

ANALYSIS 7 SERVE UP A FRESH NFSA

MONEY 8 PETROL, DIESEL SALES SHRINK AS LOCKDOWN WIPES DEMAND

SPORTS 11 NOT OVER YET

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY APRIL 7, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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T'WOOD DIDN'T BOTHER TO CALL ME BACK AFTER LOAFER: DISHA

Page 12

INDIA BETWEEN STAGE 2 AND 3 OF CORONAVIRUS, SAYS HEALTH MINISTRY

India is between Stage 2 and 3 of coronavirus pandemic with large number of cases being found in particular areas, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday concurring with the AIIMS Director's remarks that localised community transmission is being observed in some pockets of the country.



SINGER KANIKA KAPOOR DISCHARGED AFTER TESTING CORONA NEGATIVE

Singer Kanika Kapoor, who was admitted to Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) in her hometown Lucknow after contracting the coronavirus, has been discharged following her complete recovery, reported news agency ANI.



MUKESH NET WORTH DROPS TO \$48 BN IN 2 MONTHS AMID COVID-19 CRISIS

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



GOOGLE SHOWS FOOD, NIGHT SHELTERS IN 30 INDIAN CITIES

Google on Monday said it has started showing the locations of food shelters and night shelters in cities across India on its services like Maps, to help people especially migrant workers find relief centres with ease.



BJP Foundation Day: Will overcome virus crisis, says Gadkari

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AP, TS in favour of lockdown extension in corona hotspots

● KCR appeals to Modi to extend the lockdown beyond the 21-day period

L VENKAT RAM REDDY
HYDERABAD

The governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are in favour of extension of the current lockdown beyond April 14, especially in the districts that have come to be known as Coronavirus hotspots.



These include Hyderabad, Warangal urban, Nizamabad, Medchal, Rangareddy districts in TS and Vizag, Chittoor, East Godavari, Guntur, Krishna, Prakasam, Nellore and Kurnool districts in AP, where the number of people testing positive for the extremely contagious infection has spiked sharply over the past one week.

Minister Narendra Modi to extend the 21-day national lockdown to check COVID-19 beyond April 14, saying it was essential to save the lives of people. His AP counterpart YS Jaganmohan Reddy is expected to make a similar appeal.

official sources, both the Telugu states favour this policy and KCR and Jagan have already conveyed this to Modi when he called them over phone on Saturday to discuss the COVID-19 issue and the action plan post April 14, when the current spell of lockdown ends.

Sources said that the same opinion would be conveyed by the ruling parties in AP and TS, YSRCP and the TRS, to the Prime Minister when he holds an all-party meeting with floor leaders in Parliament on April 8 to discuss the pandemic.

On Monday, KCR brought the crisis in sharp focus, saying that it would be difficult to contain the spread of the virus in view of the country's "poor health infrastructure".

COVID-19 takes two more lives in AP, over 300 infected

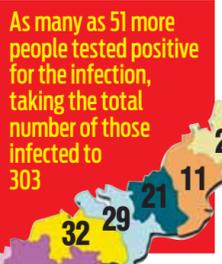
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The deadly contagion COVID-19 claimed two more lives on Monday, taking the number of deaths reported in Andhra Pradesh to three. The two deceased hailed from Krishna and Anantapur districts.

As per the health bulletin released by the government here on Monday, as many as 51 more people tested positive for the infection, taking the total number of those infected to 303.

The bulletin identified one of the deceased as a 64-year-old man from Anantapur who had returned from Mecca. He had tested positive for COVID-19 upon his return to India.

After developing symptoms of the infection on April 1, he was brought to the GGH,



district hospital in Machilipatnam on April 2 as he was not well.

On April 4, he developed COVID-19 symptoms and was shifted to the GGH, Vijayawada. He was tested for the deadly virus and was confirmed to have caught the infection.

The bulletin said that this patient had a medical history of bronchitis and asthma. He breathed his last on April 4, the day he was admitted to the GGH, Vijayawada. It is learnt that the deceased had traveled to Odisha from February 27 to 29 and had visited I-Town in Vijayawada on March 19.

As per the health department, as many as 74 people who have tested positive for the infection hail from Kurnool, followed by 42 from SPS Nellore and 32 from Guntur 32.

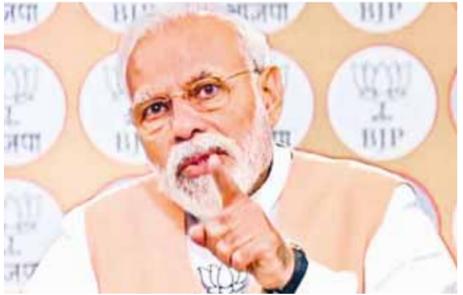
People of India will fight coronavirus together: Rahul

5

Battle to be long, India's efforts have set example to world: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's battle against the coronavirus pandemic will be a long one, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday while exhorting people to not feel tired or defeated and expressing confidence the country will emerge victorious in its fight. Addressing BJP workers on the party's 40th foundation day, Modi also responded to the Opposition's criticism about his government's measures against COVID-19, asserting that India's efforts have set an example for the world and drawn praise from the World Health Organisation and leaders abroad.



"This is going to be a long fight. We don't have to tire or feel defeated. We have to win in this long battle. We have to emerge victorious. Today, the nation's goal, mission and resolve are one, and this is to be victorious in this battle against the coronavirus pandemic," the prime minister said.

India is among the countries which understood the seriousness of COVID-19 and launched a comprehensive and timely exercise to combat it, he said, adding that the country took one decision after another and worked to implement them on the ground.

1,021% spike in Corona cases in AP, says Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP supremo and Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday termed the COVID-19 pandemic a threat to Andhra Pradesh as "very alarming" and expressed deep concern over the steep rise in the number of infections in different parts of the state.

He expressed concern that AP registered a 1,021 per cent spike in the number of Coronavirus cases as against India's average of 222 per cent in the last one week. This reflected a potentially dangerous situation that requires the State government to come forward with a "humane touch" to support the people, Naidu said.

Addressing the media online from his residence in view of nationwide lockdown, Naidu accused the ruling party of under-reporting of the Coronavirus cases at a time when other states like Kerala managed to control the infection by bringing transparency in testing. "AP should immediately step up testing on a war-footing in order to identify and isolate those infected if it is keen to prevent community transmission," the former Chief Minister said.

Pastor detained for celebrating mass on Palm Sunday

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A criminal case has been filed against the pastor of a church (prayer house) in Rayavaram Police station limits of East Godavari district, for celebrating mass on Palm Sunday.

After receiving information, Sub-Inspector, Anaparthi visited the church (prayer house), "Prabhuvaina Yesukristu Mandiram" at Rayavaram and noticed a gathering of nearly 150 believers, in violation of the social distancing advisory and the lockdown norms.



Infosys COO UB Pravin Rao appointed Nasscom Chairman

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NEED TO RAMP UP TESTS India not out of woods yet, say health experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An "exponential" ramping up of coronavirus testing is required to gauge the actual impact of the 21-day nationwide lockdown, health experts said on Monday as India nears the final week of the unprecedented measure.



The experts agreed that the lockdown has helped in slowing down spread of the virus but insisted that the situation has not reached a plateau and that there was an urgent need to upgrade healthcare facilities to deal with the crisis.

Government officials involved in strategising India's approach to contain the pandemic said the overall social distancing model adopted by the country helped in checking spread of the virus compared to many developed countries including the US which reported 3,30,000 cases. India went under a nation-wide lockdown from midnight of March 24 to combat the pandemic.

AP ropes in teachers to contain corona spread

CHINNAM PRADEEP ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has called upon teachers working in Municipal Schools across the state to help tackle the COVID-19 situation.



School teachers in some of the worst-affected districts in the state have been roped in to assist revenue and police officials in performing essential duties involved in tackling COVID-19.

The teachers are out on the street to ensure that no one violates the lockdown rules. District collectors and education officers in some of the districts have instructed Mandal Education Officers (MEOs) and Mandal Revenue Officers (MROs) to assign COVID-19 duties to teachers and to monitor them. The teachers are assigned with the responsibility of making sure people do not venture out of their homes unnecessarily, and shops are closed after the stipulated time.

Physical Education and other teachers have been asked to assist revenue officials respectively. It may be noted that teachers are being recruited to perform tasks like creating awareness on precautionary measures, assisting health workers in quarantine facilities, and keeping records.

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SC issues guidelines for functioning of courts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Court hearing in congregation must become an "exception" during the "extraordinary outbreak" of COVID-19 pandemic and it is necessary that all courts respond to the call of social distancing to ensure they do not contribute to the spread of virus, the Supreme Court said on Monday. Passing a slew of directions for all courts across India, it said that the apex court and all the high courts are authorised to adopt measures required to ensure robust functioning of judicial system through the use of video conferencing.

Observing that "technology is here to stay", the top court passed the directions by exercising its plenary power under Article 142 of the Constitution and said that all the measures which shall be taken by the courts to reduce physical presence of stakeholders within its premises "shall be deemed to be lawful".

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Chaitra & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam:
Tithi: Chaturdashi: 12:00 pm
Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: 09:15 am, 06:06 am (Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 03:22 pm - 04:54 pm
Yamagandam: 09:13 am - 10:46 am
Varjyam: 04:33 pm - 05:56 pm
Gulika: 12:18 pm - 01:50 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 12:53 am - 02:17 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:53 am - 12:42 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 38/26
Humidity: 50%
Sunrise: 06:05 am
Sunset: 06:30 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated April 06, 2020 5:00 PM

The Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh is the largest organisation in the world, with more members than any other.

The apex decision making body of the RSS, Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, was scheduled to meet in Bengaluru on March 16, 17 and 18. However, it cancelled this annual event and the 1,600 delegates returned to their respective places to implement measures to curb the spread of Coronavirus as directed by Sangh elders.

The RSS is holding its meetings through videoconference, social media and so on. The RSS deployed its activists on a large scale and is extending relief to the migrant labourers and the poor, similarly to the succour provided when natural calamities like the tsunami and earthquake rocked the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled the Holi Milan festival, held the SAARC meeting through videoconference and resolved to constitute

People's love for Modi drove away Corona darkness

SAARC fund. However, the Tablighi Jamaat turned a deaf ear to the advisory to suspend its proposed meeting in view of the Coronavirus threat. In an act of utter irresponsibility, it held its annual event in Delhi, inviting hundreds of delegates from countries serious affected by Corona by securing visas illegally.

At a time when the people of the country are satisfied over the steps taken by Modi to rein in Coronavirus, the number of cases exploded; it was due to hundreds of people taking part in the Tablighi Jamaat conclave.

India is a secular country, where people of all faiths can practice the religion of their choice. However, the threat of Coronavirus spares none, and this was why crores of people cooperated with the government and observing lockdown.

In fact, during times of

Asaduddin Owaisi, who claims to have monopoly over Muslims, defending the Tablighi Jamaat's action is atrocious. Owaisi called upon people not to give the religious colour to the episode

crises, religious and social organisations should stand by the government and should sensitise people about the impending danger and implement service-oriented programmes.

While the RSS did exactly that, the Tablighi Jamaat begged to differ. Does it not constitute an anti-India stand? If the country's harmony is affected because of the acts of some persons or organisations, who will suffer?

Asaduddin Owaisi, who claims to have monopoly over Muslims, defending the Tablighi Jamaat's action is

atrocious. Owaisi called upon people not to give the religious colour to the episode. Is it not a fact that the number of infections almost doubled due to the Tablighi Jamaat meeting? Why did Owaisi not condemn the utter irresponsibility of the organisation? Why did he not condemn the organisation for procuring visas for its delegates illegally?

There seems to be no difference between Owaisi and the Congress party; both of them oppose whatever the Centre does out of vendetta.

Both the Congress and Owaisi made a mockery of the



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

call given by PM to clap hands as a token gesture of appreciation of services of doctors and others serving society on the day of Janata Curfew. Owaisi called the PM's suggestion to light a lamp as a token of perseverance to fight the Coronavirus as gimmick and event management. In the true spirit of

Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya, for the success of any event it is customary to light lamps to dispel darkness.

Lakhs of people lit lamps when a woman's modesty was outraged during the Congress rule and took out candlelight rallies.

The PM gave the call to light lamps on April 5 to motivate people, but Owaisi and Congress exhorted the people to boycott the PM's call.

Shashi Tharoor tried to scare people that the electricity grid will collapse due to the load on the grid. A person of Tharoor's stature making such remarks is indicative of the bankruptcy of ideas in the Congress.

Barring opposing every statement that the PM made, the opposition did not do

anything for the migrant labourers and the poor, except shedding crocodile tears.

As healthy development would have it, crores of the people responded positively to PM's call on March 23 by putting their hands and blowing conches and sounding plates and lighting lamps on April 5.

Right from the homes of Tatas and Ambanis to the common man living in huts, they lit lamps, exhibiting the spirit of driving away Coronavirus.

In spite of political and ideological differences between political outfits and leaders, the bare minimum expectation is that people across the political spectrum will support the head of government at a time the country faces a crisis. Whatever the conduct of leaders like Owaisi and others, the

stood by the PM. Surprisingly, AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, who underplayed the coronavirus threat because of political reasons, indirectly supported Tablighi Jamaat's activities.

His remarks that religious colour shouldn't be given to the spread of the virus reflects his stand. Did he not know that the number of Coronavirus positive cases increased in AP because of Tablighi Jamaat? Did he not know that many took part in the meeting from his native district of Kadapa?

Why is he silent on allegations that a Deputy CM and some MLAs of the party attended the Tablighi Jamaat meeting?

It's advisable for the opposition to act with prudence after gauging the support of the people to the PM. Otherwise, they will be considered villains by the people.

TRULY SPEAKING

Essentials at consumers' doorstep

CHINNAM PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

Necessity is the mother of invention says an adage. Taking a cue from the saying, human beings find ways to come out of the crisis time and again. Due to the lockdown, the gap between sellers and buyers has been reduced, thanks to the government for its initiative to introduce mobile Rythu Bazaars.

And now, it seems, it's the turn of Amaravati Food and Supermarket Associations to help people by supplying essentials at their doorstep in Corona-hit places in Vijayawada through special mobile bus service.

SP (CID) U Ram Mohan Rao and Bank of Baroda DGM Raja Sekhar flagged off the special bus and appreciated the initiative of supplying the essentials at the customers' doorstep. They said that a few places in the city are identified as red zones due to an increase in the number of virus cases and this move would contain the people from coming out on



RTC bus to provide essential commodities at consumers' doorstep being flagged off in Vijayawada on Monday

to the streets. MD of one of the Supermarkets Krishna said that essentials will be supplied at MRP rates to the customers.

It may be noted that denizens in the city are not venturing out due to lockdown and even if they go out, they have to maintain social distancing. Therefore, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) has introduced mobile Rythu Bazaars to supply vegetables across the city by arranging RTC buses

and other vehicles for the convenience of the people.

