies drugs to Bihar, a Sapt Sagar wholesaler (25) owns a shop near earlier affected trader and lives in Maidagin area and an employee (29) working in same market and stays in Badi Piyari area. A day ago, out of 12 positive patients, eight were either related to that wholesaler or came into his contacts. Out of 52 COVID-19 patients in Varanasi, 43 are active while eight have been discharged while one has died.

Taking the matter seriously, the senior officers held a meeting and decided that till May 3 midnight no shops would be allowed to be opened and the home delivery of items like ration, vegetables, domestic gas, milk and medicines will be made till 6 pm and the pass-



Security at new hotspot Mukhimganj (Adampur) in Varanasi on Wednesday

Pioneer

es issued to home delivery men earlier would remain effective now.

Any new retailers can get their passes from district supply officer by getting names registered calling on helpline number 1077.

The sellers can sell milk between 11 am and 12 noon but by keeping their outlets closed. Only eight vegetable markets including Bhojubar, Lamhi, Pahadia, Panchkoshi, Chanduwa Satti, Sundarpur, Ramnagar Chowk and Nuwan will remain open between 3 am and 6 am. In Pahadia Mandi, 'odd and even' system will be implemented.

The decision on Sapt Sagar, Nehru Market and Bulanala medicine markets would be taken soon. However, medicine shops of private hospital premises will remain open round-the-clock. The banks, government offices, petrol pumps will remain open as usual and there would be no ban on social organisations distributing food and ration packets. The construction work would also continue and their vehicles would be allowed. These new arrangements would be for Nagar Nigam areas and all the other prior arrangements would continue

in rural areas during lockdown period.

Meanwhile, the district administration had already sealed all six new hotspots made a day ago deploying heavy police forces apart from sealing the affected localities. These hotspots are Sapt Sagar market (under Kotwali police station), Mukhimganj (Adampur), Kashipura (Chowk), Revari Talab (Bhelupur), Kazipura Khurd (Sigra) and Sanjay Nagar Colony Pahadia (Lalpur). The action is going on to seal the other three new hotspots including in affected areas of Maidagin, Mehmoorganj and Badi Piyari area. Besides, it has become a tough and hectic time for administration and Health department teams to collect samples of family members and others of all these affected patients found during the last two days.

FOODGRAIN DISTRIBUTION: The district administration has decided to distribute foodgrain of May month from fair price shop between May 1 and 12. But the card holders would get only rice and wheat from the shop. The Antyodaya card holders, active MNRREGA card holders, labourers registered in labour

office have ration cards and those who have cards of eligible household released by local body would get ration free of cost from fair price shop.

The District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma on Wednesday informed that these shops were also directed to distribute free of cost 35 kg foodgrain to those have Antyodaya card, MNRREGA card, labourers registered with labour office and have card of household and those who have card of household issued by local body as the rate of per unit. The DM appealed the card holders to lodge their complaint at toll free number-1800-1800-150 and district level control room number-0542-2221939 if the shopkeepers make less weight of foodgrain so as the stern action could be ascertained against them.

Meanwhile, the Police Public Annapurna Bank continued making ration kits and food available to needy persons and poor. It may be noted here that the bank had been opened on the directive of ADG to help the needy persons and poor by providing rations. In this bank, the social organisations and individuals make foodgrain available to make the same available to needy persons.

Review meeting to provide easy medical services to COVID-19 patients held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A review meeting was held at the Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Tuesday, to provide easy medical services to the COVID-19 patients and discussed the challenges being faced by the coronavirus pandemic. Presiding over the meeting, rector Prof VK Shukla said that the IMS is committed to provide timely treatment to every needy patients and no obstruction will be allowed in this work. He said that the IMS is fully prepared to deal with COVID-19 and necessary materials and equipment related to it are available in the institute. He said that emergency services are on in the hospital and it is being given to patients who need emergency medical treatment.

He advised that the patients and their families coming to Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) for emergency services are expected to download the

'Aarogya Setu App' on their mobile phones. At the same time, enter the hospital premises only after covering the mouths of patients and relatives with masks or gamchhas (scarfs). Apart from this, it will also be necessary for them to bring a valid identity card such as Aadhar cards, PAN cards, Jan Dhan passbooks, ration cards or BPL cards. IMS Director Prof RK Jain, medical superintendent of SSH, Prof SK Mathur, professor incharge of Trauma Centre, Prof SK Gupta, COVID-19 nodal officer Prof Jaya Chakraborty, deputy medical superintendent (DMS) of SSH Prof GN Srivastava, DMS of Trauma Centre, Prof Ghanshyam Yadav and many other departmental heads of IMS were also present.

Meanwhile, at Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital, Pandeypur, the health workers were given 5,000 masks by Janmitra Nyas and Child Rights and You (Cry) to protect them from corona

infection. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kashi Vishwanath Temple Vishal Singh, on behalf of Janamitra Trust, presented the masks to the hospital administration. Besides, 15 boxes (2160 packets) of biscuits were also provided by the trust for the patients. Almost all the positive COVID-19 patients of Varanasi division are being treated at DDU Hospital and many of them were returned home after their recovery.

The masks were donated to Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) Dr Vishweshwar Shukla. Speaking on the occasion, Vishal Singh emphasised to make better and effective efforts to prevent spreading of coronavirus pandemic.

'It is very important to keep doctors and para-medical staff safe from the infection of COVID-19. Vigilance is necessary at all levels to prevent the health workers from infection. In this regard, in the private hospitals of the city, effective

efforts should be made to prevent it,' he said, emphasising on maintaining regular and smooth supply of oxygen in hospitals treating COVID-19 patients. He praised trustees Shrutu Nagvanshi of Janmitra Trust and Dr Lenin Raghuvanshi of People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR) for providing masks.

CMS Dr Vishweshwar Shukla said that the battle against corona can be won only when special attention is given to maintain social distancing. Superintendent Dr Ramkumar Yadav was also present. Shrutu Nagvanshi said that 17,500 masks were made available, out of which 5,000 masks have been distributed to the DDU Hospital and the remaining masks will be given to Primary Health Centres (PHCs) of Harahuwa, Pindara, Basni, Puarikala and Zakkhini. The masks will also be provided to all Anganwadi workers, she added.

IIT-BHU adds UVGI system in COVID-19 Lab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Realising the urgent need to develop low cost, multi-purpose instruments for effective sanitisation in prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, Allywing Solutions, an incubated company of Malviya Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (MCIE) in Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU), has come up with innovative ready to use UVC based products. This system has been installed at the first floor of Shatabdi Super Specialty Hospital Block of Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) in BHU.

'We are offering our clients a wide range of Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) system. Our advanced systems assure the elimination of biological contaminants such as viruses, bacteria, mold, spores, allergens, and hundreds of other airborne contaminants. We make this possible by effectively and efficiently treating



moving air with UV-C radiation,' said MCIE coordinator Prof PK Mishra. Highlighting its working principle, he

said that as per latest research publications, Ultraviolet-C light-based steriliser can kill a range of microorganisms including viruses (including SARS syndrome coronavirus, Nipah virus etc.) and bacteria in a short period. The system has series of UV lamps (depending on size of place of installation) with each having capacity of 22 watts. Any virus can be deactivated up to 99% by the UVGI dose of 2400 microwattsec/cm2, however this system can produce UVGI dose of more than 2400 microwattsec/cm2 which ensures the dose in excess of this for complete inactivation of coronavirus.

'This system is also working on auto timer to ensure the safety of user against the UV dose. Moreover, visual red/green indicator ensures safety to workers again UV hazards. The system may be applied in hospitals, operation theaters, ICU & IVF Labs, microbiological labs, special wards, dental facilities, laboratories, pharmaceutical units, patient care wards etc,' he said.

PAC jawans deployed at coronavirus hotspots

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

For effective enforcement of lockdown, the police authorities have now deployed Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in coronavirus hotspots areas.

DIG Anant Deo said four companies of PAC had been deployed in hotspot areas while a team of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) had also arrived to manage sanitisation work in the city.

The DIG said that with the civil police personnel deployed in hotspot areas getting infected by the coronavirus, it had become very difficult to enforce lockdown in the interior of the hotspot localities and so it was decided to deploy PAC at a few places.

The PAC jawans took out a route march in Gwaltoli, Collectorganj, Babupurwa, Beconganj, Chamanganj and many other hotspot areas on Tuesday and Wednesday, sending out a clear message that lockdown violation would not

3 more corona +ve cases in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Three more coronavirus positive cases have come to light in Kanpur City during the past 24 hours even as one persons succumbed to COVID-19 in the city, taking the toll to four.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla told media persons that the number of coronavirus positive cases in the city stood at 200 as on Wednesday afternoon. He said there were 179 active cases and they were undergoing treatment at various hospitals while around 70 COVID-19 patients had recovered.

Meanwhile, Kanpur Municipal

Commissioner Akshay Tripathi said that to prevent spread of coronavirus, the Kanpur Nagar Nigam had stepped up its sanitisation drives. He said all the jetting machines, and hand-held machines had been pressed into service to sanitise all areas as per the roster.

Tripathi said on Wednesday, the sanitisation drive was carried out in Transport Nagar, Sabzi Mandi, Kidwai Nagar, Binagwan, Parampurwa, Kidwai Nagar (north), Kidwai Nagar (south), Ajitganj, Vasant Vihar, Juhimampur Road, Jarauli, Naubasta (west), Khadeypur, Usmanpur, Barra, Karrahi, Babupurwa and Juhi Kalan.

be tolerated at any cost. They also asked the local residents to remain inside their houses.

The SDRF team would take up the sanitisation work in the city. SDRF Sub-Inspector Shyam Babu said the team members were fully trained and would soon take over their responsibility of sanitising the police lines, police stations and other hotspot areas.

Meanwhile, swab samples of around 200 policemen were collected at the police lines on Tuesday and their report was awaited. The drive to collect samples would continue for identification of cops infected by the virus.

The DIG ordered checking of trucks entering the city to prevent entry of people from other districts. He said there

were reports that people of other districts were entering the city by hiding in trucks arriving here via Naubasta Galla Mandi border. He said all trucks arriving in Naubasta Galla Mandi should be minutely checked. He said the grain traders had also been asked to inform the police if they see any outsider in trucks entering the city border.

Nodal officer inspects multi-storied complex

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Principal Secretary and COVID-19 Nodal Officer Nitin Ramesh Gokaran along with District Magistrate BR Tiwari and DIG Anant Dev on Wednesday visited the multi-storied KDA Dreams in Panki that has been identified as a quarantine area as per the COVID-19 protocol.

The complex built by Kanpur Development Authority has 350 vacant flats.

Gokaran said with the rise in number of coronavirus positive cases, it had been decided to keep active patients in this multi-storey complex and thus

necessary modifications and arrangements were being made on a priority basis. He said those who would be housed in the complex would strictly follow social distancing.

The nodal officer said medical team and food and other necessary facilities would be arranged in the complex.

The district magistrate said Halim Degree College was nearly ready to accommodate patients. The other places identified as quarantine areas include DTS School, Sir Syed Public School, Eastern Public School all in Jajmau, he added.

Tiwari said foolproof preventive measures had been

taken in buses that would ferry coronavirus patients or their contacts.

He said the driver's cabin had been totally sealed and the passengers' space had been covered by special air-tight transparent seal to prevent infection from spreading. He said similar measures were being taken in ambulances and other vehicles used for ferrying patients or contacts.

The district magistrate said Rotary Club of Kanpur west has donated a huge consignment of sanitiser, gloves, hood caps and masks for the police personnel on duty. Rotary Club president Anil Agarwal said it

DRM inspects Kanpur station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Divisional Rail Manager Amitabh Kumar inspected the railway stations from Prayagraj to Etawah on Wednesday. The inspection was in the wake of restarting the operation of trains after the lockdown. He expressed concern over the security of railwaymen and directed officials to provide masks, gloves and sanitiser to all the staff members to enable them to discharge their duties in a safe environment. At the Kanpur Central railway station, Kumar enquired about the working of sanitiser equipment from the



workman present there. He also took stock of the availability of sanitiser, mask etc. from the railway officers for the safety of railway staff from coronavirus. During inspection, when Deputy Station Superintendent Dharendra Singh reached there covering his face with the handkerchief,

the DRM took him to task and asked him to use proper mask every time.

During the inspection, Kumar alighted at the Panki, GMC and Kanpur central station and took stock of the situation from Station Director Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay and Station Superintendent

RPN Trivedi and inspected the operations management, driver and guard lobbies there.

Talking to media persons, the DRM said in order to ensure availability of essential commodities, operation of goods train and parcel cargo express was on. 'For this, railwaymen on duty in these trains should also remain safe and protected from the virus. Hence, the department has started making stock of sanitiser, mask, coverall kit, tunnel etc. in huge quantity in advance for the use by its employees,' he said. Kumar said all these arrangements were being made for the safety of railwaymen.

Panel to probe arrest of AU prof formed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Allahabad University (AU) authorities have constituted a high level committee to probe the circumstances and events leading to the arrest of a political science department professor.

The professor along with 29 others including, 16 jamaatis from Indonesia and Thailand was arrested on April 20 night for hiding his travel history and also making arrangements for the stay of nine jamaatis at a mosque in Sangam city. The university suspended him soon after the incident.

The fact finding committee constituted by officiating Vice-Chancellor Prof Rajiv Ranjan Tiwari would be headed by Prof KK Upadhyay of Ghazipur. Upadhyay is also the proctor of the university.

The other members of the committee include Prof Anuradha Agrawal, Prof KP Singh and Prof Shabnam Hamid, while AU registrar Prof NK Shukla would be assisting the committee as secretary.

Upadhyay said that they would soon be meeting on the campus, keeping in mind the social distancing norms and scrutinise all relevant papers and information regarding the issue and then submit their reports, he added.

The findings of the committee would be tabled at the meeting of the Executive Council of Allahabad

University.

ANSARI WRITES TO CJ OF HIGH COURT : Afzal Ansari, Member of Parliament, Ghazipur has written a letter to the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court highlighting the prohibitory order banning azaan (call to prayer) by the district administration.

In a letter dated April 26 last, it was stated in the letter that everyone has been diligently following the coronavirus induced lockdown in the entire country and prayers and gathering in mosques or any other religious places continue to be prohibited but azaan was allowed in every mosque throughout the state and other parts of the country.

The letter stipulates that all of a sudden from April 24 onward, it was found that the azaan from mosques is prohibited by local administration and police and that if anyone dared to make azaan they would be booked under the National Security Act.

In light of this, the MP prayed for directions from the court to allow azaan from the respective mosque within the district, the petitioner avers that doing so would protect Fundamental Rights of people of Ghazipur.

NCR CONTROL ROOMS ASSISTING ON FREIGHT, PARCEL INFORMATION: North Central Control Rooms of North Central Railway (NCR) are operational 24x7 to assist customers on freight, parcel and

other important information.

Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has issued guidelines making use of Arogya Setu app mandatory for all government officials. In a directive issued here on Wednesday, DoPT has directed for download of the app by all government employees and self-assessment through this app before leaving for the office, the app should show 'safe' or 'low risk' status. It further says that if app shows 'moderate' or 'high risk' calculated on Bluetooth proximity (recent contact with infected person), such official should not attend office and need to self-isolate for 14 days or till app shows 'safe' or 'low risk'. Railway board has already advised that Arogya Setu developed by Ministry of Ayush is quite helpful in fight against COVID-19 to students, faculty/teacher Railway employees and their families.

Further it is also advised that Ministry of Ayush has also developed a protocol for immunity boosting measures for selfcare for Railway servants and their family members. General Manager Rajiv Chaudhry has been stressing regularly for maximising download of this app by Railway fraternity and total of about 1.05 lakh downloads of this app are done by Railway employees and their family members on NCR. This useful app can be downloaded and shared through following links : iOS: ttps ://

apps.apple.com/in/app/aarogyasetu/id1505825357

Android : ttps://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nic.goi.aarogyasetu

During extended lockdown period till May 3, NCR has taken 360 degree approach to improve freight and parcel transportation to ensure that no dearth of essential item is faced in any part of the country. With motto to transport even the smallest packet of essential commodity it has already loaded 7.8 lakh tonnes freight and booked 165 tonnes parcel till April 28, 2020.

To ensure that no hardship is faced by customers and all query related to freight and parcel operations from anyone and everyone is answered on realtime basis, NCR has made elaborate arrangements through following means .

Any information on timetabled parcel trains can be obtained fromwww.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Round-the-clock functional national helpline numbers 139 and 138. 138 being geofenced will connect to caller with nearest divisional control. Commercial control of divisions are also responding to any query from customers and can be approached on Prayagraj: 9794837343, 9794837285, Jhansi: 9794831208 , 05102446066 andAgra : 9760537860 besides a Centralised Helpline Number (SETU) of NCR at 9794835988.

‘Ensure payment to farmers within 72 hrs’

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Commissioner Chitrakootdham division Gaurav Dayal and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Chitrakootdham range Deepak Kumar inspected the wheat purchase centre and shelter home being run in scheduled caste hostel in Mahoba on Tuesday. During the inspection of wheat purchase centre at Mandi Sthal being run by Kendriya Upphokta Bhandar and Vipran Kendra, Mahoba. Commissioner Dayal instructed District Food Marketing Officer Mahoba RK Pandey to ensure payment to farmers against the purchase of wheat within 72 hours. Commissioner Dayal directed the official to achieve the target of wheat purchase of district Mahoba. Commissioner instructed the official to ensure social distancing at all wheat purchase centres in the district. Commissioner Dayal spoke to



Commissioner Chitrakootdham division Gaurav Dayal and DIG Range Deepak Kumar inspecting a wheat purchase centre in Mahoba on Tuesday

who had been kept under quarantine. Commissioner directed DM Mahoba to maintain transparency in the ration being made available to the poor and needy by the government. Commissioner asked the DM to ensure proper distribution of ration among the poor in the district. Commissioner told *The Pioneer* that everything was found satisfactory during inspection. Dayal said that DM has been directed to ensure proper implementation of lockdown guidelines and take stern action against those who did not follow social distancing guidelines and were found without face masks. Dayal said that DM was instructed to ensure cross-checking of all wheat purchase centres by SDMs on a regular basis and send him a feedback. Among those present during the inspection were Mahoba District Magistrate Awdhesh Kumar Tiwari and SP Manilal Patidar.

dozen farmers and took a feedback from them too. Commissioner asked DFMO about the purchase of gram, lentil and mustard. The DFMO said that the purchase of these items had been started at Vishishtha Mandi Raipura and Mandi Samiti Charkhari. Commissioner directed him

to start the purchase of gram, lentils and mustard at Mahoba Mandi Sthal at the earliest. Later commissioner and DIG inspected shelter home made for the people who had been kept under quarantine there. Commissioner directed Mahoba DM to make quality food available to the people

Masks given to homeguards, others

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Aditya Prakash Verma made people aware about novel coronavirus due to which lockdown was in force in the country.

On Wednesday at the traffic trifurcation masks were distributed among swachchhta mitra, homeguards and police personnel. It may be pointed



out here to check the spread of coronavirus pandemic the government has made wearing of masks mandatory and ordered action against those without them.

Under the present situation the contribution of homeguards and policemen were working hard day and night and ensuring that the people followed lockdown guidelines and 'swachchhta mitra' was laudable.

uperintendent of Police (Traffic) Aditya Prakash Verma distributed masks among such corona warriors so that they could take care of their health and make people aware about the infection.

Among those present during the distribution of masks were Akhtiar Ahmed Ansari, Vinod Kumar Sharma, Sunil Kumar Sinhal and JP Singh Yadav.

Efforts of police personnel lauded

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

President Rashtriya Jan Udyog Vyapar Sangthan Oran Anand Shivhare along with SHO Bisanda Pratima Singh and officer incharge Oran police outpost took a round of the town here recently. The residents of Oran showered flowers on SHO Bisanda ps Pratima Singh and her team for doing several welfare works in the town during the ongoing lockdown period. The traders of Oran town lauded the sincere efforts of SHO Pratima Singh for providing free ration kits among the needy and poor. SHO Bisanda Pratima Singh said that lockdown guidelines were being implemented in Oran police station area strictly.

She said that the people who did not follow lockdown guidelines were being channeled under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). She said that Superintendent of Police (SP) Banda Sddharth Shankar Meena has asked her to ensure implementation of lockdown in Bisanda area.

The Station House Officer said that people and shopkeepers were being advised to follow social distancing and wear masks while coming out of their houses due to urgent works. She said that people of Bisanda town were extending full support to the police in maintaining law and order.

Maintenance going on

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Maintenance of signalling and telecommunication equipment in the North Eastern Railway (NER) was continuing uninterrupted during the nationwide lockdown implemented to prevent Covid-19 infection. Signal and telecommunication equipment contribute to the safety and improved passenger amenities of the railways. Thus during the ongoing lockdown various signal devices were maintained for the protected movement of trains such as 4,033 point machines used in signals, 6,421 track circuits, 147 axle counters, 437 block instruments, 462 level crossings, 205 gate phones and 35 intermediate block huts. The maintenance of battery of optical fibre cable at 128 stations, public communication system /train display board at 75 stations besides Wi-Fi at 268 stations was done regularly throughout the lockdown. Thus rail safety has been strengthened by regular maintenance of signal and telecommunication equipment. During the lockdown ground connection of 31 point machines and six old electric point machines were replaced. Along with it 1,335 metres of defective optical fiber cable and 2,675

metres of defective signalling cable were changed. Besides as many as 219 old and defective batteries and 47 defective booms



at level crossings were also replaced. During this time surveillance/monitoring panel has been developed and established at Lucknow Junction, Lucknow City and Aishbagh stations. Similarly, a diagnostic panel has been installed at the Kopa Samhota station. Network management system and datalogger have been connected to surge protection device (SOD) for remote monitoring. Railway safety has also been strengthened with such developmental works.

100 PPE kits donated

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

As many as 70 PPE kits were donated by CEO Kannan Foundation, Noida, Praveen Singh to Government Allopathic Medical College (GAMC) Banda on Wednesday. Principal Dr Mukesh Yadav appreciated the gesture of CEO Kannan Foundation Noida Praveen Singh for making available 70 PPE kits to GAMC Banda. Later Praveen Singh told *The Pioneer* that he had donated 100 PPEs in the district. He had given 10 PPE kits to District Mahila Hospital Banda and 20 others to Tindwari primary health centre (PHC) on Wednesday. Singh said that he was a resident of Amara village in Tindwari area. After completing his education he started the foundation in Noida. He said that he came to know

about the Covid-19 cases in Banda so he decided to donate PPE kits to Medical College Banda, District Mahila Hospital Banda and PHC Naraini. Singh said that he had also identified 500 poor families who required financial assistance. He said that he had distributed ₹1,000 among 172 such families of the villages of Tindwari, Pailani and Jaspura towns. He said that remaining people would also be distributed ₹1,000 each within a week. Singh said that he had placed an order for 15,000 masks which would be distributed among the poor and needy people of the district. Those present on the occasion were district president, BJP Ramkesh Nishad, BJP Youth leader, Swadesh Gaurav Shivhare Golu, general secretary BJP Akhilesh Nath, Banda, Rajat seth, Dileep Gupta, Baburam, Prashant Singh and Nikhil Saxena.

