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# Centre provides ₹1.7L cr succour to poor

## Focus on migrant/farm labourers; ₹50L insurance for health-sanitation workers; fund to prevent lay-off



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses a Press conference to announce Gareeb Kalyan Yojana to help the poor in the view of the coronavirus lockdown at National Media Centre in New Delhi on Thursday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday unveiled a ₹1.7 lakh crore relief package for the weaker section of the society to deal with the impact of the three-week nationwide lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, there was nothing for the corporate sector that has taken a big hit due to the pandemic.

The economic package to help migrant workers, labour-

ers, poor and agricultural workers, and others will come into effect immediately. "It has been made to reach out to the most vulnerable sections of the society who are in need of immediate help because of the economic disruption," said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur was present, besides Atanu Chakraborty, Secretary, Department of

Economic Affairs and Debashish Panda, Secretary, Department of Financial Services.

Sitharaman also announced direct cash transfers for a large number of affected people, including senior citizens, widows, farmers and daily-wage labourers.

As per the package, health and sanitation workers will be insured for ₹50 lakh per person. This will cover nearly 20 lakh persons.

"Safai karamcharis, ward boys, nurses, paramedics, technicians, doctors and specialists, and others' health would be covered by a special insurance scheme. Any health professional who while treating Covid-19 patients meets with some accident, then he/she would be compensated with an amount of ₹50 lakh under the scheme," stated the Government Press release.

The package says that under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana 80 crore poor people will get 5 kg per person rice/wheat each month for the next 3 months in addition to 5kg of rice/wheat that they already get. Besides, 1kg of pulse according to regional preference for each household.

In a big relief to the rural women, the package says that 8.3 crore BPL Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries will be given free

cylinders for the next three months. During this period, a maximum of three gas cylinders will be provided.

The move comes two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ordered a 21-day nationwide lockdown.

Most of the financial benefits will be routed through the DBT scheme into the Jan Dhan account of the beneficiaries. In case, they don't have such accounts, the Government will make alternative arrangement to provide them financial relief.

Sitharaman announced that daily wages under the MNRGA have been increased to ₹202 a day from ₹182. This will benefit nearly 5 crore families, Sitharaman said.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, farmers will get ₹2,000 in April. This is expected to cover 8.7 crore families. The total amount dis-

tributed is estimated to be ₹16,000 crore.

In addition, a total of 20.40 crore PM JAN Dhan Yojana women account-holders will be given ex-gratia of ₹500 per month for next three months.

"This will help them run their household during this difficult period. For this purpose, the Government of India will spend ₹31,000 crore,"

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

Amid clamour for relief to low-wage earners in the unorganised sector who face a gloomy scenario due to the lockdown, the Government has decided to pay 24 per cent of their monthly wages into their Provident Fund accounts for the next three months.

"Wage earners below

₹15,000 per month in businesses having less than 100 workers are at risk of losing their employment," the Government said, adding that the assistance would help prevent "disruption in their employment".

The package also hopes to provide succour to senior citizens, widows and divyangs, numbering 3 crore.

## As corona testing ratio too low, assessment has long way to go

### With billion plus population, only 25,000 samples tested so far

ARCHANA JYOTI/TN  
RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW DELHI

With just around 25,000 samples tested from around 24,000 individuals so far, India with a billion plus population has to go a long way in assessing the true extent of coronavirus spread.

The test size is being considered as one of the lowest in the world on population yardstick. Various reports as well as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been insisting on "test, test and test" asserting



lockdown is not complete solution to combat the virus which has infected over 700 people and killed 15 so far in India.

Compare India with the US, which has four times less population, on testing parameters. While only around 24,000 individuals have been tested in India, the number stands around 60,000 for the USA.

WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been maintaining at various forum that "all countries should be able to test all suspected cases, they cannot fight this pandemic blindfolded".

On Thursday, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) directed hospitals, including the private ones, to collect the nasal and throat swab samples of the suspected cases of COVID-19 in one VTM tube and transport them to the nearest testing laboratory in cold chain.

Till now, only people in contact with the infected or those with travel history to high-risk countries, or health workers managing patients with severe respiratory disease and developing Covid-19 symptoms, are eligible for test.

## India has over 1-yr foodgrain reserve

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has enough foodgrain reserves to feed the poor amid the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus.

According to official data, the Government currently has 58.49 million tonnes (MT) of foodgrains in the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns. Out of which, rice constitutes 30.97 million tonnes and wheat 27.52 million tonnes.

The foodgrain stock is much higher than the required norm of maintaining a reserve of about 21 million tonnes as on April 1. The Government will supply over next three months additional 2 kg subsidised foodgrains under the PDS, taking the total monthly quota to 7 kg per person.

Sources said 58.49 million tonnes of grains can enable the



distribution of a full year's quota in advance to all ration card holders and beneficiaries of other welfare schemes. "Also, there is a stock of around 3 million metric tonnes of pulses, 1.1 million metric tonnes of oil seed and 4 million tonnes of sugar," the sources said.

Further, wheat procurement is about to start soon. The Consumer Affairs Ministry allowed FCI to sell food stocks to private markets under the

Open Market Sale Scheme. Besides, the Government has asked fast moving consumers good firms to ramp up supplies to meet domestic demand.

"FCI godowns has sufficient reserves to meet the demand and officials are keeping a close watch on distribution of foodgrains," Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said in a tweet.

### CUSHION AGAINST FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

- 8.3 crore BPL Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries will be given free cylinders for the next three months.
- 80 crore poor people will get 5 kg per person wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for the next three months
- 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders to get ₹500 per month for next three months
- Increase in MNRGA wage to ₹202 a day from ₹182 to benefit 13.62 crore families
- An ex-gratia of ₹1,000 to 3 crore poor senior citizen, poor widows and poor disabled
- The Government to front-load ₹2,000 paid to farmers in first week of April under existing PM Kisan Yojana to benefit 8.7 crore farmers
- Central Government has given orders to State Governments to use Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to provide relief to Construction Workers

## 88 new cases, highest single day hike

### Corona number rises to 694, death toll 16; ban on international flight till April 14

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded 88 new positive coronavirus cases on Thursday, the single largest in a day, as the total count of confirmed cases, including 16 deaths and cured ones, reached 694. In a clear message that there will not be any let-up in the lockdown, the Government extended the ban on international flight operations to India to April 14.

It has been decided that scheduled international commercial passenger services shall



A BMC worker fumigates Byculla market area as a precautionary measure against the spread of coronavirus during lockdown in Mumbai on Thursday

remain closed till 6:30 am (GMT) of April 14, 2020. This will not apply to approve inter-

national all-cargo operations and flights," said the Directorate General of Civil

Aviation (DGCA) in a statement. Even as the coronavirus infected cases continue to move northward, the Government on Thursday asserted that India is not in the community transmission stage of coronavirus pandemic.

A senior Ministry official said if and when India registers community transmission of the deadly virus, people will be informed for their safety. Talking to media during the routine Press briefing here, head scientist of the Indian Council of Medical Research

(ICMR) Dr Raman R Gangakhedkar said there is no hard evidence to say there has been community transmission of the novel coronavirus in India. The total count of positive Covid-19 cases in India neared the 694 mark, as per latest figures made available by the Union Health Ministry, as the country entered second day of the 21-day long lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a measure to contain the spread of the deadly contagion.

## COVID-19 claims second life in Indore; positive cases reach 10 in city

PNS ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh commercial capital Indore has reported second death due to COVID 19, as a 35-year-old man died after testing positive to novel corona virus on Thursday.

Till now the city has reported ten positive cases of COVID 19.

A 65-year-old woman Rabiya who was tested positive for novel corona virus had tested positive for this virus and died during treatment on

Wednesday.

On Friday, another man (35) who was COVID 19 positive and tested positive for the lethal virus died during treatment at a private hospital in Indore, Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Pravin Jadia said. The man was ailing to multiple health issues and was also suffering from novel corona virus, said Dr Jadia declining to reveal identity of the deceased.

Early in the day, a 47-year-old man Atul Bhargav had died in the city during treat-

ment at TB hospital. However, his test report on Corona is yet awaited.

On Friday as well, a 23-year-old youth from Shivpuri was also tested positive for the novel corona virus.

The youth had gone to Hyderabad for business related work on March 13 and returned to home in village Khaniyadhana on March 16. After he fell ill, he was put screening and tests confirmed that he has contracted the disease.

Slackness of health staffers was also exposed in the case as the youth upon his return from Hyderabad had released a video claiming that he had quarantined self in his house but later his condition deteriorated. Despite my repeated pleas, no one from the health department came to pick me for treatment, he said in the video.

The health dept has screened 63 persons who came in touch with the youth including the family of the earlier found patient in

Shivpuri. However, his family members including parents and sister have reported negative.

The contacts of the youth are also being scanned for further screening.

Out of the two suspects in Hoshangabad, report of one has turned negative while that of the other is awaited. A family in Tikamgarh district has been home quarantined.

Meanwhile, the CMHO in Bhopal Dr Sudhir Dehriya has been removed by the state

government and he has been replaced by Dr Sudhir Jaisani.

The total number of novel corona virus positive cases have risen to 21 in Madhya Pradesh including deaths of two. Former Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Thursday wrote to CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan urging him to ensure availability of protective gears for health staff, identification of dedicated hospitals for this disease, proper arrangements in private hospitals and establishment of labs in every district.



A city street wears a deserted look during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Bhopal on Thursday

### Essential goods shops, firms to remain open 24x7: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to ensure smooth supply of essential items and discourage large gathering during ongoing lockdown period, the Delhi Government on Thursday said shops and factories associated with essential services can operate 24x7. No additional licence is required.

In a joint Press meet with Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "We have decided to allow all establishments that supply essential items or are part of the supply chain for such items to function 24x7 to prevent overcrowding during the day."

## National Capital silenced

The Pioneer's Kushan Mitra drove around a desolate and deserted Delhi.

As someone who has called this city home for over the past three decades, this was unusual. Even on the days when much of the city shuts down, Republic Day or Independence Day, the city is still loud, abuzz and full of life.

On a normal Thursday afternoon in late-March with such fine weather, Connaught Place would be full of people, young couples stealing some moments, shoppers hunting for deals at Palika Bazaar, office workers out for a drink with colleagues at the countless bars and restaurants. Instead, the giant flagpole is bare, the streets deserted other than the police-

men running the checkpoints and Palika Bazaar's entrances are locked. This is not Delhi as anyone has ever known it in living memory, even those with memories of the 1965 and 1971 wars will say that while blackouts and curfews were common, this is unnatural.

The destitute and the homeless face a challenge like never before, with few people on the streets to give alms and restaurants and shops shut, they can't even acquire the limited rations that they used to earlier. While various State Governments and the Centre have promised that people will not go hungry, when you ask the runaways in Connaught Place if they have heard anything they tell you they haven't. Some private individuals like

Arjun and Ambika Pandey are distributing food packets and other doing so with fruit, but in these times, small private contributions can never catch up to state machinery.

Outside the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) at Kashmiri gate, a place that is usually bustling with human traffic 24 hours a day, it is surreal to see the empty roads. There are some buses running, but only for essential workers as notified by the government. Migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who are still trying to find a way home now that their daily-wage jobs have evaporated thanks to this gift from China, stand helpless around the bus station, although it must be noted that the air in this area, usually thick with

diesel fumes is strangely clean. Among those left behind by India's economic growth of the past few decades, there is confusion and helplessness, but they are beginning to understand the gravity of the situation, but they know that they are, as the saying goes, caught between a rock and a hard place.

At popular destinations for local outings such as India Gate and Red Fort, the emptiness looks like the set of an apocalyptic movie rather than sites in an Indian city. There are some private vehicles around, but those are few and far between, mostly carrying officials and mediapersons.

But we face an enemy whom we cannot see, whom we do not know how to defeat,



indeed nobody in the world knows how to defeat.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal announced that there were 36 patients for SAR-CoV 2, the so-called 'Wuhan Virus' in the capital, but he also highlighted the risks that healthcare work-

ers face with one virus-infected patient who returned from Saudi Arabia infecting a Mohalla Clinic doctor who subsequently passed it onto his family. The dangers are ever present. Those in the know are pinning some hope on various theories, particularly the 'tem-

perature' theory, but we do not know what will happen next. This is just the third day of the 21-day lockdown, the fifth day of staying at home since Sunday for many of us. This will not be an easy time for anyone. And Delhi might never feel the same again.



# Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Academy postpones events

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Sahitya Academy has postponed all the events to be held in March 2020. As per the government orders, all the cultural events have been called off due to Coronavirus spread and 21 days lockdown.

'Kavita Bhopal' by Sahitya Academy, Madhya Pradesh Culture Council, Bhopal, International Poetry Festival was from March 24 to 26, 2020.

The International Poet's Meet received the consent of foreign poets Iya Kiva-Ukraine, Nurdun Duman-Turkey, Fiona Bolger-Ireland, Nazwan Darvish-Palestine, Ivan Ivano-Bulgaria and Nicola-Macedonia. Poets of Indian

regional languages and poets of Hindi participated in this ceremony.

Besides, the conferences and workshops of the Pathak Manch Kendra Convenors Workshop organized by the Academy and the Yuva Sahitya Kendra established in the year 2019-20 are also being postponed.

Due to the safety measures of Coronavirus issued by the Government of India and the Government of Madhya Pradesh, B.P.19, the above three events 'Kavita Bhopal' International Poetry Festival, Pathak Manch Workshop and Conference and Workshop of Yuva Sahitya Kendra are postponed till the next date. The upcoming dates of the event will be intimated soon.

# CBSE extends application deadline till April 30

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has extended the application deadline for affiliation by schools till April 30. With the view of the coronavirus outbreak, the CBSE issued a circular recently.

The notice stated that the Board had notified its Affiliation Bye-Laws vide notification dated 18.10.2018. As per appendix I, the period for applying for affiliation under various categories i.e. fresh affiliation, Upgradation, Switch over from other Board, Extension of Affiliation for session 2021-22 for all applicant schools are up to March 31 with requisite fees.

In this connection, the board is in receipt of various representations from schools mentioning problems faced by schools for submission of appli-

cation for affiliation in a stipulated time period in view of the current COVID-19 situation.

Coronavirus cases in the country crossed 600 on Wednesday as authorities beefed up preparedness to fight the pandemic with a chain of hospitals of the army ordnance factories and central paramilitary forces earmarking over 2,000 beds for isolation and treatment of people affected by the disease.

Therefore, to ensure fulfillment of various Government advisories and directive on current COVID-19 situation and a measure of abundant precautions, the competent the authority of the Board after due consideration has accorded



approval for extension of date of submission of an application under various categories i.e. fresh affiliation, Upgradation, Switch over from other Board, Extension of Affiliation for session 2021-22 without any late fee till April 30.

Besides, keeping in view the serious outbreak of Coronavirus, the CBSE also postponed board exams across the country.



A social worker serves tea to the Quick Response Force personnel deployed during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo



A security personnel deflates the tyre of an offender's vehicle during nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo



People maintain social distancing as they stand in queue to purchase daily need items at Reliance Fresh during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus pandemic in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo

# Heavy rainfall lashes parts of State

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Heavy rainfall lashed several parts of the state on Wednesday, rainfall started late in the afternoon and continued till late in the night.

The abrupt weather conditions would prevail and weather conditions would turn harsher by March 30 told Met Department.

The Met department issued warning of thunder lightning and speedy winds of 30-40 km/hr and hailstorm for brief periods.

State capital recorded day and night temperature at 32.5 and 19.4 degree Celsius and would witness around same level.

For Bhopal, Hoshangabad,

Gwalior, Chambal divisions and Neemuch, Mandsaur, Tikamgarh, Chattarpur and Sagar districts warning of thunder lightning and speedy winds of 30-40 km/hr and hailstorm for brief periods has been issued.

According to the forecast Hoshangabad and Indore divisions and Bhind, Guna, Ashok Nagar, Datia, Vidisha, Rajgarh, Bhopal, Ratlam, Ujjain, Agar, Shajapur, Dewas, Narsinghpur, Chhindwara, Seoni, Sagar, Chattarpur and Tikamgarh districts are likely to witness rainfall and thundery activities in the next 24 hours.

Gwalior, Chambal, Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Hoshangabad, Sagar and Jabalpur recorded rainfall in the past 24 hours.

# CM urges people to take precautions

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has appealed to all the people of the State to take full precautions to prevent the outbreak of the Coronavirus. He said that we will not let Coronavirus spread in Madhya Pradesh under any condition. The State Government is making every necessary arrangement in this regard. The Medical Colleges and other big hospitals of the private sector will function as specific hospitals in the state.

Arrangements have been made for essential medicines, masks, PPE Kits as well as

ventilators. Chouhan was addressing the High level Meeting held in connection with Coronavirus at Mantralaya today.

The Chief Minister Chouhan said that every individual in the state should follow the instructions of isolation. Cooperate in keeping themselves and their family healthy. Chouhan said that there has been information that some citizens have returned from abroad. He further said that efforts are also being made to eliminate the possibility of contamination of their family.

Chouhan said that such persons with alertness can

quarantine themselves and ensure the welfare of the entire community. He said it is a matter of collective concern and responsibility. Chouhan urged the common people to cooperate fully in this work. The Chief Minister assured that Madhya Pradesh Government is with the people in this difficult time of crisis.

The Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Additional Chief Secretary Finance Anurag Jain, Principal Secretary Medical Education Shri Sanjay Shukla, Principal Secretary Public Health and Family Welfare Pallvai Jain Govil and others were present at the meeting.

# Guv directs Vice Chncellors to provide help to students

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Lalji Tandon has directed all the Vice Chancellors to provide necessary help to the students, pursuing studies outside their home towns keeping in view the Corona virus pandemic.

Tandon said that University administration should get in touch with all the students through every mean of communication. Help students in making arrangement for food etc. He said that such arrangements should be made,

so that the needy students contact them for help.

The Governor said that the IT cell of the Universities should train and inspire students to work from home. Engage them in information, education and communication activities to handle the Corona crisis.

The Governor Tandon has urged all the Vice-Chancellors to contribute their best to the nation's service by working with visionary thinking during this crisis period of the Coronavirus.

# City youths help poor amid lockdown

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

While everyone is in their homes during lockdown, the poor and needy section of the society is suffering. Looking at this, the youngsters of the city have pulled up their socks to help them.

As the COVID-19 has a serious outbreak in the country, 21 day lockdown was announced by Government. But, in all this, the most suffered section is poor and needy people. To help them, youngsters of the city are distributing food packets and ration to the needy people.

Two youth led groups Bhopal Helping Hands and Bhopal Jansampark Samuh have joined hands to help the

people. Every day, since the announcement of 21 day lockdown, both the groups are distributing food packets and ration to needy people.

While informing about the initiative, Saiem Khan one of the founding members of Bhopal Helping Hands told The Pioneer that the groups are distributing food packets every day and till now have helped at least 20 families in need.

He said, "This group is founded by me and my friends Siraj Khan. We have been helping people from a long time. But, since the lockdown has been announced, we have speeded up as every day we have to feed needy people."

It is to be noted that another

group Bhopal Jansampark Samoooh is preparing food for at least 1000 people daily. As many as 10 volunteers deliver food packets in different areas including old city areas, Idgah Hills and more.

"This is our responsibility to stay safe and keep others safe. So, the volunteers take all the precautions, they wear masks and gloves. They do not handover the packets, instead they keep it outside the doors. Besides, they change their clothes and take a bath before they enter the kitchen," he added. Saiem also said that the volunteers also aware poor people about COVID 19 and tell them about the safety precautions.

# 19-year-old girl hangs self, dies

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 19-year-old girl committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling at her house near Vikas Nagar under Govindpura police station area on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased, Rekha Ravidas was found hanging and was rushed to hospital where she was declared dead.

The deceased used to work as a class 12 student of a private school. In the initial investigation, the family members told police that the exams were postponed of deceased and was at home.

In the evening at around 8 when the brother of deceased returned he found deceased hanging and took her to hospital.

Later, the body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation. The police have registered a case under section 174 of the CrPC and started further investigation.

tion.

The deceased went to her room and locked from inside. Family members were aware of the reason behind the suicide. Deceased had not left any suicide note which could help in investigation to reveal reason.

Meanwhile, a 22-year-old youth was electrocuted at his house in Sukhisewania area on Wednesday; he was electrocuted while repair work at home.

According to the police, deceased Neelesh Vishwakarma was electrocuted and rushed to People hospital where he was declared dead.

Police were informed and on the receipt of the information police team reached the spot and started investigation. After the preliminary investigation the body was sent for the post mortem. The police have registered a case under section 174 of the CrPC and have started further investigation.



Quick Response Force (QRF) personnel stand guard as BMC employees spray disinfectant during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo

# Man refused to pay extortion money beaten up by miscreants

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 36-year-old man was attacked and assaulted by two miscreants after he refused to extort money at Arif Nagar under Gautam Nagar police station area on Wednesday.

According to the police, Salim Khan was attacked near his house by Ramzani and Yusuf after the victim refused to shed Rs 500 demanded by the two accused. Saturday.

The victim was asked to shed money which he refused after which he was attacked by the two accused and beaten brutally. The victim raised alert for help but after committing the crime, the miscreants managed to flee. The victim was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was released after providing treatment. Police said that the search for the attackers has been started.

After the preliminary

investigation, the police have registered a case of assault against the two miscreants who have criminal record.

The police have traced details of the accused and found that Ramzani hold crime record and has been booked by Gautam Nagar police.

In their complaint victim stated that he was near his house when the two miscreants approached him and started to extort money for liquor which he refused and which made them angry and they started to beat him. He raised alert after which they escaped the spot and before leaving they threatened the victim of life.

Police said that search has been intensified for the accused. Till the filing of the report none of the attackers were nabbed. The houses of two accused have been raided.



# State Assembly's four-day session concludes

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Announced by the Centre to deter novel corona virus threat, Madhya Pradesh Assembly's four-day session concluded on Wednesday.

The session commenced on March 24 and vote of confidence was brought by Shivraj Singh Chouhan Government. It was proposed that vote on account would be brought in the House, but due to Corona scare, the House was adjourned till March 26, with expectations that the vote on account would be presented on March 27.

However, the House was adjourned abruptly due to the Corona disease. In the present situation, the State government has decided to bring and ordinance on vote on account.

The Shivraj government had earlier convened the assembly session from March 24 to 27.

Initially the assembly session was convened by the then Kamal Nath government from March 16 to April 13. However, as the House had met on March 16 but the ex-speaker NP Prajapati had postponed the session till March 26 over Corona scare.

After the Supreme Court had ordered a floor test in Madhya Pradesh, a special session was convened on March 20 but before the House met, Nath had tendered his resignation.

After Shivraj Singh Chouhan government came to power, assembly session was convened afresh from March 24 to 27. The session was adjourned till March 26 after Chouhan cleared a floor test on March 24.

Meanwhile the assembly secretariat issued a fresh information on Thursday the scheduled meeting of the House has been cancelled in the wake of Corona virus scare.

# Rewa Solar Project starts production with full capacity

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Rewa Solar Project, one of the world's largest solar projects, has commenced production with full capacity from 03 January 2020 and the project has been selected among the best projects for the Prime Minister's Award for Innovation at the state level and for which the award would be announced on 'Civil Service Day' in New Delhi.

It may be noted that many innovations adopted in the project were the first in itself, due to which the project received the then-time minimum tariff of Rs 2.97 per unit, which was Rs 1.5 - Rs 2 lesser as compared to the tariff of Rs 4.50 - Rs 5.0 per unit from its contemporary projects.

For Viability Gap Funding institutions like NTPC and

SECI supported. It is one of the largest single-site solar power plants in the world. The 750 MW Rewa Solar Project, in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh, is spread over an area of 1590 hectares.

The developers of the three units of the project are Mahindra Renewable, ACME Solar Holdings Limited and Ericson Clean Energy respectively - the above developers were selected on the basis of bidding tariffs of Rs 2.979, Rs 2.970 and Rs 2.974 for the first year.

RUMS is leading three other solar power parks in the state, in which 1500 MW solar projects will be set up at Agar, Shajapur and Neemuch.

The project was selected for the Prime Minister's Award in the year 2017 for achieving minimum tariff for the first time.



A view of closed Chowk Bazaar during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo

## BRIEFS

### CM REVIEWS PREPARATIONS FOR RABI PROCUREMENT

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reviewed preparations for Rabi procurement at Mantralaya today. Keeping in view the Coronavirus pandemic, discussions on the proposed procurement programme took place in the review meeting. Chief Minister Chouhan said that taking into consideration the necessary measures for the safety of farmers' health and their interest, a decision will be taken soon to decide the dates of the procurement. Deliberations in context to the arrangement of transportation and storage related to wheat procurement took place in the meeting. The Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains and concerned officials were present at the meeting.

### EMPLOYEES DONATE SALARIES TO FIGHT COVID-19

Raj Bhavan's employees have announced to contribute salaries to the Chief Minister Relief Fund in order to provide financial support to handle the Corona virus crisis in the state. The Secretary to the Governor, Manohar Dubey is contributing one month's salary and the remaining employees are giving their one day salary to the Chief Minister Relief Fund.

### Pb dispatches 50k MTs of wheat, rice to other States

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To ensure uninterrupted supply of food articles to citizens of country during the COVID-19 lockdown, Punjab has dispatched 50,000 metric tonnes (MTs) of wheat and rice to different States through 20 special trains. Disclosing this on Thursday, the State Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu said that all the labour involved in loading rice and

wheat were provided masks and their hands were also sanitized.

"It was also ensured that they maintain due distance keeping in view the health concerns," said Ashu adding that the State Government and the Food Corporation of India (FCI) engaged a limited staff to compete this task in a time bound manner. The Minister also said that FCI General Manager Amardeep Singh Thind and Director Food Supplies Anindita Mitra are regularly monitoring this task.

# Curfew to be relaxed daily in HP

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday said there would be relaxation in curfew from 7 AM to 1 PM daily throughout the State to facilitate the people and to ensure that there was minimum inconvenience to them.

Presiding over a video conference with all the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police of the State from Shimla to take stock of the situation in wake of curfew in the State due to outbreak of Corona epidemic, he urged the people to come out of their homes only in emergent situation as this curfew has been imposed for their safety.

He directed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure that there was no inconvenience to the people in getting essential commodities and to maintain proper social distancing between person to person during relaxation period.

## 'There would be relaxation in curfew from 7 AM to 1 PM daily throughout the State to facilitate the people'

Thakur said that the relaxation in this curfew was only for facilitating the people to purchase daily needs items and not for commuting from one place to other places unnecessarily.

He said State Government has decided to extend the closure of all the offices of the State government up to March 31 except those notified by the State Government as essential services. He urged the employees to remain indoors and follow all the social distancing guidelines as prescribed from time to time and not to leave the station as they could be called for duty in short notice any time.

The Chief Minister said that fertilizers would also be made available to the farmers

and horticulturists during of period of relaxation in curfew so that they do not face any problem in their agricultural activities.

Thakur urged the people of the State to purchase essential commodities from the shops nearer to their homes by maintaining appropriate social distancing as it is the proper way to break the chain of corona virus.

He said that liquor vends would also remain opened during the relaxation period of curfew in the State, adding that only one person of a family should be allowed during relaxation period of curfew for taking essential commodities.

He said State Government has decided to take the matter with the Governments of

Talangana, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to supply more pulses at the earliest to ensure that there was no scarcity of pulses in the State.

Thakur said leniency must be adopted to ensure movement of staff of telecom companies as they require movement for repair and maintenance of telecom towers.

He directed the DC's of Solan, Kangra and Sirmaur districts in particularly to ensure that production in Pharma industries was not affected as they were preparing several life saving drugs.

He also asked them to make adequate arrangements of food and shelter to the vulnerable sections of the society.

He said that as many as 2257 people have been kept under surveillance out of which 636 have completed 28 days of surveillance period. The investigations of 34 persons for COVID-19 have been done today and all were found negative.



Quick Response Force personnel check a scooterist in Bhopal on Thursday

Pioneer photo



People keep distance as they stand to grind wheat grains at a flour mill during the nationwide lockdown and curfew, in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo



People purchase essential items from shops during nationwide lockdown and curfew in the wake of coronavirus outbreak in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo

# Poultry farms in Pb, Hry at loss due to feed shortage

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Poultry farmers in Punjab and Haryana are facing acute shortage of feed because of the nationwide lockdown to check spread of coronavirus, and fear that their birds will die if supply is not restored. The farmers claimed that supplies of poultry feed, including maize, soybean, groundnut cake, bajra (millet) and other items coming from other states are stuck because of the lockdown. "We have not been able to get poultry feed ever since the restrictions have been imposed because of coronavirus," Progressive Poultry Farmers Association Punjab President Mohinder Arora told

PTI on Thursday.

Arora said the suppliers in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat could not send feed to poultry farmers of Punjab and Haryana, the major suppliers of chicken and eggs in the country.

"Each farmer keeps feed stock of just four to five days and most of them are left with little or no poultry feed," he said. "The government is not caring for poultry business," he added. In Haryana, Karnal-based farmer Randhir Singh lamented that poultry birds would soon start dying if the government did not take appropriate steps to ensure resumption of feed supplies.

# Punjab to distribute door-to-door 10L packets of dry rations to daily wagers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To help the daily wagers and unorganized labourers across the state who are worst hit by the curfew imposed in light of the COVID-19 crisis, the Punjab Government would distribute 10 lakh packets of dry rations to help them through the contingency situation.

Announcing this, the Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday said that the packets, containing 10 kg atta, two kg dal, and two kg of sugar each, would be distributed in the slums and other pockets where such daily wagers and labourers are staying in large numbers.

At the same time, the Chief Minister also ordered that these packets should be made available at the offices of the Deputy Commissioners to support any such persons who do not get

covered in the door-to-door distribution and may call the helpline numbers for food.

"While the economic package announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is welcome and would provide support to many sections of the society, there is unfortunately no immediate relief provided by the Centre to the daily wage earners and the unorganized sector workers, who have been left in the lurch following the curfew or lockdown imposition," he said.

Earlier, during a video conference conducted by Congress national president Sonia Gandhi with the Chief Ministers of the party-led states, Capt Amarinder said that all efforts were being made by his Government to reach out to the poor in Punjab.

He updated the Congress president of the various mea-

sures being taken in the state to provide succour to the citizens in this hour of crisis.

The Chief Minister further said that all arrangements were being made to ensure home delivery of essential items and services, and to reach out to those in need at their doorstep. Clear directions have been issued to both, the police and civil administration, to streamline the support and delivery systems in every district, he said, adding that there was marked improvement in this regard today and the situation would further stabilize on this count in the next couple of days.

The introduction of the e-pass facility launched by the Punjab Police was a step in this direction, he added.

Reacting to reports of crowding at medicine and drugs stores in some areas, the Chief Minister assured that

there was no shortage of medical supplies of any kind.

He also assured the doctors and health staff that all necessary equipment to deal with the situation, from testing kits of COVID-19 to protective materials, was available in the State. The safety of doctors and health workers was of paramount importance, he added.

## SAD SEEKS IMPROVEMENT IN SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES TO ALL, INCLUDING POOREST OF POOR

SAD president Sukhbir Badal and party MLA Bikram Majithia on Thursday demanded improvement in the supply of essential commodities to all, including the poorest of poor.

Sukhbir said that his inputs revealed that there was only a limited truth in the government's claims of maintaining

supply of essential commodities, and appealed to the government to operationalise all channels to ensure that people do not suffer on this account.

"The poor and especially the daily wage earners are facing extreme hardships. The Government must take immediate and effective steps to help the poor and the needy in this hour of challenge," he said.

Sukhbir demanded that the government must come up immediately with was to help the farmers with the harvesting and procurement of the standing crop. "The food supply chain cannot be allowed to be broken. If that happens, it can have disastrous implications for the country," he said demanding immediate financial assistance from the Punjab Government to the farmers which could be adjusted in installments later.



A notice is being served by Shahar Qazi Syed Mushtaq Ali Nadvi for cancellation of Friday prayers at historical Taj-ul-Masajid during the nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic in Bhopal on Thursday  
Pioneer photo

# Rajnath reviews future action plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the armed forces playing a big role in the national fight against the coronavirus pandemic, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday reviewed the action plan of his Ministry for the coming days in responding to the challenge within and outside the country.

At present, Army teams and two navy ships are on standby to provide any assistance to fight the pandemic in the friendly neighbourhood countries even as an army team has returned from the Maldives after providing all help. A team of six doctors and eight paramedical personnel of the Army was deployed in Maldives since March 13 for setting up a viral testing laboratory for coronavirus.

The Minister was briefed on all these measures besides the fact about the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) laboratories having manufactured 20,000 litres of sanitisers and supplied them to various organisations including the Delhi police, which has been supplied with 10,000 litres of sanitisers. The DRDO has also supplied 10,000 masks to the Delhi Police, officials said.

## Paramilitary forces told to set up pan-India facilities

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has asked the Central paramilitary forces to set up facilities across the country to quarantine as many as 5,440 persons amid the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The central forces have also made arrangements for isolating 75 patients.

While the ITBP quarantine facility at Chhawal in the national capital is operational and successfully quarantined and discharge hundreds of evacuees from Wuhan (China) and other places, the other paramilitary forces have created threshold to set up such facilities within 24 hours, a senior Union Home Ministry official privy to the development said.

Testing kits will be provided to the quarantine facilities on need basis through Ministry of Health (DG Health Service), an official said.

It is tying up with some private companies to make personal protection equipment such as

Apart from monitoring routine health parameters of the inmates by a team of qualified doctors and paramedical staff, these facilities will be equipped with provision of meals and indoor games.

The directive to set up the quarantine facilities across the country was taken following a decision of Group of Ministers and the order was circulated through a letter from the office of the Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba and Health Secretary.

With a provision of 1,940 beds, the Border Security Force (BSF) leads the pack followed by 1,800-bedded facilities by the Central Reserve Police Force and a capacity to quarantine 1,000 persons by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

Likewise, the National Security Guards (NSG) and Central Industrial Security Force CISF will set up facilities with 300 beds each to quaran-

tine suspected coronavirus patients.

The Sasashtra Seema Bal (SSB) will set up a 100-bedded facility at Yelki (near Nanded in Maharashtra).