The Corporation has entered into an agreement with the Farmers Associations in Penamaluru, Vuyyuru, Thotlavalluru, Tadepalli, Mangalagiri, Hanuman Junction, Nuzvid and other villages for the supply of vegetables. Farmers are coming to the city in these vehicles for selling vegetables. Those who are unable to buy vegetables between 6 am and 11 am,

● SP (CID) U Ram Mohan Rao and Bank of Baroda DGM Raja Sekhar flagged off the special bus and appreciated the initiative of supplying the essentials at the customers' doorstep

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● MD of one of the supermarkets Krishna said that essentials will be supplied at MRP rates to the customers

mobile Rythu Bazaars have become a blessing in disguise.

Moreover, police barricades set up at various places in the city were creating a big problem for denizens. In this backdrop, the Corporation has arranged buses and other goods carriers to bring vegetables and sell in different parts of the city from morning to evening.

Venkateshwara Rao, a retired teacher, speaking to The Pioneer said that the initiative taken by the Corporation is laudable as it is risky to venture out to buy vegetables, or any essentials in the wake of Covid-19 as the number of positive

cases have been increasing day by day in the city. It is also convenient for retired and senior citizens to buy vegetables at their doorstep, he adds.

M Jeevan Rao, a farmer from Vuyyuru, says that the initiative of the Corporation to sell vegetables in residential areas in the city is a good move. "For more than a week, we faced problems to cut vegetables and sell them to vendors in local Rythu Bazaars due to lockdown. Now, with mobile vehicles, it is very convenient to us to sell vegetables in Vijayawada and thanked the authorities for the initiative."



CAPSULE



Priests perform puja on the second day of the ongoing Vasanthotsavam in Tirumala on Monday

ECoR serves food to needy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As per the directive of Ministry of Railways, the East Coast Railway has taken steps to providing bulk food with paper plates at different important stations in its jurisdiction through Food Court at Visakhapatnam and Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) base kitchen on Khurda Road in the wake of Corona crisis.

All the agencies of ECoR, including RPF, have also been involved in a big way in the food distribution to the needy in station areas in ECoR jurisdiction. These apart, different NGOs, ECoRWFO (ECoR Women's Welfare Organisation), railway employees have also come forward to distribute food.

From lemon rice in the South to Khichdi-Chokha in the East and Kadi Chawal in the North, Indian Railways' Catering and Tourism

Corporation is serving variety of meals keeping in mind the local taste buds of people since the lockdown was announced. Starting with more than 250 meals from March 26 at Puri Railway Station and 200 meals from March 27 at Cuttack Railway Station by Railway Protection Force (RPF) and IRCTC has taken care to distribute food to needy in ECoR jurisdiction from March 30.

Till April 6, the IRCTC has distributed 16,400 meals, which are being prepared from Khurda Road base kitchen and Visakhapatnam food court. Altogether, the IRCTC has prepared and served 16,400 meals till date from March 30.

NGOs like Marwari Yuva Manch, Kumud Pahad Surakhya Samitee, ECoRWFO/Sambalpur uhave also been involved, along with RPF, in distribution of 729 meals at Sambalpur, Titilagarh, Balangir Stations.

Vasanthotsavam performed at Tirumala

TIRUMALA ■ On the second day of the ongoing annual Vasanthotsavam in Tirumala, Sri Malayappa Swamy flanked by Sridevi and Bhudevi was brought to Dwajastambha Mandapam and offered prayers before taken to Kalyanotsava Mandapam for Vasanthotsava Snapana Tirumanjanam on Monday. In view of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in vogue at Tirumala, the TTD has cancelled the procession of Swarnaratham on second day of Vasanthotsavam. Instead, deities were brought from the sanctum sanctorum after second bell on Tiruchi and seated on Sarva Bhoopala Vahanam and aarti was offered by priests. Later, they were taken to Kalyanotsava Mandapam and Vasanthotsavam was performed.

Snapana Tirumanjanam conducted

TIRUMALA ■ On the second day of the three-day annual Vasanthotsavam in Tirumala, Snapana Tirumanjanam was performed to deities by priests in Kalyanotsava Mandapam on Monday. Tirumala Pedda Jeeyar Swamy, Tirumala Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal, additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy took part. In view of annual Vasanthotsavam, which concludes on Tuesday at Tirumala, the TTD has cancelled Pournami Garuda Seva on April 7. The TTD has cancelled annual torrent festival Tumburu Theertha Mukkoti, which is scheduled for April 7 at Tirumala in view of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.



Hyderabad start-up develops face shields for Covid-19 warriors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the growing demand for protective equipment for healthcare professionals treating Covid-19 patients, a Hyderabad-based start-up has developed 3D-printed face shields and goggles.

Using 3D printing technology, four young engineers have developed low-cost products, which can provide additional protection to the face and eyes of the medical professionals, or those engaged in relief work.

Mohammed Abdul Shukoor, a mechanical engineer, said that the 3D printing technology can help overcome any shortage of protective gear for healthcare workers dealing with Covid-19 patients.

"In countries like China and the US, a similar effort was made to meet the huge requirement for protective equipment. We drew inspiration from the same and started working on these two protective gears," said Shukoor, who along with his three batch mates, founded a start-up Daava 3D Printing Services, a few months ago.

"We were working on various industry prototypes and due to the situation created by the outbreak of coronavirus, we thought of making some protective equipment. We are not doing this for profit as like healthcare professionals, police and others, we also want to

● Using 3D printing technology, four young engineers have developed low-cost products, which can provide additional protection to the face and eyes of the medical professionals, or those engaged in relief work

● Mohammed Abdul Shukoor, a mechanical engineer, said that the 3D printing technology can help overcome any shortage of protective gear for healthcare workers dealing with Covid-19 patients

make some contribution in tackling the situation," he said.

The start-up wants to make face shields and goggles for Rs 100 and Rs 150 respectively. It uses polymers like PLA and ABS in manufacturing of these products. Since they are not getting raw materials due to the lockdown, they hope the government will come forward to help them in this regard.

"Fabulous," commented Minister for IT KT Rama Rao to a tweet about the start-up's innovations. Always the one to encourage innovations by young minds, he asked Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Industry, to look into the same.

Training for non-medical Naval personnel to tackle COVID-19

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In order to cater to a large number of patients requiring medical and emotional succour during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the ENC is undertaking training of non-medical naval personnel as Battle Field Nursing Assistants (BFNA) to lend a helping hand to the doctors and paramedics in treating the Corona patients in quarantine and isolation centres.

The training commenced at all stations under ENC from March 30 in small batches consisting of a team of six personnel each. In all, 313 personnel, including 37 officers, have been trained at naval units in Visakhapatnam, Chennai and Kolkata as on April 4. The training will be continued and is aimed at covering and training at least 75% of non-medical personnel.

Collation of information on



The training emphasises the importance of PPE by health professionals, social distancing to prevent and contain the spread of the Coronavirus by all personnel

Covid-19 for prevention, management, casualty carriage for transfer and protect by donning the PPE and disinfection have been taught to officers and sailors along with defence civilians,

including women. The training emphasises the importance of PPE by health professionals, social distancing to prevent and contain the spread of the Coronavirus by all personnel.

India has enough ventilators: Healthcare experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Indian government leaving no stone unturned in engaging start-ups and other manufacturers to bridge the demand-supply gap for ventilators, several healthcare experts said on Monday that the country was in a much better position vis-a-vis the vital equipment to tackle Coronavirus.

Dr Saurabh Sachar, a senior resident at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital's Radiology Department said: "We are well-equipped. We have enough buffer of ventilators right now at the hospital. Moreover, the ratio of people infected with Coronavirus and people, who require ventilators, is very low. The government has scaled up manufacturing of this



equipment. As of now, I don't think we will reach a stage where we need to utilise all available ventilators or need more."

He also said that, compared with many other countries, India is doing reasonably good in terms of handling Covid-19 pandemic.

"India is certainly doing better than many other coun-

"We are well-equipped. We have enough buffer of ventilators right now at the hospital. Moreover, the ratio of people infected with Coronavirus and people, who require ventilators, is very low. The government has scaled up manufacturing of this equipment. As of now, I don't think we will reach a stage where we need to utilise all available ventilators or need more"

— DR SAURABH SACHAR

A senior resident at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital's Radiology Department

tries. If we compare our population with countries like Italy, Spain and even the United States, they have lesser population but their Covid-19 patients and mortality rates are much higher. However, there is always scope to do better. The situation is so far so good."

He advised that religious congregations or similar activities should be strictly avoided, and people with other health

issues, especially diabetes, should be taken care of.

"If people continue to follow social distancing and isolation, I don't think this is a problem that we cannot come out of. People should avoid switching on air conditioners in this changing weather. If these things are followed, there are fewer chances that we will receive patients requiring ventilators," said Dr Sachar.

According to the Health Ministry, less than 20 Covid-19 patients were on ventilator support till March 30. As against this, over 14,000 ventilators were identified in hospitals across the country for Coronavirus patients at that particular time.

Dr RV Asokan, Honorary Secretary General of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), said: "Although the exact count of ventilators is not available yet but when the count was last taken by the government, it was 15,000. But within 10 days, it has increased up to 30,000, as per my knowledge through informal sources."

He said that the lockdown period had given the government time to prepare the healthcare sector for the unforeseen circumstances.

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CAPSULE



Beneficiary injured in knife attack by volunteer

CHITTOOR: Irked by the questions posed by one of the beneficiaries of financial support, a village volunteer attacked the beneficiary with knife inflicting serious injuries on him at Bandvaddipalli village in KV Palli mandal of Chittoor district on Monday. It may be recalled that the State government is distributing Rs 1,000 to each card holder's family towards loss of wage due to the clamp down. At Bandvaddipalli village, beneficiary Viswanadha Raju questioned volunteer Srinivasulu about the irregularities taking place in distribution of the financial support. Unable to bear with Viswanadha Raju suspecting his credentials, the volunteer in a fit of rage assaulted Viswanadha Raju with a knife, inflicting serious injuries on him. The injured was rushed to the government hospital at Pileru. TDP leader Nalla Kishore Kumar Reddy condemned the attack and demanded that the government take action against the volunteer.

De-worming drug for prevention of Covid-19 at zoos, says curator

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

After a tiger housed in Bronx Zoo, New York, tested positive for Coronavirus, zoos in the State are stepping up measures to protect the animals from the virus as they come in contact with the care takers.

However, besides other measures, drug Ivermectin, which is a common drug used for de-worming is reported as a preventive and therapeutic drug for COVID -19. "Luckily, we did the de-worming using this drug in February and March. This information once I shared with Central Zoo Authority (CZA) is being appreciated," said Vizag zoo curator Yesoda Bai. "I feel even for pet animals at home the same can be administered, if people feel fearful in the current scenario," she suggested.

The Central Zoo Authority has issued guidelines to zoos in the country suggesting the authorities concerned to remain alert, watch animals on 24x7 basis, including CCTV for any abnormal behaviour/symptoms, keepers handlers not to be allowed in the vicinity, without safety gear, preferably PPE (personal protective equipment), isolate and quarantine sick animals and have least contact while providing feed to animals.



It also mentioned that the carnivores, especially cats and ferrets, and primates needed to be carefully monitored. She said that fortnightly samples of the suspect cases must be sent to the designated animal health institutes to initiate Covid-19 testing, while following bio-containment and safety measures required to handle this high-risk pathogen as per the national/ICMR guidelines. Vizag zoo has two Asiatic lions, four RBT, six white tigers, two leopards, 40+ wild dogs, 35 other carnivores, including four elephants, primates: 46, rodents: 9, reptiles: 203, birds: 231 in the zoo. In Animal Rescue Centre, there are six big cats (four lions and two tigers) and other than that one female

tigress in quarantine are housed. "We are taking utmost care with the animals and animal keepers in the zoo, as both have an interface. Keepers are using masks, gloves, boots and head cover also while working in the enclosure. They sanitise properly before providing feed to animals in the designated place. In the store, staff follows the same protocol and vegetables and other feed items coming from market are washed thoroughly before distributing to enclosures," said the zoo curator. Regular prophylactic is being done at enclosure (night and day kraal). Tyre bath with four per cent formalin for vehicles entering the zoo, workers are being checked for

■ "Luckily, we did the de-worming using Ivermectin drug in February and March. This information once I shared with Central Zoo Authority (CZA) is being appreciated," said Vizag zoo curator Yesoda Bai

■ "I feel even for pet animals at home the same can be administered, if people feel fearful in the current scenario," she suggested

any illness before entering the zoo and only those staff, who are healthy, below 50 years age and coming from nearby locations are working. They are strictly advised not to go to market or to neighbourhood. Besides these measures, spreading of bleach + lime in 1:1 ration on roads and day kraals, Aerosol spraying of Virkon-S (sodium hypochlorite solution) in night kraal for every three days and placing foot baths at the entrance of day and night kraals with Virkon - S (10 gm in 1 lit of water) are also being done. Carnivore, primate (Chimpanzee) and Giraffe and Zebra enclosures are under surveillance of CCTV.

BJP celebrates 40th foundation day Govt hiding Corona positive cases: Kanna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With a slogan 'Sab ka Saat-Sab ka Vikas', the Bharatiya Jana Sangh was transformed into the Bharatiya Janata Party on April 6, in 1980, reminded BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana after hoisting the party flag at the office to mark the 40th foundation day here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the poor are starving in the present crisis across the nation, hence, the party cadre is coming forward to help them. Similarly, people are coming forward with donations voluntarily in this crucial time and appealed to them to donate generously and support the cause. He reminded that the party activists distributed food to the poor and needy. He said that everyone should wage a war against the deadly virus as a soldier to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Kanna said though the ruling party leaders are taking advantage of the situation for political gain, they are not reacting as the Corona virus situation in the State is in a crucial phase. He alleged that the State government was hiding facts on virus and demanded that it disclose the facts to people as the number of positive cases are on the rise



■ People are coming forward with donations voluntarily in this crucial time and appealed to them to donate generously and support the cause, said BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana

■ The party activists distributed food to the poor and needy, Kanna said and added that that everyone should wage a war against the deadly virus as a soldier to contain the spread of Covid-19

day by day. BJP leaders P Ramakrishna, V Narendra Kumar, P Ravishankar, A Ramu, Ch Ramu, Aruna and others were present.



'Help bring back mortal remains of Telugu student'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday wrote a letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to help bring back the mortal remains of Telugu student Kondigalla Peddinti Vamsi from the Philippines. Naidu said that the student went to pursue medicine under the Dr NTR Vidyanoti Scheme sponsored by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. He was pursuing medicine at the Cebu Doctor's University at Mandaue City in the Philippines. Vamsi hailed from Anantapur town.

Naidu told the External Affairs Minister that the deceased met with an accident and died on April 6 at around 5.20 am (IST) in the Philippines. His family members in Anantapur were shattered and inconsolable after hearing about his death. "In this connection, I request you on behalf of the bereaved family to help bring back the mortal remains at the earliest to perform last rites," Naidu said.

AP, TS in favour of lockdown extension...