Teenager commits suicide

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

A 18-year-old girl Sharjahan committed suicide by hanging herself with the help of a dupatta in Belwa Babu village under the Chauri Chaura

police station on Tuesday evening. On getting information about the matter police reached the spot, took the body of the deceased into their custody and sent it for the post-mortem examination.

6,000 lunch packets distributed

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

As many as 6,000 lunch packets were distributed among the needy in different parts of the city on Wednesday. MLA Prakash Dwivedi said that they were distributed in Padmakar Chauraha, Station Road, Civil Lines, Sutarkhana, Rahuniya, Khaipar, Chhoti Bazar, Khatla, Aliganj, Chhawani, Ramleela Road, Roadways bus stand, Jawahar Nagar, Maharana

Pratap Chauraha, Jheel ka Purwa, Swaraj Colony, Shukul Kuwan, Kalu Kuwan, Kyotara, Karbala, Muktidham, Rahuniya, Bangalipura, Noniya Mohal and Peeli Kothi. Those who distributed these lunch packets were Rajat Seth, Ankit Agnihotri, Anurudha Tripathi, Vishwa Prakash Srivastava, Pushkar Dwivedi, Rajesh Gupta, Anil Singh, Santosh Rajput, Pankaj raikawar, Mahendra Singh Kachhwah, Ankit Agnihotri,

Rahul Dwivedi. MLA Dwivedi talking to *The Pioneer* said that he had directed party workers to distribute the lunch packets among the poor and needy so that no one was remained hungry in entire Banda Vidhan Sabha area. He said that he was meeting the poor and needy and asking about their grievances so that they could be redressed at his level. He said that distribution of lunch packets would continue during lockdown period.

Vartika Mahila Mandal lends a helping hand

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

Various voluntary organisations of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Rihand station are providing food items and other essential facilities to the needy in view of outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Vartika Mahila Mandal, has provided a cheque of ₹15,000 to the Navodaya Mission, an organisation of employees of Rihand station



with its own fund. With this amount the Navodaya Mission will provide foodgrains and other relief materials to the sanitary workers and labourers. On the occasion Padma Iyengar, chairperson of Vartika Mahila Mandal, Rihandnagar, along with other office-bearers, Lakshmi Sahu and Madhavi Ramesh and Navodaya Mission's Amit Dhiman, Yogendra Kumar and Mukesh Kumar etc. were present.

Corona warriors' commitment to work outstanding

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The officials and employees of the North Eastern Railway (NER) are ensuring the continuous movement of goods and parcel trains during the ongoing nationwide lockdown in force to protect people in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Railway personnel on their duty are working cautiously during this difficult period. Various works are being done by them for prevention and treatment of coronavirus infection. Apart from it works of humanitarian aid are being done voluntarily by railwaymen. The NER administration was honouring its railwaymen by declaring 'Corona warriors of the day' every day. In this series five railwaymen were honoured on April 27, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.



Ashok Kumar Pandey, chief controller, central control room, Gorakhpur.



Brajmohan Sinha, senior commercial clerk, Lucknow division



Kamal Kumar, chief office superintendent, Lucknow division



Dhananjay Singh, SSE/ Electrical, Varanasi division



Kashmir Singh, technician/electrical, Ramnagar, Izzatnagar

Reports said that Ashok Kumar Pandey, working as the chief controller in the central control room of North Eastern Railway headquarters, has been continuously providing his services during the lockdown period. He was ensuring the smooth movement of goods

trains so that foodgrains reach their destination without any hindrance whatsoever. In view of Pandey's contribution Additional General Manager (AGM)) Amit Kumar Agarwal honoured him with the 'Corona Warrior of the Day' award. Likewise Brajmohan Sinha,

working as senior commercial clerk at goods shed situated in Basti station tried to prevent corona infection at his level. He prepared 160 masks himself and distributed them among the daily wagers working in goods shed and did their thermal screening. This work of Sinha was highly commend-

able. In view of this effort of his by Divisional Rail Manager (DRM) Lucknow, honoured him by adjudging him as special corona warrior of Lucknow division.

Kamal Kumar, working as the chief office superintendent in the Personnel department of Lucknow division, sent salaries

of about 14,500 employees to their accounts on time during the lockdown period. He got this difficult task done by coordinating with the officers and other employees for which he was declared the 'Corona Warrior of the Day' of Lucknow division. Likewise Dhananjay Singh,

working as senior section engineer/Electrical in the Varanasi division of Electricity department, besides doing the tasks assigned to him ensured availability of masks and sanitisers for all the employees working at the power sub-stations. Besides, he made arrangements for sanitising the workplace on time. Moreover he was ensuring uninterrupted power supply by getting necessary electrical equipment installed in the corona ward in the Mandal Hospital. As per the instructions of the railway administration only 33 per cent of the employees are being called to work. These limited employees are supplying electricity to the Mandal Hospital, divisional office and colonies. He encouraged all employees and their families to download the Aarogya Setu App. Singh's devoted to duty was indeed commendable, for which he was declared the 'Corona

Warrior of the Day' of Varanasi division.

Similarly Kashmir Singh Ram Singh, working as a technician-I/ventilation (Electrical) at Ramnagar station, made arrangements for charging. There were no arrangements for charging of coaches at Kashipur station. In order to ensure charging of isolation coaches he prepared charging line with the help of a 300-metre-long cable of 70 sq mm on platform number 3.

The work done by Kashmir Singh during this lockdown period was commendable for which he was declared the 'Corona Warrior of the Day' of Izzatnagar division. In order to boost the morale of railway workers during the lockdown period such awards will be given by the railway administration in future too. The railway administration is proud of such personnel.

History-sheeter shot at over enmity

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

A history-sheeter was shot at and seriously injured when he had gone to a temple in the village. He was admitted to district hospital for treatment by the police. On seeing his condition serious the doctors referred him to Kanpur for treatment. Police lodged an FIR against four persons who tried to kill him. According to police sources, Lalji Pandey (45), son of Ramdev Pandey, a

resident of Para Dabhani village under the Bisanda police station, had gone to a temple in the village where he was surrounded by four persons. He tried to run away from the spot but a person shot at him with a rifle. They all managed to escape from there. He sustained serious bullet injuries in right thigh. His family members informed the police about it. Later he was brought to district hospital in Banda for treatment from where he was

referred to Kanpur. Police said that the injured person told them that an influential person of the village used to catch fish in the canal and put it on the Parikrama Marg of the temple which was opposed by him. Since then he had enmity with him and wanted to take revenge. SHO Bisanda police station Pratima Singh said on the complaint of the injured that an FIR was lodged under Section 307 in which four persons were named. She said

that those who had been named in FIR were Ramkrapal, son of Siyaram, Shivmangal, Badku Yadav and Veer Yadav. SHO Pratima Singh said that Lalji was a historysheeter and 20 cases of murder, loot, attempt to murder and Goonda Act were registered against him at the Bisanda police station. SHO said that the condition of the injured was reported to be out of danger. SHO said that the culprits would be arrested soon.

Handwash machine installed

CORRESPONDENT ■ SHAHJAHANPUR

In order to prevent novel coronavirus infection a handwash machine was installed in the Nagar Nigam office.

All employees were encouraged to use masks and sanitiser regularly besides washing their hands. In order to ensure cleanliness and washing of hands and to make everyone aware an alarm was being played in the office through sound system every two hours. This arrangement was having a wide impact. This was said by Municipal Commissioner Santosh Kumar Sharma. With this arrangement all officers and employees were becoming aware about their safety and cleanliness, he said. The official added that he had directed the authorities concerned to install handwash machines at various places in the city, including hot spots, for



Municipal Commissioner Santosh Kumar Sharma inspecting sanitisation work at the Collectorate in Shahjahanpur

the benefit of sanitation workers and police personnel and the people. Municipal Commissioner got sanitisation work done in his presence at the Collectorate and other places in the city. Besides the sanitisation work was being regularly done in Mohammad Mahmud Haddaf, Chowk Ala Khan, Mullakhel, Pankhi Chowk, Bahadurganj,

Loha Mandi, Sabzi Mandi, Galla Mandi, Tareen Bahadurganj, Sadar Bazar, Chaiksi, rain basera, Azizganj, Nai Basti, Adarsh Nagar Colony, Kotwali Rajua, Hussainpura, Panchwati Wala Road, Baidharaj Wala Road, Kaku Wali Road, Kuchehri, Vikas Bhawan, behind Sadar police station, Tareen Jalalnagar and Avas Vikas Colony.

One electrocuted

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

One person was electrocuted when a handpump was being repaired at a brick kiln situated near Sikra Baraipur village under the Adalhat police station on Tuesday.

According to a report received here, the handpump located at the brick kiln was being repaired and Shankar (45), its employee, was helping the mechanics, Javed, Sanjay and Yunus there. Suddenly the rod of the handpump touched a high-voltage wire as a result of which Shankar died on the spot while Javed, Sanjay and Yunus seriously burnt. Following a complaint lodged by Anand, son of the deceased, the incharge Narainpur police outpost Shyamdhari Singh, registered a case and sent the body of the deceased for an autopsy while others were admitted to a local hospital.

Buses to fetch Maha students stuck in Kota

Dhule (Maharashtra): A fleet of 70 buses have started for Rajasthan's Kota to bring back an estimated 2,000 students from Maharashtra stranded there, an official said here on Wednesday.

The buses have been sanitized and will maintain adequate physical distancing precautions during the 650-kms journey to and from Kota. Each has two drivers.

The bus fleet is expected to reach Kota on Thursday and after the students board, will return to the state on Friday, said an official from Dhule.

The development came five days after senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan raised the issue with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on bringing

back around 6,000-7,000 students from the state who are stranded in different countries around the world besides around 2,000 stuck in Kota owing to national lockdown.

Following the plea, Thackeray asked Transport Minister Anil Parab to coordinate with the Centre and Rajasthan governments and after getting all the clearances, the buses were shown the green flag.

Minister of State for Revenue and Guardian Minister for Dhule, Abdul Sattar said that all precautions have been taken for the drivers who are provided face masks, sanitisers, besides maintaining physical distancing norms to ensure an event-free journey.

Ansar chief among 3 ultras killed in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Security forces in Jammu & Kashmir on Wednesday got a prize catch in their kitty as one of the three terrorists killed in the night long operations in Melhoora area of Shopian district was believed to be the Chief of the Al-Qaeda linked Ansar Ghazwatul Hind (AGH) terror outfit, Burhan Majid Koka.

In the encounter, three security force personnel, including a senior officer, also sustained injuries and were evacuated to hospital for medical treatment.

Anti-terrorist operations were going on in the South Kashmir region for last seven days, without a pause. So far 16 terrorists have been killed in seven anti-terrorist operations in last two weeks in Kashmir valley.

The first contact with the group of hiding terrorists was

Anti-terrorist operations were going on in the South Kashmir region for last seven days. So far 16 terrorists have been killed in seven anti-terrorist ops in last two weeks

made late Tuesday night in which one terrorist was gunned down while two others were neutralised during the night long operations. All three dead bodies were recovered by the security forces during searches on Wednesday morning.

Till late evening, the Jammu and Kashmir police authorities remained tight lipped over the real identity of the three terrorists and their affiliation with a terror outfit. However, local villagers in the area and unconfirmed reports claimed one of the three killed included Burhan Majid Koka.

The spokesman in Srinagar issued a press statement which

stated, "the operation was launched on the basis of a credible input about the presence of terrorists in Melhoora area of District Shopian". The spokesman said, "a cordon and search operation was launched jointly by Shopian Police, 55RR and 178Bn CRPF in the area. During the search operation, the hiding terrorists fired on the search party. The fire was retaliated leading to an encounter".

In the ensuing encounter, 03 terrorists were killed. The identification of killed terrorists is being ascertained, police spokesman added. The medico legal formalities of the killed terrorists are being done.

Police spokesman said, "incriminating material including arms and ammunition were also recovered from the site of encounter". "Police has registered a case and initiated investigation in the matter", spokesman added.

104 people tested +ve in single day in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Covid-19 pandemic continued its upward march in Tamil Nadu taking the number of persons tested positive for coronavirus to 2,162 in the State on Wednesday. The day saw 104 persons testing positive for coronavirus on a single day.

The four-day total lockdown of five major cities in the State including Chennai announced by the Tamil Nadu Government on April 26 is coming to an end on Thursday morning.

But out of the 104 persons testing positive for corona virus on Wednesday, 94 were from Chennai and the remaining persons from the neighbouring districts of Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram, Thiruvallur and Villupuram.

With 82 persons getting cured and discharged from various hospitals in the State on Wednesday, Tamil Nadu is left with 922 active Covid-19 patients in different hospitals.

As a prelude to the relaxation of lockdown on Thursday, the Government has banned any kind of retail sale of fruits and vegetables in Koyambedu Fruits and Vegetable Market, the State's biggest wholesale market.

Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami, who addressed district collectors, superintendents of police and medical professionals through video conferencing on Wednesday

reminded them that though the lockdown is being relaxed from

Thursday morning, regulations and restrictions which were in force on April 26 would continue without any changes. District borders and inter-state borders would be closely monitored while all people coming to Tamil Nadu would be thoroughly screened for any kind of expose to infection.

The Tamil Nadu cabinet which will meet on May 2 is expected to announce various crucial decisions, including easing of lockdown. Since the lockdown period is coming to an end on May 3, certain measures to ease it will be announced, especially in areas where the spread of coronavirus is very less, Secretariat sources said.

Meanwhile para medic staff led by doctors are scanning the entire stretch between Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and Pulianthope, a suburb five km away from the hospital.

This is because of an attempt made by one of the patients from the hospital's isolation ward who managed to come out of the hospital unnoticed and walked all the way to his home on Monday night.

Though the police nabbed him on Tuesday morning itself, authorities are leaving no stones unturned and checking the entire road stretch from the hospital to Pulianthope.

Hospital sources said that they do not expect any major mishap as the patient walked the entire stretch past midnight while the roads were empty.

Over 3,00,000 of Kerala diaspora register to return

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, here on Wednesday, said as of now 3,20,463 Keralites settled abroad had registered with Norka-Roots to return home, as and when the lockdown was lifted and the airports opened.

Of this, 2,23,624 were on labour/residence visa, 57,436 on visit visa, 29,219 on dependent visa, 7,276 students, 691 on transit visa and 11,327 others, he said.

"Of these, 56,114 have lost job, 58,823 on vacation travel, 41,236 whose visit visa have expired, and 23,975 whose visa have expired or cancelled," said Vijayan.

There are 9,561 children, 10,007 senior citizens, 9,515 pregnant, 2,448 students whose education have completed and 748 freed from jails among them. Also, there are 49,472 specialised workers, 67,136 professionals and 24,107 self-employed.

The Malappuram district has the highest number with 54,280 applicants, followed by Thrissur and Kozhikode with over 40,000. There are 23,014 from Thiruvananthapuram and 3,459 from the Idukki district.

The registration has to be done on www.norkaroots.org of the state-run Norka-Roots, the official body of diaspora.

The facility was opened by the Kerala government, after the Centre decided to accede to their requests.

Of an estimated 2.5 million non-resident Keralites, 90 per cent are in the Middle East countries. Around 3-500,000 are likely to return after the revival of air services.

IANS

Kerala to move Ordinance for salary cut

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Undeterred by the Kerala High Court staying its move to defer one month's salary of the employees, the CPI(M) led Kerala Government has chosen the Ordinance route to subvert the court ruling.

In his daily media briefing, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the Kerala Government would soon issue an Ordinance which would empower the Government to

defer/seize one month's salary of the employees. "The State is undergoing through a phase of unprecedented financial crisis because of Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a big fall in the State's revenue and we want to tide over this crisis," said Vijayan.

He said the contention of the High Court was that the Government's move to defer the salary is bereft of any legal power. "We are promulgating the ordinance to empower the

Government order with legality so that we could go ahead with the move to salary deferment. The decision to promulgate the ordinance was taken in the cabinet meeting held on Wednesday," said the Chief Minister.

The Kerala High Court while hearing a petition filed by the opposition parties and trade unions affiliated to them challenging the Government's move to defer the salary had stayed the move and ruled that it was not

possible to accept the Government's submission that it had the power to defer the disbursement of salary by a few months. "Payment of salary is certainly not a matter of bounty. It is a right vested in every individual to receive the salary. Article 300A of the Constitution which confers a right to property will include within its purview 'salary' also a property, at least prima facie," the judge had said on Tuesday while staying the Government Order and

adjoining the petition for further hearing to May 20.

What makes the issue interesting is that the CPI(M) while justifying the Government's right to defer the salary of Kerala Government employees is on the other side of the fence in Tamil Nadu where it is strongly opposing the Edappadi Palaniswami Government's decision to freeze the Dearness Allowance and put on hold the leave encashment facility.

The name isn't just Khan, but life itself

From Page 1

Shah Rukh Khan made no qualms about who the actor was in the film and developed a rare friendship that lasted till the very end. SRK helped Irrfan recuperate through an extended treatment regime in London by letting him stay at his house there.

When *Jurassic Park* (1993) released, Irrfan barely had the money to buy a ticket to watch the film. He later went on to star in the franchise as a part of the *Jurassic World* (2015), a testament to his determined journey. Khan was an international talent before crossovers became a cinematic fad. He was Everyman before characters like him easily got ₹100 crore returns at the box office. Be it as the loner wanting companionship but caught in his dilemmas and burdens of the past in *The Lunchbox*, the frustrated and lustful mid-30ish man with a heart of gold in *Life in a Metro*, the fiercely determined *Paan Singh Tomar* or the slacker car service agency head who sorts out a complicated and on-the-wire *Piku*, you always remember each of Irrfan's characters with a smile. Simply because he imbued them with a rare humanity and sensitivity, calibrating emotions with such tremendous control that never once did the actor overtake the character. That was his art and in many ways his life. Of course, he stole hearts with a natural flair for comedy in both *Hindi Medium* and *Angrezi Medium*, deftly capturing the perennial Indian obsession of defining their self-worth through their language proficiencies.

And how can one forget his outings in Vishal Bhardwaj's Shakespeare adaptations, *Maqbool* and *Haider*. When he utters the lines as Roohdaar in *Haider* (2014), "*Darya bhi main, darakht bhi main ... Jhelum bhi main, chinara bhi main ... dair bhi hoon, haram bhi hoon ... Shia bhi hoon, Sunni bhi hoon, main hoon pandit ... main tha, main hoon aur main hi rahoonga*," they amplified the consummate ease with which he married all the *rasas* of *abhinaya*. He stood out in *Maqbool* despite the presence of seasoned actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Pankaj Kapoor and Tabu.

That sure was a jump for the son a wealthy zamindar from Tonk in Rajasthan who had decided to pursue acting as he was fascinated by the craft of Shah.

When someone told him that Shah had graduated from the National School of Drama (NSD), Irrfan got obsessed by the idea and managed to get in. "If NSD, where I learnt the nuances of my craft during 80s, wasn't there I wouldn't have been here. It has given me everything," he told us during the promotions of *Hindi Medium*.

Much before film promotions became a subsidiary business, Irrfan handled his own PR. He had called us for an interview on the sets of *Paan Singh Tomar* in Roorkee, doing an interview in his vanity van because the site was the space he inhabited at that moment and he wanted us to be an experiential participant in it rather than giving standard quotes. Once outside on the sets, the professional took over. It was the same

soloist attitude that saw him take strong positions on societal matters, particularly against Muslim clerics, without thinking about the consequences on his career.

Some thought he was into intellectualising his role, others thought he was the eternal brooder but Irrfan, in one of the earliest interviews to this paper, insisted he never thought so much. "I apply no method, I just follow examples from real life, observe people around me, listen to their stories. A character comes alive with emotion and that cannot be taught but felt," he had told us on the sets of *Paan Singh Tomar*. Of course, he interpreted the world through his world of books as he was a voracious reader.

If anything, cancer made him philosophical and a feisty warrior. He never forgot his fans and would reach out to them with his heartfelt notes on social media and email, talking about the magic of life. In a tweet quoting author Margaret he reminded us that "Life is under no obligation to give us what we expect."

Irrfan had tried many different things from business to service to TV serials before joining the film industry but soon realised that these did not interest him. So he chased his dream, giving up privileges he could have had. "I understood that till the time I enjoy doing something I cannot do it continuously. If you are bored out of your wits within six months, how can you continue to do it for the rest of your life?" he had said. And he did something he loved with a passion... till his last breath.

Huge corona spike in Maha, 32 die, 597 test positive

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

In a huge spike in number of fatalities and infections for the second consecutive day, as many as 32 persons died of Covid-19 on Wednesday taking the number of deaths to 432 and 597 people tested positive for Coronavirus.

A day after the pandemic claimed 31 lives and left 729 others infected, as many as 32 persons succumbed to Covid-19 in various parts of the state.

With 597 fresh infected cases reported on Wednesday, the total number of confirmed Covid-19 positive cases mounted to a staggering 9915.

Of the deaths reported on Thursday, Mumbai accounted for 26 deaths, while there 3 deaths in Pune, one each in Solapur, Aurangabad and Panvel With 26 new deaths, the total number of deaths in Mumbai rose to 270, while infected cases mounted to 6644.

Soldiers of MRC Wellington defeats Covid, saves many lives in Nilgiri

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Whether it is war or peace, Madras Regiment Centre, Wellington, in Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu, does not need any introduction to people in South India. During wars, the brave soldiers of MRC Wellington had performed unbelievable missions to eliminate and annihilate the enemies.

The actions of the brave jawans of the unit are folklores in this part of the country. During peace time, MRC Wellington was the most sought after team in South India's football circuit. The All-India Football Tournaments in Kannur, Kozhikode and Thrissur in Kerala used to have sold out galleries when Kuppussamy and late Vinod Philip kicked the ball around much to the glee of their fans.

Wars are over and football is almost dead in this part of the country except for the

Indian Soccer League matches. But the tradition of MRC Wellington lives on. The warriors of this glamorous unit of the Indian Army are fighting a different war in 2020 April. True to the theme of Indian Army, "Har Kaam Desh Ke Naam", the brave fighters along with the Army Wives Welfare Association are on a mission to provide food, medicine and other essential items to residents of interior Nilgiris which are inaccessible to ordinary folks because of the hilly terrains.