Besides the Chhawal camp in Delhi, the ITBP will also have a similar facility in Greater Noida (Uttar Pradesh). The ITBP has been allocated 20-bedded isolation wards.

The NSG will have its quarantine facilities at Manesar and Hyderabad. It will also have isolation facility for five patients.

The BSF facilities will be set up 800-bedded quarantine facility at Baikunthpur (Silliguri, West Bengal), Jodhpur (400 beds), Indore (200 beds), Chakur (Maharashtra, 200 beds), Kharkhan (Punjab, 120 beds), Hazaribagh (Jharkhand, 100 beds), Srinagar (20 beds), Jalandhar (20 beds), Tekanpur (Madhya Pradesh, 20 beds), Kolkata (20 beds), Kadamtala

antennae facilities at various locations all over the country, has also ramped up production of

(20 beds) and Agartala (20 beds). The BSF will also have isolation wards for 10 patients.

The CRPF quarantine facilities will be located at 19 locations across the country. While Pinjore (Haryana) will have 190-bedded facility, Guwahati, Jammu, Narela, Neemuch, Kolkata and Imphal each will have 150-bed facility. Nagpur will have 120-bed facility followed by Ranchi (75 beds), 209 CoBRA (75 beds), Mokamaghat (75) and Muzaffarpur (75). Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Pallipuram, Hyderabad and Gandhinagar will have bedded facility at the campuses of CRPF. The CRPF will have the most number of isolation wards with a capacity to lodge 40 patients.

The CISF facility for quarantine will be located at Shivganga near Madurai.

sanitiser, masks and body suits. Bharat Electronics Limited, a public sector undertaking, is

## CRPF personnel to contribute one day's salary to PM's relief fund

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF personnel have decided to make a contribution of one day salary to Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. "We are dutifully committed to stand firmly with our Nation in this challenging time of COVID-19 spread. It's an unanimous decision and a sincere effort by our personnel. The CRPF remains steadfast towards its motto of service and loyalty, a senior paramilitary official said. With a strength of 3.25 lakh, the CRPF is the biggest paramilitary in the world.

also engaged in manufacturing of ventilators, the minister was informed, they said.

## BJP hails ₹1.7 L-cr relief package for weaker sections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday welcomed the ₹1.7 lakh-crore relief package announced by the Union Government for daily wage earners, farmers, women and senior citizens and pensioners in the organised and unorganised sectors saying it will help the poor sections of the society when the nation is on a 21-day lockdown to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

BJP President Jagat Prasad Nadda said the wide-range of economic package under Prime Minister 'Garib Kalyan Yojna' would mitigate immediate problems of food and money for the economically deprived population who would receive additional 5kg of wheat or rice per person as also 'dal' of 5 kg per house-hold for next three-months besides getting money in their bank accounts through DBT (Direct Bank transfer).

A total of 80 crore people will be covered under the package. Government also announced ₹50 lakh medical insurance cover for all health workers including Doctors, nurses and other medical personnel who are in forefront of battle against Coronavirus which may cross the crucial 'community spread' stage any time from now.

Nadda said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced a "huge relief" for the poor in this hour of crisis and asserted that it is the ruling party's resolve that nobody is left hungry.

Former party president and Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the announcement shows the sensitivity of the government towards the poor and other vulnerable sections of society.

Nadda said that over 80 crore poor people will get an additional five kg each of wheat and rice beside one kg of pulse for three months to ensure that everyone gets an adequate amount of food.

Farmers, daily wagers, poor women, people with disabilities

## Opp welcomes Central package to tide over coronavirus crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition on Thursday welcomed the Centre's move to come out with the ₹1.70 lakh-crore financial package for several categories of citizens including farmers and daily wage earners. However, a few of them also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allocating a lesser amount of ₹15,000 crore for tackling coronavirus when compared to a greater allocation of ₹20,000 crore for development of Central Vista that will include construction of a new Parliament in the national Capital. They sought the diversion of the Central Vista fund to fight the pandemic.

The allocation for the Central Vista had been done on the same day when the PM had announced the countrywide lockdown.

While the Congress welcomed the financial package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and aimed at helping the poor survive the economic distress due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the Trinamool Congress said it came late and the Centre had actually taken the cue from the measures announced by the Mamata Banerjee government more than a week ago.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said the announcements are in the right direction. "The Government announcement today of a

and senior citizens will also get monetary relief through direct benefit transfer, he said.

"On behalf of every BJP worker, I thank the prime minister for this relief to the poor, farmers, women, youths, senior citizens and the organised sector for such important decisions

financial assistance package is the first step in the right direction. India owes a debt to its farmers, daily wage earners, labourers, women and the elderly, who are bearing the brunt of the ongoing lockdown," he said on Twitter.

Terming the financial package as a "modest plan", Congress leader P Chidambaram contended that a lot more needed to be done. While welcoming the provision of foodgrains for the poor, the former FM claimed that there was not enough cash infusion. He observed that some sections of society had been completely left out. He noted that some of his suggestions such as help to tenant farmers, EMI deferment and GST rate cut had not been addressed. At the same time, Chidambaram called on the Centre to put forth a further plan of action very soon.

The Trinamool Congress on Thursday said the Centre's financial package announced in the wake of a countrywide lockdown to combat coronavirus has taken a "cue" from the one offered by the party-led dispensation in West Bengal.

"Centre takes cue from relief plans already rolled out by state govts like #Bengal a week ago - free 6 months ration for the poor, health insurance for champion frontliners fighting corona and ₹1,000 for daily wagers under new Prochesta scheme. Will supplement State efforts," tweeted TMC MP

and this relief package," he said.

Nadda also hailed the Government's announcement of insurance of health professionals and the decision to give free LPG cylinders under the 'Ujjwala' scheme for three months. Cash will be transferred in the bank accounts of

Derek O'Brien.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said that financial package is inadequate to handle the Corona crisis, comparing the ₹7.78 lakh crore loan waiver to big corporate houses.

He said the huge loan waiver to corporate houses shows that there is no dearth of resources in India and urged the Centre to come with more financial packages for the welfare of employees and poor people, who are financially hit due to the lockdown.

Yechury also urged the Prime Minister to immediately stop the Central Vista project and divert the Rs.20,000 crore allotted for it for the Corona relief package.

"Unconscionable that the central government finds it necessary to spend Rs.20,000 crore at this precise moment for a new house for the PM & other beautification schemes. Central Vista plan must be scrapped, earmarked funds must be transferred to tackle Corona crisis and its impact on the poor, said Yechury.

Former union minister and senior Congress Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor also appealed to the Prime Minister to divert the ₹20,000 crore Central Vista fund to fight COVID-19. "This is merely ₹20 crore per district. Grand spending on buildings at this time of crisis is a postponable luxury," tweeted Tharoor.

poor farmers, poor widows, poor pensioners and poor disabled.

Farmers who were receiving ₹6,000 annually would get ₹2,000 upfront under Prime Minister's scheme and MNREGA workers daily wage would be increased from ₹182 to ₹200.

## Sonia writes to PM Modi, suggests remedial measures against corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time during the coronavirus crisis, the Congress on Thursday actually came out with its own suggestive remedial measures in view of the pandemic with party president Sonia Gandhi writing in detail to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard.

The Congress, especially its leader Rahul Gandhi has been strongly criticising the Modi Government for not "doing enough" and being "in slumber" to tackle the deadly disease.

Sonia said that the lockdown is a "welcome step" even as she suggested that health and economic measures should be taken to fight coronavirus.

"As president of the Congress, I would like to state that we will support and collaborate fully with every step taking by the Union Government to ensure the containment of the pandemic," Sonia Gandhi wrote in the four-page letter to Modi.

"At this challenging and uncertain time, it is imperative for each one of us to rise above partisan interests and honour one's duty towards our country and indeed, towards humanity," said Sonia.

The Congress chief also

Three-months free cylinders would be provided to women covered under 'Ujjawala' scheme.

BJP general secretary Bhupender Yadav said the Government under Modi's leadership stands solidly with the poor and other segments of the population and is committed to the country getting over the coronavirus pandemic.

The Government has announced three-week's lockdown until mid-April, saying it is the only way out for the country to decisively defeat the virus

gave a eight-point suggestions which included a demand for a dedicated Web portal with information about designated hospitals and construction of intensive care units and ventilators.

She also requested the Prime Minister to put in place broad based social protection measures, including direct cash transfer, for daily wagers, MGNREGA workers, factory labour, construction and unorganised workers, fishermen, farm labourers and other vulnerable sections of the society.

Sonia Gandhi suggested that the centre should consider deferring all EMI payments for the next few months and also waive interests charged by banks for this period.

She added that the government should immediately put in place several social protection measures which should include direct cash transfers to daily wage workers, MNREGA workers, construction workers, farmers and others part of the informal sector. The Congress President recommended her party's NYAY scheme for minimum income support, she called it "the need of the hour". She said that the implementation of the scheme will provide the poor with basic economic resources to fall back on.

by rigorously adopting social distancing.

BJP has also suspended all its official programmes across the country with the party workers asked to assist Government varied efforts to counter pandemic across the country.

A day before, the BJP said one crore of its workers will provide for meals of five poor persons each during the 21-day lockdown. A mechanism will be put in place at the earliest in this regard, according to party's national media head Anil Baluni.

At the meeting, officials briefed Singh on various measures and assistance provided so far. The Indian Air Force has made several sorties and evacuated Indian nationals from affected areas in China, Japan and Iran. Various quarantine facilities of the Armed Forces have, so far, handled 1,462 evacuees and discharged 389. Presently, 1,073 persons are being provided care at the facilities in Manesar, Hindan, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Mumbai. Additional quarantine facilities are on standby with 950 beds capacity.

The Defence Minister expressed appreciation on the proactive role played by the Armed Forces and various departments of MoD in evacuating Indian nationals as well as foreigners from COVID-19 affected countries and ensuring them proper care at various quarantine facilities. He urged the Armed Forces and other departments to gear up their preparedness and provide all required assistance to the civilian administration at various levels. Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Air Staff Air

Chief Marshal R K S Bhaduria, Chief of Army Staff General M M Naravane, Secretary (Defence Production) Raj Kumar, Secretary (Ex-Servicemen Welfare) Sanjeevane Kutty and Secretary Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr G Satheesh Reddy attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, the IAF said on Thursday it has created 09 quarantine facilities of 200-300 personnel capacity each, at nodal IAF bases across the country. Command Hospital Air Force Bangalore (CHAFB) has been designated as the first laboratory in the IAF to undertake COVID-19 testing which will greatly enhance the region's ability to carry out quick testing of suspected cases and allow prompt and timely intervention where required.

To monitor the prevailing situation and provide immediate response and assistance as required, a 24x7 crisis management cell has been set up at Air Headquarters and various Command Headquarters. IAF aircraft are continuing to fly in medical supplies and doctors to Leh and fly out blood samples for COVID testing to Chandigarh and Delhi.

## IT Ministry issues work from home protocol for Govt employees



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has issued a protocol for work from home (WFH) for the Government employees saying every employee should be disposed of all the receipts and files in their office before 5 pm each day, which is to be monitored by a daily report showing unattended receipts or files. The protocol says every employee must be available for telephonic consultation during office hours, and the phone should be answered every time it rings.

"Every working day, before 10 AM, each officer on WFH shall fix targets/specific work for their immediate subordinate to be achieved on the day. This shall be sent through eoffice/email (not by phone).

The recipient of this e-file/mail shall further allocate work to his/her subordinate (and so on). This correspondence shall be available on eoffice," it said. On the receipt of the work, each employee shall acknowledge to the reporting officer the receipt of work using eoffice network. This communication shall be received before 10:30 AM.

The protocol further states every employee shall be available for telephonic consultation during office hours and the phone

**The recipient of this e-file/mail shall further allocate work to his/her subordinate (and so on). This correspondence shall be available on eoffice, it said**

shall be answered all the time. In case of any issue that needs consultation, officers can set up remote-meeting (RM) either through the phone or through a WhatsApp Video Call (VC). The notice for such remote-meeting shall preferably be communicated at least one hour in advance.

Everyone who is called for VC/RM shall necessarily attend. "Further, if any work (like submission of Bills etc) calls for physically coming to the office, they shall come for that specific work. The office will make suitable arrangements for their transportation," it said.

"The WFH facility shall not be considered as 'paid leave' (except in case of MTS) and it is expected that the officers who have taken this facility are alert and always available for official functioning remotely," it added.

## Guidelines for e-doctors to reach out to needy

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As tele-consultation with doctors is becoming the norm among people, literally locked in their houses due to the coronavirus threat, the Government has come out with a set of guidelines regarding the e-platform to enable the medical professionals reach out to the needy.

The idea is not only to reduce the load on the already over-burdened hospitals and avoid unnecessary exposure to both medical professionals and patients but also to prevent malpractices, if any.

Incidentally, despite the concept being recognised and defined by the WHO and its spreading influence over the past decade, it is only now that India has come out with such guidelines which singularly deals with the practice of

Telemedicine here.

Prepared by the Board of Governors, which was set up in supersession of the Medical Council of India, in collaboration with the Niti Aayog, the 'Telemedicine Practice Guidelines' gives detailed do's and don'ts while engaging in tele-medicine and tele-consultation and ensure that ethics are maintained on the part of medical professionals.

"There are a number of benefits of telemedicine... In India, providing in-person healthcare is challenging, particularly given the large geographical distances and limited resources. One of the major advantages of telemedicine can be for saving of cost and effort especially of rural patients, as they need not travel long distances for obtaining consultation and treatment," say the guidelines.

The Government feel that with telemedicine, there is higher likelihood of maintenance of records and documentation hence minimises the likelihood of missing out advice from the doctor other health care staff.

Thus, health systems that are invested in telemedicine are well positioned to ensure that patients with Covid-19 kind of issues receive the care they need, it says.

The guidelines aims to assist the medical practitioner in pursuing a sound course of action to provide effective and safe medical care founded on current information, available resources, and patient needs to ensure patient and provider safety.

The BoG will soon develop an online programme on practice of telemedicine to

familiarise the doctors with the subject. "All currently registered medical practitioners need to complete a mandatory online course within 3 years of notification of these guidelines to provide consultation via telemedicine. Thereafter, undergoing and qualifying such a course, as prescribed, will be essential prior to registration of a medical practitioner," as per the guidelines.

The doctors can use any telemedicine tool suitable for carrying out technology-based patient consultation e.g. telephone, video, devices connected over LAN, WAN, Internet, mobile or landline phones, chat platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger etc., or Mobile App or internet based digital platforms for telemedicine or data transmission systems like

Skype/ email/ fax etc.

However, the guidelines have made it clear that though telemedicine consultation provides safety to the medical professionals from contagious conditions, it cannot replace physical examination that may require palpation, percussion or auscultation; that requires physical touch and feel.

It also clearly specify the categories of medicines that can and cannot be prescribed.

As per the guidelines, doctors are strictly prohibited from insisting on telemedicine, when the patient is willing to travel to a facility and/or requests an in-person consultation and misuse patient images and data, especially private and sensitive in nature. If found violating, penalties will be as per the IMC Act, ethics and other prevailing laws.

## NBT provides select, best-selling titles for free to download and read to fight corona

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of preventive measures by the Centre to contain the spread of Covid-19, the National Book Trust (NBT), under the Union HRD Ministry, is providing its select and best-selling titles for free to download and read. This is aimed at achieving a twin purpose: Encourage people to stay at home and develop a reading habit for a constructive utilisation of time.

"The people will be able to download the books by Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand and on Mahatma Gandhi. All in all there are books for everyone in the family to read and enjoy. More titles will be added to the list," said an HRD Ministry official.

Available in Hindi, English,

Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Kokborok, Mizo, Bodo, Nepali, Tamil, Punjabi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and Sanskrit, the books cover all genres of fiction, biography, popular science, teacher's handbook, and majorly books for children and young adults.

The select titles available for download also include - Holidays Have Come, Animals You can't Forget, Nine Little Birds, The Puzzle, Gandhi Tatva Satkarn, Women Scientists in India, Activity-Based Learning Science, A Touch of Glass, Gandhi: Warrior of Non-Violence, and many more.

"The PDFs are for reading only and any unauthorised or commercial use is not allowed," the official added.

University regulator

University Grants Commission (UGC) too has addressed students and teachers and said that the lockdown period can be utilised by engaging in Online learning.

"There are several ICT initiatives of the HRD Ministry, UGC and its Inter University Centres (IUCs) - Information and Library Network (INFLIB-NET) and Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC), in the form of digital platforms which can be accessed by the teachers, students and researchers in Universities and Colleges for broadening their horizon of learning," said a HRD ministry release.

Some of the ICT initiatives include Swayam, e-PG Pathshala, Swayamprabha, Sodhganga, Vidwan and the National Digital Library.



# 1st death in J&K, panic sets in

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A 65-year-old religious teacher, who was earlier tested positive for novel coronavirus on Thursday died at Chest Disease hospital in Srinagar triggering panic among the local residents who remained in close touch with him before he was admitted in the hospital on March 21. Four close contacts of this patient had already tested positive on Wednesday.

Large number of other contacts on Thursday reported across different hospitals in Kashmir valley and offered voluntary testing to confirm whether they have contracted the virus or not.

Meanwhile, two more positive cases were reported from Srinagar on Thursday.