Continued from Page 1

"I am for the lockdown of the country furthermore after April 15. Because, we can recover from the economic problem. But we cannot recover lives. We cannot recover the lives of the people."

The country's only weapon against the coronavirus was lockdown, KCR said, adding, "I appeal to the honourable Prime Minister, to the Government of India, please extend the lockdown without any hesitation."

As things stand, the situation is more alarming in Andhra Pradesh than in Telangana. The number of people testing positive for the infection has increased at a faster clip in AP over the past three-four days.

Andhra Pradesh, which was way behind TS in respect of Corona positive cases until a week ago, appears to have "caught up" with Telangana due to a spike registered over the past three-four days.

AP crossed the 300 mark in Corona positive cases on Monday, which is close to 334 cases recorded in Telangana on Sunday.

Various states are now framing proposals to be sent to the Centre before April 15 as the Prime Minister has sought suggestions from the Chief Ministers on ways to lift the lockdown and set up various internal committees to prepare tasks, including how to deal with the demands of farmers, construction workers, and those engaged in the micro, small and medium enterprises.

A few states have set up task forces with ministers and officials to frame proposals on gradual lifting of the lockdown. Although AP and TS governments are yet to announce setting up of similar task forces, it is learnt that the Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries and senior officials of respective states are drafting proposals to be submitted to the Prime Minister by April 10.

KCR meanwhile expressed his position to Modi in clear terms: "Consult everybody, consult every Chief Minister, have a videoconference with entire country, but take a conscious decision. Because, we have no other weapon in India to contain this dreadful virus."

AP ropes in teachers to contain Corona spread

Continued from Page 1

Krishna District Education Officer MV Rajyalakshmi told The Pioneer that as per the instruction given to MEOs and MROs in the district to depute the teachers to extend their services, the teachers in their jurisdiction have come forward voluntarily to take up the task.

She said that no one has forced them to discharge their duties. "Most of the PETs and teachers from across the district came forward voluntarily in this hour of need. A few PETs have been posted at check posts and other locations to enforce social distancing protocol. Science teachers are told to create awareness among public about the virus by carrying out a door-to-door visits," Rajyalakshmi said.

Nagaraju, a teacher from Gudivada, says that they are discharging their duties from morning till noon, despite the fear prevailing about the extremely contagious virus.



Kia Motors pledges Rs 2 cr to CMRF for Corona fight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kia Motors India (KMI) on Monday pledged Rs 2 crore to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund to provide immediate and long-term relief against the coronavirus outbreak in the State.

Kia Motors India is committed to extending every possible support to the community and is taking all necessary measures to fight coronavirus that has wreaked a havoc globally, the company said in a statement.

While the Central government has implemented several measures and announced economic aid to tackle the sit-

uation, Kia Motors is doing its bit in ensuring effective health-care support to the citizens, it added.

The KMI will continue to support the country, governments and is committed to being a partner in the national fight against coronavirus.

"With the public life and services coming to a standstill amid the 21-day lockdown, the company is constantly analysing the situation on the ground and is ensuring relentless support to its customers," the company said, adding it will be providing extended free services to all its customers until July 2020.

Naidu indulging in false propaganda on Corona: Perni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government has been taking measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, said Minister for Transport and Information and Public Relations Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani). People should follow the guidelines framed by the government to combating the spread of the virus. Addressing the media here on Monday, he said that the government has done fairly well to contain the virus compared to other States.

He found fault with opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu for criticising the government while the whole nation was in the grip of pandemic. He said that the medical, sanitary, revenue, ANMs, ASHA workers were rendering their services in the need of the hour like soldiers.

He blamed Naidu for sending wrong signals among people on Covid-19 virus creating insecurity. "With the timely action of the government, we could prevent the virus from spreading further but Naidu was indulging in a false propa-



ganda on Corona cases," he alleged.

He came down heavily on the Left party leaders for finding fault in the governance of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy when government was striving to curb the virus.

Minister Nani said elaborate arrangements are being made in red zones wherein vegetables, groceries, medicines and other essentials are brought to the doorstep of people. The government was taking all measures to procure farmers' produce by giving the Minimum Support Price and made arrangements for farmers to sell the vegetables

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He appreciated police, collectors, medical, sanitation, municipal, revenue, VROs and other department employees for serving people in the hour of crisis.

1,021% spike in Corona cases in AP, says Naidu

Continued from Page 1

He pointed out that Kerala has conducted 10,200 COVID-19 tests, Karnataka 5,600 and Rajasthan 12,000 so far but no such data was available with regard to AP. "If the AP government continues to be casual and not realise the seriousness of the situation, the state would soon be on the brink of a human disaster," Naidu said.

Pointing out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reached out to the Opposition leaders and experts to mitigate the outbreak, Naidu asked Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to shed his reluctance and take all sections of leaders, intellectuals, NGOs and people's organisations into confidence to make united efforts. "This is not a time for blame-game, considering how people are becoming increasingly vulnerable because of loss of work, home isolation and general financial distress," he said.

Naidu said that like in Delhi, the AP government should give Rs 5,000 assistance to all poor families including all those 18 lakh families whose ration cards have been scrapped recently. "The government should deliver 5 kg rice, 1 kg dal, 1 LPG cylinder and midday meal to poor as directed by the Centre. This is necessary to prevent the poor from becoming vulnerable," Naidu said.

SC issues guidelines for functioning of courts

Continued from Page 1

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said, "consistent with the peculiarities of the judicial system in every state and the dynamically developing public health situation", every high court would be authorised to determine the modalities suitable to the temporary transition to the use of

All measures that have been and shall be taken by this court and by the high courts, to reduce the need for the physical presence of all stakeholders within court premises and to secure the functioning of courts in consonance with social distancing guidelines and best public health practices shall be deemed to be lawful," said the bench, also comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao.

The bench said the outbreak of coronavirus or COVID-19 in several countries including India has necessitated immediate adoption of measures to ensure social distancing to prevent transmission of the virus, and the apex court as well as the high courts have adopted measures to reduce physical presence.

"Access to justice is fundamental to preserve the rule of law in the democracy envisaged by the Constitution of India. The challenges occa-

sioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 have to be addressed while preserving the constitutional commitment to ensuring the delivery of and access to justice to those who seek it," the bench said, adding, "Court hearings in congregation must necessarily become an exception during this period."

The top court directed that district courts in each state shall adopt the mode of video-conferencing prescribed by the concerned high court.

"The concerned courts shall maintain a helpline to ensure that any complaint in regard to the quality or audibility of feed shall be communicated during the proceeding or immediately after its conclusion failing which no grievance in regard to it shall be entertained thereafter," it said.

The bench directed that courts shall duly notify and make available the facilities for video-conferencing for such litigants who do not have the means or access to such facilities.

"If necessary, in appropriate cases courts may appoint an amicus-curiae and make video conferencing facilities available to such an advocate," it said, adding, "Until appropriate rules are framed by the high courts, video conferencing shall be mainly employed for hearing arguments whether at the trial stage or at the appellate stage."

Don't be a balcony govt...

Continued from Page 1

His reference was based on the implementation of the 21-day lockdown by the Prime Minister on short notice, which left many people in the lowest rung of the social and economic strata clueless and stranded.

The letter, dated April 6, 2020, criticised the manner in which the Prime Minister announced the 21-day lockdown and compared it with a similar decision around three years ago—demonetisation. "My biggest fear is that the same mistake of demonetisation is being repeated albeit at a much bigger scale. While demonetisation led to loss of savings and livelihood of the poorest, this ill-planned lockdown is leading us to a fatal combination of loss of both life and livelihood," he wrote.

Pastor detained for celebrating...

Continued from Page 1

The people left the church upon seeing the police coming. Earlier too, a notice had been served on the pastor in the wake of prohibitory orders due to the outbreak of COVID-19. A case was booked under Sections 270 IPC, 188 IPC, Section 2 and 3 of Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 and Section 51 of Disaster Management Act 2005 against the pastor, Nathi Vijaya Ratnam. The police took the pastor into custody.

Battle to be long, India's efforts have set example to world: PM

Continued from Page 1

Opposition leaders, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi, have claimed the Central government did not respond in time to the virus.

Modi, who stressed on the need for wearing face covers outside the house, listed measures like the thermal screening of international passengers, evacuation of Indian nationals abroad and barring flights from certain countries and ramping up of medical infrastructure taken by his government.

The government, he said, took "proactive" decisions with help from experts and executed them in cooperation with states.

The speedy and holistic manner with which India acted has drawn praise not from within the country but also from the WHO," the prime minister said and added that India played a



"key role" in the holding of SAARC and G-20 meetings.

Heads of different countries have appreciated India, he said, noting that it has been coordinating with different nations and he himself has been in touch with some of them.

However, the prime minister also made it clear that India is in for the long haul in the battle against the pandemic which has wreaked havoc in many countries, including deaths in thousands in developed nations

like the US, Italy and France. He described the seriousness and maturity shown by people during the lockdown as "unprecedented".

Nobody could have imagined that people will show such discipline and sense of service in a huge country like India, he said, adding that the nation's collective strength was on display on Sunday evening.

Referring to Sunday's exercise in which millions of households across the country switched off their lights and lit diyas, candles or turned on mobile torches, he said it prepared Indians for the long fight ahead.

"All sections of society; the rich and poor, the literate and illiterate, and people of various age groups, all joined hands to show this collective strength of 130 crore Indians. It further strengthened our resolve in this fight against the coron-

avirus," Modi said. The 21-day nation-wide lockdown announced by Modi last month is set to end on April 14.

He urged BJP workers to follow his five-point suggestions, similar to what party president J P Nadda had said earlier.

They should ensure that no poor person goes hungry, the prime minister said.

He asked them to urge people to download the Aarogya Setu app, which informs and advises users about COVID-19, distribute face covers and asked others to sign on thank you messages to emergency staff.

Asserting that the battle against the pandemic is no less than a war, he urged party workers to donate to the PM-CARES Fund and also encourage others to contribute to it to help his government's measures against the pandemic.

COVID-19 takes two more lives in AP...

Continued from Page 1

Krishna district reported 29 cases followed by YSR Kadapa with 27 cases, Prakasam 24, West Godavari 21, Visakhapatnam 20, Chittoor 17, East Godavari 11 and Anantapur with six positive cases. Fortunately, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts in

Cabinet approves 30% salary cut...

Continued from Page 1

That amount will go to the Consolidated Fund of India. The purse strings of the government are being tightened in view of the coronavirus emergency and a fund — PM CARES — has been set up for relief efforts.

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

"As a Member of Parliament, I welcome the government's decision to cut salaries of MPs. In this difficult time, this is the least we can do to help fellow citizens," he tweeted.

2 private hospitals in Mumbai sealed after staff test positive

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Two private hospitals in Mumbai have been sealed after some of their medical staff, including doctors and nurses, tested positive for the novel coronavirus, civic officials said on Monday.

Three doctors and 26 nurses tested positive for novel coronavirus in Wockhardt Hospital in Mumbai Central and the facility has been sealed off to prevent the spread of infection, BMC health officials said.

No one is allowed to enter or exit the private hospital, a civic official said.

The hospital has several employees from Kerala, prompting Congress leader from the southern state, Ramesh Chennithala, to tweet, "Called Maharashtra health minister Shri. Rajesh Tope ji @rajesh11 seeking urgent intervention to ensure safety of 40 Covid-19 positive Malayalee nurses working at a pvt hospital in Mumbai."

New admissions were stopped and Outpatient Department (OPD) was closed at the Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai on Wednesday after at least one of its staff tested positive for coronavirus.

A nurse working at the private hospital had alleged in a video message that was circulating on social media that more than one staff member had contracted coronavirus, but the hospital said only one person had tested positive.

Following the allegations by



New admissions were stopped and Outpatient Department was closed at the Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai on Wednesday after at least one of its staff tested positive for coronavirus

the nurse, a meeting was called at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation office, which was attended by top officials of the hospital, BMC sources said.

As per the nurse who is seen speaking in the video, the hospital management did not inform the staff about admission of a COVID-19 patient.

When contacted, Jaslok Hospital admitted that a nurse who came in contact with a COVID-19 patient did test positive.

"The staff members handling COVID-19 patients are given protective gears like face

masks, gloves, eye protection, Personal Protection Equipment for contact droplet and airborne transmission of pathogens, long-sleeved water resistant gown to ensure precaution.

"All the medical staff who came in direct or indirect contact of the affected nurse and the connected patient have been identified and quarantined as per the protocol," it said.

As a precautionary measure, the hospital has suspended its OPD services and no new admissions are being taken for a few days, it said.

92 hospital staff quarantined after patient contracts

PNS ■ PUNE

At least 92 staff members, including several doctors, of the D Y Patil Hospital here in Maharashtra have been quarantined after an accident victim, who was being treated at the facility, tested positive for coronavirus, an official said on Monday. A senior civic official denied speculations of the COVID-19 patient having direct or indirect link to the Tablighi Jamaat which organised a religious congregation at Nizamuddin in Delhi last month that later emerged as a coronavirus hotspot in the country. The patient, an autorickshaw driver, met with the accident on March 31, said Jitendra Bhawalkar, dean of the D Y Patil Medical College and Hospital, a private medical facility located in Pimpri Chinchwad township here.

"The man, who is in his 30s, came to the emergency section of the hospital on March 31 after the accident. He was operated upon and on the second day, he developed fever. The doctors got suspicious and his samples were sent for testing which came out positive for coronavirus," he said.

Guj COVID-19 tally 144; Most cases linked to Tablighi meet

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Sixteen new coronavirus cases were reported from Gujarat on Monday, including 10 having direct or indirect link to the religious congregation organised by Tablighi Jamaat at Nizamuddin in Delhi last month, an official said. With this, the total number of COVID-19 cases in the state has gone up to 144, Principal Secretary (Health) Jayanti Ravi said.

Of the 16 new cases, 11 are from Ahmedabad, two from Vadodara and one each from Mehsana, Patan and Surat. Nine of these patients from Ahmedabad and the one from Mehsana have link to the Nizamuddin religious event, the official said.

As many as 12 of the 16 new patients are in the age group of 15 to 40 years, she said.

"The reason behind the surge in positive cases is that samples from hotspot areas — where more number of patients have been found — are being tested intensively.



Nine of these patients from Ahmedabad and the one from Mehsana have link to the Nizamuddin religious event, the official said

Several cases have come up in areas where people returned from the Tablighi Jamaat meet in Delhi," Ravi said.

The death toll in the state has gone up to 12 after a 62-year old woman succumbed in Vadodara, she said. The woman had travelled to Sri Lanka and was admitted to

hospital on March 18 after she returned and fell ill.

Besides, 21 patients have been discharged so far after recovering from the viral infection, the official said. Out of the 112 active cases, two patients are on ventilator support, while the condition of 110 others is stable, she said.

Assam considering regulating entry of people into state

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Monday said it is actively considering to start a permit system for people wishing to enter the state after the 21-day lockdown to combat the coronavirus outbreak ends on April 14.