When the civil administration intimidated the difficulties faced by the government staff in reaching out to labourers and their families in the hinterland of the Blue Mountains, officials of MRC did not think twice. The MRC jawans were on the mission to transport dry ration including atta, rice, daal and oil. They worked on the motto decided by Indian Army: "Combating COVID With Care and

Compassion".

"The Indian Army has been in forefront of reaching out to needy and providing them with the much-needed relief materials as a result of which a large number of people have benefited. In consonance with Indian Army's slogan "*Har Kaam Desh Ke Naam*" to combat COVID 19, the units and Centres of Dakshin Bharat Area will remain committed to reaching out to the needy people thereby upholding the ethos of "Service Before Self", said a media release issued by the Commandant of the MRC on Wednesday.

The Jawans who undertook the mission prefer to be the unsung heroes.

They are happy seeing the smiling faces of the children, aged and inform who could get sumptuous meals because of their adventurous mission defeating coronavirus, rains and inhospitable terrain of the Wild Western Ghats.

FROM PAGE 1

RISE RATE ON WANE, NUMBER SOARS, 33K CASE, 1077 DEAD

However, with only 10 active positive cases currently undergoing treatment at different Covid-19 hospitals, Jammu district is gradually coming closer to break the chain of spread of coronavirus. On the other hand, situation on ground zero in Kashmir Valley remains challenging as the total number of positive cases jumped to 523 on Wednesday.

A total number of 16 fresh cases were detected, all from Kashmir division while not a single case from Jammu tested positive.

On a positive note, five patients, three serving doctors were discharged from Jammu and 11 patients were discharged from Kashmir after they fully recovered and tested negative for the second time in succession.

Karnataka's tally has gone up to 523 out of which 207 have recovered and 20 people have died in the state. Kerala has reported 485 cases so far while 219 have been discharged and 4 people have died in the state due to coronavirus.

Madhya Pradesh continues to report more infected cases. The tally has risen to 2,387 while 377 have been discharged and the death toll stands at 120 in the State.

The number of infected people in Tamil Nadu has gone up to 2,058 out of which 1,168 have been discharged upon recovery while 25 people have died in the state while in Uttar Pradesh, the number of cases has gone up to 2053 out of which 462 have been cured and 34 people have died.

West Bengal has reported 725 cases so far out of which 119 have been discharged

and 22 people have died in the State.

INDIA CONDUCTING 60,000 TESTS DAILY, PLANS 1L/DAY SOON

Close to 40 per cent of the total deaths are in Maharashtra where 400 have died of Corona, so far.

Claiming that the Government has been providing quality health services to the patients, the Minister said only 0.33 per cent patients are on ventilators, 1.5 per cent patients are on oxygen support while 2.34 per cent are in the Intensive Care Units.

The Ministry has also pushed its integrated disease surveillance programme (IDSP), a nation-wide surveillance system for epidemic prone diseases, strengthening it with "substantive digital inputs," the Minister added.

"The Ministry of Science and Technology, under my charge, has also been working on innovations and have been funding certain projects which are going to make the testing procedure quite fast," Vardhan said.

The Health Minister also asserted that India has successfully tackled public health emergencies of international concern and pandemics in the past as well. "Our nation has the requisite national core capacities stipulated in the international health regulations to manage public health emergencies," he added.

Vardhan said India had maintained continuous situation awareness, with pre-emptive and proactive approach and followed a graded response as per continuously evolving scenario to tackle Covid-19 pandemic.

AAROGYA SETU NOD MUST FOR CENTRAL GOVT STAFFERS FOR ARRIVAL IN OFFICES

In a letter issued to all departments, it said all the officers, staff (including outsourced staff) working in Central Government should download 'Aarogya Setu' application on their mobile phones, immediately.

The Aarogya Setu application developed by the Government helps people to assess themselves on the risk of their catching the coronavirus infection.

A senior officer -- Joint Secretary (administration) -- in all the departments would ensure strict compliance of the instructions, the order said.

"Ministries/departments may issue similar instructions to all autonomous, statutory bodies, PSUs etc attached to them," it added.

Officers of the level of Deputy Secretary and above have already joined the offices following the Government's instructions.

All Central Government departments have been asked to call only one-third of the staff below Deputy Secretary level on rotation basis to the offices.

MEDICAL ENTRANCE ONLY THROUGH NEET:

It said considering that NEET is the first step "to weed out the evils from the system," it would not be in the national interest to step back considering the overall scenario and "if we revert to the old system, posterity is not going to forgive us".

It said the provisions of Indian Medical Council Act and regulations do not ultra vires or takes away the rights guaranteed to the aided and unaided minority institution under various provisions of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, Vineet Saran and M R Shah said, "Resultantly, we hold that there is no violation of the rights of the unaided/aided minority to administer institutions under Articles 19(1)(g) and 30 read with Articles 25, 26 and 29(1) of the Constitution of India by prescribing the uniform examination of NEET for admissions in the graduate and postgraduate professional courses of medical as well as dental science". Holding that the regulatory measures by prescribing NEET in no way interfere with the rights to administer the institution by the religious or linguistic minorities, the top court said that it intends to weed out evils from the system and various malpractices which decayed the system.

"Regulatory measures cannot be said to be exceeding the concept of limited governance. The regulatory measures in question are for the improvement of the public health and is a step, in furtherance of the directive principles enshrined in Articles 47 and 51(A)(j) and enable the individual by providing full opportunity in pursuance of his objective to excel in his pursuit..." the bench said, while disposing of 76 petitions by various minority and private institutions challenging Centre's notification related to NEET.

Among the institutions which petitioned included Christian Medical College, Vellore, Manipal University, SRM Medical College Hospital and Karnataka Private Medical and Dental Colleges Association.

The court said the regulatory measures are intended for the proper functioning

of institutions and to ensure that the standard of education is maintained and does not fall low under the guise of an exclusive right of management to the extent of maladministration.

HOLDING OF X, XII EXAMS FIRST PROBABILITY, DECLARES CBSE

The clarification by the CBSE officials came amid uncertainty over when the exams will be conducted leading to speculations that the exams will be done away with in a one-time arrangement.

"We are prepared to conduct board exams for class 10 and 12 pending due to the lockdown in wake of the COVID-19 situation in the country. The exams will be conducted for 29 subjects crucial for promotion and admissions to undergraduate courses, at the first possibility. The students will be given at least a 10-day notice before exams are conducted," a senior HRD ministry official said.

"States have been asked to start the evaluation process for the exams already conducted and have been advised to facilitate evaluation of answer sheets. The CBSE will also issue instructions for marking or assessment of non-important subjects not included in the list of 29 subjects," the official said.

Universities and schools across the country have been closed and exams postponed since March 16 when the Centre announced a countrywide classroom shutdown as one of the measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Later, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, which has now been extended till May 3.

The board was not able to conduct

class 10 and 12 exams on eight examination days due to the coronavirus outbreak. Further, due to the law and order situation in northeast Delhi, the board was not able to conduct exams on four examination days, while a very small number of students from and around this district were not able to appear in exams on six days.

"Considering the extraordinary circumstances, the board had decided to conduct exams only for 29 crucial subjects as against over 40 remaining subjects. For the rest of the subjects, the board will not hold examinations and instructions for marking and assessment in all such cases shall be separately issued," the official said.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on Tuesday had interacted with education ministers of states. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had suggested that students be marked on the basis of internal assessment as it is not feasible to conduct the pending exams now. Education ministers from different States also put forward deliberations being made about their respective state boards.

The Bihar board has already announced results for three streams of class 12 and is in the process of evaluation of class 10 exams. The Uttar Pradesh board is yet to begin the evaluation and will take a call in this regard soon.

The CBSE has already announced that it will not be conducting any exams for students in foreign countries. "There are several CBSE schools located in 25 countries. Each of these countries are also under lockdown and have decided to close down the schools for various and differential lengths of time. Under such circumstances, it is felt that the board will not be in a position to hold differential sets of exams for each of these countries," the official said.

INDIANS STRANDED IN GULF COUNTRIES

Navy readying 3 warships for possible evacuation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the Government is yet to take a call on bringing back Indians from the Gulf countries, the Navy is readying its three warships for the possible evacuation. The national carrier Air India and transport planes of the IAF may also be deployed for the mission likely to commence after May three when the national lockdown ends.

In the backdrop of several Indians working in the Gulf countries informing the embassies their intention to return in the backdrop of coronavirus pandemic and massive job loss due to drop in oil prices, the Government, while yet to take a final view, has asked the armed forces and the Air India to be on standby, sources said here on Wednesday. The stakeholders were also asked to apprise the Government of the possible evacuation plan, they added.

As per an estimate, there are more than five to seven million Indians in the Gulf countries and the ministry of external affairs has already initiated consultations with the States here for the necessary arrangements.

Moreover, the embassies in the Gulf region were also directed to firm up report about those willing to return and provide all assistance to



More than five to seven million Indians are stranded in the Gulf countries

them, officials said. Discussions between various wings of the Government were also on as to who will bear the expenses of the evacuation—will it be those returning or the central government, sources added. Apart from the evacuation, the centre has to plan in collaboration with the states about the quarantine process of the returning people and sources said talks were on between the stakeholders.

As regards the Navy, INS Jalashwa, a 17,000-ton amphibious warship or landing platform dock, can accommodate 1,000 to 1,200 people, and is now getting ready at its base at Visakhapatnam. The

other two smaller such ships are in the western seaboard and are also on a standby mode, sources said adding all the weaponry and other items were removed to make place for ferrying people.

In case, if smaller number of people are to be brought back, the IAF may press into service its C-17 and IL-76 planes, they said adding these planes recently evacuated more than 200 Indians from Iran and Wuhan. Besides the armed forces, the government has the option of tapping the civil aviation sector which has more than 500 aircraft available for the evacuation, sources said.

In the past, India brought back more than 1.5 lakh of its citizens in 1990 after Iraq launched military offensive against Kuwait. Similarly, in 2015, 5,500 people were evacuated after Saudi Arabia launched air strikes against Houthi rebels.

DESPITE MOODY’S SLASHING FORECAST

Centre sees 3% agriculture growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Moody’s Investors Service slashing India growth forecast for calendar year 2020 to 0.2 per cent, from 2.5 per cent projected in March, the Centre on Wednesday projected the agriculture growth rate at least 3 per cent which is the long-term growth rate despite most of the economic activities are at standstill amid the nationwide lockdown due to coronavirus. Agriculture and allied sector’s growth stood at 3.7 per cent during the 2019-20 fiscal.

Addressing the media, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was at 3.7 per cent during last year. “I am confident that this growth in future will not be impacted much,” Tomar added.

Presenting a very positive outlook for the sector, the Minister said despite the lockdown in the country, the sowing of summer crops had increased to 57.07 lakh hectare, which is more than 38 per cent over the area sown last year.

“Even in such trying circumstances and conditions, sowing has not decreased. In other related activities, the sector is making good progress due to the good practices adopted by the government and hard work by farmers,” Tomar said.

Echoing the sentiments, agriculture expert and NITI



Aayog member Ramesh Chand on Wednesday said that even at a time when 60 per cent of India’s economy is closed, in the case of agriculture, things are happening. “Our estimate is that the sector will see a growth rate of 3 per cent despite all prevailing adverse circumstances. The share of agriculture sector in the economy is 17 per cent. I am sure that during these distressing times, agriculture will rise and give support to the economy,” he added.

The contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) decreased from 18.2 per cent in 2014-15 to 16.5 per cent in 2019-20. The decline was mainly due to a decrease in share of GVA of crops from 11.2 per cent in 2014-15 to 10 per cent in 2017-18, according to the economic survey.

The share has been declining on account of relatively

higher growth performance of non-agricultural sectors.

However, according to Chand, prices of major commodities and vegetables were higher in mandis this year than last year. “When prices are favourable and terms of trade are better, farmers invest more. As much as 60 per cent of India’s economy is closed, but in the case of agriculture, things are moving.

It will register a 0.5 per cent growth rate and the fear that the Indian economy will shrink will be negated,” said Chand.

According to Chand, good monsoon, 40-60 per cent higher water availability in the reservoirs, and 5 per cent higher offtake of fertiliser during the first four months of this year are the major signs indicating a bumper production this year.” On top of that, 20 per cent increase in the sale of

Earlier, the Minister said that there is a surplus foodgrain in the country and there is no shortage of vegetables during the lockdown

seeds and high food prices, showing better terms of trade and more encouragement to the farmers to produce are also expected to give cues to an affluent crop season,” Chand added.

Earlier, the Minister said that there is a surplus foodgrain in the country and there is no shortage of vegetables during the lockdown.

According to Tomar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains committed to doubling the income of farmers by 2022. “The agriculture sector has remained unaffected due to the Covid-19 lockdown, but there have been other problems. As soon as the situation improves, we will start working towards the goal,” he said.

Regarding the damage to the crops due to recent weather conditions, the minister said there were provisions available between the states and the Centre to tackle the issue. Recounting the measures taken by the Government to aid the sector, like the PM Kisan and increasing coverage of the KCC, he said the Modi government increased the MSP of various crops by 50 to 109.

UGC issues guidelines for new academic calender, university exams

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The new academic session for freshers may begin in universities from September and for already enrolled students in August in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) told universities on Wednesday.

Detailing the guidelines for examinations and academic calendar for the universities in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, the commission said the exams for final semester students be conducted in July. “Intermediate students will be graded based on internal assessment of the present and previous semester. In states where the COVID-19 situation has normalised, there will be exams in the month of July.

For terminal semester students, exams will be held in July,” the UGC said.

“Universities may follow a six-day week pattern and devise proforma to record travel or stay history of staff and students for the lockdown period. Extension of six months will be granted to MPhil, PhD students and viva-voce be conducted through video conference,” it added.

The commission clarified that the guidelines are advisory in nature and varsities may chalk out their own plan taking into consideration issues pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Robot developed to assist frontline healthcare workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists from the CSIR-Central Mechincal Engineering Research Institute, Durgapur, have developed a robot ‘HCARD’ to assist the frontline healthcare workers battling Covid-19 in maintaining physical distance from the virus infected patients and save themselves getting infected.

The robotic device HCARD, in short for Hospital Care Assistive Robotic Device, is equipped with various state-of-the-art technologies and works both in automatic as well as manual modes of navigation.

This robot can be controlled and monitored by a nursing booth with a control station having features such as navigation, drawer activation for providing medicines and food to patients, sample collection and audio-visual communication, said Prof. (Dr.) Harish Hirani, Director, CSIR-CMERI.

He explained, “The HCARD could be effective for frontline healthcare officials dealing with Covid-19 patients in delivering services while maintaining mandatory physical distancing.”

The cost of this device is less than ₹5 lakh and the weight is less than 80 kilograms, added Prof. Hirani.

The CSIR-CMERI is also working on war footing to minimise the impact of the contagion through technological interventions.

Scientists at the CMERI have also developed a few other customized technologies, including Disinfection Walkway, Road Sanitiser Unit, Face Mask, Mechanical Ventilator and Hospital Waste Management Facility, said Prof Hirani.

Now, herbal remedy ‘Ayush Kwath’ to boost immunity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

While the race is on to find a cure for the Covid-19, the Union Ayush Ministry has handed out a recipe of an immunity boosting herbal formulation to the States and firms in the sector for the management of the highly infectious virus which has caused havoc all across the world.

To be prepared from the extracts of herbs Basil (tulsi) leaves, cinnamon bark, sunthi (Zingiber officinale) and krishna marich (Piper nigrum), the decoction will be known as ‘Ayush Kwath’ or ‘Ayush Kudineer’ or ‘Ayush Joshanda’, said the Ayush Ministry in a let-

ter to the stakeholders recently.

The Ayurveda companies are already on their job. Delhi-based AIMIL Pharma engaged in producing a range of herbal products, said that it is in the process of launching the ‘Ayush Kwath’ in powder and tablet forms in the market soon.

“Various reports have shown that Coronavirus has been found to be fatal for people with weak immune system.

“The herbs enlisted by the Ministry for preparing ‘Ayush Kwath’ are well-known known for their immunity enhancing properties,” Sharma said emphasizing that the decoction will be for the benefit of the

humankind struggling with the pandemic.”

The AIMIL Pharma’s herbal drug, Fifatrol is already well-accepted in the market for its efficacy to fight off various viruses and has been found to be effective in curing major bacterial infections.

According to health experts, while Coronavirus reduces the immune response of the infected person, it has also been observed that mostly its target is people with low immune system.

The experts feel that improvement of the immune system helps in reducing the effects of the infection and also fight the Covid-19.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ last week had reiterated usage of Indian alternative medicine system, saying that people across the world are paying special attention to the importance of ayurveda and yoga amid the Covid-19 pandemic and that the social media is full of write-ups related to its benefits in boosting immunity.

In fact, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shiv Raj Singh Chauhan too announced that his government will distribute the Ayush decoction to at least over one crore people across the State in next three months in a bid to enhance their immunity to fight the virus.

States, UTs told to ensure divyang-friendly Covid test centres

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on Wednesday asked the States and Union Territories to ensure that the Covid-19 centres for testing/ quarantine and treatments at the hospitals are disabled-friendly.

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of all the States and UTs, Shakuntala Gamlin, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) at the Ministry, pointed out that the current crisis poses greater threats to the PwDs not just due to their compromised immunity and ability to perceive or comprehend information but also due to absence of accessibility features in the physical

environment and eco-system provided at such Covid-19 related facilities.

Asking the States to implement the guidelines prepared in this direction by the Ministry in letter and spirit, the senior official said that “priority treatment for the PwDs and provisions of safety, healthy living and hygiene for them, attendants, care-givers and accessible service providers, such as sign language interpreters should be ensured.”

In addition, it is also necessary that basic physical accessibility features are ensured, as per reasonable accommodation in the centres for Covid-19 testing and quarantine facilities as well as for treatment at hospitals and health centres, said Gamlin.

SOME OF THE ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES TO BE KEPT IN MIND	
■ Ramps (gradient 1:12) with railings.	■ At least one low height accessible counter at reception, testing areas and pharmacies.
■ Audio announcements and captioned videos for public announcements of important news.	■ Accessibility in lifts or assigning liftman in at least one lift for PwDs.
■ Reserving areas/ rooms/ wards with accessible toilets .	■ Provision for vestibular cabins for attendants of Covid-19 patients, especially with intellectual disability and mental illness.

It must be ensured that basic features of accessibility such as signages, requisite items like soaps and gloves are provided at these centres so that persons with restricted mobility and those dependent upon attendants/caregivers are not inconvenienced further, especially during the times of this pandemic, she reminded.

The Government has clas-

sified health facilities into three categories Covid-19 Care Centre, Dedicated Covid-19 Health Centre and Dedicated Covid Hospital. These dedicated facilities will have separate earmarked areas for suspected cases and confirmed cases, and ensure the available hospital bed capacity is used only for moderate to severe cases of the infection.

Novel coronavirus more brutal to men

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Novel Coronavirus, which has exploded across the globe, is more brutal to men in outcomes and fatality is almost 2.5 times when compared to women, though both genders have the same prevalence, according to a study published in a recent journal of Public Health.

So far, researchers have confirmed that older Covid-19 patients and those with comorbidities, such as heart disease and respiratory conditions, are at greater risk of severe disease and death. However, Dr. Jin-Kui Yang, a physician at Beijing Tongren Hospital in China, noticed that the number of men dying from the virus appeared to be higher than the number of women.

“This raised a question: are men more susceptible to getting or dying from Covid-19? We found that no-one had measured gender differences in COVID-19 patients, and so began investigating.”

Yang and a group of colleagues analyzed several patient datasets to see if there were differences in how men and women respond to Covid-19. This included data on 43 patients who the doctors had treated themselves and a publicly available dataset on 1056 Covid-19 patients.

The virus responsible for Covid-19 is similar to the virus behind the 2003 SARS outbreak, and it attaches to the same protein, called ACE2, on cells it attacks. Given this similarity, the doctors also analyzed a dataset of 524



SARS patients from 2003.

Strikingly, in the largest Covid-19 dataset, over 70 per cent of the patients who died were men, meaning that men had almost 2.5 times the death rate of women. And interestingly, being male was a significant risk-factor for worse disease severity, regardless of

age.

In the SARS dataset from 2003, the researchers found a similar trend, with a significantly higher mortality rate amongst males compared with females. Interestingly, levels of ACE2, the protein involved in the viral attack in both SARS and Covid-19,

tends to be present in higher levels in men, and also patients with cardiovascular disease and diabetes, all of whom have worse outcomes in Covid-19.

However, further research is needed to determine exactly why men with Covid-19 tend to fare worse than women. While the current study has a small sample size, and larger studies are needed to confirm the results, this is the first preliminary study investigating the role of gender in morbidity and mortality in patients with the deadly pathogen.

Globally, the number of novel coronavirus cases have surpassed 3.1 million along with reporting more than 200,000 deaths across the world.

Cong blames Sitharaman for twisting facts on defaulters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday hit back at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying instead of twisting facts she should come up with simple answers on the issue of wilful defaulters.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala took to Twitter to fire four queries at the Finance Minister.

“To mislead or misstate facts, while holding the august office of Finance Minister, is most unfair, Nirmala Sitharamanji,” Surjewala

tweeted as he pointed to an apparent discrepancy in the amount of money reportedly recovered from Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya.

“You tweeted that Rs 2,780.50 crore had been recovered from Modi-Choksi-Mallya. On March 16, 2020, parliament was told that the Enforcement Directorate had recovered only ₹ 96.93 crore in five years under PMLA-FEMA!” he stated.

“1. Why has Modi Government written off bank loans worth ₹66,000 crore between 2014/15 and

2019/20?

2. Is RBI’s RTI reply dated April 24, 2020, of bank loans write off of ₹68,607 crore wrong or right?”

3. Why is Modi government writing off bank loans of absconders and fraudsters like Nirav Modi+Mehul Choksi (Rs 8,048 crore), Jatin Mehta (Rs 6,038 crore), Mallya (Rs 1,943 crore) and others as per RBI’s RTI reply of April 24, 2020?

4. Who permitted such huge write offs of bank loans and defaulters and why,” Surjewala questioned.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Lost school year

Schools are the worst hit by the virus as they are gateways to a child's engagement with the world. Now, there's just fear



There is no doubt that apart from public health and the economy, the Coronavirus has hit our education system hard. As colleges and universities deal with truncated courses in a revised academic calendar and resort to e-learning, these are at best half-baked measures. Simply because digital connectivity, accessibility and affordability are big challenges in India's vast, underprivileged hinterland and dots of cities are not representative enough as an alternative model of instruction.