The district magistrate, Srinagar also ordered the closure of all places of worship, including mosques and gurd-

waras, to prevent the further spread of coronavirus disease in the district.

Spokesman of the Jammu & Kashmir Government, Rohit Kansal tweeted, "Siblings (7 years old and 8 months old)-grandchildren of a confirmed case from Srinagar with travel history to Saudi Arabia who had tested positive on 24th tested positive". Total number of active positive cases now 11, he added.

At present 12 people are being treated including nine in the Valley and three in Jammu region of the Union Territory after testing positive for COVID-19.

Thirteen patients are admitted at a Leh hospital.

According to official sources, the deceased patient had returned from New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu recently after being part of a religious congregation attended also by people from Indonesia and Malaysia. He

arrived in Srinagar on March 16 via Indigo flight from Jammu and first reported the symptoms between March 18-19. he was admitted in the hospital on March 21.

The J&K Government has

ordered an inquiry into the alleged mishandling of the patient after he was tested positive for COVID-19 at the CD hospital.

Meanwhile, second day of the 21 day long lockdown

passed off peacefully barring stray incidents of violation by the local residents.

So far the police authorities have booked over 250 violators across the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

## 50 contacts of Kashmir's first victim quarantined

**Srinagar:** Authorities in Jammu & Kashmir were vigorously tracking the travel history of Union Territory's first COVID-19 victim as nearly 50 of those who came into contact with the victim have already been shifted to quarantine facilities.

Four of these quarantined persons have already tested positive for the virus.

Health officials said the deceased patient had a che-

quered travel trajectory and it was logical to assume that he had come into contact with a much higher number of persons than have been traced so far. "He was in Delhi where he is reported to have come into contact with Indonesian, Malaysian and Italian citizens. He has visited Samba and Jammu towns before he came back to the valley.

"He had attended a religious congregation in Sopore

and met dozens of people in Srinagar city", health officials said.

The fact that he had been evading isolation and treatment as per the standard operating procedure (SoP) for such patients, was also worrisome. "The fact is that he was symptomatically a full blown case before he was isolated and admitted is very worrisome", said a doctor.

IANS

## No Friday prayers in Kashmir mosques

IANS ■ SRINAGAR

Kashmir's Grand Mufti Nasirul Islam on Thursday said that there should be no Friday prayers in any mosque or shrine across the Valley on Friday in the wake of the coronavirus threat.

Talking to IANS, the Grand Mufti said on Friday people should not hold congregational prayers in Mosques and shrines across Kashmir.

"The situation is very grave," he said. "I appeal to people including Imams and Khateebis and managing bodies of all Masjids and shrines across Kashmir not to hold Friday congregational prayers."

He said that only three people including the meuzzins of Masjid should offer five times prayers, rest of the people should say the prayers at home.

Meanwhile, DC Srinagar Shahid Choudhary tweeted: "Closure of all religious places in #Srinagar is under way. With active cooperation of Management committees. Revered shrines Hazratbal, Naqshband Saheb show the way. #StayAtHome"

"Dastgeer Saheb , Gurudwara Saheb Chhati Padshahi and others. Mosques follow. Thankful to officials on ground and all management committees. #StayAtHome"

## Goa converts 5 tourist resorts into quarantine facilities

IANS ■ PANAJI

The North Goa district administration there on Thursday took over five tourist resorts, including one private facility, to create quarantine facilities for Covid-19 epidemic.

On Wednesday, three persons had tested positive for coronavirus.

The resorts, taken over by the administration, included Goa Tourism Development Corporation-operated facilities at Mayem, Mapusa, Calangute and Old Goa, and a private resort 'Acron Seaway' at the popular beach village of Candolim.

These facilities would be handed over to the Deputy Collectors, said a directive issued by the North Goa District Magistrate R. Menaka on Thursday.

"There is need to prepare quarantine facilities in the North Goa district in view of the prevailing health emergency due to spread of Covid-19," the order said and added, the properties were being temporarily taken over by the administration under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Goa has isolation wards at four centres.

# Tamil Nadu positive cases rise to 28

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Even as the number of persons tested positive for coronavirus touched 28 by Thursday evening and two persons succumbing to the pandemic (one each in Madurai and Kanyakumari), the activities of religious preachers from other countries is causing worries to security officials in Tamil Nadu. The cause of death of person in Kanyakumari district is yet to be ascertained and the health Minister's office is tight lipped about the incident.

The 28 persons who have been admitted to hospitals in Chennai, Madurai, Salem and Erode include four Indonesian and two Thailand citizens. These six persons are in the State for religious preaching. They have been indoctrinating the faithful about Tablighi Jamaat (Society for Spreading Faith), 'an organization urging Muslims to

return to practicing their religion as it existed during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammed', according to State Police officials.

The Indonesians reached Salem in the first week of March from New Delhi by Kerala Express and since then they have been proselytizing in the districts of Salem, Madurai and Erode. The person who died on Wednesday, an office bearer of a local mosque management committee, had accompanied the Indonesians during their engagements in Madurai.

TG Vinay, Madurai district collector, told reporters that the health department officials are tracking the persons who had met the Indonesians and the Madurai man during congregations and social gatherings to collect samples from them for testing.

The secret visits undertaken by the foreign preachers belonging to TJ have taken security agencies by surprise.

**The secret visits undertaken by the foreign preachers belonging to TJ have taken security agencies by surprise**

The organization was in the news recently when they held an 'international mass religious gathering' in the last week of February 2020 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where more than 700 COVID-19 cases have been reported. There is total secrecy associated with the TJ gatherings.

"What we know is that the Indonesians and Thai nationals have been addressing congregations in various mosques in these districts. Since outsiders are not allowed during these meetings, we do not

know what kind of sermonizing is happening during these religious classes. It could be anything ranging from interpretation of Quran to encouraging the Muslims to fight the CAA," said a senior intelligence official.

The official who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed that monitoring of congregations in temples across the State was not at all a problem.

"But mosques and churches are a different class as we can never infiltrate into the religious gatherings inside these places. The concerned Government agency is yet to make any probe into the activities of these proselitizers," he said.

The statement regarding the number of Corona Virus patients admitted to various hospitals in the State were disclosed by Dr C Vijaya Baskar, Tamil Nadu Minister for Health.

Chief Minister Edappadi

Palaniswamy who held a day long meeting in the secretariat on Thursday with ministers, senior bureaucrats and district collectors later made a passionate plea to the people of the State to cooperate with the administration in its war on Corona.

"I am addressing you not as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu but as a member of your family. Do not get panic as the total lock down has been declared for your own safety and security. The State administration is doing all it can do to make your stay in indoors a comfortable life. Maintenance of social distancing is the only option to prevent the spread of Corona, said the chief minister taking a cue from the Prime Minister's address to the nation on Wednesday evening.

The chief minister said all arrangements have been made to provide free ration and essential items to people in the lower strata of the society.

## Didi hits street to teach physical distancing

WITH 1 FRESH CASE IN WB TOTAL AT 10

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee worked frantically taking personal tours of Kolkata to spread social-distancing awareness, Bengal registered yet another corona infection case with a middle-aged person from Nayabad area of the State capital testing positive for the dreaded virus, Health Department sources said.

Though the man has no travel history to Corona-affected countries he recently joined a wedding party at Egga town in East Midnapore where people returning from such countries had assembled, sources said adding the administration had started taking information about the people who joined the said party. The entire family of the affected person has been home-quarantined.

The man is in a critical condition, the doctors said. The Thursday's case takes the

total number of corona infections in Bengal to 10. The State has witnessed one Corona related death with the victim succumbing to the disease last week.

Meanwhile the Chief Minister has written to her counterparts of 18 States expressing concern about the stranded migrant workers from Bengal.

The Chief Minister has requested the other Chief Ministers to ensure adequate food and medical facilities for the migrant workers from Bengal who are stranded there ... because the State administration cannot reach out to them due to the ongoing lockdown," a senior government official said adding Bengal Chief Secretary had been asked to sent the details of the stranded persons to their counterparts of those eighteen States.

Banerjee who had been working frantically to prevent

Corona invasion in Bengal on Thursday personally visited the prominent markets of Kolkata to educate the buyers and sellers about social distancing.

Alighting from her vehicle the Chief Minister was seen asking people to stand at least a metre apart from each other even as she personally drew chalk circles for the buyers to stand within those circles. She visited Posta, Jaan Bazaar, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road and Gariahaat

Market where she advised the people on social distancing and wearing masks.

Elsewhere the State Government on Thursday decided to open the School of Tropical Medicine as yet another facility for testing Corona infections. According to sources STM has been provided with about a thousand kits from Pune Institute of Virology and is likely to be functional immediately.

## One more death in Maha, total +ve cases rise to 125

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The coronavirus claimed one more life in Maharashtra taking the total number of deaths in the State to five, even as the total number of patients testing positive for the pandemic rose to 125 in the State on Thursday.

On a day when the Maharashtra announced that it had permitted owners of the shops vending essential commodities to keep their establishment open for all 24 hours in a day, the state health authorities confirmed that a 65-year-old woman died at Navi Mumbai's General Hospital on Tuesday night.

"After undergoing treatment at two private hospitals, a 65-year-old patient was admitted to the General Hospital at in a critical condition on the afternoon of March 24 (Tuesday). She died on the same night. The laboratory reports confirmed yesterday that she died because of Coronavirus," a medical bulletin put out by the Public Health Department of the Maharashtra Government under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) said.

"We are trying to ascertain if the deceased had either history of international travel or had she contracted Coronavirus through some contacts," the bulletin added.

With the latest death, the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the state has risen to five. The coronavirus had claimed first life in the state on March 17, when a 63-year-old disease-infected had died at the Kasurba Hospital. Subsequently, another 63-year-old male patient, who had been admitted to private hospital in Mumbai died on March 19. On Sunday night, Filipino died at a private hospital late on Sunday night. Later on Monday evening, a 65-year-old COVID-19 patient died at Kasturba Hospital in Mumbai.

According to the medical bulletin, three more patients - one patient each from Mumbai,

Sindhudurg and Nagpur - tested positive for Covid-19. "The infected patient from Sindhudurg had travelled along with another Covid-19 positive patient in railway compartment. The infected person from Nagpur had travelled to Delhi, but it is not confirmed yet that he had history of international travel.

There was confusion in the total number of patients who tested positive for Coronavirus. In the morning, State Health Minister Rajesh Tope tweeted: "The current count of COVID19 patients in the state of Maharashtra is 124. Yesterday evening, I each in Mumbai & Thane such 2 patients have been identified as positive. 15 people from these have been recovered and are discharged from the respective hospitals".

Later in the evening, the Public Health Department of the Maharashtra Government reported that there were three Covid-19 positive cases in the state on Thursday.

However, the Public Health Department of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in its medical bulletin issued in the evening said that there were 15 positive cases during the day. Of the 15 cases, there were six

cases from Mumbai and one case from the city, all of which were because of "close contact" with Covid-19 contracted patients, while the remaining eight confirmed cases were from Dombivili (1), Navi Mumbai (1), Thane (2), Vashi (1), Mumbai (1), Mumbai suburbs (1) and Pune (1). All these patients had been admitted to Kasturba Hospital and were diagnosed as positive in the laboratory there.

Meanwhile, the BMC reported that as many as 10 Covid-19 patients had recovered and were discharged from the hospital.

Meanwhile, in an effort to reduce inconvenience caused to the citizens who venture out to make purchase of essential commodities, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced that his Government had permitted the owners of the shops selling essential commodities to keep their establishment open for all 24 hours in a day.

"Owing to lockdown, people are contributing to crowds outside shops selling essential commodities which was not advised from the point of view of their health. That's why we have asked the shopkeepers to keep their establishments open for 24 hours in a day," Uddhav said.

## Don't compel us to deploy Army: Ajit Pawar on lockdown violations

**Mumbai:** Taking a stern view of many people still sauntering out on the roads despite a state and nationwide lockdown, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday hinted that he would not hesitate to deploy the Army to control the crowding menace.

"In the USA, to enforce the lockdown, they have taken the help of US Army. Don't compel us to do the same. This will be your responsibility," Pawar warned.

Pawar's statements came after reports of people hitching hikes in milk vans, a policeman seriously injured

after a motorcyclist drove straight into him to avoid being stopped in Vasai (Palghar), attacks on policemen in Beed, activists of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Mumineen on doctors and workers at a Malegaon hospital, and other incidents.

Pawar's veiled threat came during a discussion with other ministers and top officials amid reports of how large numbers of people simply walk out of their homes during curfew and lockdown period, with blatant attacks on doctors, paramedical workers and even police. IANS

## BJP MLA asks cops to shoot down lockdown violators

IANS ■ LUCKNOW

BJP MLA from Ghaziabad, Nand Kishore Gurjar, has asked the State police to "break their legs who violate the lockdown orders".

In a video that is now going viral on the social media, the MLA can be seen saying that the police can even "shoot them in the legs if people do not listen".

"Such people should be treated like anti-nationals. If they are not following government orders, they are terrorists," he said.

Gurjar further said that every constable who breaks the legs and shoots the violators would be given a reward of Rs 5,100 by him.

The BJP MLA also warned the clerics of mosques and said that several Muslims had informed him that people were crowding the markets.

"I am warning the clerics that they should inform the police if people do not listen to them," the MLA said.

Gurjar had earlier hit the headlines when he prescribed cow urine as a cure for coronavirus.

## K'taka reports second death, 4 fresh cases

**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka Government, here on Thursday, reported second Covid-19 death and four more positive cases, raising the total number of cases to 55.

"A 70-year-old woman, resident of the Chikkaballapura district, had a history of travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. She had returned to India on March 14 and died on March 24," said a health official.

Her death from Covid-19 could only be confirmed after medical examinations on Thursday morning.

According to an official statement, the patient died at a designated hospital, here. "The funeral rites were performed with all the precautionary measures as per the Centre's guidelines for Covid-19 suspects," the official said.

Confirming the second death, Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar tweeted, "I regret to inform that Covid-19 test result has come out as positive for the woman, who had succumbed on Tuesday. The Government stands com-

**The three new patients have been admitted to designated hospitals even as the health department has initiated their contact search**

mitted to curb the spread of coronavirus in the state."

Karnataka's first Covid-19 death, a 76-year-old Kalaburagi man, was also India's first such death.

Among the positive cases confirmed on Thursday all were men. A Mysuru resident, 35, with no travel or positive case contact history emerged as Karnataka's 52nd positive case. "He was with quality assurance section of a pharmaceutical company and has been in contact with many healthcare professionals," said the statement.

Similarly, a 64-year-old man from Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, with travel history to France returned to India on March 1. He also visited Himachal Pradesh, Puttaparthi and arrived here on March 21

to emerge as the 54th case.

Likewise, a 45-year-old man from Bengaluru, a contact of 25th case, is the 55th coronavirus positive case in Karnataka.

The three new patients have been admitted to designated hospitals even as the health department has initiated their contact search.

The State health department has requested the passengers who travelled with 36th positive case to contact it.

"Positive case No. 36 travelled in S3 coach, lower berth in the Mangalore Express from Mumbai, which departed on March 17 and arrived in Batkal on March 18. Passengers who travelled in the same coach may please contact the helpline," said the statement.

The 36th case was a 65-year-old man from the Uttara Kannada district who travelled to Dubai and returned to India via Mumbai on March 18. He took a train to Uttara Kannada. Sudhakar urged people to stay at home and be safe. IANS

## Man kills brother for stepping out during lockdown

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the first of its bizarre crime committed during the 21-day lockdown period, a 21-year-old youngster was killed by his elder brother here on Thursday, after his younger brother stepped out of home ignoring his repeated requests to stay indoors in view of the spread of coronavirus.

The incident took place at Kandivli's Samata Nagar locality in north Mumbai.

Identifying the deceased youngster as Durgesh Laxmi Thakur, the police said that they had arrested one Rajesh Laxmi Thakur (29) on charges of killing his younger brother.

"Durgesh used to work in a private company in Pune but came to Mumbai to stay with his brother during the shutdown," a senior police officer at the Samata Nagar police station said.

According to the police, Rajesh had been advising and warning Durgesh repeatedly

**The incident took place at Kandivli's Samata Nagar locality in north Mumbai**

against stepping out of home. However, Durgesh was not paying heed to his elder brother's advice.

When Durgesh returned home from outside this evening, Rajesh and his wife confronted him. This led to a fierce verbal duel between them. At one stage, an enraged Rajesh allegedly hit Durgesh with a sharp object. An injured Durgesh was rushed to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead on admission.

Rajesh, who owned a local saloon in Kandivli (East) stays with his wife near Gaondevi Road at Samta Nagar.

Meanwhile, Rajesh was booked under section 302 of IPC. He was immediately produced before in a local magistrate court, where he was remanded in police custody.