Addressing a press conference, Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the state government wants to regulate the inflow of the people, including permanent residents, who are planning to

come to Assam after the nationwide lockdown is over.

"We will allow phase-wise entry into Assam because if, for example 50,000 people arrive on a single day then we will not be able to handle that load as we do not have such a big quarantine facility. So, we will have to sequence them," he added.

The government will take a final call on this by Wednesday and will launch a website through which people can apply if they want to come to Assam, Sarma said.

Kanpur admin mulls NSA against Jamaat participants

PNS ■ KANPUR (UP)

The Kanpur administration on Monday gave the "last chance" to those who attended the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi or have come in contact with them to report themselves to authorities, warning that NSA would be invoked against them if they failed to do so.

The congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin area has emerged as one of the biggest clusters of COVID-19 in the country and many of the attendees have tested positive for the virus. Authorities fear those who have returned from the meet could spread the virus to other areas.

"Those who have come in contact with any Jamaat member or were at the religious congregation in Delhi markaz have been given a last chance to come forward and present themselves before the district authorities for COVID-19 test, otherwise be ready to face the National Security Act," District Magistrate Brahmdeo Ram Tiwari said.

SHORT READS



BJP Foundation Day: Will overcome virus crisis, says Gadkari

NAGPUR: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday said the BJP government at the Centre has tried to walk the path shown by party stalwarts Syama Prasad Mukherjee, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, Atal Bihar Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani. He said the country would overcome the coronavirus crisis and emerge a "super economic power" under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Speaking on the party's Foundation Day, Gadkari, in a video message on Twitter, thanked its workers. Gadkari expressed happiness over the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act. "Our government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tried to walk the way and fulfill the dreams shown by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, LK Advani, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyay," he said.

One lakh kits arriving from China to aid quick screening in TN

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Monday said order has been placed for buying one lakh Rapid Test Kits from China and it will arrive here on April 9 aiding quick screening for coronavirus in the State. Of the 4,612 people who were tested for the contagion, 571 turned positive, Palaniswami said adding the RTKs will be sent to all districts and testing could be done quickly for whom ever needed. "One lakh test kits have been ordered and we are getting it from China," he told reporters adding the kits have a 30-minute window for providing results which will aid quick and more screening of people to ascertain the presence of virus. The kits will arrive on Thursday and the following day districts could have them, he said. Also, orders have been placed for 2,500 ventilators and more masks and Personal Protective Equipment was being procured to meet requirements, he said. The State has optimal inventory of drugs including antibiotics and intravenous fluids needed to treat coronavirus patients, he said.

Aligarh man arrested for inflammatory social media post

ALIGARH (UP): A 20-year-old man has been arrested here for a communally sensitive social media post related to the coronavirus pandemic, police said on Monday. Mursim Ali was arrested on Sunday from Atrauli, about 35 km from here, for his post that went viral and had the potential to breach the communal peace, Atrauli Station House Officer Dharmendra Singh Panwar said. Ali works as an assistant at a local medical shop. He has been booked under several sections of the Indian Penal Code including 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc) and 505 (2) (promoting enmity hatred or ill-will among classes), the SHO said. He has also been charged under the National Disaster Management Act.

In a first, PM Modi chairs Cabinet meet via video link

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, PM Narendra Modi chaired a meeting of the Union Cabinet on Monday via video link amid the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. Besides Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah were present at the PM's official residence along with some senior officials, other members of the Cabinet were connected via a video link from their offices and residences.

K'taka Auqaf Board suspends congregational prayers

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka State Board for Auqaf on Monday issued orders suspending congregational prayers and visit to the Qabrasthans (Muslim Graveyards), Dargahs on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat on April 9, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It is hereby directed to all the managements not to allow any congregational prayers in the masjid and the managements of the Qabrasthans/Dargahs throughout the State to suspend the visit of public



on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat on Thursday, April 9," the order read.

It said, no public shall be allowed to perform religious rituals in the Qabrasthans/

Dargahs and all their gates shall be kept closed.

Asking the managements of the Qabrasthans and dargahs to take necessary steps for implementation of the order in the interest of public health in letter and spirit, it instructed all Waqf officers, Districts Waqf Advisory Committees in the state to adhere to the order and to circulate the same to all the Waqf managements, and ensure that the said Order is followed scrupulously.

"Any dereliction in this regard will be viewed seriously," it added.

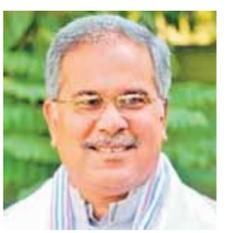
POST-LOCKDOWN MOVEMENT: Chhattisgarh CM seeks elaborate discussions

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold elaborate discussions and put necessary measures in place before resuming interstate traffic services after the end of ongoing lockdown, so that a possible community spread of COVID-19 could be checked.

Baghel, in a letter to the PM on Monday, also said that eight out of 10 COVID-19 patients in the state had recovered and had been discharged, officials said.

"No one has died due to the coronavirus in the state and so far the situation is very much under control as a result of measures taken by the state government and public cooperation. But in other parts of the country, the number of COVID-19 patients has been steadily rising. As the testing



for the COVID-19 virus will increase, the number of infected persons may also increase," he said in the letter.

"If after April 14, (the deadline of the nationwide lockdown), inter-state trains, flights and road transport services are resumed, then there will be chances of movement of COVID-19 infected people from other states to Chhattisgarh, as result of which the state may face new challenges," he said.

Plea in HC for evacuating Indians stranded in USA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea was moved on Monday in the Delhi High Court for the safe and secure return of all Indian citizens employed in the United States of America (USA) and now stranded there without jobs in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The petition was heard via video conferencing in the morning by a bench of Justices Manmohan and Sanjeev Narula which directed it be listed on Tuesday so that a copy of the plea can be served on the central government.

The petition has been moved by a couple whose daughter is stranded jobless in the US after her employer suddenly asked her to resign on March 20 in the wake of COVID-19 and she could not return to India due to ban on commercial flights.

Similar is the situation of many Indian citizens who were employed in the US but are now stranded there jobless in the



wake of COVID-19 outbreak, the petition, moved through advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal, has claimed.

The plea has also said that the petitioners' 24-year-old daughter — Yasmin Tahira Hussain — only has two months from March 20 to leave the USA as per her H1B visa conditions.

The petition has claimed that if the travel ban is further extended then it would be difficult for her to leave the USA and she cannot survive there for long without a regular source of income as should would not be

Police denies reports of truckers beaten up in Arunachal Pradesh

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh Police on Monday termed as "rubbish" reports of several truckers, belonging to a particular community, were allegedly beaten up in state, following which they fled to neighbouring Assam, leaving their vehicles behind.

Inspector General of Police Chukhu Appa said reports of drivers and handy men of a particular community were fleeing the state especially in Kurung Kumey was "rubbish" and "without any iota of truth".

He said that no passenger vehicle was plying due to the lockdown.

The Deputy Commissioner of Kurung Kumey district Kento Riba said on Monday that a truck had hit a parked SUV at Sangram on Saturday that led to an altercation between both the drivers,

which, he said, was given a different colour by some official.

An officer of the civil supply department in a letter to the DC on Sunday informed that truck drivers and handy-men of a particular community were beaten up between Sangram and Palin by a few youth forcing them to flee to Assam.

The DC said that the district officer was reprimanded for inordinate delay in informing him about the incident and a police team led by sub-divisional police officer was sent to the spot to settle the issue of compensation and a case was registered against the driver for his fault.

Three rice-laden trucks reached Koloring, the headquarters town of remote Kurung Kumey district on Sunday evening and returned smoothly, the deputy commissioner said.

Kerala HC allows cat owner to go out to buy food for pets

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday allowed a cat owner's plea seeking to permit him to go out in his car to buy food for his pets amid the lockdown to prevent spread of novel coronavirus.

Considering the plea filed by Prakash, who owns three pet cats, a Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justices A K Jayasankaran Nambiar and Shaji P Chaly observed that animal food and fodder were covered under essential items.

Allowing the plea, the court

directed that the petitioner could go out to buy the food for his pets on the basis of a self-declaration, along with the order of the court.

In his plea, the cat owner had alleged that the police did not grant him vehicle pass for buying cat food after its stock got exhausted.

He had submitted the application for vehicle pass online on April 4.

The court asked whether the cat will not eat other food, the petitioner, a vegetarian, submitted that the cats were fed biscuits and seven kg was required to feed them for three weeks.



2.5-yr-old son of UP's first patient tests positive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A two-and-a-half-year-old child tested positive for COVID-19 in UP's Lucknow on Monday, weeks after his mother became the first coronavirus case of the state capital, officials said. The toddler has been admitted to the King KGMU, they said. "A two-and-a-half years old child was admitted here after being found positive for COVID-19. His mother was the first coronavirus patient of Lucknow and was discharged after recovery," the KGMU officials said.

55 firms producing up to 70,000 litres of sanitiser per day in UP: State govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Facing an increased demand for sanitisers in the state, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued licences to 55 companies to produce up to 70,000 litres of the liquid per day. "Total number of sanitiser licenses issued in the state is 55. This includes 22 sugar mills, as many sanitiser companies, nine distilleries and two other companies," an official statement issued here on Monday said. There has been a spurt in the demand for sanitisers following the outbreak of coronavirus in the



state and to deal with this, the government issued licences to distilleries and sanitiser-manufacturing companies to increase production. The product is being made available in the market

through dealers and chief medical officers placing requests for sanitisers are being provided promptly. Production can be further increased if required, officials said.

SHORT READS



People of India will fight coronavirus together: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said the people of India will together win the battle against coronavirus as it gives an opportunity to unite and set aside differences of religion, caste and class. He said in order to defeat the deadly virus, people should forge one common purpose, for which compassion, empathy and self service are the central idea. "The coronavirus is an opportunity for India to unite as one people, putting aside differences of religion, caste and class; to forge one common purpose. The defeat of this deadly virus. Compassion, empathy and self sacrifice are central to this idea. Together we will win this battle," he said on Twitter. Giving this message of unity, Gandhi also posted a picture of two young children of different religions walking with their arms around each other.

Woman cop defers marriage to attend to her duties

RISHIKESH (U'KHD): Preferring her duty over personal considerations in the war against coronavirus, a woman police officer here put off her marriage to be able to look after migrant workers at a relief camp. Shahida Parveen, a sub-inspector posted at Muni Ki Reti police station here, is currently deployed at a relief camp meant for migrant workers. She was to get married on April 5. However, the call of duty prompted the officer to defer her marriage so that she could take care of the migrant workers at the relief camp where she is posted. "At a time when the entire country is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, we also have certain duties to fulfill. So, I decided to defer my marriage scheduled for April 5 to be available for people who need my services," Parveen said.

12 Jamaat members, their 52 primary contacts report to police

SHIMLA: Twelve Tablighi Jamaat members who had attended the group's congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin, a COVID-19 hotspot, and their primary contacts have reported to Himachal Pradesh police for testing after warning of a strict action against them, a senior official said on Monday. On Sunday, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and Director General of Police, Himachal Pradesh, Sita Ram Mardi had asked Jamaat members to come forward for testing by 5 pm, else they would be booked for attempt to murder. The DGP said 12 Jamaat member and their 52 primary contacts have reported to the police following which they are put under home quarantine.

SC guidelines for hearings through video conferencing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday passed a slew of directions for all courts across the country to extensively use video-conferencing for judicial proceedings saying congregation of lawyers and litigants must be suspended to maintain social distancing amid coronavirus pandemic.

The top court, which has restricted its functioning and is conducting hearing through video conferencing of extremely urgent matters during the lockdown period since March 25, exercised its plenary power under Article 142 of the Constitution to direct all the high courts to frame a mechanism for use of technology during the pandemic.

Stressing that "technology is here to stay", a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said that recent outbreak of COVID-19 has necessitated social distancing and it is necessary to ensure that court premises do not contribute to



the spread of coronavirus.

The top court has taken suo motu (on its own) cognizance of a letter written by senior advocate and former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Vikas Singh, who has suggested measures for use of technology for conducting hearings in the courts.

The bench, also comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao, directed that all courts would maintain helpline for grievances regarding video feed during and immediately after the hearing and they

must make appropriate arrangements for litigants, who do not have access to such facilities.

The apex court made it clear that no evidence would be recorded via video-conferencing and if recording of evidence is must in the courts, then the concerned judge would ensure that distance is maintained inside the courtroom.

It said courts will have the power for restricted entry for the proceedings and to adjourn the hearing, if crowd cannot be managed.

The bench said that no pre-

Stressing that "technology is here to stay", a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said that recent outbreak of COVID-19 has necessitated social distancing and it is necessary to ensure that court premises do not contribute to the spread of coronavirus

siding officer would restrict the entry of parties to the case unless they are having any health problem.

It clarified that these directions have been issued to ensure that the judiciary rises to face this unique challenge of COVID-19 pandemic and these directives would remain in place till further orders.

India learnt to live without politics, religion: Scientist

PNS ■ BENGALURU

"The country has learnt to live without politics and religion," says eminent scientist G Madhavan Nair on the lockdown imposed across the nation to curb the spread of COVID-19.

"This is a great achievement," observed the former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation. He said this trend should be continued after every election, with all the political activities pushed into the background and everybody concentrating on nation-building.

On COVID-19, Nair told 'PTI': "Actually, many of these viruses are dormant on the earth, and when favourable conditions come, they flare up. If you look at the last three centuries or beyond, once in 100 years, something or the other breaks out. So, its a natural phenomenon."

He said Indians have demonstrated their unity, standing up together without any caste, creed and political colour in the battle to combat



the spread of the Coronavirus, adding, the same approach should be adopted in nation building.

Nair said implementation of various measures aimed at halting the spread was being spearheaded largely the bureaucracy, who have risen up to the occasion extremely well and same tempo has to be maintained.

In the matter of bringing COVID-19 relief package to people, India has been able to cut out the middle-men, he said.

"Previously all the funds used to be leaked out to middlemen and that used to real-

ly deny benefits which are supposed to reach the people. So that process (cutting out middlemen), if it's continued, it's definitely good for the country," Nair said.

Noting that India has a huge domestic market, he pitched for giving a thrust to the indigenisation programme, which perhaps had taken a back-seat for quite some time because of readily available things outside.

"Now is the time for Indian industries and research laboratories to wake up and give a big push to indigenisation drive," Nair underlined.

Figures tell truth: RSS leader Manmohan Vaidya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Figures tell the truth," said RSS Joint General Secretary Manmohan Vaidya on Monday referring to the number of COVID-19 cases linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi.

However, he said Muslims are helping the government in tracing contacts of Tablighi Jamaat which should be appreciated. The health ministry had on Sunday said the rate of doubling of COVID-19 cases in India was 4.1 days, but if the cases linked to the Tablighi Jamaat event would not have happened, it would have been 7.4 days.

Lauding the decision taken by the country's leadership to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, Vaidya told reporters that India handled the COVID-19 situation comparatively better than several developed nations.