Only frontline universities are on some sort of digital grid but the rest are not. Also, students, who made it back home before the lockdown, may not be able to tune in depending on tele-connectivity issues in their home States. The percentage of people who were able to use the internet pan-India was 20.1 per cent, with rural at 13 per cent and urban at 37.1 per cent. Only 10.8 per cent of Indians used the internet in the last 30 days. Also, while senior students fret and fume over career-making tests and admissions, very little is being thought about the primary and middle schools, most of which rely on an interactive, visual and physical format of teaching. Schools and colleges are also about a natural rhythm of life. For children, they are the first experiences of life outside the cocoon of a home, the first mode of engagement with nature and the wider world. School learning being an integral part of the development process of a child, the emphasis on theoretical lessons than practical knowledge may turn out to be more of a drill. The problems encountered by students on account of home tutoring are varied. Besides, even if projects are commissioned online for execution at home, the tools for doing so, namely paper, pencils, paints, stencils, cardboards and so on, are not available now, figuring as they do in the non-essential list. Sometimes parents are ill-equipped to teach older children. In the countryside, it is worse because parents send their offspring to school simply because of the mid-day meal programme. No school means we are staring at a major nutritional deficiency among children till the secondary level. Psychologists are already fearing that this could be an emotionally scarred generation as they are confined indoors for prolonged periods based on a fear of the unknown. Besides, there are far too many gaps in online education for seniors, too, at this point of time. Lectures and teaching may have resumed without much hindrance but without access to libraries and laboratories, there is no way of gauging students' application skills.

It was to tackle such issues that two expert committees were formed to look into the ways of conducting exams in universities amid the lockdown and work on an academic calendar in a post-Covid scenario. Keeping in mind region-specific challenges, the recommendations include allowing universities the flexibility to conduct online courses and exams, depending on the availability of facilities. Further, the panel has suggested a six-day class schedule post-normalcy to make up for the lost time and a 40 per cent weightage to online performance in grading students. Experts have also recommended a more holistic assessment module whereby teachers can factor in the marks obtained by students in the last academic year to evaluate their consistency and then decide their grades. Presentation-based assessments and a two-hour exam module instead of the previous three-hour format are also on the cards. Indeed, such clarity was badly needed to keep students, particularly the younger lot, invested in signing up for online classes in the first place. Besides, a graded exit strategy means there is already an added performance pressure on students to finish their courses faster than usual. At the moment, student anxieties are focussed on incomplete board exams, which need to be completed either online or offline, depending on the lockdown continuity. Going forward, policy makers need to reavaliability our education satellite programmes as a credible distance learning tool. Counselling sessions need to be organised to help students absorb the impact of social distancing from their peers. There needs to be a new discipline for the rough and tumble of sports or even cultural group activities. Of course, in the longer run, the education budget, like that of health, needs to be hiked. Enhanced social sector budgeting can only rescue us in the long haul if we want to capitalise on India's young demographics.

Kim's dead, long live Kim*

*Well, we don't really know if he is dead. Various theories are doing the rounds at the moment



The strange thing about the Kim clan is that according to a legend, they are all descendants of Princess Suriratna, who travelled from a distant kingdom to marry the progenitor of the tribe. If you believe the legend, she came from Ayodhya. Yes, that very same Ayodhya that we know of. Of course, this does not explain anything about the Kim dynasty of North Korea, which ruled like kings in that isolated yet nuclear-capable rogue nation. The founder of the dynasty, Kim Il-Sung, apparently descended from heaven at Mount Paektu,

a "holy mountain" near the Korean-Chinese border. The creation myth of the clan obviously borrows from religious texts because the one mistake that most people make is considering North Korea to be a communist State. It may be the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, but in reality the best term to describe North Korea's governance system is to call it a "theocratic monarchy" where the word of Kim is the law.

That brings us to the latest Kim in the chain, the grandson of the founder, Kim Jong-un and the younger son of Kim Jong-Il. While there is little news about Kim Jong-un of late, with sources in Seoul and Washington contradicting each other and a studied silence from Beijing, one can assume that things are not exactly hunky-dory in Pyongyang. We do not know whether the North Korean leader is dead or not but we must assume he has been incapacitated to some degree. But why are we getting so edgy about his whereabouts? Of course, because he is the leader of a tiny country but boasts of an active and advanced nuclear weapons programme. This brings us to the question, who next for the Kim dynasty? The smart money is on Kim Yo-Jong, Kim Jong-un's younger sister. We already know that male primogeniture is not the way the clan operates as Kim Jong-un removed his elder (half) brother Kim Jong-Nam through one of the most bizarre assassinations in history at the Kuala Lumpur airport. But then there is "the uncle," Kim Pyong-Il, who was brought back to Pyongyang last year after being sidelined for almost a decade as Ambassador to various nations. But any intelligence official, who knows what is going on in North Korea, is possibly just as clueless as you or me. The fact is that we have no idea of what will happen next and if Kim Jong-un is really dead or he is just undead. Sorry for the pun but we are still watching events to see who is next to sit on the Kim throne.

Now, digital distancing

With the country taking on the Coronavirus pandemic head on, cybercriminals have lost no opportunity to exploit fears around it. We need to crack down on this fast-growing menace



CHARRU MALHOTRA

For the world, the outbreak of Coronavirus has meant solitary confinement for so long. There's nothing much to cheer about. In the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "Home is the new office and the internet is the new meeting room." Even those, who had otherwise been "digitally ignorant," have now taken to the internet to stay connected, air anxieties, share information and bide the quarantine time. According to data from the department of telecommunications, Indians consumed 308 petabytes (PB) or 308,000 terabytes (TB) of data daily on an average for the week beginning March 22. Such rapid consumption of data has also lured cybercriminals to "harvest free-floating" data to accelerate the spread of malware. But are internet users even aware of the socio-technical challenges that come along? With the spread of the disease, we are (rightfully) bombarded with health advisories almost every day but are we even aware of the importance of preserving user privacy so as to maintain cyber hygiene in these turbulent times?

Some forms of cybercrimes that have assumed importance in COVID-19 times include phishing, malware distribution, ransomware, fake news, cyberbullying, zoom-bombing and even child pornography. Phishing is a type of social engineering attack, which is done to steal personal data using emails or phone calls. Many more techniques are applied to lure the victim to click at mischievous links or to share the OTP. Only late last month, a Mumbai resident reported to have lost substantial money after he was coaxed to share an OTP on the recently downloaded malicious contact-tracing app. Similarly, social media platforms, emails and apps have also been "weaponised" with malware (also referred to as "spyware", "payloads", "trojans" and "rootkits"), which stealthily steals personal data from the device of the unwitting victim. In the wake of the spread of Coronavirus, a threat map website, too, was launched to steal personal information from a panicked public.

To top it all, sextortion email scams are back with vengeance. Such dubious emails falsely claim to possess porn videos of the victim and demand ransom, usually in bitcoins. In certain instances, IT resources of the victim could be "locked", this is termed as "denial-of-service" (DoS) attack. Another prevalent category doing the rounds amid Corona pandemic is that of misinformation (fake news), which has only further alleviated fears. To cite an example, a fake message claimed that administrators of 52 WhatsApp groups were detained by the Dadar Cyber Crime Police. Another viral message alleged that Prime Minister Modi is offering ₹15,000 to all Indians and that the Government has launched a video conferencing tool, "Namaste" as an alternative to Zoom.

Several spurious websites advocating safety tips and treatment methodology have mushroomed, too. The latest scam using UPI



revolved around the PM Cares Fund with a fake UPI ID being floated. Likewise, several duplicate websites have emerged where the unemployed are expected to deposit some money to have access to potential job givers. Scams offering discounted services from Reliance Jio and Netflix have been there, too. Believe it or not, fraudsters even tried selling the world's largest statue for \$4 billion, claiming the proceeds would be used to help the Gujarat Government fund its fight against the Coronavirus.

Besides, Zoom calls have witnessed undesirable videos and leakage of sensitive office information. What is most unfortunate is that there has been a sharp rise in the demand for child pornography. The digital preoccupation of children has increased because of lockdown-related compulsions of using digital collaboration tools for "study from home" and they have gone more vigorously on online dating and gaming platforms, too. As a result, "children, teens face a bigger risk online" warned a report. Cyberbullying, including unpleasant social media retorts and humiliating posts against individuals or a community, particularly the Chinese and their look-alike communities, have also inflated to almost 900 per cent in the last few weeks.

All such criminal activities on the cyberspace echo the view that a quarantined world has

ALL KINDS OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES ON THE CYBERSPACE ECHO THE VIEW THAT A QUARANTINED WORLD HAS BECOME LIKE LIVING ON A BLOCK OF THIN DIGITAL ICE THAT CALLS US TO BE EXTRA CAUTIOUS. TO AVERT COVID-RELATED CYBERCRIMES, WE MUST BE VIGILANT AND MAINTAIN CYBER HYGIENE NORMS



become like living on a block of thin digital ice that calls us to be extra cautious. To avert COVID-related cybercrimes, we must practise basic "digital distancing" and maintain "cyber hygiene" norms. One must particularly be wary of "unsolicited emails" or unknown "friend requests." One should never open links made available through unknown addresses. It should also be a complete no-no to apps that originate from unreliable locations or expose our personal details on social media.

Increased digital activity from domestic devices insists that we install anti-virus and virtual private network (to camouflage real IP addresses). We should also regularly upgrade our software. Let us develop a habit of creating stronger passwords, consisting of "caps", "special symbols" and "numbers." We must also keep changing our passwords regularly; for this one can rely on inbuilt password managers.

Using two-factor authentication is a must; maybe we can purchase hardware keys like Yubikey. Let us keep our webcams closed when not in use. Adopting a very strict "zero-trust" approach, which includes keeping privacy settings of all the devices and apps stringent, is essential. One must make sure that everything and everyone is verified before we grant any information or access to it. After all, where there are vulnerabilities and weakness, there

is space for greater harm — both physical and cyber.

If despite all the aforementioned precautions, one unfortunately gets entrapped in any kind of cybercrime, the easiest way out is to seek help by dialling "100" and registering an FIR/complaint. However, in doing so, the victim must provide all supporting documents and details of the crime, including his/her name, date and time of the incident, email, mobile number, hard copy and soft copy of the screenshot of the malicious message. A complaint can also be lodged with the national central portal, cybercrime.gov.in. Simultaneously, it is prudent to report to the respective service provider of the digital platform where this crime has happened (such as Google for Gmail).

Indeed, these times have imposed serious challenges on us. As rightly remarked by Lt Gen Rajesh Pant, National Cybersecurity Coordinator, "Cybersecurity is everybody's responsibility" and "...the endpoint of cyberspace is our mind." Let us all join hands together and stay extra vigilant on internet spaces and dampen the celebratory din echoing from the corridors of cybercriminals, a la Jamtara. After all, digital trends are here to stay in a post-pandemic period, too.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi)

SOUNDBITE

He (Rahul Gandhi) should take tuition from his party colleague P Chidambaram to understand the difference between write-off and waive-off.

Union Minister
—Prakash Javadekar



Just got the news of the passing of Irfaan Khan ... this is most disturbing. An incredible talent ... a prolific contributor to the world of cinema ... left us too soon ...

Actor
—Amitabh Bachchan



This President and this administration worked diligently to get Americans on the ground there in China, to help the WHO try to get in there as well. We were rebuffed.

US Secretary of State
—Mike Pompeo



The Government must announce a scheme on the lines of the paycheck protection programme in the US to protect the salaries and wages of employees.

Congress leader
—P Chidambaram



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Home is a better place

Sir — The West Bengal Government has taken the admirable decision to relax mandatory admission of COVID-19 infected patients to hospitals due to the lack of large quarantine facilities. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that those COVID-19 infected people, who have reasonable living or physical spaces at their homes for quarantine, should go for home isolation, instead of institutional quarantine, with necessary social distancing. I appreciate this decision of the Mamata Government because home quarantine is far better than hospitalisation. I urge other States to take such a decision so that the contagious virus is controlled as soon as possible.

AL Nadwi
Bengaluru

Plight of rural India

Sir — This refers to the article, "Rural India hunkers down to avoid COVID-19" (April 29) by Kalyani Shankar. The writer's humanitarian view about rural Indians in the midst of

Saudi Arabia takes a step forward

The news that Saudi Arabia has decided to end flogging as a punishment comes only days after the death of one of the country's leading human rights activists, Abdullah al-Hamid, in custody. This corporal punishment will now be replaced by prison sentences, fines or a combination of both, as per the directive from the Kingdom's apex court. Saudi Arabia has a history of dealing out harsh punishments to people who challenge the powers that be. A founding member of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association, al-Hamid was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment in March 2013, on multiple charges, including "breaking allegiance" to the Saudi ruler, "inciting disorder" and seeking to disrupt State security. But perhaps the most high-profile instance of flogging in recent times was the case of the Saudi blogger, Raif Badawi, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes in 2014 for "insulting" Islam, among other offences.

The welcome decision to ban flogging is said to be an extension of the human rights reforms introduced under the direction of the King of Saudi Arabia and the country's *de facto* ruler and Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman. But who can forget the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a vocal critic of the Crown Prince, in

still remains safe and sound so far. However, any complacency at this juncture might culminate in the opening of a Pandora's box of woes. The situation may get out of hand in case the virus hits the rural swathes. To top it all, the

health infrastructure in these areas is woefully inadequate to tackle a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases. As it is, people are finding it difficult to follow the social distancing and lockdown protocols, both physically

and economically, too. The writer has rightly stressed on the need for a pragmatic strategy, keeping in mind the economic growth and healthcare needs of this lot of the people. This needs serious deliberation. Gram panchayats can be tapped for the implementation of any such move.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur

Truth about poverty

Sir — At a time when we stand agape at the Facebook-Jio deal involving billions of dollars, images from a quarantine facility in Agra, where inmates were scrambling to get tea, biscuits and water through locked gates is disgraceful. It lays bare the truth about poverty, hunger, filth and disease engulfing the poor. Poverty has been an amalgamated untouchability apparatus besides caste, religious and gender toxicity. Corona times have deepened the abyss.

Shreshtha
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

From health to financial crisis

A neo-Keynesian move by the Centre could have hitched up falling demand to rescue the ailing economy



PRASENJIT BISWAS

Fighting COVID-19 has brought out renewed demands for a stronger health safety net, combined with social and economic security. Both require adequate revenue resources, employment and income generation. Only a sound macro economic policy of demand-boosting public expenditure, progressive taxation and greater investment in all the three sectors of the economy can fulfill these requirements. Visibly, fiscal management by rate cut, devaluation of the Rupee against the US Dollar, augmentation of Government finances by pulling surplus funds from the RBI, could not create elbow room. Reluctantly, not more than one per cent of the GDP for boosting the aggregate demand for the large sections of poor, casual, unemployed and migrant workers in informal and formal sectors, is ramped up through all these measures. Can this health emergency slide into a stiff economic and political emergency? Seemingly, the Government is pushing for the long haul without a clear revival plan post-lockdown. With the Rupee being at an all-time low, cutting the reverse repo rate by the RBI does not unfetter the parked up ₹6 billion of banking institutions towards enhanced credit demand, though arguably the cost of credit has been brought down.

The latest monetary stimuli worth ₹50,000 crore for the purpose of borrowing by small, medium and rural enterprises cannot by itself pump in blood in the distressed farm and MSME sectors, unless promoted by suitably-calculated tax and interest exemptions. On the other side, the stock market continues to plummet as more foreign investors offload their stocks. Frugal monetary stimuli alone are not able to scale up the freefall by an aggressive redemption on the demand side. In the lockdown-induced gloom, sharp fall in aggregate demand makes the factor market quiver for fresh capital reinvestments. As long as such uncertainties persist, it is unlikely that monetary stimuli can lead the economy to revival. Like the first package worth ₹1.7 lakh crore for the poor could not invigorate the level of aggregate demand that can create confidence in the factor market, the second one meant for the industry and service sector certainly missed the bull's eye. Given these ducks and drakes in reinforcing the "animal spirit" in the economy, a continued lockdown would result in the freefall of economic indices.

This brings us to the question, whether the pandemic has led the Centre to create an emergency chest that otherwise calculably would have been dictated by an impending financial emergency? Given the Centre's overall fund position and the dwindling health of the exchequer, it is not difficult to understand the drive for collecting more money into brand new funds like PM Cares. Instead of borrowings from the market, the PM Cares Fund gives the Centre the discretionary power of funding "select" States in such terms that are purely driven by crisis response. Extraction of money from constituency development funds meant for MPs is another drastic measure for mopping up money to fight COVID. Is the Centre getting weary of deficits in the public exchequer that might slow its response towards COVID testing and treatment?

The recent pump priming by printing currency worth ₹1.2 lakh crore is a response to the increasing demand for cash during the pandemic. The point is, desperate times needing desperate monetary measures cannot avert the macro economic risk of capital flight from the market, further weakening any recovery that is already stressed by lockdown-induced pang. The recent discussion on the projected growth of the GDP in the current fiscal between 1.8 to 2.4 per cent, to doomsday prediction of negative growth, spurred intense fear in business circles.

The initiatives taken by the RBI have had limited impact as the Centre cannot back it up from its own resources. When market borrowings become cheaper, demand for cash is rising and yet the credit market is shrinking with stocks being sold. It is a general risk perception that is creating an unmediated and internalised sense of crisis in asset management, spurring flight of capital. In effect, India's stable foreign reserve cannot offset the trading imbalances created by various risk currencies losing buoyancy, sparking off a chain of morbid response in the product and factor markets across the country. The fall in crude prices saves India's foreign reserve but at the same time, the cost of import of many essential drugs and manufacturing components dents the apparent confidence of holding of reserves. To unleash the animal spirit, a neo-Keynesian move by the Centre could have hitched up falling demand to rescue the economy. If the Centre is compelled to continue the lockdown at a massive economic and social cost, what are its political spin-offs? Is it a suspension of many of our fundamental rights that enable citizens to make both ends meet, or is it just a short-term squeeze? Seemingly, it will be difficult to restore the lost rights in practical terms and the effect of such a loss would rob institutions of democracy the precious human freedom. A financial emergency, then, is a political tool to restrict not only citizens' freedom and capability but to impose norms of behaviour on the public that a slowing economy forces upon the Government.

The paradox is that a falling economy requires greater manpower participation and action in production, while restrictions imposed on liberty of individuals and enhanced exploitation of workers would tire the system out by lockdown-induced quirky lockouts. Hence the animal power of the economy needs to be released in full, which might correspondingly boost up antibody and herd immunity. This would contain COVID in the short term and revitalise the economy in the long term.

(The writer is a Shillong-based philosopher and political analyst)

KEEP THIS IN MIND AND I AM SAYING THIS QUITE OPENLY, NO ONE SHOULD BUY VEGETABLES FROM MUSLIM VENDORS.
—UTTAR PRADESH BJP MLA
SURESH TIWARI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



EVEN IN SUCH CHALLENGING TIMES, BJP LEADERS ARE SPREADING HATE. THEY SHOULD BE SLAPPED WITH SEDITION CHARGES AND PUT IN JAIL.
—SAMAJWADI PARTY SPOKESPERSON
ANURAG BHADAURIYA

Time to tame the dragon

Beijing has been pushed to the wall and should not be allowed to bounce back without paying for its deliberate mischief. India needs to support global efforts to contain China



ANIL GUPTA

While the world struggles to combat the deadly pandemic spread by COVID-19, the dragon nation believed to be the originator and spreader of the deadly virus is busy working out its options to combat the international pressure and campaign launched against it. The nation, which was dreaming of becoming the world leader, is today finding itself pushed to the wall, with most nations joining together and demanding an international inquiry into how the virus emerged out of the Wuhan laboratory and the deliberate delay in sharing information about its existence? The global community holds China responsible for the loss of health and human lives, the damage to the world economy and for the hardships humanity will have to face in a post-COVID world. Beijing is also being questioned over the disappearance of virus whistleblowers in China and strict censoring of any information pertaining to the outbreak. As expected, China has denied all the allegations and continues to do so amid growing international demands of monetary compensation from it against the Coronavirus damages to the global economy.

Wuhan, which is the epicentre of the Coronavirus crisis, has been on the radar of the global community since long as it was dubbed to be the location of the largest virology laboratory in the world, housing about 1,500 kinds of viruses. It was also rumoured that the US and China were jointly developing the biological agent. The virus is believed to have hit the city in October but by the time the disease became global and Wuhan was locked down in the third week of January, maximum damage had already been done. Two weeks prior to the lockdown, almost five lakh people had left Wuhan for their homes in central China and 18 international destinations. Many of them were carriers of the deadly Coronavirus. The question now being asked as a subject of international inquiry is, "Was it intentional or accidental?"

Why does China find itself in a quagmire today? Despite its counter-offensive and rubbishings of allegations against it, the dragon nation finds itself isolated globally. A peep into recent events in China is essential to understand the same. The connection between the phenomenal rise of Xi Jinping and his autocratic style of functioning by capturing complete power within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and his ambition to make China the number one power in the world and the Wuhan episode is a matter of study. Xi is the most powerful man in China donning three hats of the general secretary of the CCP, president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) among many other top Governmental posts. In order to make China great again, Xi has enunciated a grand strategy.

At the 19th CCP National Congress in October 2017, Xi announced his ambition of realising the "Chinese dream" of national rejuvenation. He said, "The Chinese nation has stood up, grown rich and is becoming a strong nation. To fulfill our dream, I have set up a timeline with three major target dates. By the party centenary in 2021, China should finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. By 2035, China should be much stronger economically and technologically, have become a global leader in innovation, and have completed its military modernisation. By the PRC centenary in 2049, China should have resolved the Taiwan question and be a strong country with world-class forces." Was the Wuhan experiment part of the grand strategy of Xi? Was it planned as a centenary gift on the occasion of his first timeline of the celebration of the centenary of CCP?