## Humanitarian crisis

Labourers don't have bank accounts and are out of the welfare arc. As they migrate, the flu could swamp rural India



State borders now present a picture of reverse human migration as thousands of daily wage earners, casual labourers and vendors, who do not have a bank account or even money to save, trudge back to their home States despite a lockdown. With no buses, trucks or trains, they have decided to surrender to destiny and return to their villages on foot. For even without a day's work, they would not be able to get food for their families or rent the hovel they live in at slum clusters. Food shortages and uncontrolled hoarding have meant that they have not been able to get basic rations over the last two days, leading to widespread panic. It is a hard choice between starvation and the flu. In the absence of soup kitchens or shelters, the vast numbers of India's unorganised labour market won't even be able to avail the economic relief measures announced by the Government. And they are going back home, thinking they will live off the land with whatever subsistence farming can give them. There will be a roof over their heads where they do not have to pay rent. There's no agricultural activity either, signalling a low output of food crops that may foist another problem on the nation later. This is a humanitarian crisis like no other. Let us not forget migrant returnees may have already unwittingly carried Coronavirus into India's vast rural swathes, which are unaware, unprepared and under-equipped to deal with the criticality of a health emergency of this scale. And considering they are travelling in clusters, all of them could be potentially infected by the time they reach from carriers among them. Then the whole purpose of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 21-day lockdown, to break the transmission cycle of the virus, would get defeated. Worst, rural India could be swamped. Assuming these "non-banked" people even avail of the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana and get 5 kg per person rice/wheat each month for the next three months in addition to 5 kg of rice/wheat that they already get, they would rather use these benefits at their village than be homeless and helpless in cities. This unprecedented flight of migrant workers out of our cities, be it Rajasthan or Telangana, poses a new challenge in our fight against the virus. Containing and settling them at shelters in a specified location pose the biggest challenge. Frankly, India has not had time to prepare for the human dimension of the virus or the lockdown. The WHO did lead it up the garden path, not pressing the panic buttons early on. There was a denial about the inevitability of community explosion, given the density of our population and the failure of Indians to take to social distancing, isolation and quarantining protocols seriously. Now experts are saying the lockdown would have been effective had it been enforced a week or two before and that we are still two steps behind the virus.

According to reports, over 2,000 daily wage workers in Ahmedabad took to their feet and other means of transport for their homes back in Rajasthan. Thousands of wagers are walking long distances, even to the extent of 100 and 300 km, and often on empty stomach to reach their villages. According to the Economic Survey of 2018-19, over 90 per cent of our total workforce is "informal." The worrying part is that the NITI Aayog estimates show that India's informal sector employees are approximately 85 per cent of all workers. The Economic Survey of 2016-2017 had indicated an annual flow of close to nine million migrants among States between 2011 and 2016. Internationally, too, migrants are posing newer challenges to managing the epidemic. Borders throughout the Middle East tend to be porous with political refugees, economic migrants and others often travelling along informal routes. It is very difficult under such circumstances to monitor who is entering and leaving what country. Also, these people cannot access public healthcare. This has caused much of the spread in nations around Iran, too. Now imagine that with our States. We are quite precariously perched but trying to flatten the curve would mean not just lockdowns or an economic package but aggressive testing, isolation and surveillance. Where are these facilities in rural India? If we are to ride this out and look ahead, there can be no two ways about rearranging a nation's health priorities. As the PM said, *Jaan hai to Jahaan hai*. Delhi's Central vista makeover, at ₹20,000 crore, can wait!

## Data crunch

Video-streaming services find themselves restricting data consumption across the world



As almost half of humanity finds itself under lockdown, some of the few companies that might be benefitting belong to the video-streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime globally, and others like Hotstar, Voot and MX Player in India. However, they also have had to face unique challenges, thanks to the Chinese contagion. Production of movies and television shows has come to a screeching halt, forcing players like Netflix to establish a \$100 million fund to ensure that production crews, many of whom do not have permanent jobs, have access to some funds at least. But the bigger problem is the pressure that such streaming services have put on mobile networks. With more people staying home and watching movies and television shows online, there has been a surge in video consumption.

As a result, both telecom operators and Governments across the world have requested that these popular services reduce the quality of the service. With high-definition streaming using upwards of two megabits per second and Ultra High Definition 4K streaming using up to 10 megabits per second, mobile firms, who are the main networks in India, are finding themselves under huge amounts of strain. Many streaming services have already announced that they would be suspending High Definition and Ultra-High Definition streaming on cellular networks with immediate effect. People consuming data on WiFi or broadband networks can still enjoy preferred quality streaming. During a time of a national emergency, which we are facing right now, mobile networks must be kept free. Heavy data consumption is clogging up the networks. While the amount of mobile data available and its prices have been a big boon for the Indian economy over the past two years, the fact is that reducing streaming quality to standard definition will make little or no difference on mobile phones and at the same time keep the networks free for emergencies. This is a responsible act by both the telecom operators and the streaming service providers. However, this thankfully does not apply to fibre and copper networks but the reach of those in Indian households is extremely limited in the first place. This, of course, highlights how India and the world need to strengthen their data networks and make them faster so that more people can use it. It also highlights how different companies get affected when a crisis of this nature emerges and how they are working around it. Hopefully, things will return to normal soon and people will go back to office and the days of "Netflix and Chill" will return but for now, "Netflix and stay at home."

While the Modi Government deserves wholehearted support in tackling COVID, a few correctives should be in place. Wholehearted and not unthinking support is the need of the hour



AJOY KUMAR

We live in strange and unnerving times. India and the world are currently in the midst of a raging battle against a common enemy — Coronavirus. The total number of cases in India at the time of writing stood at 686 and the number of deaths at 13. Both these numbers, unfortunately, are expected to rise over the weeks that will follow. Numbers across the world are staggering. The death toll in Italy and Spain have reached in the thousands, eclipsing that of China's.

The most worrisome aspect of the virus is not the fatality associated with it — though for the elderly and those without adequate medical care this figure is frighteningly high — but its speed of transmission. The virus took just 67 days to reach the first one lash and in the next 15 days, it infected the next two lash people across the world. The modern world has rarely witnessed an enemy about whom we know so little and which moves relentlessly and ruthlessly. Though this does not require saying, yet: We cannot beat the virus unless we pull in the same direction. This is not the time to squabble as there will possibly never be a more unifying enemy in our lifetime.

In the light of this very different world that you and I have woken up to, it is important to support and recognize the efforts of the Indian Government, healthcare professionals and workers, the media, policemen and all other individuals who have put themselves in the line of fire. The Prime Minister has our full support in tackling the virus. While his decision to impose a nationwide lockdown may seem to be a bit too harsh, we must keep in mind that the Government has our best interests in mind. The Finance Minister has also been announcing several relief measures for the poor and the marginalised. I cannot commend this move enough. With the economy, especially small businesses, in shock, I hope this is the first step in dealing with this unprecedented crisis.

During this time, we must also be grateful to the country's federal structure, several Chief Ministers, most notably Arvind Kejriwal and Pinarayi Vijayan, who have truly shown their leadership capabilities at an hour when this quality is necessary and found wanting at times. While I endorse and support the measures taken by the Government to tackle the unique beast of COVID-19, I, as an Indian, would also like to put forward a few suggestions and perspectives that I believe, can aid our fight against this dreadful disease and, hopefully, see us emerge victorious at the end of this long battle. I hope that the many trollers, who often attack any piece of writing by looking at the writer rather than the content, see this article in that spirit. Stranger things are happening in times of Corona.

**The need for a down-up approach:** While the lockdown is necessary to contain the virus, it is important to ensure that the cure has (i) the desired effect, ie, it prevents

## Force majeure

# WE CAN STOP CORONA

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF RESPIRATORY DISEASES LIKE COVID-19



people from congregating together in large groups and (ii) does not provide greater pain to the very sections of society it seeks to protect than the disease itself. The Prime Minister's speech while commendable in many ways was found significantly wanting on this count.

By giving just a few hours' time for the 21-day lockdown to kick in and that, too, without adequate disclosures/detailing regarding the provision for essential services, the Prime Minister caused widespread panic across the country. There were massive crowds that assembled around grocery stores and chemists, fearing the worst. The impact of this crowding will only be seen later but it was distinctly avoidable.

The Prime Minister, for example, could have taken a note from the Delhi Government, which had itself called for a lockdown two days prior to his announcement. The Delhi Government has been more stringent than the Union Government pertaining to certain measures. The only difference has been the approach followed by both. The former has rather been more down-up than top-down in its tactics. This system has been successfully implemented by various firms as well, where employees and workers at the ground level have been able to provide accurate feedback on what measures work while deal-

ing with the customers.

In the case of Governments, the customer is the vast population of this great country. Therefore, as is becoming more obvious day by day, a top-down approach does not work. Instead, we need a clear line of communication between the Prime Minister and the public. This includes taking a press conference where the media, which has been and will be crucial in highlighting the shortcomings of the Government's measures, can highlight questions that the public, too, have been raising. Such press conferences can be done effectively through social media platforms like Facebook live events with limited access to accredited journalists. However, to limit this only to the Prime Minister would be a big mistake. Chief Ministers, too, need to follow a similar approach. This is why Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal must be applauded for being proactive in this regard.

Similarly, there are widespread reports of police officers in a number of States disrupting the supply of essential services by lashing their *lathis* on workers, trying to reach their place of work or transporting essential services. E-tailers allege that up to 15,000 litres of milk and 10,000 kg of vegetables were dumped due to police action. This must be stopped at the earliest. Certain Police Commissioners have held dis-

cussions with e-commerce service providers and come to the conclusion that they would pass instructions to their officers. However, this step must be taken a little further. Officers must hold Facebook live discussions where citizens can highlight areas where they are facing discomfort or harassment. I do not blame the policemen entirely on this count as till now, they have only been given broad guidelines to ensure no movement on the roads. The requirement at this stage is one of nuance, which cannot come from a top-down approach towards governance.

**An active bureaucracy:** Another step which I think can help is to involve the bureaucracy. I have held many discussions with bureaucrats, and they feel they can contribute in alleviating the issues faced by the public while also maintaining social distancing and following all lockdown norms. One clear area where this can help is with respect to daily-wage and migrant workers. As a result of the lockdown, daily-wage and migrant workers have been left to fend for themselves. The sudden decision to stop all trains and buses from inter-State travel has left lakhs and lakhs of workers in the middle of nowhere or without a roof over their heads. There are numerous stories of workers and children walking hundreds of kilometres

to reach their villages.

While a large number of readers will have the luxury of dealing with the panic and pain caused due to the outbreak of Coronavirus with their families by their side, this essential support system is not within the reach for these migrant workers. On this count, I plead that the Government takes steps while acting within the lockdown protocol, to ensure that these workers can be transported to their home States in buses with strict social distancing norms and sanitation practices in place. The bureaucracy can help implement these steps. It is in times like these that the bureaucracy can and must come to the fore, even if they do so in regulated numbers. By allowing a large number of them to sit at home, we are being deprived of this valuable resource.

Of course, it is easier to speak than it is to write and easier to write than to practise but just like every Indian, I want the country to come out of this crisis as a shining example to the world. While I support the Modi Government wholeheartedly in its efforts to tackle the virus, wholeheartedly does not mean unthinkingly. In order to beat the Coronavirus, wholehearted and not unthinking support is the need of the hour. (The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

## SOUNDBITE

BCCI should not wait forever to start the women's IPL. The board must make it happen by next year on a smaller scale before gradually developing it.

**Indian cricketer**  
—Mithali Raj



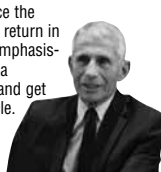
It is important that we start a people's movement against COVID-19, just like we did under the leadership of the Prime Minister to make the country open defecation free.

**Megastar**  
—Amitabh Bachchan



There is a strong chance the new Coronavirus could return in seasonal cycles. This emphasises the need to develop a vaccine, test it quickly and get it ready by the next cycle.

**Top US scientist**  
—Anthony Fauci



Mufti's continued detention during lockdown is cruel. There was never any justification to detain everyone in the first place and none at all to keep them detained during a lockdown.

**NC leader**  
—Omar Abdullah



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Lockdown imperative

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Total lockdown" (March 26). This decision taken by the Centre for the nation is a commendable. But the challenge now is to convince people to not only stay indoors but remain calm. People should be advised not to resort to hoarding that creates further hurdles for the Government. Restrictions on the public and the availability of essential services should be honoured by civil enforcement agencies while also keeping in mind genuine requirements.

**Varun Dambal**  
Bengaluru

### Myths vs facts

Sir — Foreign media has been inundating the world with reports of the "success of China" in combating the proliferation of COVID-19 in Wuhan. *Prima facie*, such reports appear to be legitimate. They are commensurate with the claims made by the Chinese Government. As of Tuesday, China reported 3,277 deaths with 81,171 positive cases.

According to the Government, no new cases were reported for the past five days in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak.

However, a recent report by the *Epoch Times* would cast doubts on the aforementioned data. The report reveals the alarming disappearance of around 21 million cell phone

### Misreading Kashmir

This refers to the editorial, "Back to the people" (March 25). The Kashmir Valley has been subjected to violation of citizen rights for close to eight months now. There has been a blanket hold on the press and newspapers. Internet services still stand suspended. The cavalier promulgation of Section 144 and its unending nature is a poor reflection on governance. Only a Government that is ill-equipped to manage even transient socio-political aberrations would be transfixed into a freeze mode as this. We have brought on damage to the region's economy and worse, our national fabric.

It has now dawned on the Government that the absence of the Abdullahs from the scene is not so inconsequential to the new narrative it has designed for the Kashmir palimpsest. Without elected leaders, there can be no engagement with the people, who have been erased and forgotten for so long. Either it runs an inanimate State with mounting disillusionment or gathers its wits and acumen to infuse the real meaning of integration of the State with the pulse of the nation, with or without Article 370



and any other legalese. There was hardly any justification for the continued incarceration of the Abdullahs under the Public Safety Act. Now, the Government must release other leaders, too, especially former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti.

**R Narayanan**  
Navi Mumbai

### Beef up tracking system

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Total lockdown" (March 26). The decision taken by the Government to shut down the country for three weeks is historic but not enough. The next task is to trace every traveller who entered the country after a specific date and subject them to a diagnostic test. This is a gigantic exercise and this is why the private sector must be roped in.

**Shambhavi**  
Via email

### For the sake of existence

Sir — Most nations have been put under house arrest in the wake of the spread of a deadly virus. With this all kinds of liberties, be it the right to free movement, entertainment or the pursuit of happiness have been curtailed. But it must not be forgotten that the right to live is the most sacred human right.

**Manisha**  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### COD a boon for everyone

The Govt will be able to improve efficiency and citizens will be saved from the unnecessary hassle of visiting various offices



DINESH TYAGI

Recently, students of a college in Delhi University, while being acquainted with the "Digital India" initiative of the Narendra Modi Government, were asked how many of them had gone to a Government office for availing services. About 90 per cent of them raised their hands. When they were asked how many of them would like to go back to the Government office for availing its services, the response was a big, resounding "No" from almost all of them. Asked to give a reason for this response, many of them cited long queues, uncooperative staff, being made to run from one counter to the other, rudeness, tardiness and the lackadaisical attitude of Government servants, as some of the factors that would prevent them from going back. And this was not just restricted to departments run by State administrations, it also included offices run by the Central Government.

The writing on the wall is clear. Given a choice, no one, particularly the new generation, wants to visit Government offices to get the simplest of work done. The experience of visiting a Government office, even if it is equipped with computers and air conditioners and other modern amenities, has not been very good for common citizens, particularly the younger generation, which is short on time and patience and has gotten used to getting what they want at the click of the mouse or a tap on a touchscreen. Apart from this, the inconvenience of travelling from their place of residence or work to the Government department, the time required to be spent on getting the job done, procedural ambiguity and availability of alternatives for such service delivery, play a major role in putting people off Government offices.

Today, there are various products being purchased through endless e-commerce platforms and services being availed through technological platforms where citizens need not visit the brick and mortar shops/offices. In view of these emerging technological advancements, the expectations of citizens have enhanced significantly and they are willing to pay for services delivered to them at their doorstep and the convenience of making payment at the time of delivery of services, which is called Cash on Delivery (COD).

In fact, it was Flipkart, which after its launch in 2007, revolutionised e-commerce through its COD payment model. Thanks to the COD model, Flipkart's products reached far-flung areas of the country. People, who did not have the facility of online banking or credit cards, were the ones who propelled the COD model.

A Nielsen Global Connected Commerce Survey report says that about 83 per cent of shoppers in India favour utilising cash for all their online purchases. Customers also hesitate to input card information because of different online frauds and hacking. It says that the larger part of the payment made by buyers for online stores like Flipkart, Amazon and so on, was COD, where 72 per cent were from significant urban communities and 90 per cent from small towns.

The online retail sector is booming and COD is a major contributor to this. Despite the fact that e-wallets and internet banking services are on the rise, the COD payment model is still preferred by a large section of society. Payment choices like internet banking, credit and debit cards and e-wallets cater to just 30 per cent of online purchases as compared to COD. One sector, which could further boost the COD payment model, is the delivery of Government services. Citizens generally require birth certificates, domicile/residence certificates, caste certificates, income certificates, ration card, election card, school/college certificate, marriage certificate, land records, land registration documents, various permissions/licences for doing business and organising social functions/events and so on. Filing Government challans or taxes, getting various licences are some other services that could be delivered at home.

Citizens should be able to avail services through online processes where they can attach various documents as required by the Government and the Government/institutions concerned should send the certificate/licences/documents to their residence/office after finishing the verification and other due processes. Citizens are willing to pay the courier charges and "fee" as prescribed by the Government.