"To tackle the COVID-19 outbreak, India's leadership took some decisive steps which got public support as well," he said.



The RSS leader said workers of his organisation helped 25.5 lakh people during the lockdown besides feeding the poor and daily wagers and starting a helpline.

He asserted that the Tablighi Jamaat could have handled the situation in a better way.

"Figures tell the truth...they (Tablighi Jamaat) stand exposed as many in the Muslim community are opposing them... and a number of Muslims are also helping government officials in tracing their contacts which should also be appreciated," Vaidya told reporters here.

RSS cancels programmes between April - June

NAGPUR: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has cancelled training modules and programmes scheduled between April and June in view of the novel coronavirus outbreak, its joint general secretary Manmohan Vaidya said on Monday. These include over 90 'Sangh Shiksha Varg' training camps, he added.

COVID-19: CAPFs asked to suspend non-essential movement of troops till Apr 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Thal Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) have suspended all non-essential movement of its troops and staffers as they have extended their leaves by another 10 days, till April 15, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, officials said on Monday.

The earlier orders were in the mid March asking jawans and officers of CAPFs to "be where they are" till April 5.

"Fresh orders have been issued and all non-essential and routine movements, transfers and postings have been put on hold. No such travel will take place in these forces till April 15 now," a senior official said.

"In order to cut down travel risk to prevent the possibility of spread of the disease during travel, the competent authority has directed that all personnel who are already on leave and likely to join duty before April 5 may be asked to extend leave till April 15," the order accessed by PTI said.



"This may also be ensured by intimating affected personnel over phone by respective leave sanctioning authorities till further order," it added

"This may also be ensured by intimating affected personnel over phone by respective leave sanctioning authorities till further order," it added.

The order said the decision has also been taken "in view of the prevailing situation arising out of COVID-19 and the lockdown imposed by the government in the country".

The CAPFs have a combined strength of about 10 lakh personnel. These forces comprise the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border

Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). Counter-terror force National Security Guard (NSG) has also been included in the order.

"This order was first issued to ensure prevention of mass outbreak of the pandemic in these forces that are the backbone of the country's internal security and deployed for vital duties, including border guarding and counter-terrorist operations," a

senior CAPF official had said. The troops live very closely in demarcated camp areas and even one COVID-19 positive case among them can lead to infecting hundreds of colleagues in a short time, he had said.

A senior CRPF officer said movement of officers and troops on leave or training will only be allowed in case of a "strict emergency" and that will be cleared after approval by senior commanders who will review and decide each case on its individual merit.

Provide travel details, Mumbai cops to TJ members

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai police has asked Tablighi Jamaat members who attended the Nizamuddin gathering in Delhi last month to approach the nearest police station or call on BMC helpline number 1916 as part of the efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The event, which had more than 9,000 participants, including from several foreign countries, is now being seen as a prime catalyst of the virus spread across states as many attendees have tested positive.

The police, in a tweet, said, "We request all attendees of

Tablighi Markaz at Nizamuddin, New Delhi to report their travel details on @mybmc helpline 1916 and help us in our fight against this pandemic."

"Those failing to cooperate will face strict action under Indian Penal Code (IPC), Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Act. It is our request and your responsibility to report your travel details," it added.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Pranay Ashok said the appeal was for everyone's health and safety, including members of the outfit. "We will take action if this dikat is not followed," he added.

Siddaramaiah urges K'taka CM to announce special package to help farmers

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Siddaramaiah on Monday urged Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa to announce a special package to help farmers, agriculture labourers and also working class in various sectors who are affected by the lockdown.

Siddaramaiah put forth his demands during a telephonic conversation and the Chief Minister positively responding to it informed that he will formulate a programme keeping in mind the suggestions made



by the Opposition, a statement from the LOP's office said.

It said, the Chief Minister also spoke to Siddaramaiah

regarding the government's decision to stop supply of free food for poor and needy through Indira Canteens.

Siddaramaiah on Saturday had written to Yediyurappa urging him to utilise Indira Canteens efficiently and provide food for poor and needy until the coronavirus crisis and lockdown is over.

The former Chief Minister's letter had come a day after the state government had decided not to provide free food at Indira Canteens as concerns were raised about the quality and misuse that was happening.

Odisha: COVID-19 hospital becomes operational

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A new dedicated hospital exclusively for COVID-19 patients became functional here on Monday as Odisha raced ahead in its preparedness to provide treatment facilities to people afflicted with the disease, officials said.

The state government's third dedicated hospital for COVID-19 patients, with 525 beds, will be managed by SUM Medical College and Hospital, and supported by Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL).

With this, the bed capacity of



dedicated hospitals for COVID-19 patients in Odisha has increased to 1,350, they said. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who interacted with doctors and healthcare workers of the hospital through video conferencing, appreciated their commitment to serve people during this global pandemic.

Pondy CM calls for 'practical approach'

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy has said the Prime Minister had the responsibility to protect the nation with a "practical approach" during the lockdown to combat the spread of Covid-19 and not by resorting to calls for lighting lamps and clapping hands. Narayanasamy, who had been among those who immediately welcomed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for "lighting lamp or a few other measures earlier" made a U-turn and criticised such steps.

"The PM has every responsibility to protect the nation with a practical and down-to-earth approach as he cannot shirk his responsibility," he said adding the coronavirus scourge can't be driven away by clapping hands or lighting lamps. Speaking to reporters after lighting lamps at his residence here on Sunday, he also hit out at the Centre for not responding to the plea of the governments of Puducherry



and other states for funds to handle the Covid-19 "PM should now ponder over what he should do to relieve the people, industrialists, workers, weaker sections and others of their current sufferings arising out of the closure of undertakings," the chief minister said. "The Centre had not released even paise to Puducherry although the territorial government had pleaded for a grant of Rs 995 crore to meet the exigency caused by the pandemic," he said adding the territorial government was managing the situation from out of its own funds.

Now, a digital book camp to beat lockdown blues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to engage children during the lockdown, Penguin India has started a month-long digital summer camp in which its authors will curate talks, masterclasses, read-aloud sessions and do-it-yourself activities.

The #StayHappy initiative is through the channel of GurgaonMoms, a women's community in the NCR.

"With outdoor activities suspended and everyone being advised to stay in, parents are facing a challenge to keep children meaningfully engaged. Amid all this, we initiated the idea of #StayHappy to bring cheer and quality content to our readers," says Preeti Chaturvedi, vice president (marketing and strategic alliances) at Penguin Random House India.

"Over a period of one month, our authors will curate talks, masterclasses, read-aloud



sessions and DIY activities through the channel of GurgaonMoms. We have an impressive line-up in place and hope our readers will enjoy this initiative," she adds.

Upasana Luthra, director of GurgaonMoms Book Club, says there could not have been a better way to utilise screen time more fruitfully than this idea of a book camp.

"We are looking forward to

many more on a diverse range of topics. Esha Deol among the speakers addressed us and we were so thrilled to see her share her story with us," she says.

Deol in a video shared her journey of motherhood, as documented in her book "Amma Mia" and how one should stay safe.

Says Deol about the initiative, "Parents and kids are dealing with a unique chal-

"We are looking forward to many more on a diverse range of topics. Esha Deol among the speakers addressed us and we were so thrilled to see her share her story with us," Upasana Luthra said

lenge right now and I thought this will be a great opportunity to connect with them and share my own challenges and experiences as a parent, which I also document in my book." Other names include popular authors Ruskin Bond, Jane DeSouza, fitness expert Deanne Panday and spiritual guide Sri M.

STAY SAFE, BE WELL: Hemsworth to Indian fans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hollywood superstar Chris Hemsworth on Monday said he was looking forward to celebrate "Extraction", a part of which he shot in India, with his fans here but that could not be possible amid the coronavirus spread.

The actor said he had an unforgettable time in the country while shooting for the film with the local talent and would like his fans to enjoy the trailer, which drops Tuesday. Netflix is set to release the film on April 24.

"Namaste India, Chris Hemsworth coming to you all the way from Australia. As you may have heard, I was incredibly excited to come to India, and to celebrate this movie where it was filmed. My time in your country during the production was unforgettable and I was so looking forward to returning."

"But due to all that's happening in the world at the moment, I, like you, am staying home. I



know things are not easy right now for everyone," the 36-year-old actor said.

Asking fans to keep an eye on the trailer, Hemsworth said the film is an incredible action packed ride, directed by his good friend Sam Hargrave.

"It was an absolute honour to work alongside some of your best local talent to make this movie possible, and I can't wait for you to see it. Sending you lots of love and good thoughts to everyone around the world, stay home. Stay safe, be well," he added.

Masking India

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



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

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

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

The Bhilwara model

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



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

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

India's super spreaders

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



A SURYA PRAKASH

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

“
THOSE WHO VIOLATED THE CURFEW, BEHAVED IRRESPONSIBLY, CONTRACTED THE DISEASE AND SPREAD IT TO OTHERS ARE ONE CATEGORY. BUT THOSE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE DIABOLICAL ACT OF DELIBERATELY SPREADING THIS DISEASE SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS MASS MURDERERS. WHAT SHOULD BE THE PUNISHMENT FOR ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF MILLIONS?
 ”

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

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

There are trouble-makers like Maulana Saad and some other clerics. If we wish to preserve our Constitution and protect the health of 1,300 million citizens, such people must be dealt with in the most severe manner. Just when we thought we were getting to grips with COVID-19, the *maulana* and other leaders of the Tablighi have triggered a monumental spread of the disease. The Government must send out a strong message that those who play around with the lives of millions of cit-

izens, will be made to pay. The Indian Penal Code (Sections 168-170) deals with persons, who commit nuisance and spread epidemic diseases, but the punishments under these sections are too mild. The Government must go beyond this. Several States, including Delhi, have already invoked the powers vested in them under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

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

But the punishments prescribed in these Acts and even in the National Security Act (NSA) are too inadequate for this dastardly and unpardonable sin. Those who violated the curfew, behaved irresponsibly, contracted the disease and spread it to others are one category. But those who are involved in the diabolical act of deliberately spreading this disease should be classified as mass murderers. What should be the punishment for endangering the lives of millions of people and ensuring the death of hundreds of them? The Indian State needs to ponder over this.

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

SOUNDBITE

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



Congress leader —Anand Sharma

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



Actor —Salman Khan

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



British Monarch —Queen Elizabeth

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



RSS Joint General Secretary —Manmohan Vaidya

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shun gimmicks

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

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

Politics amid pandemic

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

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



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

Pachu Menon Margao

Economic fallout

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

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

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

Mahima Jain Guwahati

Deteriorating situation

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

Sritoma Mukherjee Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

An opportunity taken in a crisis

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



GWYNNE DYER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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

—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



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

—ILLINOIS GOVERNOR JB PRITZKER

Serve up a fresh NFSA

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



UTTAM GUPTA

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

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

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

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

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

“WHEN SUBSIDISED FOOD IS AVAILABLE AT A FRACTION OF THE MARKET PRICE, THERE IS HUGE INCENTIVE FOR DUBIOUS OPERATORS TO SIPHON OFF. WHEN HANDLING AND DISTRIBUTION COST (BESIDES MSP PAID TO FARMERS) IS REIMBURSED TO AGENCIES ON 'ACTUAL' AS FOOD SUBSIDY, INEFFICIENCY AND INFLATED COST CLAIMS (INCLUDING BOGUS) ARE INEVITABLE. WHEN MILLIONS OF THE RICH/BETTER-OFF ARE ALSO MADE BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE NFSA, SUBSIDY IS BOUND TO BALLOON



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

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

How can the food requirement of the needy be met in full without entailing additional burden on the exchequer? How can the two objectives be reconciled? What is the way forward?

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

Kumar, senior BJP leader, recommended a reduction in coverage under the NFSA from the existing 67 per cent to 40 per cent, restricting the eligibility of subsidised food at ₹1/2/3 per kg only to the poorest of the poor under the Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY), plus increasing their entitlement from five kg to seven kg per month and making the rest pay 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers. Reduction in coverage by 27 per cent can remove 35 crore people from the scheme. That will release 175 crore kg per month, which can be used to give an additional five kg per month to those under the AAY. The number of families under the AAY being 2.5 crore or 12.5 crore people (five per family), five kg extra for each will consume 62.5 crore kg per month. Even after this, there will be a monthly surplus of 112.5 crore kg or 1.125 million tonnes. In other words, the Government need not undertake distribution of 13.5 million tonnes of grain annually, which will result in corresponding saving in subsidy of ₹43,000 crore annually.

Likewise, an increase in issue price to beneficiaries, other than those under the AAY or 32.5 crore from the existing ₹3 per kg to 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers or ₹14 per kg rice, can help reduce subsidy. The savings will be about ₹1,800 crore per month or ₹21,600 crore per annum.

Yet, the Government has not acted upon the recommendations of the panel. Meanwhile, the country continues to be saddled with millions of underfed poor; unsustainable high subsidy; inefficiency in handling and distribution by State agencies; misuse of subsidy and

subsidised food being cornered by millions of undeserving people.

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

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

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

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

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

Hardly an elevation for a former CJI

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



ROBIN DAVID

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

The State comprises three organs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

other than employment as an ad hoc judge of the Supreme Court under Article 128 of the Constitution. The Law Commission also recommended that judges of the Supreme Court should not start chamber practice after retirement. These recommendations have not been implemented. Other Constitutional functionaries such as the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and members of the Union Public Service Commission are barred from post-retirement employment with the Government. Bureaucrats in the Administrative Services can take up commercial employment after one year, post-retirement, also known as the cooling-off period. In 2014 Chief Justice R M Lodha at his retirement suggested a two-year cooling-off period for Supreme Court Judges after retirement.

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

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

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

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

(The writer is Advocate Partner at Dua Associates)

CAPSULE



'Cement demand may fall by 20-25% if pandemic isn't contained by May'

Mumbai: Cement demand in India is expected to fall sharply by 20-25 per cent in the current fiscal year if the COVID-19 pandemic is not contained by May, and construction activities begin only in the second quarter, Crisil said on Monday. The number of COVID-19 infected cases has been spiking despite the lockdown and has surpassed the 4,000 mark, while the death toll crossed 100. Keeping a pessimistic approach, the rating agency said the cement demand in India would contract by an unprecedented 20-25 per cent this fiscal if the country is unable to contain the pandemic by May. This would lead to extension of social distancing measures through June, and construction activity beginning only in Q2FY21. However, assuming that lockdown and other social distancing measures will continue till April-end and construction activity may resume in mid-May, the agency noted that the fall in demand during the fiscal could be to the extent of 10-15 per cent. "COVID-19 has cast a long shadow over a much-anticipated mild recovery in Indian economy in fiscal 2021," it noted.



Swiggy raises additional USD 43 mn as part of ongoing funding round

New Delhi: Food ordering and delivery platform Swiggy on Monday said it has raised an additional amount of USD 43 million (over Rs 325 crore) as part of its ongoing Series-I funding round. The size of the round now stands at USD 156 million. In February 2020, Swiggy raised USD 113 million (over Rs 805 crore) in the funding round led by existing investor Prosus N.V. along with participation from Meituan Dianping and Wellington Management Company.