"Winning without fighting" is an old Chinese

“ANCIENT CHINESE GENERAL, STRATEGIST AND PHILOSOPHER SUN TZU LIKED TO WIN BEFORE THE OTHER SIDE EVEN KNEW THEY HAD LOST. WAS XI TRYING TO EMULATE THE LEGENDARY CHINESE STRATEGIST? CHINA, UNDER XI'S LEADERSHIP, HAS ALSO MASTERED THE ART OF 'GREY ZONE WARFARE.' HIS GREY ZONE TOOL KIT IS EXPANSIVE AND INCLUDES 'GLOBAL ECONOMIC DOMINATION' THROUGH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COERCION. WAS THE VIRUS INTENDED AS A MASTERSTROKE TO CRIPPLE THE COMPETING WORLD ECONOMIES? IF IT WAS, XI HAS DEFINITELY SUCCEEDED IN HIS GAME PLAN FOR THE TIME BEING



strategy. It goes to the credit of modern Chinese leadership, including Xi, that they have not ignored the ancient Chinese wisdom but instead imbibed it in their modern thinking and strategies. Ancient Chinese General, strategist and philosopher Sun Tzu liked to win before the other side even knew they had lost. Was Xi trying to emulate the legendary Chinese strategist? China has also mastered the art of "grey zone warfare." Xi's grey zone tool kit is expansive and includes "global economic domination" through political and economic coercion. Was the virus intended as a masterstroke to cripple the competing world economies? If it was, Xi has definitely succeeded in his game plan for the time being. While India has always considered the threat from China as a reason to grow, Beijing has always envisaged us as an impediment and existential threat to the fulfilment of the "Chinese dream" and thus an intended target.

To its credit, the US was the first nation to call the Chinese bluff by blaming China and terming the pandemic as the "China virus." It also questioned the role of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and put it under the scanner, ultimately withdrawing the financial assistance to the global health watchdog. Beijing lost no time in counter-attacking and blaming the US for bringing the virus to China during the World Military Games held in Wuhan in October 2019. It blamed the US for bringing infected soldiers as part of the 300-strong contingent. However, the Chinese argument was not convincing because had it been so, why did the virus not affect other athletes in the American contingent and from other contingents, including the Chinese, and why did it remain confined to Wuhan only?

In view of the prevailing geo-political situation, Iran was the only nation that supported the Chinese charge. Thus, the "conspiracy theory" sold by China as a counter-narrative to the assault by the US

and other European nations failed to hold ground. The global community also took notice of the fact that by mid-March, when the rest of the world economies were on the verge of collapse and economists were predicting a worse crisis than 2008-09 or the "Great depression", Chinese factories had commenced production.

China had begun to re-build its supply lines whereas a lockdown in major parts of the world had brought the global economy to a standstill. Worse than that was the aggressive buying overseas of the majority shares in their companies. It smacked of the real conspiracy since companies in China are also the properties of the CPC. Xi's dirty ambition was exposed before the world.

India, during this entire crisis, has behaved like an independent, matured nation with paramountcy to its national interests. Many wanted India to join the US in withdrawing financial support to the WHO and echo the global outcry of an international enquiry against China. India did not want to be recognised as a cheerleader of the US or other west European countries but preferred to chart its independent course. India did not openly blame China because the situation demanded no disturbance on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that may interfere in the nation's fight against COVID-19. But India lost no time to nip in the bud the evil designs of Chinese companies by making Government nod mandatory for Foreign Direct Investments from neighbouring countries, a move aimed primarily at Chinese firms. Beijing did make a noise, calling it violation of World Trade Organisation norms but India stood firm.

The Indian intelligentsia also played its role in naming and shaming China. Brahma Chellany, a famous China-watcher, minced no words in stating, "The COVID-19 pandemic should be a wake-up call for a world that has accepted China's lengthening shadow over global supply chains for far too long. It is only

by reducing its global economic influence that the world can be kept safe from Chinese political pathologies."

This outbreak is a golden opportunity for India to realise its 'Make in India' ambition and become a global manufacturing hub. India must also remember that power begets respect and compliance and so it must keep its long-term vision in mind and strengthen its armed forces.

As a prelude to revival of the economy, India needs to ensure that its huge workforce stranded in various parts of the country is gainfully employed, thus generating jobs. The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana package should not turn into a free dole but used to generate employment. Randhir Singh, a Chandigarh-based senior advocate, in a letter addressed to the PM has suggested effective measures to generate employment for migrant labour, which include: Organising them into a manageable workforce based on their skills and experience under retired personnel from uniformed forces as supervisors; employing them in time-bound projects under the local administration to include cleanliness and sanitisation of public places, cooking food in community kitchens, tree plantations, water harvesting, desilting, construction of water tanks and restoration of traditional check dams, loading/unloading of essential supplies, supplementing farm labour and couriers/delivery boys.

The dragon has been pushed to the wall and should not be allowed to bounce back without paying for its deliberate mischief. India needs to complement the global effort and also chart a strategy to contain China in the post-Corona world. India should also bat for a new global treaty to deal with the risks to the future of humanity. There is growing dissent in China. It is the right time to strike when the iron is hot by launching a psy-war campaign against the CPC and Xi. (The author is a Jammu-based commentator, security and strategic analyst)

Navigate the sea of job loss with confidence

Professionals terminated by their employers must keep abreast of the key developments introduced by the Government and handle the forthcoming chapter in their career with pluck and positivity



SONAM CHANDWANI

Mass layoffs are an impending consequence of this pandemic, which is likely to further rupture our already ailing economy. In response to the global and national economy taking a hit and financial difficulties brought on by the lockdowns necessitated by the need to curb the spread of the pandemic, employers have altered traditional working methods to limit contact between employees. They are embracing remote working methodologies, bonus/salary cuts

while mass layoffs have become the order of the day. Even as we are oblivious to the depth of the virus' impact on the economy, one thing is abundantly clear — the workplace will never be the same again.

With lockdown 2.0 in effect, the cash reserves will further plummet, creating additional strain on employers and will subsequently aggravate the problem of layoffs in a company's pursuit to save depleting resources from further drain. This is especially true for organisations that cannot function remotely owing to the nature of their business. In such a scenario, one can only imagine the plight of white collar workers, the condition of blue collar employees, contractual labourers and those belonging to the unorganised sector.

Anticipating joblessness brought on by the pandemic, the Government on March 20 issued an advisory to all

private and public companies, dissuading them from wage deduction and employment termination. It further stated that salaries of workers shall not be deducted even if they were compelled to stay at home due to the pandemic. On March 29, the Government invoked the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and issued a notification under Section 10(2)(1) to State Governments and Union Territories requiring all industrial and commercial establishments to refrain from wage deduction, retrenchments and to ensure timely payment of wages.

However, mere announcements in the absence of Government Ordinances for payment of wages to employees are not legally binding in nature and lack effectiveness. Like in the case of Maharashtra, the notification is advisory in nature and should not be misconstrued as absolute or legally enforceable, by the employees.

The rationale behind the order was to provide some financial respite to employees during a crisis. Unfortunately, State Governments have not issued any legally-binding Ordinances, therefore giving employers the liberty to lay their employees off.

In the interim, employers should take into account alternatives to outright termination — such as reduced schedules, furloughs, or salary cuts. To further mitigate the stress emanating from job losses, there is severance pay, which serves as a temporary cushion for employees while they look for another job. Severance packages are taxable in the hands of the employee as profit in lieu of salary under Section 17(3) of the Income Tax Act. However, it may be exempt by virtue of Section 10(10C) of the said Act if compensation is received under a Voluntary Retirement Scheme, subject to certain conditions. Unfortunately, there are no

special relief packages for employees laid off on the pretext of the pandemic, though partial relief afforded under Section 89 may be claimed if s/he is liable to pay tax in respect of compensation received on termination of employment. So, what should you do if you get laid off by your firm?

Consult your Human Resource department: This could be done even before you receive a letter of termination, just to know about the company's future plans. If and when you receive a termination letter, you must consult the HR and find out whether it is a temporary or permanent measure.

Get a written acknowledgement: Irrespective of the nature of your notice, it is your duty to secure a written acknowledgement of the same. It is advisable to ask for the reason of such a termination in the letter or e-mail itself.

Consult your lawyer: You may

approach your lawyer with the employment contract and letter of termination so that you are apprised of the potential remedies available to you. If in future, the Government plans to give any relief package or implement a process of re-employing all those laid-off because of the lockdown, all the documentations will come in handy.

Look for opportunities: In these distressing times, many organisations are resorting to collaborative practices by hiring laid-off employees so that the talent pool is not lost. This is termed as "People + Work Connect", which is employer-to-employer partnership. Keep yourself abreast of changes in the economy, specifically industries that directly impact your nature of work.

Know your situation: The best way to start planning for the future is to see your present situation — as is. Make a note of your basic expenses and chalk out a plan to be financially inde-

pendent in tough times.

Crashing economies, plummeting sales figures, coupled with the uncertainty of business redemption, are prompting many companies to terminate employment so as to save themselves from running out of business.

People scarred by unemployment are asking themselves, "What now?" Job loss can be a disturbing and difficult time, psychologically and financially, particularly with so many unknowns in our world right now. But professionals terminated by their employers must keep abreast of the key developments introduced by the Government and handle the forthcoming chapter in their career with confidence. The key to navigating the rough waters of COVID-19 is to remember that this is temporary and we are in this together.

(The writer is Managing Partner, KS Legal and Associates)

Markets rally for 3rd day ahead of F&O expiry; HDFC twins lead charge

Sensex rallies 606 pts, Nifty reclaims 9,500

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices defied gravity for the third straight day on Wednesday, spurred by robust gains in financials, bank and IT stocks amid positive overseas cues.

A smart recovery in the rupee and short covering ahead of the expiry of April futures and options (F&O) contracts added to the momentum, traders said.

After surging 783.07 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 605.64 points or 1.89 per cent higher at 32,720.16 — an over six-week high.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 172.45 points, or 1.84 per cent, to close at 9,553.35. HDFC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 7.07 per cent, followed by HDFC Bank at 4.87 per cent. The HDFC twins accounted for over half of the index's gains.

Other winners included HCL Tech, M&M, Tata Steel, SBI, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and Infosys, spurring up to 4.11 per cent. On the other hand, Axis Bank, Asian Paints, HUL, Titan and Nestle shed up to 3.67 per cent.

Indian markets opened on positive note taking cues from its Asian peers and ahead of U S Federal Reserve's decision on



interest rates amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, said Narendra Solanki, Head- Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi.

“Indian benchmarks extended their gains in late afternoon session as traders also took encouragement from reports of Finance Minister's likely announcement of larger stimulus package for the economy, which also led to some short covering in heavily negative sectors like financials ahead of monthly expiry on Thursday,” he said. Vinod Nair, Head of

Research at geojit Financial Services, said, “Expectations of lockdown measures easing and company specific news about restarting operations, gave support to the markets. The volatile crude oil prices were also up because of a lesser than forecasted increase in US oil inventories.”

BSE metal, finance, teck, IT, telecom and capital goods indices rallied up to 3.92 per cent, while FMCG ended in the red. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices surged up to 1.04 per cent.

SC asks I-T dept to refund ₹733 cr to Vodafone Idea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted partial relief to Vodafone Idea Ltd by asking the Income Tax department to refund ₹733 crore to the telecom firm within four weeks, for assessment year 2014-15.

Vodafone Idea, formerly known as Vodafone Mobile Services Ltd, had however sought ₹4,759.07 crore in tax refund from for AYs — 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. The top court did not order I-T refund pertaining to AYs other than 2014-15.

“Insofar as AY 2014-15 is concerned, final assessment order passed under Section 143(3) of the (Income Tax) Act indicates that the appellant (telecom firm) is entitled to refund of ₹733 crore; while for AY 2015-16 there is a demand of ₹582 crore,” a bench comprising Justices UU Lalit and Vineet Saran said in the judgement.

The top court also noted that the Income Tax department would be entitled to invoke “requisite power under Section 245 of the Act to set off the amount of refund payable in respect of AY 2014-15 against tax remaining payable.”

Soon advisory to protect interest of homebuyers: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) will soon issue an advisory to all Real Estate Regulatory Authorities and State Governments to protect the interest of home buyers and other real estate industry stakeholders amid lockdown in view of coronavirus outbreak.

This has been decided after a high level meeting of Central Advisory Council (CAC) chaired by Housing and Urban Affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by NITI Aayog CEO Amithabh Kant, Secretary, MoHUA Durga Shankar Mishra, Secretary Department of Legal Affairs AK Mendiratta and other stakeholders of real estate industry.

According to a statement issued by the ministry, the concerns of the real estate sector particularly the impact of the pandemic COVID-19 and consequent nationwide lockdown were deliberated in the meeting.

“There was a demand for providing special relief for the real estate sector so that the sector is able to cope up with adverse impact of the current crisis. COVID-19 has already disrupted construction activities due to reverse migration of labour at large scale and dis-



ruption of supply chain of various construction materials,” the statement said.

“After detailed deliberations, the Housing Minister assured all the participants that the matter will be considered keeping in view the interests of all stakeholders. He further said that MoHUA will

soon issue,” it said.

The real estate body Naredco has estimated that the sector would incur losses of ₹1 lakh crore on account of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown and sought a \$200-billion package from the Government to kick-start the economy.

Govt considering packages for sectors facing distress: Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is “seriously considering” unveiling packages, to the extent possible, to support sectors facing distress and a decision in this regard will be taken at the Prime Minister's level, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday.

Interacting with real estate body Naredco via video conferencing, the MSME and Road Transport and Highways said minister: “I have also given suggestions from my department but a final decision will be taken by the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister”.

Govt looking into possibility of building smart cities along Delhi-Mumbai Expressway: Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is looking into the possibility of building smart cities along the Delhi-Mumbai Express Highway that is being built on a new alignment, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday.

However, a final decision on this will be taken by the Finance Ministry and the Prime

Minister's Office, he said. “The Government is looking if NHAI can plan a township along the highway (Delhi-Mumbai Expressway) ... A Cabinet note has been floated for this,” Road Transport, Highways and MSME Minister Gadkari said during an interaction with real estate body NAREDCO via a video conference. The ₹1 lakh crore flagship Delhi-Mumbai Expressway pro-

ject is scheduled to be completed within three years and expected to cut down the travel time between Delhi and Mumbai to just 12 hours. Gadkari said the Government has saved about ₹16,000 crore on land acquisition front alone on the project on a new alignment and will pass through backward and far-flung tribal areas of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan.

NIFTY 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY 50	9408.60	9599.85	9392.35	9553.35	172.45	
HINDALCO	109.09	117.65	108.30	116.40	7.65	
ADANI PORTS	274.00	293.20	272.70	290.90	17.95	
HDFC	1734.00	1845.00	1726.00	1827.95	112.15	
GAIL	85.00	89.80	84.40	89.00	4.45	
HCLTECH	474.80	501.00	470.20	495.00	23.90	
ZEE	156.70	166.00	154.65	159.05	6.60	
HDFCBANK	935.00	992.70	934.10	970.05	38.65	
M&M	337.00	351.80	336.25	349.00	13.05	
COALINDIA	135.00	140.85	135.35	140.00	4.60	
TATASEEL	273.00	286.15	271.25	282.45	8.90	
VEDL	77.05	79.95	77.00	79.25	2.40	
SBI	185.00	191.80	183.00	189.55	5.25	
BAJFINANCE	2200.05	2375.00	2200.05	2287.00	58.90	
INFY	666.00	682.00	658.00	678.00	17.30	
JSWSTEEL	160.80	166.40	159.00	163.55	4.15	
TCS	1874.00	1912.55	1850.05	1903.00	43.95	
BAJAJFINSV	4865.10	5070.00	4822.40	4975.00	113.20	
ICICIBANK	335.00	376.50	351.65	367.65	7.80	
TECHM	525.95	563.90	522.10	531.50	11.10	
INFRATEL	160.05	163.95	157.05	162.60	3.20	
ONGC	69.40	70.95	68.70	70.55	1.35	
HEROMOTOCO	966.25	1040.00	941.00	1019.95	36.85	
SHRECEM	889.00	1925.00	1895.35	1921.70	351.10	
IT	162.00	183.05	185.00	187.45	14.30	
TATAMOTORS	77.45	79.30	76.55	78.15	1.20	
ULTRACEMCO	340.10	345.80	346.10	344.95	51.95	
BHARTIARTL	495.00	498.40	487.05	493.00	7.35	
BAJAJ-AUTO	2474.00	2520.00	2450.00	2500.00	36.30	
ITC	180.50	182.90	179.65	182.05	2.60	
IOC	80.00	81.15	79.80	80.70	1.05	
SUNPHARMA	476.00	484.95	473.15	478.80	4.85	
WIPRO	180.10	182.45	179.40	180.80	1.10	
POWERGRID	159.00	160.60	156.00	157.95	0.75	
GRASIM	500.00	504.90	495.55	499.55	2.10	
EICHERMOT	14409.90	14450.00	14125.55	14382.65	55.80	
BPCL	360.00	365.00	355.05	359.95	0.85	
MARUTI	510.00	510.00	501.05	505.50	2.30	
BRITANNIA	344.80	328.75	315.00	316.00	1.05	
RELIANCE	1187.90	1453.65	1420.00	1427.00	-1.15	
NTPC	91.45	92.35	90.75	90.25	-0.10	
KOTAKBANK	1327.00	1332.00	1315.20	1325.00	-1.65	
UPL	363.95	364.40	354.35	360.00	-0.50	
STEELIND	17748.00	17748.00	17400.00	17510.00	-59.65	
CIPLA	605.00	607.90	590.10	595.40	-3.20	
INDUSINDBK	453.00	489.00	443.00	465.50	-2.55	
TITAN	932.00	933.60	918.00	924.00	-8.85	
DRREDDY	3949.75	3970.00	3822.55	3882.00	-67.75	
HINDUNILVR	2290.00	2291.70	2271.00	2234.00	-55.95	
ASIANPAINT	1846.90	1847.00	1755.90	1775.00	-49.40	
AXISBANK	430.75	448.85	425.95	438.85	-16.60	

NIFTY NEXT 50						
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	
NIFTY NEXT 50	23498.20	23694.70	23426.55	23624.05	256.10	
IBULHSGFIN	119.00	132.40	117.35	126.05	8.95	
ASHOKLEY	45.15	48.75	44.55	47.75	3.20	
OFSS	2218.00	2425.00	2214.25	2394.00	154.85	
IDEA	4.05	4.30	3.90	4.25	0.25	
BANDHANBNK	221.10	237.90	219.65	234.30	13.20	
ICICIPRULI	386.75	405.30	376.35	404.85	20.80	
NHPC	20.40	21.45	20.40	21.25	1.00	
PEC	92.00	97.40	91.40	95.00	4.25	
PETRONET	225.00	236.50	224.80	234.60	10.25	
MOTHERSUMI	79.95	86.10	79.75	81.70	3.40	
GICRE	132.90	138.80	132.50	138.15	5.70	
HINDZINC	167.00	172.00	164.70	171.55	6.50	
PNB	31.30	32.50	31.10	32.30	1.05	
BAJAJHLONG	1943.95	2084.95	1939.95	1999.00	60.75	
ICICI	1190.00	1235.35	1182.70	1229.15	33.70	
CONCOR	360.00	370.10	357.25	366.85	9.65	
NMDC	73.95	76.30	73.75	75.20	1.95	
DLF	138.50	142.50	137.50	141.40	3.40	
ADANITRANS	201.90	208.00	198.20	205.00	4.05	
UBL	943.00	967.85	931.00	949.00	18.00	
MCDOWELL-N	528.00	539.60	522.60	532.30	9.40	
HAVELLS	532.95	545.00	529.45	542.55	9.60	
PEL	937.00	967.45	932.30	947.95	14.00	
DMART	2310.00	2350.00	2305.80	2339.00	33.20	
INDIGO	914.35	929.95	905.05	921.00	12.70	
HDFCLIFE	488.00	505.20	484.75	492.60	6.45	
BANKBARODA	47.55	48.65	47.20	47.90	0.60	
BOSCHLTD	10150.00	10160.00	9960.00	10081.70	99.60	
AMBUJACEM	166.90	170.75	165.65	169.05	1.35	
AUROPHARMA	622.40	631.85	612.80	624.00	4.05	
GODREJCP	536.50	539.85	530.10	535.90	2.10	
DIVISLAB	2388.00	2409.00	2352.00	2369.75	6.40	
HDFCAMC	2514.00	2549.35	2460.00	2502.00	5.35	
CADILAHCH	325.00	330.70	320.50	326.60	0.65	
L&T	64.50	66.00	64.00	64.30	0.10	
NIACL	119.00	123.55	118.50	119.45	0.15	
BIOCON	366.00	366.00	350.70	352.15	0.15	
ACC	1128.00	1140.00	1107.00	1126.90	0.40	
LUPIN	860.00	872.70	848.75	853.50	-0.85	
MARICO	291.00	293.70	287.00	289.75	-0.35	
PAGEIND	18045.00	18350.00	17900.00	17999.00	-42.20	
PGHIL	10590.00	10700.00	10235.00	10500.00	-36.30	
SILIFE	723.00	723.00	708.40	713.90	-5.95	
SRTRANSFIN	703.00	716.40	681.95	688.80	-6.50	
SIEMENS	1148.00	1148.00	1113.10	1125.00	-15.10	
HINDPETRO	211.20	212.05	206.70	208.00	-2.90	
PIDILITIND	1560.00	1567.60	1509.55	1527.00	-27.45	
DABUR	490.00	490.65	475.45	477.50	-10.00	
BERGEPAINT	531.00	535.90	511.45	515.00	-14.95	
COLPAL	1505.85	1513.20	1460.00	1463.00	-42.85	