COD for Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services is one business model which can do wonders for both the Government as well as the people. While the Government will be able to cut costs in terms of office set-ups and improve efficiency, citizens will be saved from the unnecessary hassles of visiting Government offices.

The COD payment model from delivery of G2C services would have multiple advantages in terms of reduced carbon emissions as people won't have to drive to the service centres. There will be massive time saving and fewer man-days lost as well. It will cut graft and the system of touts as officers/staff will process the applications on a "first come, first serve" basis and reduce undue favouritism. The COD payment model for G2C services will redefine the process and character of Government services and bring out the "service" part in the true sense. COD for G2C services will be a game-changer for enhancing transparency in Government service delivery.

(The writer is CEO, Common Service Centre, SPV)

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

I WOULD JUST LOVE TO HAVE THE COUNTRY OPENED UP AGAIN AND RARING TO GO BACK TO NORMAL BY EASTER.  
 —US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



WE URGE BUSINESSES TO LISTEN TO PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ON SOCIAL DISTANCING. WE'LL RETURN TO WORK WHEN WE SAFELY AND RESPONSIBLY CAN.  
 —NEIL BRADLEY  
 US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S CHIEF POLICY OFFICER

# What can we do for India?

Citizens are very conscious of the fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution. However, are we equally aware of our duties towards our nation, especially during a crisis?



CHITTARVU RAGHU

The Prime Minister had appealed for a "Janta (people) Curfew" on March 22 in a bid to prevent the deadly Coronavirus from spreading into the community on a larger scale. At that time, Narendra Modi's appeal got an overwhelming response from all citizens and we stood together to do his bidding. Unfortunately post the Janta Curfew, people are not taking the 21-day lockdown announced by Modi seriously and are coming out of the homes.

For instance, in Hyderabad's Hi-tech City, where most of the highly-educated software professionals reside and software companies are located, there was a major traffic jam on March 25 and the streets were filled with people. Similar violations of the curfew are being reported from other parts of the country, like Delhi, Noida, Chandigarh and so on. This is despite repeated warnings by the Government about the need for social distancing to stem the spread of the Coronavirus.

We have witnessed the impact of the virus in Italy and the US due to the lack of social distancing, despite constant reminders by the Governments there on the importance of doing so. Citizens of India, and the world at large, are very conscious of the fundamental rights as guaranteed under the respective Constitutions of their countries. However, are we equally conscious of our duties towards our countries? As the citizens of India, we are obligated to abide by the fundamental duties contemplated under Article 51A of our Constitution. Article 51A was incorporated into the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment in 1976 and came into effect from January 3, 1977. The Article contemplates fundamental duties that citizens of the country are obligated to follow. These include abiding by the laws and the directions issued by the State in the interest of the public. These are all constitutional obligations cast upon the citizens to help in the promotion of the spirit of patriotism and for upholding the unity of the country.

Pursuant to the same, we performed our fundamental duty when we responded to the call for the "Janta Curfew." Post the March 22 curfew, we still continue to have obligations towards the nation's security and the health of its people. We should not only enjoy the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution but we are also obligated to adhere to the fundamental duties.

The Government has got every right to give appropriate directions in such times of calamities and we are obliged to follow the same. In case we do not discharge our obligations in relation to our fundamental duties/obligations as contemplated under Article 51A, the State would be entitled to register cases against us under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), more particularly under Section 269 and 270 of the IPC.

Section 269 says that, "Whoever unlawfully or negligently does any act, which is and which he knows or has reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life shall be punished with imprisonment up to six months."

Section 270 of the IPC also implies that, "Whoever maliciously does any act, which is and which he knows or has reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term, which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both."

The Government may also invoke the Epidemic Disease Act, 1887, for better prevention of spread of dangerous epidemic diseases. The

“IT IS TIME FOR US TO REALISE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND FOLLOW THE SOCIAL DISTANCING AND LOCKDOWN INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO THE LETTER. IF WE EXPECT OUR GOVERNMENT TO RESPECT OUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS THEN WE HAVE TO PERFORM OUR FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES, TOO. IT IS NOT A ONE-WAY STREET. IT IS MANDATED BY THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR COUNTRY”



Central Government may take measures as warranted and any violation of the same constitutes an offence under Section 188 of the IPC, which stipulates that any disobedience of an order promulgated by a public servant is an offence and shall be punished with imprisonment for a month.

In case State Governments are unable to channelise financial resources, in the light of the present calamity which obviously has an enormous adverse effect on the country's economy, the Central Government may invoke Article 360 of the Constitution and impose financial emergency. The cost of the COVID-19 lockdown in India has been pegged at ₹9 lakh crore or four per cent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to a report by British brokerage Barclays. A report by Nomura had said that as over 75 per cent of the Indian economy will be shut down during the 21-day period, the lockdown will lead to a direct output loss of approximately 4.5 per cent.

At present, almost 80 per cent of the major financial centres of the country have been locked down, including commercial cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata and so on. The US dollar is at an all-time high against the Indian currency i.e., equal to ₹75.62.

Most of our economy is dependent on small businesses and also the daily-wage earners. In the light of the total lockdown of the country, the State has to take care of the daily-wage workers who are deprived of their livelihood during this period as it would be impossible for them to survive without it.

In fact, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a series of financial relief and welfare measures on Thursday for the farmers, the poor, widows, daily-wage and migrant workers as

the country prepares for a long lockdown. The Government announced a ₹1.7 lakh crore Prime Minister Gareeb Kalyan Yojana. Sitharaman announced that the relief package would include direct benefit cash transfers, free Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to families living Below the Poverty Line (BPL), grains and pulses for the poor while the middle class would be able to withdraw funds from their Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) account. The Government will pay EPF contribution, both of the employer and employee, for three months for all those establishments with less than 100 employees out of which 90 per cent earn less than ₹15,000 per month. It also announced collateral-free loan doubled to ₹20 lakh to 63 lakh women self-help groups that will help seven crore households.

The Government also announced insurance of ₹50 lakh for medical professionals who are on the Coronavirus frontline. As of now, the Government is fulfilling its responsibilities towards the citizens.

However, Article 360 says that if the President is satisfied that the situation has arisen whereby the financial stability or credit of India or any part thereof is threatened, he/she may declare a financial emergency.

During this period, the executive authority of the Union is empowered to give directions to the States to follow the same. Any such direction may also include a provision requiring the reduction of salaries and allowances of all or any class or people serving a State or the Union Government.

A provision requiring all Money Bills and other Financial Bills to be reserved for the consideration of the President after they are passed by the Legislature of the State is also there. A proclamation issued under Article 360

shall remain in force for two months unless before the expiry of the period it is approved by both the Houses of the Parliament. Once approved, it remains in force until revoked by the President. Till now no such financial emergency has been imposed under Article 360 and the Government is doing all it can to mitigate the financial woes of the people that have been brought upon them by the lockdown. However, this may not be the case in the long run as the Coronavirus cases across the country are rising exponentially on a daily basis.

State Governments across the country are preparing quarantine centres in preparation of the expected onslaught of the virus if we are unable to contain the contagion. In these circumstances it may become necessary for the Central Government to take the appropriate decision to invoke Article 360 of the Constitution or else the State Governments may face a severe financial crunch.

The Modi Government has taken the lockdown decision in the nick of time although it could have done it a bit earlier. And all the citizens are obligated to heed the advice and warnings given by the State and Central Governments in this regard by confining themselves to their homes and only come out in case there is an emergency and for buying essential items.

It is time for us to realise the seriousness of the pandemic and follow the social distancing and lockdown instructions given by the Government to the letter. If we expect our Government to respect our fundamental rights then we have to perform our fundamental duties, too. It is not a one-way street. It is mandated by the Constitution.

(The writer is an Advocate in the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts)

# COVID-19 will hit the farm sector

If sowing is delayed in the Zaid season or farmers miss this window because of late delivery of seeds, or no seeds at all, we are possibly looking at a famine-like situation emerging and also extreme feed shortages coupled with food price inflations later this year



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

Humanity is besieged by the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) at the moment. However, more than the virus, its manifestation has gained notoriety in the world. As economies plummet, fear reigns over our minds, streets and homes. Sneezing and coughing have become a reprehensible act in these times. The Indian Government, like others around the world, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) are trying very

hard to contain this global pandemic. But the threat surrounds us. A major world power like China has fallen prey to this disease. Iran, Italy and now the US are being ravaged by it and it is only a matter of weeks, if not days, before it hits the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations and India, with its full might. As of now we have 694 confirmed cases and 14 deaths in the country but this number is going up daily. As a safety measure, the Union Government has announced a 21-day lockdown across the country. It is a commendable step to curb the spread of the virus.

But ahead of the curve, black markets were already trading new commodities — masks, soaps, disinfectants and so on. People continue to hoard supplies. Very soon black markets will load up on essential medicines, foods and so on and as the desperation level and death toll rise, the agrarian sector and seeds will be

devoured by the Coronavirus mayhem, too.

Farming is the backbone of our economy and most of our agriculture today depends on quality seeds and the organised seed sector. Our food production is also dependent on availability of human resources or farm labour and free movement of agricultural products — including seeds, fertilisers and so on. Both are restricted at this time. The US has shut its borders followed by the European Union (EU) and the world has cancelled visas and restricted the movement of people.

Even when the lockdown in India is lifted, the current environment of fear can only herald decreased availability of farm hands in the near future. There will be a rise in farm wages for this season and we may see the cost of production of foods rising. The threat is even greater in the poultry sector, as prices of chicken in Delhi have



nosedived. People are falsely conjoining avian flu with COVID-19 and this is leading to greater losses in the poultry sector. Even before the 21-day curfew began, the workers were reluctant to work on poultry farms due to the rumours.

The global seed sector is deeply dependent on a global supply chain of production regions and no one country is a seed sovereign by itself. The freezing of ports and seeds shipments will derail agricultural productivity later this year. Small and

medium seed traders and small seed companies may also be at risk, as they don't store vast stocks of seeds. They rely on the international and domestic shipments before each season. A disruption will be detrimental to their business.

World over, March and April are a very important time for planting spring crops such as maize, sunflower, soybean, canola, spring wheat and barley, open field vegetables and so on, north of the Equator and autumn crops to the south. In India too, we will see the sowing of Zaid season crops soon. If sowing is delayed in the Zaid season or farmers miss this window because of late delivery of seeds or no seeds at all, we are possibly looking at a famine-like situation emerging and also extreme feed shortages coupled with food price inflations later this year.

The International Seed Federation (ISF) has sought to assuage fears citing the European

Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (BfR) statement: "There is currently no evidence that food, including seed, is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus. Transmission via surfaces, which have recently been contaminated with the virus is, nonetheless, possible through smear infections. However, this is only likely to occur during a short period after contamination, due to the relatively low stability of Coronaviruses in the environment." What this means is that there is no evidence yet and seeds may not be a gateway.

These are tough times and call for courage and truth. We need to make informed and scientific evidence-based decisions so that COVID-19 doesn't evolve into another monster which threatens not just our health but also our agriculture. The Indian Government and other Governments

of the world should not impose any restrictions on agrarian products, including seeds. Seed companies and exporters should take responsibility for the health and safety of workers involved in the shipments. Port authorities have strenuous months ahead due to the massive work of screening shipments and people and they should be aided in this. The virus spreads from person to person, so the latest WHO directives should be broadcast and people and workers need to be made aware of them. Shipments of seeds anyways have a very low risk of spreading viruses and hence should not be stopped or delayed. The world must come together in this time of crisis. We need to become conscious and alert as this pandemic affects each one of us. We have to fight not only the Coronavirus but fear itself.

(The writer is Director, Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India)

# G20 nations to inject \$5 tn into global economy

## Modi pitches for new crisis management protocol

Let us put human beings rather than economic targets at centre of our vision for global prosperity, cooperation: PM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the world reels under the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged the powerful G-20 grouping to put human beings rather than economic targets at the centre of the vision for global prosperity and cooperation.

In his address at a video conference of the G-20 leaders, Modi also pitched for developing a new crisis management protocol and procedures to deal with global health crisis besides significantly boosting capability of organisations like the WHO, Government sources said.



He also said G-20 should work together to reduce economic hardships, particularly of the poor nations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic which has killed over 21,000 people and infected more than 470,000 globally. The Prime Minister called for ushering in a new globali-

sation for collective well being of entire humankind, noting that medical research should be freely and openly available for all countries.

He said empowering the WHO was necessary for development of effective vaccines to deal with global pandemics. "Let us put human beings rather than economic targets at the centre of our vision for global prosperity and cooperation," Modi was quoted as saying by the sources.

He also stressed on developing a more adaptive, responsive, affordable and human healthcare system that can be deployed globally to deal with healthcare crisis.

AFP ■ RIYADH

G20 nations pledged a "united front" on Thursday in the fight against coronavirus, saying they were injecting USD 5 trillion into the global economy to counter the pandemic amid forecasts of a deep recession.

US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin joined the emergency videoconference chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Salman, who called for coordinated action while facing pressure to end an oil price war between Riyadh and Moscow that has roiled energy markets.

The talks come amid criticism that the G20 has been slow to address the COVID-19 pandemic, which has left more than 21,000 dead worldwide according to official data, and triggered financial shock waves as more than three billion people are locked down.

"We are strongly committed to presenting a united front against this common threat,"

the leaders said in a joint statement after the summit. "We are injecting over USD 5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures, and guarantee schemes to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic."

As concerns mount for poorer countries without access to capital markets or adequate health facilities, G20 leaders also pledged to work with bodies such as the International Monetary Fund to deploy a "robust" financial package to support developing nations.

"It is our responsibility to extend a helping hand to developing countries and (the) least developed countries to enable them to build their capacities and improve their infrastructure to overcome this crisis and its repercussions," King Salman said. The world's 20 most industrialised countries are scrambling to defend their virus-wracked economies amid forecasts they will likely plunge

into a recession. On Wednesday, the financial ratings agency Moody's estimated the G20's overall gross domestic product would contract by 0.5 per cent this year, with the US economy shrinking by 2.0 percent and the eurozone by 2.2 per cent.

This week, French President Emmanuel Macron and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping pushed for an emergency G20 summit to limit the impact of the pandemic.

The lack of immediate action stood in contrast to the 2008 financial crisis, when the group quickly swung into action to mobilise assistance for vulnerable countries.

Talk of global coordination has yet to resonate under Trump's isolationist presidency. On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo took aim at China, saying the top diplomats of the Group of Seven agreed with him that Beijing was waging a "disinformation" campaign about the pandemic.

## Xi calls for all-out global war against corona, moots tariff cuts

PTI ■ BEIJING

Battling the coronavirus at home, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday called for an all-out global war against the pandemic and proposed tariff cuts and removal of trade barriers to prevent the global economy slipping into recession.

Speaking at the unprecedented virtual G20 Summit on COVID-19, Xi said the world needs to be resolute in fighting an all-out global war against coronavirus which has created an unprecedented health crisis.

"This is a virus that respects no borders. The outbreak we are battling is our common enemy. All must work together to build a strongest global network of control and treatment that the world has ever seen," Xi said through videoconference.

Xi's statement came amid growing international criti-

cism of China's reported failure to be fully transparent in reporting the COVID-19 outbreak in the central Chinese city of Wuhan last year.

Xi said the community of nations must move swiftly to stem the spread of the virus and China will be more than ready to share its good practices, conduct joint research and development of drugs and vaccines, and provide assistance where it can to countries hit by the pandemic.

He said China has set up its online COVID-19 knowledge centre that is open to all countries. About the pandemic's impact on global economy, Xi asked G20 members to cut tariffs, remove barriers and facilitate the unfettered flow of trade.

He called on all G20 members to take collective actions, send a strong signal and restore confidence for global economic recovery.

## Around the Globe

- Iran reports 157 new virus deaths, imposes intercity ban
- Students can return to India after travel ban is lifted: Embassy
- China seeks opening of border with Pak to supply medical equipment
- Indian doctors want UK PM to scrap 'unfair' surcharge as health service battles COVID19
- WHO 'very much' sided with China on coronavirus, says US President Donald Trump
- China reports 67 new imported coronavirus cases
- Moscow announces deaths of two patients with coronavirus
- Coronavirus deaths in France jump to over 1,300
- Home Secretary Priti Patel looks at UK border closures akin to India: Report
- Germany ramps up coronavirus tests to 500,000 a week
- Virus-stricken cruise ship told to leave Australian waters
- Nepal to reopen key border points with China to allow supply of essential goods
- London hospitals cope with 'continuous tsunami' of coronavirus cases
- Need a war-time plan to win the war against COVID-19: Guterres at G20 virtual summit



## VIRUS TOLL OVER 21,000

AFP ■ MADRID

As world leaders hold online crisis talks on Thursday on the coronavirus pandemic that has forced three billion people into lockdown and claimed more than 21,000 lives.

With the disease tearing around the globe at a terrifying pace, warnings are multiplying over its economic consequences, and experts say it could cause more damage than the Great Depression.

Amid squabbling between the leaders of China and the US over who is to blame, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for the world to act together to halt the menace. "COVID-19 is threatening the whole of humanity," he said. "Global action and solidarity are crucial. Individual country responses are not going to be enough." The global lockdown — which also took in India's huge population this week — tightened further on Thursday as Russia announced it was grounding all international flights, while Moscow's mayor ordered the closure of cafes, shops and parks.