France heading for worst recession since WWII: minister

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

Petrol, diesel sales shrink as lockdown wipes demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's petrol sales shrank by 15.5 per cent and diesel demand tanked over 24 per cent in March as the economy froze under the nationwide lockdown announced to check the spread of COVID-19. Also, aviation turbine fuel (ATF) sales fell by 31 per cent as flights got suspended alongside the shutting of businesses and most vehicular traffic going off-road. Petrol sales dropped to 1.859 million tonnes in March from 2.2 million tonnes sold in the same month in 2019, according to provisional industry demand numbers. Diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country, saw demand contract by 24.2 per cent to 4.8 million tonnes from 6.34 million tonnes in March 2019.

Similarly, ATF sales fell to 2.25 million tonnes from 2.185 million tonnes last year. The only fuel that showed growth was LPG as households rushed to book refills for stocking during the three-week lockdown period. LPG sales rose 3.1 per cent to 2.25 million tonnes in March from 2.185 million tonnes in the same month last year. Industry officials said the pattern in fuel consumption is likely to continue in April as the lockdown is to last till mid of the month and there are indications that part restrictions will continue even after the lockdown is lifted. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a 21-day lockdown beginning March 25, shutting offices and factories, barring those involved in essential services. Also, flights

were suspended and vehicles went off the road as most people were asked to stay home to help check the spread of coronavirus. March will be the first month in two-and-half-years when petrol sales would see a negative or degrowth. The fuel had registered an 8.2 per cent growth during the first 11 months of 2019-20 fiscal. Diesel has seen a 1.1 per cent rise in consumption from April 2019 to February 2020. It had seen sales slip into negative territory in January this year before rising in

Petrol sales dropped to 1.859 million tonnes in March from 2.2 million tonnes sold in the same month in 2019



February. LPG consumption recorded a de-growth of 4.3 per cent during February and a cumulative growth of 6.2 per cent in April-February.

Lockdown deepens woes of automobile dealers: Ind-Ra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The nationwide lockdown has deepened woes of automobile dealers as the coronavirus pandemic crippling most economic and commercial activities will negatively impact demand for automobiles, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). The Supreme Court's order on March 27 to allow automobile dealers, except in the National Capital Region, to sell 10 per cent of unsold Bharat Stage IV (BS-IV) compliant inventory within 10 days after the nation-wide lockdown ends on April 14, 2020 comes as a little respite to an already struggling automobile dealership, it said. The ratings agency said some original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) have announced support to auto dealers either by taking the ownership of unsold stock, or by requesting their inventory



financing partners for an extension of the moratorium to their dealers due to the lockdown. OEMs could also compensate their dealers for the unsold stock to a certain extent, which was also seen during the goods and services tax implementation, it said in a statement. "However, given that the sluggish demand in the industry over the last 12 months, Ind-Ra opines that the current measures might not be adequate to cover the losses of the dealers," it added. Furthermore, the three-month moratorium on the instalments of all term loans is likely to trouble most dealers, who usually sit on short-term borrowings rather than term loans, as automobile dealers' operations are working capital intensive. However, a large part of the debt is related to inventory funding, which is also likely to reduce due to lower sales, Ind-Ra said.



Coal India develops sanitising chamber

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL has developed a sanitising chamber for disinfecting its mine workers and containing the spread of the deadly coronavirus that has wreaked havoc across the world. The sanitising chamber at one of the mines of Coal India-arm South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) has already been commissioned, an official said. Each worker of SECL at the Bartunga Hill Mine in Chhattisgarh enters the sanitising chamber where a disinfectant is sprayed over the full body, making the worker safe and sanitised, the official said. "A full-body sanitiser has been commissioned in Bartunga Hill Mine, Chirimiri area, SECL. The system consists of a water pump... In the system there are total 16 misting nozzles which are installed on both sides of the chamber in two columns; four nozzles each on both side of the cham-

ber which operates automatically by a timer circuit," the official said. When a person put his leg even for a second in the foot platform of timer circuit, the pump operates automatically in turn water misting starts from all the 16 nozzles, the official explained. The nozzles are operative for 20 seconds which is required for proper sanitisation, the official said adding that after that the pump stops automatically. The chemical used for sanitisation is sodium hypochlorite in recommended portion with water. According to the official, another Coal India subsidiary Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) has pressed into service a "fog cannon" to sanitise peripheral areas among coal miners and people living in and around its operations. The single largest coal-producing company in the world has taken several measures to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

Ambani hails RIL staff as 'frontline warriors'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With thousands of his company employees helping run lifelines in a lockdown country - from phone lines to stores to fuel, billionaire Mukesh Ambani has hailed them as 'frontline warriors' as he reiterated Reliance Industries' role in India's war against COVID-19. In a mailer to over two lakh employees of the oil-to-telecom conglomerate, the country's richest person said he was humbled to witness each one of them displaying extraordinary levels of commitment in battling most formidable adversity in modern history. While the three-week lockdown sent most of the 130 crore Indian indoors, Reliance's telecom arm Jio continues to provide a lifeline to nearly 40 crore people through uninterrupted voice calling and internet services on mobile; Reliance Retail supplies essential food and other items to millions.



CAI maintains cotton crop output at 354.50 lakh bales

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Cotton Association of India (CAI) has retained its cotton crop forecast for the 2019-20 season, beginning from October 1, 2019, at 354.50 lakh bales of 170 kgs each as in the previous estimate. The total cotton supply estimated by the CAI during October 2019 to March 2020 was 327.53 lakh bales (170 kgs each) which consists of the arrivals of 283.03 lakh bales up to March 31, imports of 12.50 lakh bales and the opening stock estimated by the CAI at 32 lakh bales. A committee has decided to meet in the first week of May 2020, to take stock of the situation arising on account of the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 pandemic and



consider changes, if any, to be made in the cotton balance sheet for the season, CAI said in a release here. Further, the CAI has estimated cotton consumption during October 2019 to March 2020 at 154 lakh bales, while the exports has been estimated at 31 lakh bales up to March 31. Stock at the end of March is estimated at 142.53 lakh bales, including 34 lakh bales with textile mills and the remaining 108.53 lakh bales with Cotton

Iran says European barter system 'good omen'

PNS ■ TEHRAN

Iran on Monday welcomed the launch of a European barter system to bypass US sanctions as a 'good omen' but said it was insufficient in light of the Europeans' commitments. Britain, France and Germany said last week they had carried out the first transaction through the Instex mechanism to deliver medical supplies to Iran, which has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. In the first official reaction to the development, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the transaction had involved "a few hundred thousand euros (dollars)".

'Two-wheeler volumes likely to contract'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ratings agency Icria on Monday said two-wheeler volumes are expected to contract by 11-13 per cent in FY2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. The challenges are likely to get aggravated as consumer spending will be severely impacted by the outbreak resulting in lower spending

power both in urban and rural markets, Icria said in a statement. The extent of slowdown remains contingent on the severity of the coronavirus outbreak and thus continuation of lockdowns. Even prior to the disease outbreak, the demand for two-wheelers was expected to be flat in India amid sharp rise in vehicle prices following the transition

to BS-VI emission norms (resulting in 10-12 per cent inflation) and subdued macro-economic scenario, it said. Giving an estimate, the ratings agency said, "The two-wheeler industry is likely to witness another year of demand contraction with unit sales likely to decline between 11-13 per cent to around 18 million units in FY2021 following the adverse impact of the

Covid-19 outbreak on economic growth and discretionary spending." Icria Vice President Shamsheer Dewan said on earnings front too, two-wheeler original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) are expected to brace for another year of lower earnings and decline in operating margins, to 11.5-12 per cent from around 14 per cent in the previous year.

Infosys COO UB Pravin Rao appointed Nasscom Chairman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT industry body Nasscom on Monday said it has appointed Infosys Chief Operating Officer UB Pravin Rao as its chairman for 2020-21, succeeding WNS Global Services Group CEO Keshav Muruges.

Also, Rekha M Menon, chairman and senior managing director of Accenture in India, has been named as the

vice chairperson for 2020-21. The appointment was announced at Nasscom's Executive Council meeting. Given the lockdown on account of the COVID-19 crisis, the meeting was conducted via a video conference - a first for the industry body. Rao will take on the position from his previous role as vice chairman of



Nasscom, succeeding Keshav Muruges, Group CEO of WNS Global Services, who served as chairman of NASSCOM for the year 2019-20. Nasscom said in a statement. "These are challenging times for the Indian IT industry, as we deal with an unprecedented situation. However, the Indian IT industry has time and again proven its resilience, and I have no doubt that this time too, we will emerge stronger and wiser," Rao said. He added that as everyone adjusts to a "new normal", he believes that the industry needs a focused approach towards building resilience, upskilling workforce and contributing to our country's growth more than ever.

EU approves UK 50 bn pound scheme

PNS ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union gave the go ahead on Monday to a British scheme to provide a 50-billion-pound (57-billion-euro) 'umbrella' to shield private businesses from the coronavirus epidemic. The United Kingdom left the bloc at the end of January, but EU law still applies until the end of a post-Brexit transition period, and would normally restrict state subsidies. But Brussels has promised to show "full flexibility" in its rules as capitals scramble to shore up employers pummeled by the virus and the associated national lockdowns. Britain has set aside a fund to provide direct grants and subsidised public loans to key businesses and to encourage research into preventing, treating or curing the virus. In a statement published on Monday, the European Commission confirmed that it would give the package the green light, as it done two smaller British schemes announced last month. On March 23 Britain ordered a three-week shutdown of non-essential shops and services to limit transmission of the virus, which has now killed more than 600 people there.



Pharma exports to miss USD 22 billion target due to lockdown: Official

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pharma exports from India may witness a dip in growth due to ongoing lockdown and also export restrictions imposed on certain drugs, a top official of Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council, a body under the Ministry of Commerce which earlier estimated that exports may cross USD 22 billion in FY 20 has said. Udaya Bhaskar, director general of Pharmexcil said pharma exports were pegged at USD 19.14 billion during the last fiscal. He also said the global situation of coronavirus spread became unpredictable with each country imposing certain tailor-made restrictions. He said the exports in March 2019 alone stood at USD 2.1 billion which prompted the exports estimation to be pegged at USD 22 billion for the FY20. The exports were at USD

17.28 billion during 2017-18. India restricted exports of Paracetamol and Hydroxychloroquine, among some other drugs to other countries in view of their perceived role in Covid-19 treatment. "As far as exports are concerned, since there are several restrictions, we may cross last year's figure. Last year we did USD 19.14 billion worth of pharma exports. By February ending this year we achieved USD 18.74 billion. Even if there is a big dip in March, the figure may cross last (fiscal) year's mark," the official told 'PTI'. According to him, India started getting some Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) from China though it is still becoming difficult for the bulk drug to reach its destinations. The body said member-exporters are having a commitment through Irrevocable Commercial Letter of Credit (ICLC) before the date of imposition of restriction.

Staff of ports, shipping PSUs donate a day's salary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 30,000 employees of the country's major ports and shipping PSUs have contributed a day's salary totalling over Rs 7 crore to the PM-CARES Fund to support the fight against COVID-19, the government said on Monday. India has 12 major ports -- Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Mormugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V.O. Chidambaram, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia). "Employees of all the major ports and PSUs (public sector undertakings) under the Ministry of Shipping have come forward to donate a day's salary amounting to Rs 7 crore to the PM-CARES Fund, for providing assistance to those impacted by the COVID-



19 pandemic," the Ministry of Shipping said in a statement. These ports and entities have about 30,000 employees, with the highest 6,324 employees with the Mumbai Port Trust, who contributed Rs 1.27 crore; followed by 3,891 employees with Chennai Port Trust who contributed Rs 0.72 crore; 3,700

employees with Kolkata Port Trust who contributed Rs 1 crore; and Rs 3,177 crore contributed by Vishakhapatnam Port Trust's employees. Apart from employees' contribution, these ports and entities have also contributed Rs 52 crore to the PM-CARES Fund to fight the pandemic.

Among the major ports, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust contributed the highest Rs 16.40 crore from corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the PM-CARES Fund, followed by Rs 8 crore each by Deendayal Port Trust and Paradip Port Trust, and Rs 4 crore each by Kamarajar Port and New Mangalore Port Trust.

They have contributed a day's salary totalling over Rs 7 crore to the PM-CARES Fund to support the fight against COVID-19

V.O. Chidambaram Port Trust gave Rs 2 crore to the Fund for fight against COVID-19, while Vishakhapatnam Port Trust, Kolkata Port Trust and Mumbai Port Trust contributed Rs 1 crore each to the Fund. Among others, Cochin Port Trust contributed Rs 0.54 crore, Chennai Port Trust Rs 0.50 crore and Mormugao Port Trust Rs 0.25 crore.

CARING FOR THE PAWS AND CLAWS

Animal activists and people of various other organisations are feeding and taking care of street animals to help them survive these tough times, finds V SATEESH REDDY

Due to the lockdown called as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, we have been staying home to prevent the spread of the virus. We buy groceries and other essential items that will suffice a week or two. But life certainly isn't the same with animals on the street.

With nobody to feed or care for the street dogs, the animals have begun to suffer with malnutrition. Closure of restaurants, in particular, have affected these animals. Hot summers have only aggravated their situation. To help solve this problem, several animal lovers and social activists have taken it upon themselves to care for the needs of these animals.

Mohan Reddy Ravula of Hyderabad is feeding dogs and monkeys with fruits every week around the Kothagudem and Pochampally area. Mohan uses feeding vehicles with the support of police personnel and feeds the animals. He shares, "I'm spending Rs 25,000 every month to feed animals on the streets. The lockdown makes life difficult for animals to get food. With the help of a feeding vehicle and police personnel, I feed these animals different kinds of fruits. We are placing water bowls for these animals to sip from, everyday." Mohan regularly posts his efforts on social media to inspire others to do the same.

Laxman Muleti, founder of Animals Water Bowl Project, is helping animals get sufficient food and water every day with the support of his volunteers from all over the country. "We stopped all our activities that require people-gatherings to prevent the virus spread in the country. We have thousands of volunteers all over the country and have requested them to feed animals in their surroundings in these trying times," he informs.

Laxman, along with his team, also makes cartoons and motion films to inspire people to feed animals in their vicinity.

Zabi Khan, animals rights activist and founder of A Place to Bark, says that accidents due to rash driving and others against animals on the street have come down. "The lockdown resulted in a reduced number of animal deaths. The animals are now living in peace," she says. "But it has also resulted in malnutrition of

these animals, since there is nobody on the streets feeding them. We are collecting cat and dog food from people through our campaigns and feeding hundreds of animals across Hyderabad everyday. Till date, we have raised more than 400 kg animal food from donors. We are also placing water bowls for animals in the city," she adds.