BSE 500

Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	AMBUJACEM	167.50	170.70	165.65	169.50
BAJFINANCE	2204.00	2375.00	2201.00	2292.80	RECLTD	90.25	94.25	90.25	93.25
HDFCLIFE	491.80	505.00	484.40	492.65	ADANIGAS	104.10	107.90	104.10	105.70
INDUSINDBK	454.05	489.00	443.30	470.60	UPL	362.50	365.60	354.55	360.25
RELIANCE	1446.00	1453.05	1420.50	1426.20	GNFC	147.40	152.00	144.65	145.70
AXISBANK	432.00	448.70	427.50	438.85	BAJAJ-AUTO	2478.60	2519.80	2451.00	2499.95
HDFCBANK	940.00	992.40	933.00	976.75	EXIDEIND	146.60	156.00	146.60	155.30
HDFC	1740.00	1845.00	1728.95	1837.00	TATAELXSI	817.00	841.75	796.75	810.35
ICICIBANK	354.80	376.40	351.75	370.25	HINDPETRO	213.90	213.90	206.70	208.20
SBIN	185.30	191.70	183.00	190.00	MUTHOOTFIN	840.00	841.05	818.45	823.70
IBULHSGFIN	119.70	132.30	117.30	126.95	CEATLTD	787.50	811.00	770.00	783.85
HINDALCO	110.00	117.55	108.50	116.30	MINDTREE	865.45	892.40	853.70	881.80
TCS	1872.35	1911.30	1851.00	1905.20	IGL	478.00	480.20	471.00	475.95
TATASEEL	274.45	286.00	271.40	282.50	MIDHANI	205.00	214.80	204.55	210.60
RBLBANK	121.00	127.20	118.35	125.80	POWERGRID	161.00	161.00	156.05	158.00
BAJAJFINSV	4898.90	5066.90	4855.00	4997.25	IDFCFIRSTBT	22.70	22.70	21.95	22.00
HINDUNILVR	2310.00	2310.00	2221.40	2232.10	ULTRACEMCO	3430.00	3451.95	3365.95	3434.10
MOTHERSUMI	80.00	86.00	79.90	81.40	PIDILITINDIA	1554.00	1564.45	1510.00	1517.20
ZEEL	151.95	166.00	155.15	159.35	COLPAL	1506.00	1513.90	1461.05	1471.00
AUOPHARMA	617.00	631.40	613.00	625.10	INRINFILFLUOR	1630.00	1640.65	1570.00	1600.00
MARUTI	5120.00	5120.00	5012.40	5068.60	WIPRO	180.40	182.40	179.40	180.70
IDEA	4.04	4.30	3.92	4.21	RCF	42.25	43.25	40.75	41.10
LOT	863.70	882.50	854.45	876.65	RAJESHSEXPO	609.95	654.70	599.20	616.20
KOTAKBANK	1332.00	1350.05	1315.55	1329.00	IOC	80.15	81.15	80.00	80.50
TATAMOTORS	77.70	79.30	76.75	78.15	ULB	964.90	967.75	934.50	943.40
BANDHANBNK	222.25	238.00	220.00	234.40	NAUKRI	2418.70	2575.75	2408.00	2442.25
ATUL	4860.00	5007.65	4745.00	4962.70	DIVISLAB	2368.80	2408.00	2353.45	2367.70
STAR	378.00	449.00	378.00	449.10	GESHIP	226.75	236.80	217.50	228.00
ANSAPAINPT	1855.00	1855.00	1757.00	1768.00	WOCKPHARMA	2600.00	2688.45	2621.95	2626.00
INFY	687.00	681.70	658.10	677.70	ABBOTINDIA	1700.00	1818.40	1694.35	1798.40
DEEPAKNI	486.00	534.85	479.90	507.10	IPCALAB	1635.00	1639.85	1585.00	1591.40
CIPLA	613.00	613.00	590.40	596.65	VOLTAS	497.50	498.35	489.00	491.40
SUNTV	379.95	396.35	379.60	393.10	ASTRAZEN	2311.15	3130.35	2346.85	3044.90
HCLTECH	480.00	500.00	470.45	491.50	NAM-INDIA	278.00	243.00	270.50	237.40
CYIENT	204.05	215.40	204.05	207.85	BEMIL	586.00	598.50	582.15	589.00
SUNPHARMA*	475.00	484.80	473.50	477.95	CASTROLIND	123.80	128.75	121.35	128.10
JINDALSTEL	84.55	89.80	83.35	88.65	PNB	73.75	74.05	71.15	73.10
BIOCON	367.00	367.00	350.80	352.00	BEL	31.60	32.50	32.15	32.30
PPC	92.00	97.45	91.55	94.90	CANFINHOME	309.70	325.25	307.35	313.40
LUPIN	868.95	872.75	850.00	854.25	CESC	61.20	62.00	60.65	62.30
SRTRANSFIN	705.00	715.80	681.55	696.25	RELINFRA	23.00	23.00	22.95	22.90
BHARTIARTL	493.80	498.40	487.45	497.25	RHFL	21.20	21.30	20.85	20.90
MAMAPPURAM	132.05	132.60	124.70	125.85	MFSL	482.60	482.60	464.00	472.70
EQUITAS	54.40	55.40	51.80	52.20					
CHOLAFIN	150.50	154.00	145.55	150.30					
ONGC	69.60	70.95	68.70	70.50					
ICICIFRULI	384.00	405.30	376.40	402.80					
FRETI	87.85	95.00	87.85	89.65					
HEXAWARE	303.00	306.00	283.35	295.95					
PVR	981.95	1038.10	959.10	1009.30					
JSWSTEEL	161.70	166.40	159.25	164.15					
M&MFIN	158.00	162.35	153.05	156.85					
PERSISTENT	480.00	480.00	467.40	472.05					
SAIL	27.65	30.80	27.05	30.20					
M&M	338.00	351.70	336.15	348.05					
BATAINDIA	1334.00	1353.25	1330.20	1338.30					
HEROMOTOCO	1970.00	2018.20	1941.50	1970.90					
VEDL	78.40	79.95	77.00	79.15					
INDIGO	910.30	929.55	907.50	921.05					
CANBK	85.20	88.20	84.35	87.40					
TECHM	528.70	536.90	522.35	528.85					
BRITANNIA	322.00	328.85	315.00	315.15					
ASHOKLEY	45.50	48.70	44.60	47.95					
ITC	181.00	183.00	179.75	182.10					
LICHSGFIN	280.80	287.10	275.10	284.50					
COROMANDEL	574.05	585.00	565.60	570.35					
L&TTH	65.00	65.95	64.00	64.55					
CADILAHAC	325.85	340.45	320.50	326.55					
DLF	138.20	142.15	137.85	141.55					
HEL	933.65	967.00	933.65	955.40	JKPAPER	106.95	106.95	100.60	101.10
PFG	766.00	832.90	759.30	839.20	MARICO	290.00	293.65	287.10	289.90
BANKBARODA	47.75	48.60	47.25	48.10	MCX	1102.65	1107.75	1040.45	1044.35
GRAPHITE	195.05	215.55	195.05	215.55	NOCIL	91.00	91.20	87.65	88.45
DREDDY	3970.00	3970.00	3871.00	3880.50	DEEPAKPERT	109.45	110.55	104.50	106.70
TITAN	935.00	935.00	918.30	925.00	TORNPOWER	319.00	326.45	315.35	322.40
SRF	3680.00	3738.15	3615.60	3664.95	HAVELLS	530.00	544.60	530.00	542.60
NITTECH	159.05	1246.00	1163.75	1180.00	BERGEPAINT	538.00	538.00	514.00	516.50
ESCORTS	714.00	725.00	704.20	714.95	TORNPHARM	2522.00	2530.00	2399.70	2419.90
GAIL	86.00	89.85	84.65	89.10	TATAPAPER	31.20	31.50	31.00	31.10
INDIACEM	101.00	103.35	100.05	104.00	IDBI	21.20	21.40	21.10	21.20
NATANSOL	345.00	355.40	345.00	354.00	DMAT	2320.00	2348.95	2300.00	2328.70
JUSTDIAL	388.40	393.00	379.30	389.80	ADANIENT	142.40	142.30	135.75	139.40
BANKINDIA	34.80	35.05	34.30	34.60	INFRATEL	161.30	163.95	157.05	162.90
BPCL	361.00	364.85	355.40	361.30	VNC	20.05	26.20	25.05	25.70
UJIVIAN	178.90	181.00	173.70	175.80	INITATORGA	97.50	102.90	96.10	98.20
GLMMARK	330.00	335.20	325.90	329.70	ITI	83.50	89.00	82.65	87.10
APOLLOHOSP	1421.20	1425.50	1375.00	1413.85	OMAXE	158.75	159.00	151.90	153.55
UNIONBANK	26.85	27.35	26.70	27.05	ICICIGI	1176.00	1235.85	1176.00	1232.30
HDFCAMC	2533.90	2535.00	2460.00	2503.75	GRASIM	501.80	504.90	496.25	501.70
PRESTIGE	172.00	194.40	170.00	171.55	CONCOR	361.35	370.00	358.75	365.85
NTPC	91.25	92.30	88.90	90.25	DCBBANK	83.30	83.30	79.10	79.60
IBALEAST	60.75	62.40	57.50	59.75	AUBANK	529.00	537.50	514.80	537.50
ACC	1135.00	1138.95	1108.00	1122.70	SBILIFE	727.90	729.00	708.80	713.30
DABUR	492.30	492.30	475.65	482.60	JAICORPLTD	68.95	70.30	64.00	69.00
BALKRISHN	924.35	968.00	924.35	962.15	JUBILANT	415.30	418.00	397.05	407.30
BHARATFOOP	267.65	287.40	260.00	282.45	COMUMINSIND	392.90	395.85	370.95	379.80
FEDERALBNK	47.80	47.85	45.80	46.55	GUGLAS	258.95	260.00	254.25	257.00
NESTLEIND	1769.00	1727.40	1741.00	17495.70	GODREJPC	530.05	540.00	530.05	536.30
MGL	967.00	988.65	941.00	946.10	ADANIPOWER	30.85	31.60	30.30	31.20
EICHERMOT	14464.80	14464.80	14125.00	14324.35	RALLIS	210.30	211.00	203.50	207.70
APOLLOTYRE	90.00	96.80	89.75	95.05	FCONSUMER	7.97	8.79	7.97	8.77
TVSMOTOR	303.00	310.00	294.70	307.60	GNPL	55.15	56.25	55.10	55.70
PFIZER	4840.00	4840.10	4840.00	4930.50	INOXLEISUR	208.80	214.45	203.35	209.40
ABFRL	116.00	116.00	111.50	112.10	SIEMENS	1150.20	1151.00	1114.20	1126.20
ADANIPORTS	276.05	293.00	273.00	288.25	UFLEX	197.50	197.50	188.00	189.80
AVANTI	426.45	447.05	416.00	432.35	WHIRLPOOL	1932.90	2070.00	1906.15	2053.80
COALINDIA	136.00	140.75	135.00	139.85	TCIEP	654.45	764.60	654.45	728.80
PETRONET	225.80	236.45	224.80	235.20	GRANULES	172.75	172.75	166.45	164.80
JUBLFOOD	1542.60	1568.75	1536.00	1553.25	LAURUS	530.00	534.70	513.00	519.70

184 countries going through hell: Trump blames China

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump doubled down on China for failing to tame the coronavirus at its very origin, saying it has led to 184 countries “going through hell”, as several American lawmakers demanded steps to reduce dependence on Beijing for manufacturing and minerals.

Trump has been publicly blaming China for the global spread of the “invisible enemy” and launched an investigation against it. He has also indicated that the US may be looking

at “a lot more money” in damages from China than the USD 140 billion being sought by Germany from Beijing for the pandemic.

Leaders of the US, the UK and Germany believe that the deaths and the destruction of the global economy could have been avoided, had China shared the information about the virus in its early phases.

“It’s in 184 countries, as you hear me say often. It’s hard to believe. It’s inconceivable,” Trump told reporters at White House on Tuesday.

“It should have been

stopped at the source, which was China. It should have been stopped very much at the source, but it wasn’t. And now we have 184 countries going through hell.”

The virus, which originated in China’s Wuhan city in mid-November, has killed more than two lakh people and infected over three million globally. The largest number of them are in the US; nearly 59,000 deaths and over one million infections.

The massive outbreak in the US has put Trump under increasing pressure from

American lawmakers to decrease US dependence on Beijing and they have also sought compensation from China.

Senator Ted Cruz and his colleagues have urged Defence Secretary Mark Esper and Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to support the development of a fully domestic supply chain of rare earths and other minerals that are critical for manufacturing defence technologies and supporting national security.

“It is clear that our dependence on China for vital rare

earths threatens our US manufacturing and defence-industrial base. As the October 2018 Defence Industrial Base Report states: ‘China represents a significant and growing risk to the supply of materials deemed strategic and critical to US national security.’ (...) Ensuring a US supply of domestically sourced rare earths will reduce our vulnerability to supply disruptions that poses a grave risk to our military readiness,” the Senators wrote.

The US is 100 percent import-dependent for rare earths as well as 13 other met-

als and minerals on the US Government Critical Minerals List and more than 75 percent import reliant for an additional 10 minerals.

Congressman Brian Mast on Tuesday introduced a legislation to hold China accountable for its “coronavirus deception”. The resolution would empower the US to withhold payments on debts owed to China equal to the costs incurred by the US in response to COVID-19.

“China’s total lack of transparency and mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak has cost

tens of thousands of lives, millions of jobs and left untold economic destruction. Congress must hold China accountable for their cover-up and force them to pay back the taxpayer dollars that have been spent as a result,” Mast said.

Cruz, member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced his intention to introduce a legislation to cut off Hollywood studios from assistance they receive from the Department of Defence if those studios censor their films for screening in China

Around the Globe

- Several hundred Ukrainian entrepreneurs protested in Kyiv on Wednesday, demanding the Government to ease lockdown restrictions enacted on March 12 to stem the spread of the coronavirus
- Germany is extending its worldwide travel warning until mid-June, saying the coronavirus situation is too dire to change the guidance. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the warning, due to expire May 3, would be extended to June 14 because there has been no change to the danger posed by the pandemic. Maas says he will discuss the matter with European partners in the coming weeks
- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and fiancée Carrie Symonds on Wednesday announced the birth of a ‘healthy baby boy’. The birth is believed to be slightly premature but both mother and baby are said to be doing very well. It is understood that Johnson, who has just recovered from coronavirus, was present throughout the birth, at a Government-run hospital in London. Johnson is set to miss his first Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons with the newly-elected Opposition Labour Leader Keir Starmer, who congratulated the UK PM on the “wonderful news”
- President Donald Trump took executive action to order meat processing plants to stay open amid concerns over growing coronavirus cases and the impact on the nation’s food supply. The order signed on Tuesday uses the Defense Production Act to classify meat processing as critical infrastructure to try to prevent a shortage of chicken, pork and other meat on supermarket shelves. Unions fired back, saying the White House was jeopardizing lives and prioritising cold cuts over workers’ health
- China on Wednesday said it will hold its annual parliament session from May 22 which was earlier scheduled to be held from March 5 and got postponed for the first time due to the coronavirus outbreak, signalling that the pandemic which paralysed the country for over three months is finally under control. The decision was made at a regular session of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, the country’s top legislature, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The third session of the 13th NPC, which was to be held from March 5, was postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- Tracking the aggregated movements of people using their mobile phone data may help predict the geographical and temporal spread of COVID-19 infections up to two weeks ahead of time, according to a study. The research, published in the journal Nature, analysed the distribution of population outflows from Wuhan, China, during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak in January 2020. According to scientists, including Nicholas Christakis, from Yale University in the US, large-scale population movements can contribute to localised outbreaks of disease becoming widespread epidemics

GLOBAL DEATH AT 2,19,620

Total 3,167,367 cases have been registered globally

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,039,501	59,459
Spain	2,36,899	24,275
Italy	2,01,505	27,359
France	1,65,911	23,660
UK	1,61,145	21,678
Germany	1,60,479	6,374
Iran	93,657	5,957
Turkey	1,14,653	2,992



Report: Uber to cut 20% workforce globally, 5,400 jobs at risk

San Francisco: Ride-hailing firm Uber is reportedly laying off 20 per cent of its workforce — more than 5,400 of 27,000 employees — as rides come to an indefinite halt in most countries owing to lockdowns and social distancing in place, The Information reported. Layoffs of that magnitude “could be announced in stages in the coming weeks” at Uber, said the report, as long-serving Uber’s Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Thuan Pham quit the company.

AFP

Company says drug proved effective against virus in US study

Washington: A biotech company said on Wednesday its experimental drug has proved effective against the new coronavirus in a major US Government study that put it to a strict test.

Gilead Sciences’ remdesivir would be the first treatment to pass such a test against the virus, which has killed more than 2,18,000 people since it emerged late last year in China. Having a treatment could have a profound effect on the global pandemic, especially because health officials say

any vaccine is likely a year or more away.

The study, run by the National Institutes of Health, tested remdesivir versus usual care in about 800 hospitalized coronavirus patients around the world. The main result is how long it takes patients to recover. California-based Gilead gave no details on results on Wednesday, but said an announcement is expected soon. NIH officials did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

AP

MEN ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO DIE FROM COVID-19

IAN S ■ BEIJING

Men and women are equally likely to contract the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19), but men are more than twice as likely to die from the disease as compared to women, warn researchers.

The results, published in the journal Frontiers in Public Health, suggest that additional care may be required for older men or those with underlying conditions.

So far, researchers have confirmed that older COVID-19 patients and those with certain underlying conditions, such as heart disease and respiratory conditions, are at greater risk of severe disease and death. However, Dr Jin-Kui Yang, a physician at Beijing Tongren Hospital in China, noticed a trend among COVID-19 patients who died.

“Early in January we noticed that the number of men dying from COVID-19

appeared to be higher than the number of women,” said Yang.

“This raised a question: are men more susceptible to getting or dying from COVID-19? We found that no-one had measured gender differences in COVID-19 patients, and so began investigating,” Yang added.

For the findings, the research team analysed several patient datasets to see if there were differences in how men and women respond to COVID-19.

This included data on 43 patients who the doctors had treated themselves and a publicly available dataset on 1,056 COVID-19 patients.

The virus responsible for COVID-19 is similar to the virus behind the 2003 SARS outbreak, and it attaches to the same protein, called ACE2, on cells it attacks. Given this similarity, the doctors also analysed a dataset of 524 SARS patients from 2003.

US, Chinese experts probing origins of virus: Report

Beijing: American scientists are working their Chinese counterparts to investigate the origins of the novel coronavirus, a prime demand of US President Donald Trump and several other countries, an official media report here said on Wednesday.

While there is no official announcement here, the state-run CGTN television reported on Wednesday that the China Centre for Disease Control and Prevention is facilitating

the cooperation between Dr. Ian Lipkin, Director for Centre for Infection and Immunity of Columbia University, and Prof Lu Jinhai of Sun-Yat-Sen University of Guangzhou to conduct the probe.

“The two are working together to determine whether the virus emerged elsewhere in China before Wuhan in December” last year, the report said. It is also not yet clear whether the investigation has the official consent of the US

government.

The report about the probe came as China is fighting back mounting calls for an international enquiry into the source of coronavirus which broke out in Wuhan and spread to the whole world.

China on Monday said such a probe has no precedence or legal basis besides investigations into such pandemics in the past had not provided any conclusive results.

Besides Trump, who

stepped up demand for an investigation into the origins of the novel coronavirus and whether it escaped from Wuhan Institute of Virology, Britain, Australia and Germany called for more transparency from Beijing on COVID-19 origins.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang on Monday played down the calls for enquiry saying that the investigations in the past on such viruses achieved little.

PTI



COVID, CORONA AND LOCKDOWN: Newborns around world named after pandemic

Tupas, expressing relief after the uneventful delivery.

“I wanted her name to remind us that COVID did not only bring us suffering. Despite all of this, a blessing came to us,” he added.

And so, Covid Marie it was.

Weeks earlier, two mothers in southeast had had similar ideas, apparently encouraged by a doctor in the hospital



where their babies were delivered.

One was called Corona Kumar and the other Corona Kumari.

“I told them this would help create awareness about the disease and remove the stigma around it,” said SF Basha, the doctor.

“To my surprise, they agreed.

Not to be outdone, a migrant-worker couple stranded thousands of kilometres

from their home in Rajasthan decided to name their child Lockdown.

“We named him Lockdown remembering all the problems we had to face during this tough time,” local media reports quoted the father Sanjay Bauri as saying.

Tupas, the father of baby Covid Marie, said that while he had fielded criticism on social media for his unorthodox choice, he would not be swayed.

“She might experience bullying, but I’ll just teach my daughter to be a good person,” he said. “We didn’t have second thoughts.”

Satellite images of luxury boats further hint Kim at villa: Experts

Seoul: Satellite imagery showing recent movements of luxury boats often used by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his entourage near Wonsan provide further indications he has been at the coastal resort, according to experts who monitor the reclusive regime.

Speculation about Kim’s health and location erupted after his unprecedented absence from April 15 celebrations to mark the birthday of his late grandfather and North Korea’s founder, Kim Il Sung.

On Tuesday, North Korea-monitoring website NK PRO reported commercial satellite imagery showed boats often used by Kim had made movements in patterns that suggested he or his entourage may be in the Wonsan area.

That followed a report last week by a US-based North Korea monitoring project, 38 North, which reported satellite images showed what was believed to be Kim’s personal train was parked at a station reserved for his use at the villa

in Wonsan.

Officials in South Korea and the United States say it is plausible Kim may be staying there, possibly to avoid exposure to the new coronavirus, and have expressed scepticism of media reports he had some kind of serious illness.

They caution, however, that Kim’s health and location are closely guarded secrets and reliable information is difficult to obtain in North Korea.

The last time official media in North Korea reported on Kim’s whereabouts was when he presided over a meeting on April 11, but there have been near-daily reports of him sending letters and diplomatic messages.

Kim’s seaside compound in Wonsan, on the country’s east coast, is dotted with guest villas and serviced by a private beach, basketball court, and private train station, according to experts and satellite imagery. An airstrip was bulldozed last year to build a horse riding track, while a boathouse nearby shel-

ters Kim’s Princess 95 luxury yacht, valued at around \$7 million in 2013.

“It’s one of his favourite houses,” said Michael Madden, a North Korea leadership expert at the U.S.-based Stimson Center, who has compared Kim’s affinity for Wonsan to U.S. President Donald Trump’s favoured resort, Mar-a-Lago in Florida. Madden said Kim is believed to have about 13 significant compounds around the country, though he appears to only regularly use about half of them.

“All of them are set up to serve as the leader’s headquarters, so they are all equipped for him to run the country,” he said.

Wonsan is one of the larger and better appointed compounds, but it also has a useful location that allows Kim to easily travel to other areas along the coast, or return quickly to Pyongyang in his private train or along a special highway designated for use only by the Kim family or top officials, Madden said.

Agencies

UN: New polio outbreak in Niger after vaccination suspended

AP ■ LONDON

The World Health Organization (WHO) said Niger has been struck by a new outbreak of polio, following the suspension of immunisation activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN health agency reported that two children were infected by the highly infectious, water-borne disease and that one was paralyzed. The outbreak was sparked by a mutated virus that originated in the vaccine and was not connected to a previous polio epidemic Niger stopped last year, WHO said, in a statement last week.

“The poliovirus will inevitably continue to circulate and may paralyze more children as no high-quality immunisation campaigns can be conducted in a timely manner,” said Pascal Mkanda, WHO’s coordinator of polio eradication in Africa.

In rare cases, the live virus in oral polio vaccine can evolve into a form capable of igniting new outbreaks among non-

immunised children; stopping the epidemic requires more targeted vaccination.

Earlier this month, WHO and partners announced they were forced to halt all polio vaccination activities until at least June 1, acknowledging the decision would inevitably result in more children being paralyzed. The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says there have been 33,500 cases and 1,469 deaths as of Tuesday, but experts suspect the real numbers are far higher due to lack of testing and poor surveillance.