Tokyo's millions of citizens have been told to stay home and tourism-dependent Thailand has shuttered its borders. Economists say the restrictions imposed around the world could cause the most violent recession in recent history.

"The G20 economies will experience an unprecedented shock in the first half of this year and will contract in 2020 as a

whole," ratings agency Moody's said.

Unemployment rates are expected to soar — as much as 30 per cent in the US — according to James Bullard, president of the St Louis Federal Reserve.

Leaders of the G20 major economies will hold a virtual huddle later Thursday in the shadow of such dire predictions. "As the world confronts the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges to healthcare systems and the global economy, we convene this extraordinary G20 summit to unite efforts towards a global response," tweeted the king of Saudi Arabia. Saudi currently holds the rotating G20 presidency.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said richer nations needed to offer support to low and middle

income countries. The devastating effect on poorer nations was laid bare on Thursday when the Philippines announced that nine frontline doctors had died after contracting COVID-19.

Three large Manila hospitals said this week they had reached capacity and would no longer accept new coronavirus cases. Hundreds of medical staff are undergoing 14-day self-quarantines after suspected exposure, the hospitals said.

The death toll from the virus, which emerged in China late last year, continued to grow, with the US becoming the sixth country to hit four figures. Almost 1,050 people are now known to have died in the United States, with nearly 70,000 confirmed infections, a tally by Johns Hopkins University showed.



AP ■ MADRID

The number of coronavirus infections closed in on a half-million worldwide Thursday, with both Italy and the US on track to surpass China, and a record-shattering 3.3 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week in a stark demonstration of the damage to the world's biggest economy.

Health care systems in Europe and New York buckled under the strain, with Spain's death toll climbing to more than 4,000.

In the US, an unprecedented \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package to help businesses, hospitals and ordinary Americans make it through the crisis cleared the Senate and is expected to be voted on in the House on Friday.

At least 2.8 billion people, or more than one-third of the Earth's population, are under severe travel restrictions.

But the head of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, scolded world leaders for wasting precious time in the fight against the virus that has already killed more than 22,000



people and infected over 480,000, thrown millions out of work and ravaged the world economy.

"The time to act was actually more than a month ago or two months ago," he said Wednesday. "We squandered the first window of opportunity. ... This is a second opportunity, which we should not squander and do everything to suppress and control this virus."

In the United States, where deaths passed 1,050 and at least 70,000 people were infected, the damage from the widespread economic shutdown was made plain when the number of people applying for

unemployment benefits last week was more than four times the old record, set in 1982.

A political battle, meanwhile, raged between those demanding urgent action for a long siege against the pandemic, like New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, and President Donald Trump.

Trump has expressed hope churches could return to normal by Easter on April 12, and grumbled that "our country wasn't built to be shut down" — apparently concerned that the outbreak's devastating effects on financial markets and employment will harm his reelection chances. Democrats

say Trump is putting the economy ahead of the health and safety of Americans.

"I'd like to say, let's get back to work next Friday," said Joe Biden, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination. "That'd be wonderful. But it can't be arbitrary."

In Brazil, the country's governors are defying President Jair Bolsonaro over his call to reopen schools and businesses, dismissing his argument that the "cure" of widespread shutdowns is worse than the disease. As of Thursday, the country had more than 2,500 cases and 59 deaths.

New York has emerged as a virus hotspot. The city's mammoth convention center is being turned into a hospital. The state recorded more than 350 deaths.

Spain has become the country in Europe where the outbreak is spreading the fastest.

On Thursday, the Health Ministry reported reported nearly 8,600 new infections and 655 deaths, bringing the total cases to over 56,000 and more than 4,000 fatalities — second only to Italy's death toll of about 7,500.

## Spain toll over 4,000

AFP ■ MADRID

The coronavirus death toll in Spain surged to 4,089 after 655 people died within 24 hours, the Health Ministry said on Thursday.

It was a 19 per cent increase on figures released Wednesday by the authorities in Spain, which has the world's second highest death toll from the disease after Italy.

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 rose to 56,188, the ministry said. Despite a national lockdown imposed on March 14, which parliament on Thursday agreed to extend until April 11, both deaths and infections have continued to mount, with officials warning this week would be particularly bad.

But the rise in the number of new deaths was smaller than that recorded on Wednesday when the figure rose by 738 or 27 per cent.

Health authorities are hoping it will soon become clear whether the lockdown is having the desired effect.

The Madrid region has suffered the brunt of the epidemic with 17,166 infections — just under a third of the total — and 2,090 deaths, or 51 per cent of the national figure.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose wife is infected with the virus, has said this is the country's most difficult moment since its 1936-39 civil war.

"Only the oldest, who knew the hardships of the civil war and its aftermath, can remember collective situations that were harsher than the current one. The other generations in Spain have never, ever had to face as a collective something so hard," he said when he imposed the state of emergency on March 14.

Spain's demographics partly explain why it has been one of the worst-affected nations.

## Coronavirus cases in US cross 65,000 with more than 1,000 fatalities

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has approved major disaster declarations on public health for many US states, including worst-hit New York, as the total number of confirmed cases in the country crossed 65,000 mark and more than 1,000 people have died due to the deadly coronavirus.

According to the Johns Hopkins coronavirus tracker, the number of deaths caused by the novel coronavirus in the US rose to 1,031 with 68,572 confirmed cases. The United States has the third highest number of confirmed cases behind China and Italy.

In addition to declaring a national emergency, President Trump has approved major

disaster declarations for New York, California, Washington, Iowa, Louisiana, North Carolina, Texas and Florida.

This is probably for the first time in recent memory that over half a dozen states have been approved for major disaster declarations on public health.

Condition continues to deteriorate in New York City, which has emerged as the epicentre of the COVID-19 in the US.

By Tuesday, the number of confirmed cases crossed 30,000 and at least 285 people died. New York was followed by neighbouring New Jersey with 4,402 cases and 62 fatalities. California, with nearly 3,000 cases and 65 deaths is under lockdown.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY**

General public is hereby informed that this boy namely **Manish S/o Pramod Gupta R/o Jhuggi N1-8-A633, G.K. Block, Wazirpur, Delhi** **Age : 13 years, Height : 3'6", Face : Oval, Complexion : Fair, Build : Thin, wearing chocolate colour pant, cream colour shirt and black colour shoes in feet, has been missing since 07.11.2013 from the area of P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi.** In this regard FIR No. 464/13 dated 09.11.2013 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing boy may kindly inform to the following:-

**E-mail: cbc@cbl.gov.in** **SHO :**  
**Website: http://cbl.nic.in** **P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi**  
**Fax: 24368639,** **Tel. No. : 011-27636000,**  
**Tel.: 24368638/24368641** **27631600**

DP/126/NW/20

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL**

General public is hereby informed that this girl namely **Ruby D/o Idrish R/o H.No. 312, L-1, Gali No. 1, Sangam Vihar, New Delhi** **Age : 16 years, Complexion : Fair, Height : 5'3", Build : Thin, Face : Long, wearing suit and salwar, has been missing/kidnapped since 14.03.2020 at about 10:30 A.M. from the area of P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi.** In this regard FIR No. 108/20 dated 15.03.2020 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi.

Any person having information or clue about this missing/kidnapped girl may kindly inform to the following:-

**E-mail: cbc@cbl.gov.in** **SHO : P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi,**  
**Website: http://cbl.nic.in** **Tel. No. 011-29551326, 29551597**  
**Fax: 24368639,** **8750870835**  
**Tel.: 24368638/24368641**

DP/705/D/20

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**

**See Section 82 Cr.P.C.**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Mukesh S/o Rajender R/o C-141, Astal Colony, Bawana, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence FIR No. 210/18 u/s 279/337/482 IPC & 33/58 Excise Act. Act. P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Mukesh** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Mukesh** absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Mukesh** accused of FIR No. 210/18 u/s 279/337/482 IPC & 33/58 Excise Act. Act. P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **15.05.2020**.

**By Order: Sh. Vaibhav Mehta**  
**Metropolitan Magistrate-02 (North),**  
**Court No. 114, 1st Floor,**  
**Rohini Courts, Delhi**

DP/145/ON/20

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**

**See Section 82 Cr.P.C.**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Sanvra S/o Laxman R/o VPO Solia, Teh. Sarvar, Distt. Ajmer, Rajasthan** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 199/19 u/s 454/380/411/34 IPC P.S. Kirti Nagar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Sanvra** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Sanvra** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Sanvra** accused of FIR No. 199/19 u/s 454/380/411/34 IPC P.S. Kirti Nagar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **05.05.2020**.

**By Order : Sh. Jagminder Singh,**  
**Metropolitan Magistrate (West Distt.),**  
**Room No. 146, 1st Floor,**  
**Tis Hazari Court, Delhi**

DP/67/WD/20

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank** Branch office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Ashish Puri, Ruchika Puri, G-72, South City, Phase-1, Gurgaon, Haryana A/c:- LBDEL00001256288	Flat No.- 1429, Type-III, Second Floor, SF Sector-37 Noida Uttar Pradesh, North East- Road, South East- Open, South West- Flat No-1447, North West- Flat No-1426	07-Feb-2020, Rs.1135635/-	30/09/2019
2.	Ravinder Sharma, Sweetie Sharma, B-2/19, CDRVB, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi, A/c:-LBDEL00001481592	Mayur Dwaj Co-Operative, Group Housing Society Ltd, Geeta Colony, Flat No- 403- C, Delhi or Alias Mayur Dwaj Co-Operative, Group Housing Society Ltd, Geeta Colony	07-Feb-2020, Rs.1762803/-	30/04/2016

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

**Date : 27-03-2020**  
**Place: Delhi/NCR**

**Authorized Officer**  
**ICICI Bank Limited**

**In drastic move, Italy shuts most factories to halt virus**

**Soave:** Italy has become the first western developed nation to idle most of its industry to halt the spread of the coronavirus, a potential cautionary tale for other governments, such as the Trump administration, that are resisting such drastic measures.

After more than two weeks of a nationwide lockdown, the Italian government decided to expand the mandatory closure of nonessential commercial activities to heavy industry in the eurozone's third-largest economy, a major exporter of machinery, textiles and other goods.

AP



# 3.3 MN AMERICANS SEEK JOBLESS AID

Nearly 5 times earlier high

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Nearly 3.3 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week — more than quadruple the previous record set in 1982 — amid a widespread economic shutdown caused by the coronavirus.

The surge in weekly applications was a stunning reflection of the damage the viral outbreak is inflicting on the economy. Filings for unemployment aid generally reflect the pace of layoffs. Layoffs are sure to accelerate as the US economy sinks into a recession.

Revenue has collapsed at restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, gyms, and airlines.

Auto sales are plummeting, and car makers have close factories. Most such employers face loan payments and other fixed costs, so they're cutting jobs to save money.

As job losses mount, some economists say the nation's unemployment rate could approach 13 per cent by May. By comparison, the highest jobless rate during the Great Recession, which ended in 2009, was 10 per cent. The economic deterioration has been swift. As recently as February, the unemployment rate was at a 50-year low of 3.5 per cent.

And the economy was growing steadily if modestly. Yet by the April-June quarter of the year, some economists think the economy will shrink at its steepest annual pace ever — a contraction that could reach 30 per cent.

In its report on Thursday, the Labor Department said 3.283 million people applied for unemployment benefits last week, up from 282,000 during the previous week.

Yet many people who have lost jobs in recent weeks have been unable to file for unemployment aid because state websites and phone systems have been overwhelmed by a crush of applicants and have frozen up.

That logjam suggests that Thursday's report actually understates the magnitude of job cuts last week. So does the fact that workers who are not on company payrolls — gig workers, free-lancers, the self-employed — aren't currently eligible for unemployment benefits even though in many cases they're no longer able to earn money.

## Trump's push to open economy could come at cost of lives

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The contrast could hardly be more stark. Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York has said that if all of his sweeping, expensive measures to stem the coronavirus saved one life, it would be worth it. President Donald Trump has another view: The costs of shutting down the economy outweigh the benefits, frequently telling Americans that 35,000 people a year die from the common flu.

Though it may seem crass, the federal government actually has long made a calculation when imposing regulations, called "the value of a statistical life," that places a price tag on a human life. It has been used to consider whether to require seat belts, airbags or environmental regulations, but it has never been applied in a broad

public health context.

The question is now an urgent one given that Trump in recent days has latched on to the notion that the cure for the pandemic should not be worse than the disease and argued that "more people are going to die if we allow this to continue" if the economy remains closed. He has targeted a return to a semblance of normalcy for the economy by Easter Sunday, April 12.

Critics say he's presenting the nation with a false choice at a moment when deaths and infections from the virus are surging.

"We're not going to accept a premise that human life is disposable," said Cuomo, whose state has seen far more infections and deaths from COVID-19 than any other state. "And we're not going to put a dollar figure on human life."

## Taking aspirin may not reduce dementia risk

Sydney: Taking a low-dose aspirin once a day does not reduce the risk of thinking and memory problems caused by mild cognitive impairment or probable Alzheimer's disease, nor does it slow the rate of cognitive decline, say researchers.

Aspirin has anti-inflammatory properties and also thins the blood. For years, doctors have been prescribing low-dose aspirin for some people to reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke. However, there are also possible risks to taking aspirin, including bleeding in the brain, so guidance from a doctor is important.

Because aspirin can be beneficial to the heart, researchers have hypothesised, and smaller previous studies have suggested, that it may also be beneficial to the brain, possibly reducing the risk of dementia by reducing inflammation, minimising small clots or by preventing the narrowing of blood vessels within the brain.

## US grants Iraq shortest sanctions waiver yet for Iran gas

AFP ■ BAGHDAD

The United States on Thursday granted Iraq a 30-day waiver to keep importing Iranian gas despite American sanctions, two Iraqi officials told AFP, the shortest extension yet.

The US slapped tough sanctions on the Iranian energy sector in late 2018 and has granted Iraq a series of waivers, usually for 45, 90 or 120 days. Baghdad relies on gas and electricity imports from its neighbour Tehran to supply about a third of its power grid, crippled by years of conflict and poor maintenance.

"This is the final extension," one source at the Iraqi president's office told AFP.

The source said Washington had been frustrated that Iran was meddling in the Government formation

process in Iraq. Adnan Zurf, who has had close ties with US officials since the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, was nominated on March 17 and has a month to pull together his cabinet. "The US did not want to put Zurf in a difficult position by not renewing the waiver," a second senior Iraqi official told AFP, confirming the 30-day extension.

The official said Baghdad had prepared a checklist at the beginning of the last 45-day waiver period of ways the country could decrease its reliance on Iranian oil. "But we haven't been able to accomplish any of them because of the circumstances," the source said. Iraq has been hit by a cocktail of crises in recent weeks, including the government formation stalemate, collapsing oil prices and the novel coronavirus pandemic.

# Market clocks best 3-day rally in years

As stimulus calms investor jitters amid lockdown

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks surged for the third straight session on Thursday, logging their best three-day gains in years, after the Government's much awaited stimulus measures for coronavirus lockdown-hit segments lifted sentiments.

The BSE gauge Sensex surged 1,410.99 points or 4.94 per cent to settle at 29,946.77; while the NSE barometer Nifty shot up 323.60 points or 3.89 per cent to 8,641.45.

After the worst-ever crash on Monday, the Sensex has recovered by 3,965.53 points or 15.26 per cent over the last three sessions. Likewise, the NSE Nifty has regained 1,031.20 points or 13.55 per cent in three days.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, rallying up to 46 per cent. Other winners were Bharti Airtel, L&T, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra, Bajaj Auto, HUL and HDFC — rising up to 10 per cent.

On the other hand, Maruti Suzuki, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma and Reliance Industries closed with losses.

All sectoral indices ended with gains with BSE telecom, capital goods, bankex, finance, realty and FMCG indices surging up to 10 per cent.

The broader markets also gained momentum with the Nifty Midcap and Smallcap indices rising 3 per cent each. An effort to cushion the economic blow of the 21-day lockdown in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Finance Minister Sitharaman announced a slew of measures worth Rs 1.70 lakh crore to help citizens survive the crisis.

Paras Bothra, President of Equity Research, Ashika Stock Broking, said, "Domestic markets zoomed for the second day on the trot driven by optimism on USD 2 trillion package to US economy and also in anticipation of an economic package for the Indian economy."

"Finance Minister indeed announced Rs 1,75,000 cr package for the poor and needy, however measures addressed to corporate or SMEs are still missing. Perhaps this will be followed by monetary stimulus by RBI along with forbearance on loan repayments."

The Rs 1.70 lakh crore economic package involves free food grains and cooking gas to poor for the next three months, one-time doles to women and poor senior citizens, higher wages to workers and measures

to boost liquidity of employees. The scheme will be implemented with immediate effect.

"This is a package for lockdown impacted segments," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, adding that the Government is prioritising.

According to traders, volatility remained during the day as March derivatives contracts expired.

The Indian Rupee surged by another 78 paise to close at 75.16 against the US dollar on Thursday after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced various welfare measures to tide through the coronavirus crisis.

In a positive news for India's fiscal health, the crude oil prices continued to trade below USD 30 a barrel amid steep fall in demand due to COVID-19 led lockdowns in major parts of the world.