Zabi complains that people are afraid that they could contract the virus from these animals and so aren't venturing out to feed them. This, she says, despite the World Health Organisation confirming that neither do these animals contract nor do they carry the virus. Their organisation has also been spreading awareness about the same.

Mahabubabad district-based animal activist Suma is feeding animals everyday by cooking 25 kg of food. Suma says, "Even on any other day, animals on the street don't get enough food, and the lockdown has just worsened the situation. I'm cooking 25 kg rice to feed these animals around Mahabubabad district area, everyday. I'm using a Topudu Bandi (moving vehicle) to reach these animals. The police too, have been very supportive of this cause."

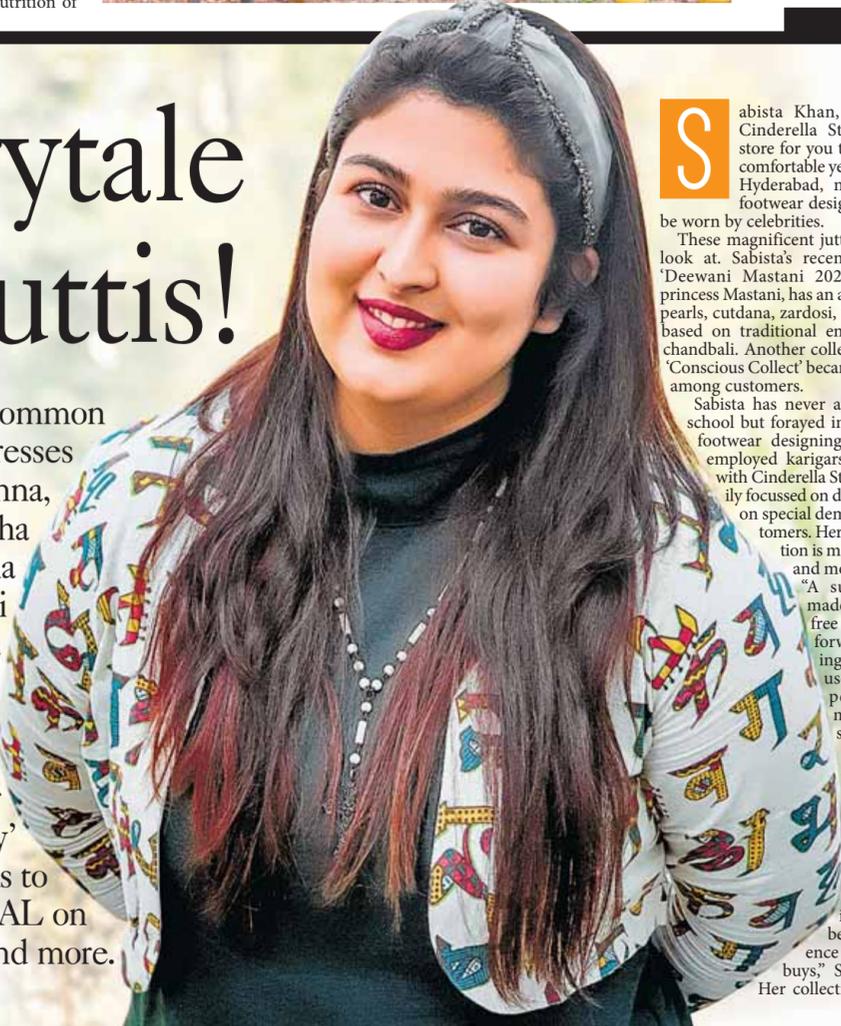


“Even on any other day, animals on the street don't get enough food, and the lockdown has just worsened the situation. I'm cooking 25 kg rice to feed these animals around Mahabubabad district area, everyday. I'm using a Topudu Bandi (moving vehicle) to reach these animals. The police too, have been very supportive of this cause.”

SUMA
 ANIMAL ACTIVIST

A fairytale of Juttis!

What's one thing common between actresses Karishma Tanna, Manisha Koirala, Neha Sharma, Samantha Akkineni, Soha Ali Khan, and Rhea Kapoor? Their love for 'Juttis' designed by Sabista Khan. The founder-owner of 'Cinderella Story' speaks to SHIKHA DUGGAL on her journey and more.



Sabista Khan, the owner of Cinderella Story, an online store for you to find the most comfortable yet lavish 'juttis' in Hyderabad, never knew her footwear designs will one day be worn by celebrities.

These magnificent juttis are a treat to look at. Sabista's recent collection of 'Deewani Mastani 2020' inspired by princess Mastani, has an amalgamation of pearls, cutdana, zardosi, '3 Cheers' motif based on traditional embroideries and chandbali. Another collection called the 'Conscious Collect' became an instant hit among customers.

Sabista has never attended fashion school but forayed into the world of footwear designing with her self-employed karigars. She came up with Cinderella Story which heavily focussed on designer footwear on special demand by her customers. Her footwear collection is made up of vibrant and modernised looks. "A sustainable line made up of cruelty-free materials, I look forward to launching more juttis that use less than two percent leather material," she says.

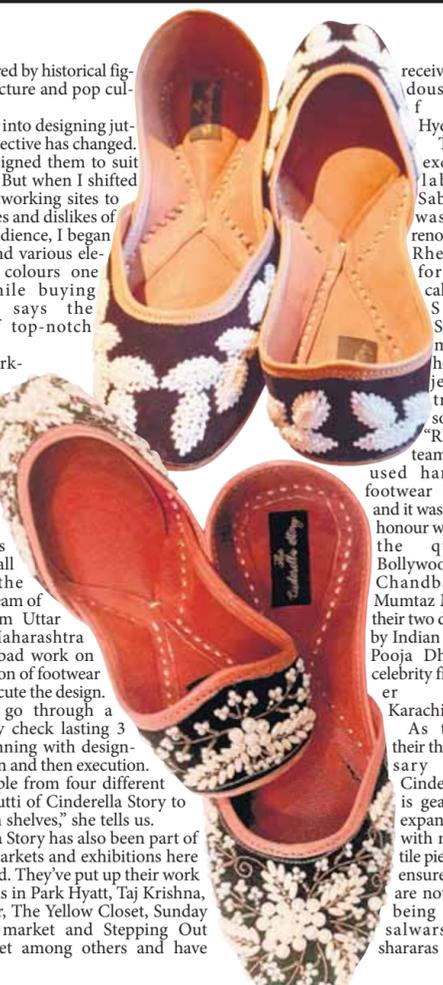
But why the name Cinderella story? "Cinderella Story has every shoe come with a fairy-tale because every woman has an interesting story behind her preference of footwear she buys," Sabista explains. Her collection of juttis are

mostly inspired by historical figures, architecture and pop culture.

"One year into designing juttis, my perspective has changed. Earlier I designed them to suit my lifestyle. But when I shifted to social networking sites to learn the likes and dislikes of my target audience, I began to understand various elements and colours one prefers while buying footwear," says the founder of top-notch brand.

From working diligently on the comfort quotient, shapes and sizes, Cinderella Story is receiving laurels for its juttis from all around the country. A team of karigars from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Hyderabad work on the production of footwear and help execute the design. "The juttis go through a strict quality check lasting 3 weeks, beginning with design, inception and then execution. It takes people from four different cities for a jutti of Cinderella Story to be placed on shelves," she tells us.

Cinderella Story has also been part of many flea markets and exhibitions here in Hyderabad. They've put up their work at exhibitions in Park Hyatt, Taj Krishna, Label Bazaar, The Yellow Closet, Sunday Soul Sante market and Stepping Out Night market among others and have



received tremendous response from Hyderabadis.

Their most exciting collaboration, Sabista says, was with renowned stylist Rhea Kapoor for a brand called 'Stage 3 Social'. Sabista talks more about how the project gained traction on social media. "Rhea and her team of stylists used hand-picked footwear for shoots and it was an absolute honour working with the queen of Bollywood styling." Chandbali and Mumtaz Mahal were their two designs used by Indian pastry chef Pooja Dhingra and celebrity fitness trainer Yasmin Karachiwala.

As they near their third anniversary in June, Cinderella Story is gearing up to expand their line with more versatile pieces that will ensure your juttis are not limited to being styled for salwar and shararas alone.

Chris Hemsworth to Indian fans: Was looking forward to be back in India



Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth says he was "incredibly excited" about coming to India to celebrate his upcoming Netflix film *Extraction*. Hemsworth was scheduled to be in Mumbai on March 16 to promote the film that has been shot in India. The promotional tour was called off due to the global coronavirus outbreak.

Greeting fans the 'desi' way, Hemsworth sent his love to India in a new video, saying he was honoured to work with "some of your best local talents". He added that his time spent in the country will always remain close to his heart.

"Namaste India. Chris Hemsworth here, all the way from Australia. As you may have heard, I was incredibly excited to come to India and celebrate this movie where it was filmed. My time in your country during production was unforgettable and I was looking forward to returning," he said in a video, posted on the official Instagram handle of Netflix India.

"But, you know all that is happening in the world at the moment. I, like you, am staying home. I know things are not easy right now for everyone so I wanted

to share something I hope you'll enjoy. I want to keep an eye out tomorrow for the trailer debut of my new film, *Extraction*. This movie is an incredibly action-packed ride, directed by my good friend Sam Hargrave. Netflix will be releasing it everywhere on April 24," he added.

Originally titled *Dhaka*, the film also stars Indian actors Randeep Hooda, Pankaj Tripathi, Priyanshu Painyuli, and Rudraksh Jaiswal. It revolves around Tyler Rake (essayed by Hemsworth), a fearless, black market mercenary, who embarks on the most deadly extraction of his career when he is enlisted to rescue the kidnapped son of an imprisoned international crime lord. Hemsworth shot for the Netflix film in India in 2018. He shot in Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

"It was an absolute honour to work alongside some of your best local talents to make this movie possible. I can't wait for you all to see it. Sending you lots of love and good thoughts to everyone around the world. Stay home, stay safe. Be well," he said while concluding his video message.

Along with the special message, Netflix India

announced an exclusive YouTube premiere for the trailer of *Extraction*. The trailer is set to go live first on Netflix India's YouTube page, followed by the rest of the world, on April 7.

Earlier, in an interview to IANS, Hemsworth opened up about shooting in India, saying he felt like a rockstar while doing so.

"I love the place and the people. Shooting there... There were thousands of people on the streets every day and I have never experienced that on set. It was sort of intimidating as it was exciting because there were so many people," he said.

"After every take (when the director) called 'cut', there was loud cheer. We felt like rock stars in a stadium. But the warmth and support we got while shooting there, no matter how disruptive we were to their daily lives, it was so good. People were so positive. I have huge appreciation to that," he added.



Akshay Kumar to release song *Muskurayega India* amid Covid-19 crisis

Akshay Kumar, along with Jacky Bhagnani, is all set to release a new single titled *Muskurayega India* in the times of coronavirus outbreak and made under his banner Cape of Good Films. The actor took to Twitter to release the first look of the song.

He shared a poster featuring a smiling woman's face with the words Covid, coronavirus and lockdown embossed in the background. It has been sung and composed by Vishal Mishra and penned

by Kaushal Kishore. Sharing the poster on Twitter, he wrote, "At a time like this when our days are clouded with uncertainty and life has come to a standstill, bringing you a song of hope. #MuskurayegaIndia song out at 6 PM today. @Just_Music #CapeOfGoodFilms @VishalMMishra @jackkybhagnani!"

According to reports, the song is said to feature all from Ayushmann Khurrana, Tiger Shroff, Vicky Kaushal, Kartik Aaryan, Rajkumar Rao, Sidharth

Malhotra to Taapsee Pannu, Bhumi Pednekar, Kriti Sanon, Kiara Advani and Ananya Panday. The actors shot their respective portions at their homes which were then compiled for the music video.

The report quoted Akshay as saying, "At a time when our days are clouded with uncertainty, and life has come to a standstill, we want people to be certain of one thing — everything will be back to normal and all we need to do is put up a united stand against this pandemic. This song is one step towards doing that."



Top B'wood producer's daughter is Covid-19 positive

Hollywood went into a tizzy after it emerged that the daughter of a top producer, the name behind Shah Rukh Khan films like *Ra.One* and *Chennai Express* — has tested Covid-19 positive, here on Monday.

The producer, Karim Morani, and his two daughters, including one who is an actress, and eight other family members live in Juhu's Ashok Nagar Society which is now gone under isolation, according to local municipal corporator Renu Hansraj.

A report has quoted BMC Corporator Renu Hansraj as saying, "The entire Morani house is under lockdown. There are 9 people living in that building. All will be tested tomorrow. We shall take all steps to be extremely co-operative with them."

The report has also quoted Karim's text message which the filmmaker sent out to a few people. It read, "My daughter Shaza has not mingled with any foreign travellers and had no COVID symptoms at all. It is my duty to inform you as we are law-abiding citizens. We are admitting her in Nanavati Hospital to be kept under isolation. The municipal authorities will be here, tomorrow, at 10 30 pm."

Hansraj added that all the building residents shall be tested for Covid-19, and they are all very cooperative.

A civic team visited the family on Monday for getting further details of their health status, the producer added, reassuring his friends in a message.

This is said to be the first case of Covid-19 reported from the posh Juhu area, the abode of top Bollywood film personalities, industrialists and celebs from different fields.

In the vicinity of the producer's apartment are the Jambhaji Narsee School, the N.M. College, Mithibai College, NMIMS, and even the homes of Amitabh Bachchan, Shatrughan Sinha, Jeetendra Kapoor, Hrithik Roshan among others.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2		3	4	5
			6		
7			8		
			9		
	10				
11				12	
		13			
	14				15
16				17	
18				19	

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

GINGER MEGGS

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

ACROSS

- Thief
- Tidy your hair with this
- Young woman
- A dairy product
- To turn round and round
- Gleam
- Truthful
- Bitter-tasting
- Thick cord
- Defeated

DOWN

- Great anger
- A round wooden container with flat ends
- Above
- A light wind
- Trembles with cold
- Find north with this
- Book writer
- Nearly
- Cut something with scissors
- This metal goes rusty

SOLUTION

R	E	C	T	A	N	G	L	E
A	P	R	I	L	O			
N	O	K	H	S	A			
T	U	R	N	S	T	R	E	E
Q	U	I	V	E	R			
U	D	N		L	M	N		
E	L	E	C	T	A	D	A	L
A	R	M	S					
A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E	D

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The 36-year-old was struggling to make cut for Olympics, postponed to 2021. The showpiece, originally scheduled for July-August this year, was expected to be a swansong for veterans such as Sushil and tennis ace Leander Paes. But the one-year delay seems to have caused a change of plans.

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

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

That disappointment is, however, already behind him.