Eradicating polio requires more than 90 per cent of children being immunised, typically in mass campaigns involving millions of health workers that would break social distancing guidelines needed to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

Across Africa, 14 other countries are struggling to contain their polio epidemics, which have also been caused by a rare mutation of the virus in the oral vaccine.

Hillary Clinton endorses Biden to challenge Trump

IAN S ■ NEW YORK

Hillary Clinton, who was defeated by President Donald Trump in 2016, has endorsed former Vice President Joe Biden to challenge him in November in a much-changed environment.

“I want to add my voice to the many who have endorsed you to be our president,” Clinton told him on Tuesday.

Clinton was among the last holdouts among Democratic Party leaders in endorsing Biden, the only major candidate left standing in the party race for the nomination to run in the presidential election this year.

By inserting herself into the race for the Democratic Party nomination with the backing of the party establishment, the former secretary of state had blocked Biden’s chances of running in 2016 after having served two terms as vice president.

Now she said, “I wish he

were president right now but I can’t wait until he is — if all of us do our part to support the kind of person that we want back in the White House.”

Biden responded, “I really appreciate your friendship. What a, just a wonderful personal endorsement.”

They spoke from their homes at a virtual town hall meeting on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women during which Clinton made the endorsement.

Before the meeting, Clinton tweeted cryptically, “A little hint about who the surprise guest will be for @JoeBiden’s 3pm ET (US East Time) town hall today: (She’s excited).”

Criticising Trump, she said, “Out of this terrible tragedy of the pandemic and the loss of life and loss of income and everything else that we’re suffering through, this is a moment of reckoning.”

Former President Barack Obama endorsed

Biden, who was his vice president, on April 14.

Biden has received the endorsements of all the major challengers in the race for the Democratic Party nomination, who have all dropped out.

When the last rival standing, Senator Bernie Sanders suspended his campaign and endorsed him on April 8, Biden sealed his nomination with only a formal endorsement at the Democratic National Convention in August.

Recognising this fact, the New York State Elections Board cancelled the state’s primary scheduled for June.

Although he has endorsed Biden, Sanders stays on the ballot in the intra-party elections and wants to use his showing as a bargaining chip in drafting the party’s election manifesto.

Sanders campaign adviser Jeff Weaver called the cancellation, an “outrage, a blow to American democracy, and must be overturned.”

TrendSlazer

Sidharth loves doing action films

Actor **SIDHARTH MALHOTRA** says he loves to watch and work in action films.

Amid lockdown, the actor treated his fans to question and answer session by using a “would you rather” filter.

He wrote the question: Would you rather watch an action film or a horror film? While 60 per cent people replied “action,” 40 per cent said “horror.”

Sidharth answered: “Well, I love watching as well doing action films.”

He then asked various another questions and the fans participated actively.

He is now gearing up for his next *Shershaah*.



‘Working with Jacqueline was fun. I think she is one of the most hard-working professionals I have had the pleasure of working with. We have been complimented on how we look together on the screen, which is great. We always had the concept of music video, the colours, the dance very clear in our minds.’

—**Rapper Badshah**

At a time one can't move out of the house due to the nationwide lockdown, actor **JANHVI KAPOOR** says she is missing Varanasi.

She took to Instagram and shared a throw-back slow-motion video of herself on a boat on the ghats of Varanasi. She is seen wearing a White kurta paired with her lime Green *dupatta* to complete her soft look and has absolutely no make-up on.

“Missing #Varanasi,” she captioned the video. On the film front, the actor will next be seen in *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*, *RoohiAfza*, *Takht* and *Dostana 2*.



Women have to work harder: Dua

Singer **DUA LIPA**, who is known for belting out hits like *New Rules*, *IDGAF* and *One Kiss*, says pop artists, especially

women have to work harder to be taken seriously in the industry.

Achieving the star status was not an easy ride for Lipa, who was speaking on the Rolling Stone Music Now podcast.

She said: “Artists in pop, especially women, have to work harder to be taken seriously. You have to work a lot harder for people to really believe that these are your lyrics, that this is your vision.”



A flood of condolences from those who have worked closely with him is evidence that the actor was the master of versatility and the king of modern Bollywood classics, says **CHAHAK MITTAL**

In the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go, but what always hurts the most is not taking a moment to say goodbye.” Sahabzaade Irrfan Ali Khan's words from the film *Life of Pi* (2012) couldn't explain the reality better. When the middle-aged Pi in the film begins narrating his shipwreck encounter to a Canadian author, we instantly know that he survived through all his challenges and ordeal that we are about to witness. Real life replicated reel as Irrfan successfully overcame the challenges in Hindi cinema, and, in life of battling a rare cancer. Well, almost. He returned with his last performance in *Angrezi Medium*, promising more such reliably engaging roles. However, destiny had other plans. The actor's sad demise in Mumbai certainly came as a shock to every cinema connoisseur and his close ones, yesterday. A flood of condolences on social media — by celebrities and commoners alike — is evidence that his hard work and determination, a series of up-and-coming roles, and the idea that being “self-made” is indeed real, made his death feel so personal to everyone. Here are a few words from those who have worked closely with him and know how he lived only for the love of his craft.

Recalling her “first-ever” official trip to Mumbai in 2005, filmmaker and producer Guneet Monga talks about how she went there to get Irrfan's signature for a Canadian visa document for the film, *Partition*. She adds, “I met him at the parking lot of Mumbai airport between flights. From then to making *The Lunchbox* together, he has been a dream to work with. He always took chances and encouraged new voices. He loved stories and gave them his all — from *Salaam Bombay to Maqbool to Life of Pi to Jurassic Park*. He is our true global star. He is cherished around the world as one of the best actors ever. And indeed, there is no one like Irrfan. The magic of his eyes and that smile will live on for generations to come. He has truly set the bar very high.”

Talking about how his demise has shaken her, she says, “I am deeply saddened by the news and don't know how to process it. It was a privilege to see him bring so many unforgettable characters to life. I am glad I could witness his charm and unmatched wit, one last time on big screen with *Angrezi Medium*. He is a legend and his legacy will go on forever. He will always be in my prayers. Also praying for strength for his wife, the amazing Sutapa and his sons. Thank you for all the magic!”

Filmmaker Homi Adjanian recalls how they created the film, *Angrezi Medium*, against all odds. Says he, “Irrfan was still undergoing treatment during the shoot. I remember once asking him why he wanted to do a film in this situation and his retort was simple. He laughed and said, ‘Idiot? I am not dead, right? So let me live doing what I love!’ And Irrfan was truly in love with his craft. He had stopped caring for fame and stardom but he never wanted to stop acting. Also, he never made his problem anyone else's. Ironically, throughout our shoot, we all looked up to him for strength rather than the other way around. I always knew he was an amazing actor but that I got to be a small part of his journey is something I will always cherish.” It's certainly hard to say goodbye to someone close and express sorrow and as Homi wrote his feelings to us, he ended the mail with, “Sent with opposable thumbs.”

He had earlier posted on Instagram,

Life of Irrfan



10 EXAMPLES OF MAGNIFICENCE

Irrfan Khan was a true on-screen chameleon who smoothly transformed from a top athlete to a bandit to a common man looking for a bride to a doting dad in films. The actor's sad demise made us recall his memorable roles in films, which will stay forever in the hearts of millions of his fans. After his last, *Angrezi Medium*, where he played a single father on his goal to fulfill his daughter's dream to study in London, here are 10 of his most inspiring and strongest roles:

THE WARRIOR (2001)

His first feature film, by British filmmaker Asif Kapadia, Irrfan stars as Lafcadia, a warrior in feudal Rajasthan who attempts to give up the sword. The film later became Britain's official Oscar selection. At the BAFTA Awards, it also won the Alexander Korda Award for Best British Film. It was also one of the films shortlisted for UK's official entry for the Academy Awards but was ultimately dropped on grounds that the language was not indigenous to Britain.

HAASIL (2003)

With a focus on student politics, the film depicted him as a student leader of Allahabad University. Irrfan received the Filmfare Award for Best Villain.

MAQBOOL (2004)

The crime drama about passion and power was an adaptation of the play *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. In the Vishal Bhardwaj directorial that starred Pankaj Kapur and Tabu, he played the title role — right-hand man of an ageing don.

THE LUNCHBOX (2013)

It was a romantic film but not the usual one with actors lip-syncing to

love ballads. The film profiled Irrfan as a lonely man on the verge of retirement. But before his office days are over, a mistaken lunchbox delivery changes his life.

“I long to explore romance in different ways. I don't often get that chance. This concept of love, we misuse the term. Love is a pure connection, a strong longing,” the actor had said in an interview in 2014.

PIKU (2015)

It was essentially a father-daughter film that was appreciated by many for Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone's chemistry. But Irrfan knew how to make his presence felt in the Shoojit Sircar directorial. He played the role of a man who ran a cab service in Delhi. His profession makes him join the fun yet emotional ride with the father and daughter in *Piku*.

THE NAMESAKE (2007)

The film essays the journey of US-based kid Gogol, whose Indian parents, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguly (played by Irrfan

and Tabu) make him learn the appreciate Indian culture as he engages deeply with modern, American perspectives on dating, marriage and love.

KARWAAN (2018)

The film took the audience on a fun road trip with Irrfan, Dulquer Salmaan and Mithila Palkar's characters. Irrfan portrayed the friend who everyone would want in real life too. It showed his comic side and romantic sides too.

PAAN SINGH TOMAR (2012)

He brought to life the story of late Paan Singh Tomar, a champion athlete who later became a bandit, to the big screen. It wasn't easy to get into the skin of Tomar, who later came to be known as the ‘Bandit King’ of the Chambal Valley. The film, helmed by Tigra Manshu Dhulia, fetched him National Award for Best Actor.

MADAARI (2016)

Irrfan played a grieving father who later kidnapped a top politician's son. “I play a man who feels the system has collapsed completely and there is a need for a reform. My character is not based on any one individual. Nor is the film an attack on my political ideology,” Irrfan had said in 2016.

HINDI MEDIUM (2017)

In the comedy-drama, Irrfan played a rich businessman who did everything — even pretended to be from the poor section of society — just to get his daughter enrolled into an elite English school.

“We laughed about you dying... But I didn't think I'd feel so broken when I heard what I was expecting to hear for a while now. I am eternally grateful for walking a few steps of your journey with you, that I could call myself your friend, for the memories stuffed with so much joy, so much laughter in such little time. You once told me how you had an inexplicable love for your craft but didn't want the stardom anymore. Well, you never needed to be a star, my friend, because you shone brighter than the universe.” **#RIPirrfan**

Actor Mithila Palkar, who shared the



screen with Irrfan in *Karwaan*, shares, “I am truly saddened hearing this news. It is heartbreaking and leaves a void that cannot be filled. We have lost one of India's brightest lights, a wonderful, talented actor, a good human being and someone I admired deeply and was grateful to have had the opportunity to work with. I learnt so much from him while working on *Karwaan*. At this time, my thoughts and prayers are with his family that they find the strength to cope with this loss. May his soul rest in peace.”

Actor Richa Chadha wrote on social

media, wherein she recalled her backstage experience with him in 2013. “2013, backstage... after winning our respective Filmfare (critics) awards, we were ushered away to take ‘winner photos’. You won for *Paan Singh Tomar*, a performance so real that it was unbelievable. We met several times after. I even sought you out for advice which you gave patiently, rolling a slim cigarette, sipping on black tea, laughing, and talking cinema, politics and spirituality. Today, you became one with god. Your body suffered in the last two years immeasurably and you fought hard!

Infecting dreams

The horrors of the pandemic and the surreal and frightening ways it has upended daily life are affecting ambitions and exposing feelings of fear, loss, isolation and grief

gering, particularly for health care workers whose dreams show similarities to those of combat veterans and 9/11 responders, said Deirdre Barrett, a Harvard University professor who is surveying COVID-19 dreamers worldwide. She has collected 6,000 dream samples from about 2,400 people.

So many people are sharing accounts of dreams online that there's a Twitter account dedicated to gathering them in a virtual library under the handle “I Dream of COVID-19.” “As far as I know, no one has dream samples from the flu pandemic of 1918 — and that would probably be the most comparable thing,” said Barrett, who has studied the dreams of 9/11 survivors and British prison-



ers of war in World War II. “Now we just all have our smartphones by our bed, so you can just reach over and speak it or type it down. Recording our dreams has never been easier.”

The dreams are also exposing what is bothering us the most about the pandemic. The themes seem universal. Dreams of a safe place suddenly overtaken by the

virus speak to contagion's terrifying invisibility, says Cathy Caruth, a professor at Cornell University who has studied trauma for 30 years. Pandemic dreams, she says, are reminiscent of the experience of Hiroshima survivors, who worried about invisible radiation exposure, and also of some nightmares described by Vietnam veterans.

“They seem to be in part about things that are hard to grasp, what it means that anybody can be a threat and you can be a threat to everybody,” Caruth said. Episcopal priest Mary Alice Mathison dreamed 500 people showed up for a funeral in her church and wouldn't go home. Other dreams underscore that no one knows how the pandemic will

end. In those, the dreamer wakes with a start before learning how it turned out.

Ashley Trevino is still trying to process one terrifying dream. The 24-year-old barista is out of work due to the pandemic and was spooked when officials announced the first COVID-19 death in her central Texas county. A few days later, she dreamed she and her girlfriend were in line to enter a dark, metal warehouse where they'd be injected with the new Coronavirus by government workers wearing Hazmat suits. Fluorescent lights in the parking lot cast an eerie glow as she watched her partner get the shot and gasp for breath. Then she got the shot, too. “I watched her kind of collapse against the wall and while I was trying to fight the effects of it and not pass out myself, I was like ... ‘Is she dead now?’” Trevino woke up whimpering. She immediately felt an impulse to share her nightmare with someone — anyone — and tweeted it to the world from her bed.

In Pakistan's Punjab province,

a college literature teacher described dreaming she was one of only 100 people left on the planet who didn't have COVID-19. The infected population had gained political control and was chasing the uninfected “so the world would become the same for everyone,” said Roha Rafiq, 28.

Rafiq is terrified for her elderly father, who insists on going to prayers every day despite a cough and a stay-at-home order. “I think,” she said in a Twitter direct message, “this anxiety has given me this dream.”

According to Barrett, many people dream they are sick with COVID-19 or of being overcome by what seem to be stand-ins for the virus: swarms of bugs, slithering worms, witches, grasshoppers with fangs. Others dream of being in crowded public places without a mask or proper social distancing. Still others dream of losing control. In one such dream, the dreamer was held down by infected people who coughed on her. In another, the dreamer came across bands of people shooting at random strangers. —AP



♦Initially, it appeared that the situation in the district would worsen in comparison to other places. But it is at the forefront in curing infected patients. How did the turnaround take place?

Our team made efforts that there is no weak link anywhere. Our doctors, paramedical staff, district administrative team and police department are engaged in serving the public. Even entrepreneurs, NGOs and common citizens are doing their bit. The first thing we did was to get in touch directly with the public. For this, a state-of-the-art integrated control room was set up by the district administration. This toll free number, 1800 419 22 11, is controlled by call centres and government officials. It functions on the All-in-One model where all problems related to COVID-19 are resolved by District Administration, Health Department, Police, Noida Authority and Greater Noida Authority. The biggest challenge was to find the infected patients. Our medical team is looking for them and sending them to quarantine within six hours. At the same time, the carrier is searched for and quarantined as well.

♦What is the role of Government Institute of Medical Sciences Greater Noida in treating infected patients?

It is at the forefront of caring for patients of Greater Noida since the first case was registered in Noida. Earlier, the samples of patients were sent to labs outside the district for testing. This delayed the reports which meant that women and young children quarantined for several days. From April 13, the Government Institute of Medical Sciences started testing in its laboratory itself. This speeded up the operations. The director of the institute, Dr Brigadier

Fight for survival

The entire world is struggling under the onslaught of the Corona pandemic. The situation in our country, too, has caused a lot of anxiety. The administration of Gautam Buddha Nagar is tackling the virus on a war footing and its efforts are showing a positive response. The recovery rate of Corona-infected patients in the district is more than 50 per cent. The foresight, tireless work and team spirit of the new District Magistrate SUHAS L Y made this possible. In conversation with SANTOSH PATHAK, he outlines the strategies that have helped to keep the situation in control

Rakesh Gupta and his team are serving the patients 24x7.

♦How is an area designated as a hotspot? How does your team work in these areas?

This is done on the basis of Corona-infected patients. If one case is found, one kilometre radius is declared as such and if there are three cases, this is extended to three km. In this area, apart from medical, sanitation and essential supplies like ration and vegetables, all other facilities are closed. With this, our cluster maintenance team, which earlier had 300 people and now has 407, starts its work. Anganwadi or Asha local health workers survey each house accom-



panied by people from the administration and police. The three are our front-line as they survey the area and detect cases. Our Rapid Response Team, consisting of doctors equipped with all the necessary resources, reaches the Corona-infected cases. They locate the people who have come in contact and with the infected person and quarantine them immediately. Not letting the disease spread is the biggest challenge. Some people are also examined on-the-spot, if the need arises.

♦The lockdown has created a stressful situation at homes, especially for women and the elderly. What are the measures that the administra-

tion is taking?

The Department of Psychology and Mental Health, Gautam Buddha University, is providing online counselling to all students, teachers, employees and others. If anyone experiences stress, mood fluctuations, lack of sleep, lack of concentration, sudden anxiety, depression, unprovoked fear, loss of confidence or any other similar problems, s/he can get advice from experts over the phone. All these numbers have been circulated in newspapers.

♦The wheat crop is ready to be harvested. How is the administration supporting farmers?

The officers of the concerned department have been directed to ensure wheat procurement while maintaining social distancing at the purchasing centres set up in the district. The government is purchasing wheat at the rate of ₹1,925 per quintal from the farmers. Online registration of farmers is mandatory to take advantage of this policy.

♦The Noida-Delhi border has been sealed recently. Will this help to prevent the further spread of the disease? And wouldn't it have been better if the step was taken earlier?

No decision is taken suddenly by the administration. It is based on studying the data daily. The sealing will benefit both Noida and Delhi as infected people from both places were infecting others. Managing the risk is the real trick. The geographical location of the district is a big problem as Gautam Buddha Nagar is bordered by other districts. Therefore, there is always this fear that the patient from a hotspot of another state can come here.

♦The graph of patients recovering is improving. This must be a relief...

The growth of Corona is exponential. We can neither be too happy nor negligent when cases reduce. Rather, one needs to be vigilant. In such a situation, the responsibility of administration increases further because when you aren't cautious, accidents take place.

♦An order of the Central Government has granted permission to open some shops. Is this a cause for relief or worry?

The local administration is empowered by the Central and State Government to tighten the guidelines issued by them according to local conditions. On the basis of this, we have strictly stopped every activity except essential services. Currently, no other shops or industrial units will be allowed to open till the situation is completely under control.

♦People have said that they are facing problems withdrawing money as ATMs do not have cash while those from hotspots are unable to go to the ATM or bank...

There are 445 branches of 45 banks in the district, besides 827 ATMs of banks. These are functioning smoothly. For the convenience of people, 232 bank friends of 10 banks are providing money to people from door to door. There is no problem with cash in the district. A total of 33 ATMs and 47 Bank Mitras are functioning in the hotspot area, through which a transaction of 4.32 crore has been completed. Similarly, the Indian Postal Service is also helping people.

♦CM Yogi Adityanath has ordered that home delivery personnel should also be checked for Corona. Is it being done in the district?

Home delivery boys have been found to be infected in many places. Because of this, it has been decided that random testing of door-to-door deliverymen will be done.

♦What message would you like to give to the people?

People, indeed, are facing problems with the lockdown. Reducing their discomfort is our main challenge. Our team of Corona warriors comprising Asha, Anganwadi workers and doctors are fighting for the masses. We are engaged in this endeavor of protecting the society. People, including the ones in the hotspots, have helped us by cooperating. The only request to people is to become aware and also make people around you aware.

IN SHORT

On the occasion of HUDCO's golden jubilee, more than 1,000 officials and stakeholders joined a live webcast event. In the wake of the pandemic, the use of information technology to enable virtual celebration of the foundation day, was historic. Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs was the chief guest. He appreciated the company's contribution and urged them to strive innovatively to address the challenges in the habitat sector and develop as a knowledge hub among the SAARC and Commonwealth nations, particularly post the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, Mishra stressed the need to learn from our experiences and go beyond our usual business to achieve our dream of making India a developed nation by 2030. Shiv Das Meena, Chairman and Managing Director, HUDCO congratulated the employees for their commitment and dedication that has made the company a profit making enterprise with a unique business model of 'profitability with social justice'. M Nagaraj, Director (Corporate Planning) welcomed the participants and D Guhan, Director (Finance) proposed the vote of thanks.



Ram Mohan Mishra, Special Secretary and Development Commissioner (MSME), Government of India, gives certificate of media Internship to Manjari Kumari, a student of Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi.



Jsimple appoints a new business head

Jsimple LLC, a US-based company in Artificial Intelligence HR space, appoints Karnika Bansal as a Business Head for its global operations. Jsimple envisions expanding the rollout of attrition prediction add-ons to the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) in India and internationally.

Karnika will be responsible for overseeing operations of the company, building strategic partnerships to drive growth and profitability, cultivating a high-performing and agile team culture and branding of the company in India and the US. She brings positive energy and experience to the company with sound decision-making, marketing and communication skills, operational effectiveness and acumen for driving swift business growth. Karnika will be working directly with the CEO, Jag Singh and will have offices in North Haven,



Connecticut, US and Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Jag Singh, CEO of Jsimple, said, "I am thrilled to appoint Karnika to this important role as we advance our efforts in using artificial intelligence to predict employee attrition and other HR analytics initiatives of our advanced technologies to companies around the world."

Karnika said, "I am very excited to work for a company that is digitally transforming the HR industry. Jsimple's product HRonTips uses artificial intelligence to predict the flight risks in a company, which would help organisations save huge sums annually."

NBT & FICCI organise a webinar

While wishing everyone on the World Book and Copyright Day, Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal, Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India, said that India is a hub of knowledge. With its ancient scriptures and so many universities, India is a link between the past and the future. Emphasising on the need to promote reading in the country, Dr Pokhriyal said that children should be encouraged to believe that books are their best friends.

Professor Govind Prasad Sharma, chairman of NBT, spoke about the changing times from the oral tradition to hand written parchments to printed words. He said now the time has come that society accepts e-learning as a method of knowledge dissemination. He also said that Coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we function. We publishers need to make sure that we keep imparting knowledge be it through digital and e-publishing mediums.