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

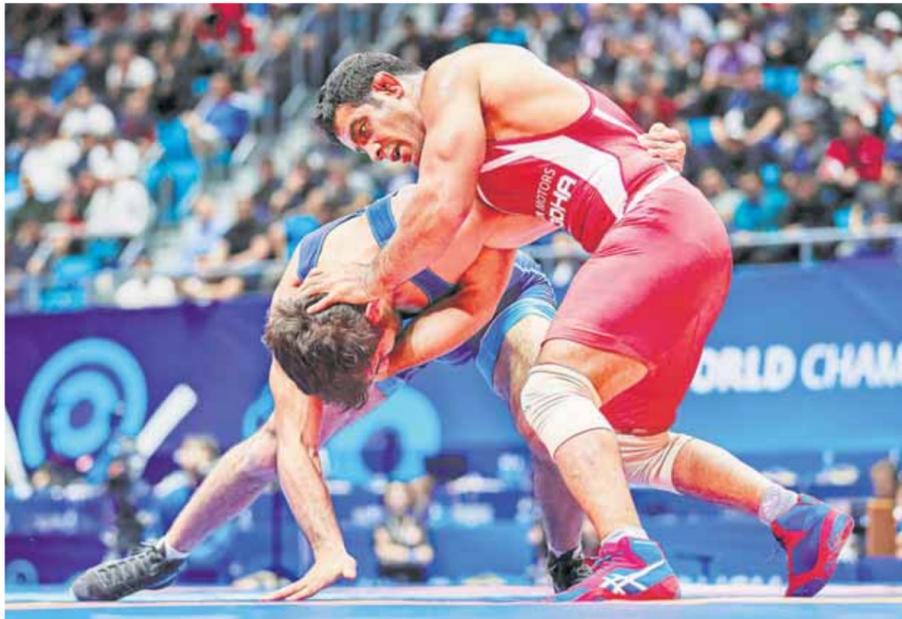
“I am still practising twice a day. Obviously I am not hitting the mat but I am trying to be in shape and God willing, I will be able to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics,” he added.

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

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

NOT OVER YET

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



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

PTI/File Picture

daily job to manage it.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Having won hearts with her performance in her maiden World T20, what is her next goal? For Shafali, the only goal is to win. “Win more games for India. I should be able to put India in a position of strength when I go out to bat. The goal will always be to contribute to India’s success,” she signed off.



Dhoni owns Malinga in IPL battles: Styris



former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar.

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

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

“Mumbai Indians have won 4, CSK has won 3 but they have played less IPL (they were banned for two seasons). When you look at that, Mumbai Indians is emerging as a team that is threatening CSK in the last few years, they have actually been the better team than CSK, couple of IPL titles to MI.”

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

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

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

“It’s about the best finisher in the game against the best finisher bowler. Dhoni vs Malinga and Dhoni owns Malinga,” he said.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

“It’s about consistency, CSK have never missed the final series, have won

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

PTI ■ KARACHI

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

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

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

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

“I really don’t know why we have not won Tests their all these years. At times, we went there with top bowling



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

attacks yet lost. To me it was a case of when the bowling worked the batting didn’t put up enough runs or when the batters put up enough runs the bowlers didn’t come

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

rounder Abdul Razzaq and wily Saqlain Mushtaq but yet they lost 0-3.

But at same time he pointed out that in Tests, India had also generally struggled in Australia until 2018.

“You have to keep in mind that Australia is never an easy place to tour for any side. Look at the recent tour by New Zealand they are a top side and they lost badly. England have lost Ashes in Australia in a one-sided series.”

Waqar not in favour of cricket in empty stadiums

KARACHI: Pakistan bowling coach Waqar Younis said he is not in favour of cricket resuming before empty stadiums amid the COVID-19 pandemic as he feels the desperate plan would end up creating more problems. “No I don’t agree with this suggestion that cricket activities should resume soon even before empty stadiums,” he said during a video conference with journalists.

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

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

es behind closed doors,” the former fast bowler said.

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



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

Bavarians resume training

AFP ■ BERLIN

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

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

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

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

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

Germany.

On the pitch, Bayern’s stars were careful to keep their distance from each other and there were no challenges or tackles.

Once training was over, the players left to shower at home, where they ate food provided by the club in lunch boxes. Bayern asked fans to stay away from the Saebener Strasse complex, where hundreds of supporters usually turn up to see their heroes.

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

Bayern are four points clear in the Bundesliga table. At the training ground of their closest rivals Borussia Dortmund, the players also did not shower or eat on site after a session that focused on running and shooting.

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

Cummins prioritises T20 WC over IPL

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

“The T20 World Cup is something we’ve spoken about for the best part of two or three years. The (ODI) World Cup in 2015, that was absolutely a career highlight for me and I wasn’t even playing in the final. I’d love to see that go ahead,” Cummins was quoted as saying by the *Australian Associated Press*.

“That’s probably the big tournament this year for international cricket... I’d love for that to happen in a perfect world and if I was to be really greedy, I’d love for the IPL to happen as well.”



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

“We have so much talent in this

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

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

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

year.

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

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

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

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

F1 in ‘very fragile state’, warns McLaren boss

AFP ■ LONDON

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

The 2020 world championship has been unable to start with eight races of a scheduled 22 already either scrapped or postponed.

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



the teams have agreed to lower the 2021 budget cap to \$150m (138.7 million euros) down from \$175 million.

However, he said the ceiling needs to be reduced further to counter the financial fall-out from the virus-hit season.

“Could I see — through what is going on right now in the world if we don’t tackle this situation head on very aggressively — two teams disappearing? Yeah,” said Brown.

“In fact, I could see four teams disappearing if this isn’t handled the right way. “And then, given how long it takes to ramp up an F1 team, and given the economic and health crisis we are in right now, to think there would be people lined up to take over those teams like there has historically been... I don’t think the timing could be worse from that standpoint.”

“So I think F1 is in a very fragile state at the moment.”

BWF suspend all tournaments till July

NEW DELHI: The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Monday suspended a host of its flagship international, junior and para tournaments scheduled from May to July in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It comprises many Grade 2 and 3 events including HSBC BWF World Tour, BWF Tour and other BWF-sanctioned tournaments.

According to a BWF release, the decision was taken in “close consultation and consensus” with the Host Member Associations (HMA) and Continental Confederations (CC). The most prominent tournament affected during the period is the Indonesia Open 2020 (Super 1000).

Last week, the BWF froze the world rankings and world junior rankings until further notice, with the lists backdated to March 17, 2020.

The BWF is also reviewing the impacts of the rescheduling of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games upon the Olympic and Paralympic qualification system. This review process is expected to take several weeks upon which BWF will make a further announcement. PTI

Delhi shooting WC cancelled

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The shooting World Cup scheduled to be held in two parts in the national capital in May was on Monday cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Cup, originally scheduled to be held from March 15-26, was postponed to May barely four days before the start of the event.

“Due to COVID-19 pandemic the New Delhi Organising Committee has been forced to cancel Rifle/Pistol and Shotgun World Cups. Both of these were due to take place in New Delhi,” the sport’s world governing body ISSF said in a statement.

After the postponement last month, it was decided to hold the tour-

namment in two parts — Rifle and Pistol competitions from May 5-13, while Shotgun competitions were set from June 2-9, later changed to May 20 to 29.

However, considering the situation, the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) and the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) decided to cancel the tournament. The ISSF has also decided to call off the combined World Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan, which was to take place from June 22 to July 3.

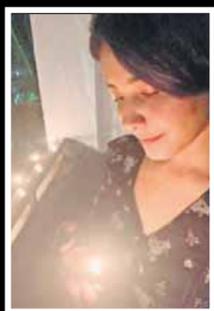
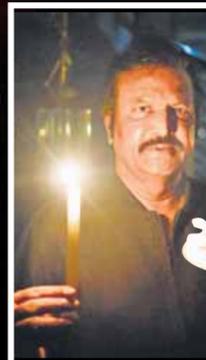
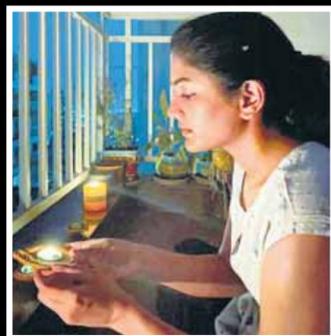
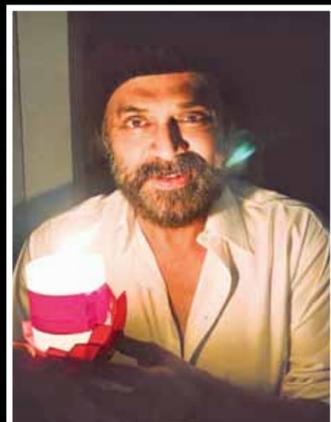
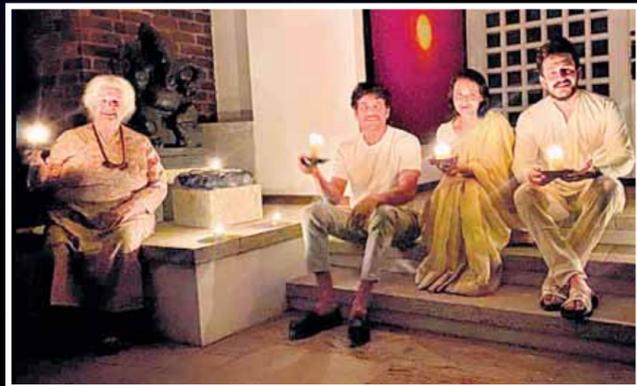
“The health and safety of our athletes, officials, staff and of all members of our shooting fraternity are absolutely paramount,” the NRAI said in a statement.

T'WOOD supports #9pm9minutes initiative

Tollywood celebrities switched off non-essential lights and lit up candles, diyas and even switched on mobile flashlights from their balconies and verandas in Hyderabad on Sunday evening as a nationwide show of solidarity and to display the country's "collective resolve" to defeat the Coronavirus. The Prime Minister last Friday urged people to switch off lights at their homes and light lamps, candles or turn on mobile phone torches for nine minutes at 9 pm on April 5 as a gesture to "challenge the darkness spread by the corona crisis".

Stars such as Krishnam Raju, Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna, Venkatesh, Mohan Babu, Arjun, Rajasekhar and family, Pawan Kalyan, Mahesh Babu, Manchu Vishnu, Allu Arjun, Gopichand, Naga Shaurya, Akhil Akkineni, Vijay Deverakonda, Karthikeya, Vishwak Sen, Lakshmi Manchu, Tamannaah, Lavanya Tripathi, Raashi Khanna, Eesha, Rukshar and other noted personalities like Sai Kumar, Sreenu Vaitla, Sampath Nandi, Valokantham Vamsi, Vijay Konda, Anil Ravipudi, Satish Vegesna among others flooded social media with photos of their participating in the initiative along with the rest of the nation.

Murali Mohan, Hema, Nandu, Geeta Madhuri, Raj Kandukuri, Shiva Kandukuri, Uttej, Pradeep Machiraju, and stunt masters Ram-Laxman also shared photographs of their participation for the cause.



DOUBLE the dose of entertainment

Filmmaker Anil Ravipudi, who makes it a point to visit Visakhapatnam for story sittings, is working out of his home turf in Prakasam, AP this time around. The director was also joined by his team of writers over there just before the lockdown was imposed. Ravipudi, who has 100 per cent success ratio as a filmmaker, is almost on the verge of locking down the complete script of F3, his follow-up to last year's box-office smash F2. "With nothing much to do, the director and his writers solely concentrated on fleshing out the script of F3. They are happy with what they've wrote till now, as they believe the entertainment dose is double to that of F2. While Venky and Varun will spearhead the sequel too, Ravipudi is looking at a third hero to take humour to the next level. He will announce the casting at an appropriate time," said a source close to the director.

taking the roles of Venky and Varun forward. "The director is looking at new actresses to be the film's leading ladies. He might ask his first part's leading ladies to make guest appearances though," the source informed.

Set to go to floors later this June, Dil Raju and Sirish will shepherd the film under their Sri Venkateswara Creations.

The source added that Tamannaah and Mehreen who sizzled in the first part might not be a part of F3 as Ravipudi has penned a new story altogether, only



T'wood didn't bother to call me back after *Loafer*:

DISHA

Disha Patani, one of the most sought-after actors in Bollywood, has dropped hints to stage a comeback to Telugu cinema. Although many people started following her work after her turn in *M.S Dhoni: The Untold Story* (2016), where she played the 2011 world cup winning captain's old flame who dies in an accident, she made her film debut with Puri Jagannadh's *Loafer* in 2015. As the film went largely unnoticed for being a run-of-the-mill commercial potboiler, she couldn't attract many Telugu films later.

However, her stars changed overnight after *Dhoni* released. Deluge of Hindi offers and brand endorsements followed her soon after, leaving her to overlook projects from other industries, including Telugu. In a latest interaction on social media though, when quizzed by fans if she has intentions to do Telugu films, she replied, "My debut film, *Loafer*, didn't do well and Tollywood never bothered to call me back. I began my career in Bollywood and settled there." Well, hope the T-town filmmakers are listening to her.

Meanwhile, Disha, who was recently seen in *Malang*, has Ekta Kapoor's *KTina* and Salman Khan's *Radhe* in her kitty.

Lakshmi Kanakala no more!

Late director Devadas Kanakala's daughter and actor Rajiv Kanakala's sister Sri Lakshmi Kanakala, breathed her last at her residence on Monday. She was suffering from cancer. She is survived by husband and two daughters.

Hailing from the family of actors, acting was in Sri Lakshmi's blood. She took up acting as profession. She made her acting debut through TV serial *Rajasekhara Charitramu* in *Doordarshan*. She acted in serials like *Chinnari*, *Agnipoolu*, *Kotha Bangaram*, *Kaliyuga Ramayanam*, *Arundhati*, *Akasaganga*, *Swathi* in *Gemini TV* and *Priyanka*, *Ruthudhara* TV serials in *E TV*. She had also acted in a Kannada telefilm and Hindi movie.



She had married a journalist and writer Peddi Ramarao who worked for several plays and TV serials. He penned dialogues for the mega daily TV serial *Ruthuragalu* in *Doordarshan*. Sri Lakshmi and Ramarao tied the knot in 2002. The couple is blessed with two daughters.

The family has appealed people to not attend her final rites due to the ongoing lock down and the wide spread of Corona virus pandemic and that they are making arrangements to perform her last rites.

Krishnam Raju's family, Naresh and KK Radhamohan donate to Covid-19 affected

Veteran actor Krishnam Raju's family has sent a cheque of Rs 10 lakh to Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund on Monday. Raju informed that while his three daughters — Sai Prasadha, Sai Prakeerthi and Sai Pradeepthi — contributed Rs 2 lakh each for the cause from their pocket money, his wife Shyamala donated Rs 4 lakh.

Actor Naresh too on Monday said that he will be donating Rs 10,000 to 100 families belonging to MAA. He informed that 58 families have already received his money directly deposited in their bank accounts. Furthermore, he will be contributing Rs 1 lakh to Corona Crisis Charity, which has been set up to help the daily wage employees of the film industry. Similarly, producer KK Radha Mohan, who is awaiting the release of *Orey Bujji*, has agreed to donate Rs 3 lakh to CCC.