Talking about NBT's initiatives during this period, Yuvraj Malik informed that NBT has planned the launch of a publishing series titled

— Corona Studies Series — to document and provide relevant reading materials for all age-groups. The material is being readied by a study group comprising experienced psychologists and counselors. The first sub-series is on — Psycho-social impact of Corona pandemic and the ways to cope. In addition, NBT is preparing children's books on our Corona warriors, other stories and picture books related to various aspects of Corona to create awareness. Also, books focused on art, literature, folklore, economic and sociological aspects, science/health awareness emerging out of the Corona pandemic are also in the pipeline.

Over 180 participants logged-in to join the webinar across India, which included publishers, authors, editors, teachers, booksellers, digital content creators and publishing professionals. The webinar provided insights on the post-COVID-19 scenario for the publishing industry, while understanding the ways in which the education will be relooked into with the rising e-learning practices.



GGSIU invites online applications for MSc

IP University has invited online applications for MSc (Biodiversity and Conservation), available at the University School of Environment Management. The last date of submission of online applications is May 5.

The minimum eligibility to apply for this programme is BSc degree in Botany, Zoology, Biochemistry, Anthropology, Biotechnology or any other related streams of Life Sciences with minimum 50 per cent marks.

The admission will be given on the basis of Common Entrance Test (CET) conducted by the university. The programme has been designed to produce biodiversity conservation professionals with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the subject and how to conserve it in a sustainable manner.

New COVID-19 sample collection lab

Rajinath Singh, Defence Minister of India, dedicated the first COVID-19 sample collection mobile lab of the country — Mobile BSL-3 VRDL Lab.

This lab has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Ministry of Defence, Government of India, in collaboration with ESIC Medical College and Hospital, Sanathnagar (Hyderabad)



with due permission of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Government of Telangana.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajinath Singh appreciated the efforts of DRDO and ESIC in setting up of this Bio-Safety Level 2 and Level 3 lab in a record time of 15 days, which usually takes about six months time. He further said, "This testing facility can

process more than 1,000 samples in a day and will enhance country's capabilities in fighting COVID-19."

Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Labour Minister, Government of India, also complemented DRDO and ESIC for developing the mobile testing lab in a very short time. He said, "It's a very important step in our fight against Coronavirus.

LIC shows great performance amid lockdown

In these difficult times of business distress caused by COVID-19, Life Insurance Corporation of India continues to better its performance. In just concluded financial year 2019-20, LIC has achieved its highest number of policies for the last six years. Individual new busi-

ness performance of the corporation as at March has shown impressive figures of 2.19 crores in number of policies and '51,227 crores in first year premium income. The corporation collected single premium of '21,967 crores and non single premium of '29,260 crores. The

ratio being 42.88 for single premium and 57.12 for non single premium.

Overall, LIC has achieved an impressive growth rate of 25.17 per cent in first year new business premium as compared to private players, who have collectively achieved a premium growth

rate of 11.64 per cent. The industry's positive growth in policies is also due to LIC's superlative performance. The corporation's composite market share in number of policies and first year premium as at March 31 was 75.90 per cent and 68.74 per cent respectively, which is an

increase of 1.19 per cent in number of policies and 2.50 per cent in first year premium.

LIC credits its performance to the trust of the customers and the dedicated efforts of entire team, who worked with zeal during extremely challenging circumstances.

Endless possibilities

Even in these times of uncertainty and despair, the light of education should be kept aglow, says GURINDER SINGH

COVID-19, a pandemic that has crippled the world is being tipped as greater than the Great Depression during the 1930s. The fall out of this novel Coronavirus would have far greater economic consequences than imagined. Several economists are expecting the global economy not to revive before the fourth quarter of this financial year. The Coronavirus cases have now crossed more than one million worldwide with more than 59,000 deaths.

However, even in these times of uncertainty and despair, the light of education and enlightenment should be kept aglow. India is known worldwide for its education system and its education players have stepped up to tackle these unprecedented times.

Technology has come to rescue during these dark times. According to a KPMG and Google report, online education is on an uptrend with the number of users to reach 9.6 million in 2021 from 1.6 million in 2016, which by any standards is a humongous jump. With the new concept of social distancing, including students and corporate executives confined to their homes, users for online education are set to increase, including universities like Amity

University that use technology to facilitate education. Online education has become the preferred educational partner, it is catering to over 1,00,000 students live remotely across its campuses around India and across the globe. These measures are being undertaken as a precaution against the spread of Coronavirus and to safeguard the health of students and faculty members. All classes are being held live online as per the existing timetable using the Learning Management System and Virtual Classroom system of the university. The faculty members are meeting online for taking several strategic initiatives like conducting interesting webinars for the academic community and the industry. Faculty Development Programmes to increase the research quotient and improve the project writing abilities have been conducted. Several such initiatives are in the pipeline for the coming weeks. All steps have been taken to complete the academic session as planned and preparations are in place to lay the foundations for the process of online examinations.

Amity's Mentor-Mentee is also being conducted online where faculty members are in constant touch with students and are providing

counselling to students. Furthering its initiative of using research for the betterment of the society, a 'Research Network on Novel Viruses' has been created. This network comprises of the leading scientists in the field of Virology at Amity and also from around the globe.

Here are some of the ways to use this time effectively:

Ask the industry/company for any remote work: In case your summer internship is cancelled, explore the opportunity of working remotely, as there would be definitely some jobs where this could be feasible.

Be an entrepreneur: You can start your own project; may be a website, a blog or any online social event that you have always been passionate about but never found time to give wings to your dreams. You might be surprised with the endless possibilities.

Read, read and read: If you have been unable to get an internship where you can work remotely, take this opportunity to read.

(The author is the Group Vice Chancellor, Amity University.)

He who plants a tree, plants hope. And in these times of COVID-19, when there's despair and uncertainty, vowing to plant trees is what the world needs. As April 22 marks Earth Day's 50th anniversary, United States based reforestation non-profit organisation, One Tree Planted, has committed to plant 5,00,000 fruit trees across India during the monsoon planting season this time.

These trees will be planted in the land of marginal and small farmers. For these families, fruit trees will not only mean nourishment without spending anything but the harvest can also provide supplementary income for a positive social and economic impact. At a time when the number of migrant labourers returning to their native villages is a harsh reality, fast-fruited trees, such as banana and papaya, can keep hunger at bay.

Moringa, papaya and banana trees can produce food and fruit within eight to 10 months of planting. Lemon, guava, apricot, pear, peach and jujubes produce fruit in their third year and onwards. The long-term benefit is immense. Each tree provides a minimum of 10 USD of fruit and nutrition per year. Half a million fruit trees translate into ₹ 50 crore worth of fruit and nutrition, year after year for the next 50-60 years.

Beyond the nutritional and social benefits of reforestation with fruit trees, this project will support cleaner air and help reduce the effects of climate change.

PLANTING HOPE



Statistically, India's air quality is among the lowest in the world, leading to pollution and health issues.

"Everyone is affected in different ways right now due to Coronavirus and we're honoured to be able to help through the simple act of planting trees. These trees will support with cleaner air, water, food and social impact for families. It's a humble offering that can have a ripple effect of benefit for years

to come," says Matt Hill, Chief Environmental Evangelist at One Tree Planted.

The planting and nurturing of the fruit trees will be executed by local partners at Sustainable Green Initiative, with whom One Tree Planted has already planted over 3,00,000 trees throughout India.

As Kathleen Rogers, President, Earth Day Network said, "Trees not only filter the air and fight climate change, they provide food,

energy and income to communities. One Tree Planted's commitment to plant half a million fruit trees in India is admirable, especially during such trying times. To create a more sustainable future, we must work together to come up with creative solutions. Planting trees improves our shared environment while supporting some of the communities most affected by Coronavirus and climate change. We applaud their efforts."

Reforestation will begin as early as June, just in time for World Environment Day on June 5 and will take place in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Odisha along with local communities.

Karuna Singh, Regional Director, Asia, Earth Day Network, saw synergy between what Earth Day Network does and how One Tree Planted is also encouraging fruit tree planting. She said, "Earth Day Network has run Trees4Earth since 2016 and endeavours to distribute saplings in areas of less privileged. Understanding that low levels of income often compel people to chop native trees for firewood, we explain them the economic benefits of maintaining trees that bear fruit." Singh also congratulated the non-profit organisation for their gesture.

Rahane fine with IPL in empty stadiums

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and Delhi Capitals batsman Ajinkya Rahane won't mind playing the IPL in empty stadiums if it ensures the safety of the fans.

Speaking in an *Instagram Live* session arranged by Delhi Capitals, Rahane said: "Covid-19 pandemic has taught everyone that unexpected things can happen, therefore we need to be happy about what we are doing, and should value what we have."

"As for IPL or any other sport, I feel it could be played without spectators. All of us have played domestic cricket in almost empty stadiums, so that's an experience all cricketers are used to."

"Of course we are nothing without our fans, and that's why their safety is of utmost importance. Even if they get to watch some Live action from home, I am sure that will be an enjoyable experience as well. The safety of fans is key, and if we need to play in empty stadiums for that, we are open to do it," Rahane said.

IPL 2020 has been indefinitely postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but there is a possibility that it is played behind closed doors in September.

The experienced middle-order batsman was bought by Delhi Capitals last year before the IPL Auction, and says he is really excited about playing for the franchise.



Ravi Shastri chats with Ajinkya Rahane during practice session

PTI/File Picture

"It is something I've really been eager about, and it has stemmed in because of the things I've heard about the team from the likes of Ishant, Shikhar, and Shreyas. They've told me that it's like a huge family where everyone is always backing each other, and enjoying each other's successes," he said.

Talking about his excitement on playing under head coach Ricky Ponting,

Rahane said he has always admired the Australian legend.

"My idols growing up were definitely Rahul Sir and Sachin Sir, but I've always admired Ricky Sir also. I used to try to copy his batting and fielding styles. And therefore, I'm really looking forward to working under him. I'm sure he will help me immensely in my batting as well as overall leadership," said the former captain of Rajasthan Royals.

Moeen calls for Hundred delay

LONDON: England all-rounder Moeen Ali called for a year's delay to the start of the new Hundred as officials met to consider the fate of the competition.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have long insisted the new 100-balls-per-side format, to be played by eight franchises rather than English cricket's established 18 first-class counties, is vital in attracting a new audience to the game.

But with world cricket at a standstill due to the pandemic, Moeen fears that even if the Hundred does get the go-ahead, health and travel restrictions may make it impossible to bring in high-profile overseas stars.

"It is better for it to be delayed," Moeen, set to captain the Birmingham Phoenix in the Hundred, said.

"As players we want the Hundred played with all the best players around the world available to come and play so it makes more sense that way."

"It would be hard work to squeeze in the Hundred as well. It is such a big deal for us in this country and we want it to be played when everything is right and there are no problems around the world."

AFP

Buttler is best ODI player at present: Stokes

IAN'S ■ LONDON

Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes heaped praise on teammate Jos Buttler, saying the destructive wicket-keeper batsman is one of the most versatile white-ball players in the world at the moment.

"For me he is one of the most versatile and best ODI players in the world right now. You know he can destroy you; he can hit you 360 but he can also play innings like that in the World Cup final. To have that skillset as an ODI player is an absolute nightmare for an opposition captain or bowler," Stokes said during a chat with Rajasthan Royals spin consultant and New Zealand spinner Ish Sodhi in the *The Royals Podcast* Episode 5.

Hosts England won the World Cup for the first time in 2019 by beating New Zealand on boundaries after a tied Super Over amidst heart-stopping drama.

Chasing 242 for victory, Stokes scintillating unbeaten 84 helped the hosts tie the see-saw

contest, forcing the Super Over where more drama unfolded.

Jos Buttler and Stokes took 15 runs off Trent Boult's Super Over without losing their wickets.

On fitness regimes changing in the England team, Stokes said: "Watching someone like Jos put in an extra 45 minutes to an hour on his fitness, that was what drove me to have a rethink to 'I feel I can do more here'." "Slowly I started operating in that mode of 'right I can do my skills-based stuff, let's do some sprints, let's go for a run,

and then it led into something bigger and better."

"It then just got around the whole team with new guys coming in and just thinking that's how everyone operates. I remember Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid used to be scared of the gym, but then those two started doing extra work and one of them in an interview said 'we don't want to let anyone down in the team over fitness.'"

Stokes, who plays for Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League (IPL), also spoke about fielding, saying you cannot switch off at all on the field in T20 cricket.

"You can afford to switch off every now and again in a Test match or a One-Day game but in a T20 game you can't. As you'll know from the last two years at Rajasthan I was massive on making sure everyone was putting in the effort to make their fielding better because I know that if you can save 2, 3 runs every game in the field then it is going to help you win games of cricket."



AB de Villiers denies being approached to lead Proteas



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star South African batsman AB de Villiers on Wednesday denied being approached to lead the national team hours after a TV channel quoted him as saying that an offer has been made by the country's cricket board.

"Reports suggesting Cricket SA have asked me to lead the Proteas are just not true. It's hard to know what to believe these days," de Villiers tweeted.

The explosive batsman retired from all forms of international cricket in 2018 but there has been talk of a return in the national team.

Star Sports show *Cricket Connected*, in a press release,

quoted him as saying that he has "been asked by Cricket South Africa to lead the Proteas again."

The 36-year-old played 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20s for the national side before his retirement.

The former captain said that he will only make a comeback if he feels that he is good enough to play at the international level even though he has been a regular on franchise circuit.

"The most important thing to me is that I have got to be in top form and I have got to be better than the player next to me. If I feel I deserve my spot in the side, it becomes much easier for me to feel that I should be part of the playing XI," he said.

"I have not been part of the Proteas for a while and I feel that it's important for myself and for other people to see that I am still good enough to be there," he said.

South Africa coach Mark Boucher had earlier said that de Villiers would be considered in the national team for the T20 World Cup to be held in Australia only if he shows good form and proves himself to be the "best man for the job".

But in wake of COVID-19 pandemic, de Villiers said he is not sure of a comeback if the T20 World Cup, to be held in October-November, is postponed.

Latham, Southee feature in NZC awards

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Opener Tom Latham has won the Redpath Cup as New Zealand's best batsman, breaking a seven-year streak in which the trophy was won by either Kane Williamson or Ross Taylor.

Latham won the annual award for the first time after scoring 608 runs in nine Tests at an average of 40.53. His best innings was his 154 against Sri Lanka in Colombo in August which helped New Zealand win the second Test and level the two-match series.

Latham was selected as an opener in the International Cricket Council's world Test team of 2019.

"This season we faced some of the very best bowling attacks in the world and Tom was an absolute rock at the top for us," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said.



New Zealand batsman Tom Latham

AP/File Picture

Tim Southee won the Windsor Cup as New Zealand's best bowler for the first time since 2014. The trophy has been won by either Trent Boult or Neil Wagner over the previous five seasons.

Southee took 40 wickets at an average of 21.47 in the awards periods, contribut-

ing to Test match wins over Sri Lanka in Colombo, England in Mount Maunganui and India in Wellington and Christchurch.

"The way we played our Test cricket at home this summer was especially pleasing," Stead said.

"To beat England first up was a great effort and then to perform so well against a very good Indian side was immensely satisfying."

The trophy winners were unveiled on the second day of New Zealand Cricket's virtual awards ceremony, with organizers going digital for the first time.

New Zealand finished off its home schedule for 2019-20 with back-to-back Test wins over India in February, then had its limited-overs series in Australia disrupted because of border closures and travel restrictions implemented because of the coronavirus pandemic.

La Liga set for individual training return on May 4

AFP ■ MADRID

Spain's professional athletes including La Liga players can restart basic training from May 4, the country's government announced on Tuesday.

The Spanish top-flight has been on hold since March 12 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the decision was the first move in lifting lock-

down measures which will be done in four stages across two months.

"The first phase, or phase 0, is the preparation to transition phase or the de-escalation phase, which we are already in," Sanchez said.

"In the best-case scenario, this de-escalation phase will take a minimum of six weeks and



the maximum duration we want to see is eight weeks for the whole of Spain," he added.

Only later in later stages of the process will full sessions be able to take place.

The announcement allows the league's clubs to restart individual sessions with their

squad members, a protocol agreed upon by La Liga and the Spanish Football Federation earlier this month.

According to local reports players will have to undergo Covid-19 screening tests before returning to training.

They will have to arrive at their club's facilities already in kit, with gloves and masks, and only a maximum of six players can be on the pitch at the same time.

Olympics difficult if pandemic not contained: Abe

AFP ■ TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Wednesday it would be "difficult" to hold the postponed Tokyo Olympics if the coronavirus pandemic is not contained.

The premier's remarks came a day after Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said in an interview with a local sports daily the Olympics will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't brought under control by next year.

Abe told parliament: "We must hold the Olympics as a testament to humanity's victory over the coronavirus."

"If we're not in such situation, it's difficult (to hold) the Games," he said, insisting the importance of developing vaccines and drugs.

He added: "We've been saying we will hold the Olympics and Paralympics in which athletes and spectators can participate safely and in a complete form. I think (the Olympics) cannot be held in a



Japan PM Shinzo Abe

AP/File Picture

complete form if the pandemic is not contained."

The pandemic has already forced a year-long delay of the Games, which are now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021.

'SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS'

LAUSANNE: The postponement to 2021 of the Olympic Games in Tokyo because of the coronavirus

pandemic will cost the International Olympic Committee (IOC) "several hundred million dollars", its president Thomas Bach said on Wednesday.

"We already know that we have to shoulder several hundred million US\$ of postponement costs," the German wrote in a letter to the Olympic movement, warning that, while the IOC would honour its financial obligations to Tokyo, it would probably have to make cuts.

"We also need to look into and review all the services that we provide for these postponed Games," he said.

"The IOC will continue to be responsible for its share of the operational burden and its share of the costs for these postponed Games."

The IOC, which has approximately \$1 billion (926 million euros) in reserves, took the historic decision to postpone the Games, scheduled to open on July 24, until July 23 to August 8, 2021.

Sachin, Sehwag & Kohli in Hussey's Best Enemies XI

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australian batsman Mike Hussey on Wednesday picked the Indian trio of swashbuckling former opener Virender Sehwag, the legendary Sachin Tendulkar and current skipper Virat Kohli in his Best Enemies XI in Test cricket.

Hussey, who played Test cricket for Australia from 2005 to 2013, picked the Best XI of opponents he has played against in Test cricket on *The Unplayable Podcast*.

The 44-year-old named Sehwag, known for his explosive batting, and former South African captain Graeme Smith as openers in the strong batting line-up which also includes the likes



Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar in action during Road Safety World Series

of Brian Lara, Tendulkar, Kohli, Jacques Kallis and Kumar Sangakkara.

Hussey picked Tendulkar and Kohli to bat at number four and five respectively.

South Africans Dale Steyn, Morne Morkel, English pacer James Anderson and spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan made for the bowling attack.

The Australian said it

was difficult for him to leave out former Chennai Super Kings teammate MS Dhoni. He justified his decision, stating that the dasher from Ranchi was pipped by Sangakkara based on the impact in the longest format of the game.

"I wrestled with this one between Kumar Sangakkara, MS Dhoni and AB de Villiers. But I think the latter two have got more impact in the shorter formats T20s and ODI."

"Sangakkara had immense impact in Test cricket," Hussey said.

Asked what it was like facing bowling legends like Glenn McGrath, Shane Warne and Brett Lee in the nets, the former middle-order batsman said the sessions were ruthless.

"It was brutal. If you can get through your net sessions unscathed you know you can get through anything in Test cricket."

"That was real strength of the Australian team when I was playing," he added.

Hussey, was part of a dominant Australian side, and the southpaw, believes "high quality training" was the reason behind the team's success.

"Seeing the current team train now, the high quality training probably sets up apart from the other countries certainly the West Indies. Have seen a couple of their training session and they are much more relaxed."

"I think that has played an important part in Australia's success in the past."

Thomas and Uber Cup Finals postponed again

NEW DELHI (PTI): The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals was on Wednesday postponed for the second time due to the Covid-19 pandemic with the Badminton World Federation (BWF) deciding to hold the global showpiece team championships from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The tournament was originally scheduled to be held from May 16-24 but on March 20 was postponed to August 15-23 due to the worsening global health crisis.

On Wednesday, the BWF postponed the tournament once again saying it's not possible to

hold the event before September.

"Following the Danish Government's decision on 6 April to extend a ban on 'larger gatherings' in Denmark until the end of August, both parties agreed that it was no longer feasible to stage the championships on the rescheduled dates of 15-23 August," the BWF said in a statement.

"BWF in consultation and consensus with Badminton Denmark, tournament organisers, Sport Event Denmark and the local Aarhus government concluded that a move to October was the best solution."

Top 10 finish in 2028 Olympics is ambitious but not impossible: Rijiju

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju feels finishing among top 10 countries in the medals tally of 2028 Olympics is definitely "ambitious but not impossible" and the Government has already begun efforts to realise the goal.

Rijiju said talent scouting for 2028 Olympics has already begun and the process will get further boost once the nationwide coronavirus-forced lockdown is lifted.

"We have set ourselves a goal of having India in the top 10 countries in the Olympic 2028 medals tally. It is an ambitious goal, but not impossible," said the Sports Minister on



Wednesday while addressing an online knowledge enhancement session of table tennis coaches.

"We have already started

scouting for young talent and after the Covid-19 pandemic is over, the Government will form specialised squads for each sporting discipline consisting of

present and veteran coaches and athletes.

"These teams will travel to every district of the country to scout for raw talent. We still have 8 years to prepare for 2028 and I am confident with the correct policies, India can feature in the list of top 10 countries," he insisted.

The online knowledge session for table tennis coaches was attended celebrated former India paddler Kamlesh Mehta, secretary of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) MP Singh and was conducted by India's former Italian coach Massimo Constantini.

Massimo, who has been India's national coach in two phases, is credited for the coun-

try's big medal hauls in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

"2018 was a landmark year for table tennis in India because by winning the two Bronze medals in the Asian Games we proved that our level has improved significantly. The strongest table tennis playing countries participate in the Asian Games and if we could clinch medals there, we can even win medals in the Olympics," said the Sports Minister.

He said the time was right to strengthen and popularise the game in India, especially with 27 Indian paddlers currently in top 100 and 17 of them in top 50 in the world rankings.

"Table Tennis needs very

limited infrastructure and it can be played by youngsters in any part of the country."

"I really see a lot of potential in this sport and government policies are being framed to create more infrastructure and training facilities for table tennis at the district, state and national level."

"Given the standard of the game in India right now, I feel that by 2028, we should be able to clinch some medals in TT at the Olympics," he said.

The Sports Minister said it is important to organise more leagues in table tennis at the district, state and national levels to popularise the game and motivate more youngsters to take it up.