## Crisil cuts FY21 growth estimate sharply to 3.5%

Mumbai: The severe dent in the economic activity due to the coronavirus pandemic led rating agency Crisil to sharply cut its growth estimate for 2020-21 to 3.5 per cent, on Thursday.

Earlier, the agency had predicted an economic growth of 5.2 per cent for the next

## More than dozen PSBs announce COVID-19 emergency credit line

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than a dozen public sector banks have announced COVID-19 Emergency Credit Line to deal with the hardships faced by various sectors of the economy.

Though public sector banks (PSBs) were quick to respond with steps to deal with the hardships faced by various sectors of the economy, private sector banks such as ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank are yet to come out

with any relief measures for their customers.

As many as 15 PSBs out of the total 18 government-owned banks till Thursday evening announced schemes to mitigate hardships faced by various segments. Taking the lead, the country's largest lender SBI last week announced an emergency credit line to meet any liquidity mismatch for its borrowers.

The additional liquidity facility COVID-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL) will pro-

vide funds up to Rs 200 crore and will be available till June 30, SBI said in a circular issued on Thursday.

Following the suit, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India and Bank of India.

Besides, Indian Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, Syndicate Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank and Andhra Bank have also introduced relief schemes till date for meeting liquidity requirements under COVID-19 emergency.

## E-commerce companies temporarily stop taking orders for non-essential items

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce companies Paytm Mall, Amazon and Flipkart have temporarily stopped taking orders for non-essential items due to restrictions imposed during the

nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The companies had on Wednesday complained about their delivery staff being punished by local police despite government orders to exempt them from lockdown restrictions.

"Paytm Mall has decided to help users buy essential products including household staples, healthcare, hygiene, personal safety products on its platform. The company would temporarily not take any new orders for products that fall in the non-essential categories including fashion, mobile, and accessories, white goods and electronics among others," Paytm Mall said in a statement.

## Unitech board working on resolution plan to complete stalled realty projects: Hiranandani

New Delhi: Crisis-hit Unitech's board, which has been superseded by the Central Government, is working on a resolution plan to complete stalled realty projects but the pace has slowed due to the coronavirus pandemic, its member Niranjan Hiranandani said on Thursday. "Board is working on resolution plan but now, with the pandemic crisis, things are moving slow. But, we are definitely working," Hiranandani said in a tweet while responding to a query.

Niranjan Hiranandani is managing director of Hiranandani group. He is also President of industry bodies Assocham and NAREDCO.

## Yes Bank board okays fund raising of ₹5,000 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cash-starved private sector

Glender Yes Bank on Thursday approved a proposal to raise Rs 5,000 crore by way of share sale, including qualified institutions and rights issue. The board meeting held on Thursday cleared this proposal. This fund raising will be over and above Rs 10,000 crore cleared on February 7. The board at its meeting has approved subject to receipt of requisite approvals, raising of funds for an additional amount aggregating up to Rs 5,000 crores Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The fund may be raised in one or more tranches by "way of issuance of securities but not limited to through a qualified institutions placement/ public

issue, rights issue, global depositary receipts, American depositary receipts, foreign currency convertible bonds or any other permissible mode," it said.

So, in aggregate the fund raising cannot exceed Rs 15,000 crore, it added. Facing the collapse of the fourth largest private lender, the Reserve Bank sacked Yes Bank management and placed it under an administrator in the evening of 5 March with a 30-day moratorium.

On March 14, the government notified the rescue plan drafted by the RBI under which State Bank of India would pick up around 49 per cent equity in Yes Bank. Private lenders joined SBI to shield the banking sector from a widespread crisis by injecting Rs 10,000 crore into the bank with SBI alone infusing Rs 6,050 crore.

## ESAF Small Finance Bank gets Sebi's go-ahead for ₹976 cr IPO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ESAF Small Finance Bank has received capital markets regulator Sebi's go-ahead to float a Rs 976-crore initial public offering. The company had filed draft papers with Sebi in January and obtained its "observations" on March 20, as per the latest information available with the markets watchdog. Sebi's observations are necessary for any company to launch public issues, including initial public offer (IPO), follow-on public offer (FPO) and rights issue.

The IPO of ESAF Small Finance Bank comprises a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 800 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) aggregating up to Rs 176.2 crore, according to the draft prospectus filed with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

## Asia markets mixed as US lawmakers debate stimulus

Hong Kong: Asian markets mostly rose or clawed back early losses on Thursday as investors breathed a sigh of relief that US senators have finally passed a gargantuan stimulus package for the world's top economy after being delayed by wrangling over details.

Unprecedented USD 2 trillion plan — described by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell as a "wartime level of investment" — helped spur a surge across global equities as panicked traders worried about the impact of virus sweeping the planet. But another advance on Wall Street was blunted Wednesday as it emerged that four Republican senators have balked at the generous provisions agreed to in the bipartisan deal with the White House.

However, the bill eventually cleared the Senate by an overwhelming majority and will now head to the House of Representatives before going to President Donald Trump for his signature. Monster deal thrashed out between Republicans, Democrats and White House includes cash payments to American taxpayers and several hundred billion dollars in grants and loans to small businesses and core industries. It also buttresses hospitals desperately in need of medical equipment and expands unemployment benefits.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY**



General public is hereby informed that one boy **Namely:** Tushar Asiwai, S/o Suresh Asiwai, R/o H.No. 3D-1, Imarti Block, Ganga Rama Vatika, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi, **Age:** 16 years 11 Months, **Height:** 5'9", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue Jeans, Blue, Shirt, Green Jacket and White Colour Shoes in feet has been missing since 15.03.2020 from his home, Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 139/20 dated 16.03.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Tilak Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this boy but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.

**SHO**  
**E-Mail:** cbc@cbi.gov.in  
**Website:** http://cbi.nic.in  
**Fax:** 011-24368639  
**Ph:** 011-24368638, 24368641

**P.S. Tilak Nagar, Delhi**  
**Ph. 011-25409290**  
**25407800**  
**DP/60/WD/2020**

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**

**(SECTION 82 Cr.Pc.)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Manish Sethi, S/o Bhushan Sethi R/o A-91, Abchal Nagar, Chander Vihar, Nangloi, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 904/18 u/s 379/411/482 IPC, P.S. Pashim Vihar East, Delhi** it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused person **Manish Sethi**, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Manish Sethi**, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Manish Sethi, FIR No. FIR No. 904/18 u/s 379/411/482 IPC, P.S. Pashim Vihar East, Delhi**, is required to appear before the court on or before **27.04.2020**.

By order  
**Sh. Puneet Nagpal**  
MM -07, Room No. 289, 2nd floor  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/93/OD/2020

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely:** Ashok Kumar Gupta, S/o: Duni Chand, R/o: H.No. Q-41, Budh Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi, **Age:** 39 Years, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** White Fair, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue Colour Jeans & Grey Colour Pant & Black Colour Sweater has been missing since 16.03.2020 from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard **DD No. 29A, Dated 16.03.2020** has been lodged at **P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing person please inform the undersigned.

**Web-site:** http://cbi.nic.in  
**E-Mail ID:** cbc@cbi.gov.in  
**Fax:** 011-24368639  
**DP/104/RD/2020**

**SHO**  
**P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi**  
**Ph.: 011-27521294-95**

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF PERSON ACCUSED**

**See Section 82 Cr. PC**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Vinod Sharma S/o Sh. K.C. Sharma, R/o H.No. 100, 4th Floor, Vigyan Lok, Delhi-92**, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the Offence **FIR No. 524/16 dated 07.11.2016 u/s 420/34 IPC** at **P.S. Krishna Nagar, Delhi**, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Vinod Sharma** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Vinod Sharma** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation u/s 82 CrPc is hereby made that the said **Vinod Sharma** accused of **FIR No. 524/16 dated 07.11.2016 u/s 420/34 IPC** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **20.05.2020**.

By Order  
**Ms. Aakansha Vyas**  
Metropolitan Magistrate  
Karkardooma Court, Delhi

DP/12/SHD/2020-  
(Court Matter)

# PUBLIC NOTICE

Branch office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the secured creditor and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Rajat Sharma, Monika Sharma, B 18, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Complex, Delhi, Saidulajab A/c No:- NHNOD00001261503	Flat No B- 501, 5th Floor Ninex City Tower B, Village Khirki Daula, Sector 76, Gurgaon- 122001	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 13625473.99/-	05/11/2019
2.	Lalit Saini, Dinesh Saini, House No 5A, Near Railway Road Opposite Justice, Gopal Trust Hospital, Gurgaon, Gurgaon A/c No:- NHNOD00001269303	Flat No. Valencia- 101 1st Floor, Oasis Grand Stand, Plot No-GH-01, TS 01 B, Sector- 22D, Yamuna Express Way Gautam Buddha Nagar	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 3212386/-	05/11/2019
3.	Parveen Kumar, Mrs Soma, Sanjeev Kumar, B 67 Vikas Vihar Colony Nagar Kakrola South West Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHNOD00001269070	Flat No 12A-02 Floor 13, Tower C, Upside Sector, Surajpur Plot No. Hra-12/A, Oasis Venetia Heights Greater Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 3161992/-	06/10/2019
4.	Jeenesh Kumar, Monu, House No 336/20, Street No 1, Shanti Nagar, Gurgaon, Gurgaon A/c No:- NHNOD00001267807	Flat No C- 1907, 19th Floor, Oasis Venetia Heights Plot No. Hra 12 A, Group Housing West Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHGH200001273584	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 2980792/-	05/11/2019
5.	Harkesh., Manju Singh, 45/22, Sharat Bose Lane, North Dumdum Rajbari Colony, North 24, Parganar, Calcutta, A/c No:- NHXBA00000888035	Khewat No 1290 Min, Khatoni No 2039 Min, Khasra No 2764, 2768, 2767 Mouja Bahadurgarh, Surat Nagar Line Par Bahadurgarh	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 1526014/-	07/08/2019
6.	Sanjay Kumar, Kanchan Patel, 26/128 Block 25 Trilok Puri, Preet Vihar East Delhi New Delhi Preet Vihar East Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHGH200001273584	Flat No- 1112, 11 Floor, Oasis Grand Stand, Plot No. Gh 01, TS 01 B, Sec-22 D, Yamuna Express Way Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 1275999/-	11/09/2019
7.	Dharam Pal Singh Rathor, Shiksha Rathor, B- 58, Preet Vihar, Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- LBDEL00001107640	H. No. C- 498, Yojna Vihar Delhi	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 818132.87/-	09/08/2019
8.	Rampal, Amit., Lalgarh 145, Palwal, Palwal, A/c No:- LHDWDJ00001296958	409, Kaida Colony Khewat Khata No 4807/5602 M, Kita No 28 (40-10) Kita No 1 Palwal, 1, Palwal -121105 Haryana	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 10037127/-	06/12/2019

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : 27-03-2020  
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer  
For ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd.



## Trend Glazer

### Kishen Kanhaiya is special to me: Anil

Actor **ANIL KAPOOR** said that his 1990 release *Kishen Kanhaiya* has a special place in his heart.

The actor reminisced about the **Rakesh Roshan** directorial as it completed 30 years. The actor said that he is glad to see "the love and appreciation that the film has received."

Anil said, "Madhuri Dixit and I have worked together in a lot of films and each has a set of memories which can never be forgotten. *Kishen Kanhaiya* was and continues to be my favourites. My double role gave me an opportunity to explore two very different personalities — one strong and the other soft."

The film will air on Zee Bollywood tomorrow.



### 'Samisha Shetty Kundra completes 40 days today. The first milestone for a mother and her child, as per Hinduism. It only makes me realise that there are so many other things we should be grateful for even if some things don't go as planned. For next 20 days, I'm going to document one thing that I'm grateful for every day.'

—**Shilpa Shetty Kundra**

Actor **HRITHIK ROSHAN** has stressed that the safety of the most fundamental caretakers of the city and society must be ensured. He has taken an extra step by procuring masks for Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).



Hrithik tweeted, "In such times, we must do what we can to ensure the safety of the most fundamental caretakers of our city and society. I have procured N95 and FFP3 masks for our BMC workers and other caretakers."

He paid his gratitude to minister Aaditya Thackeray for giving him the opportunity to support the Maharashtra government.

### Miley suffers anxiety in isolation

Hollywood singer **MILEY CYRUS** said she suffered a panic attack as she self-isolated in her mansion amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 27-year-old revealed how the time she spent locked away in her home triggered a number of issues.

"I was sitting outside my house one night and I was looking at the stars. And it was the one place where I felt really safe. I was thinking about how fortunate and lucky I am that I live in a space where I can still go out and take a walk. But not everyone has that space," she said.

"And so I started having this fear, anxiety and panic, and I actually started giving myself really cold feet," she added.



# LIFE IMITATES FILMS

With binge-watch becoming the ideal quarantine activity, pandemic films are the new favourite genre across the world, says CHAHAK MITTAL



but it looks like a mutant coronavirus.

'CONTAGION FEELS PRESCIENT AS IT NOT ONLY GIVES AN ILLUMINATING GLIMPSE INTO WHAT HAPPENED — BUT WHAT MIGHT.'  
—STEVEN ANDREW SODERBERGH (DIRECTOR)

There's no trespassing in this city or the planet. I'm sorry! Earth is closed today." Till a month back, this was just a dialogue by Tony Stark aka Robert Downey Jr in *Avengers: Infinity Wars*. But now, it is a lived reality. The shopping complexes, cafes and bars, cinema halls, theatres, museums, public centres, offices, and schools and colleges have downed their shutters and there is not a single soul on the streets amid the ongoing global pandemic of Coronavirus or COVID-19.

'Netflix and chill' was the buzzword for hanging out alone or with friends earlier but now, it's the favourite 'quarantine' activity. And while people juggle with deciding on what to watch online, data shows that streaming and downloads of films, which show global crises or pandemics akin to the present one, have seen a sharp rise. One such is *Contagion* (2011), which gives the viewer a feeling of *déjà vu* as the film revolves around a family man (played by Matt Damon) who tries to navigate a partial societal collapse after a deadly virus spreads across the globe.

As per the data released by various sources, the film is becoming one of the most popular pandemic genre movies of 2020. According to iTunes, it is the third most popular film on the channel currently as well as the only film in the top 10 that didn't come out in 2019 as every film that's listed in the top 20 was released in 2019, except for this one. The film might have not garnered as much attention when it was first released due to its "unrealistic" and some "highly fictional" assumptions as claimed by many critics. There were sequences where a vaccine was developed really quickly and the film depicted that the virus reached humans through contact with animals.

However, today, it has returned to make the audience realise how it predicted the Coronavirus outbreak of 2020

long back in 2011. As per the data released on March 8 by The Verge and TorrentFreak, which collaborated to study the rise of number of downloads of *Contagion* between January 1 and March 4, thousands of people around the world were found to be illegally downloading the pandemic film. The results were analysed by checking the IP addresses that shared the film and studying torrent tracker data. The study also said that before January 24, *Contagion* was torrented about 200 times per day around the world. On January 25, the number rose to 1,500. As per the US, after the virus started spreading there, the downloads were around 18,000 every day.

According to MUSO, a piracy analytics firm, *Contagion* downloads, from 546 on January 7, rose to over 30,000 by January 30. Such a high number of piracy visits of the film have proven what heights people reach up to when they are not able to stream any film that they want to watch.

As per the data by Google trends of the last 90 days, "Where can I watch *Contagion*?" became the ninth most searched query whereas "Contagion full movie download," or "Contagion Netflix" became the 19th, 20th and 21st queries respectively. The film is now available on Amazon Prime Video and Google Play only in some countries.

Not just the surge, the film is also becoming a medium of learning about the situation for students.



## Tiring effect

Here's why having old tyres on your car could be a risk

Tyres are of vital importance since they are the only part of the vehicle that makes contact with the road. Yet motorists often neglect their condition and age, and the results can be catastrophic. In its most recently available information, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that 738 people died in 2017 from tyre-related crashes. As a tyre ages, small cracks in the rubber begin to develop over time, appearing on the surface and inside the tyre. This cracking can eventually cause the steel belts in the tread to separate from the rest of the tyre. Tread separation can also happen to defective, underinflated and poorly maintained tyres. Hot climates will also accelerate the aging process.

Here's what you need to know to determine tyre age and what issues old tyres can pose:

### HOW LONG DO TYRES LAST?

Carmakers and tyre manufacturers differ in their recommendations on when to replace a tyre. Many automakers,

including Ford, Nissan, Mazda and Mercedes-Benz, tell owners to replace tyres six years after their production date regardless of tread life. Brands such as Continental and Michelin say a tyre can last up to 10 years, provided you get annual tyre inspections after the fifth year.

The NHTSA has no specific guidelines on tyre age and defers to the recommendations of carmakers and tyre manufacturers.

### DETERMINING THE AGE OF A TYRE

You'll need to locate the transportation number printed on the sidewall of the tyre. The first two numbers represent the week in which the tyre was made. The second two represent the year. A tyre with a

DOT code of 1018, for example, was made in the 10th week of 2018.

Tyres made before 2000 end in a three-digit code that is trickier to decode, but essentially if you see a DOT number ending in three digits, the tyre was made in the last century and should be immediately replaced.

If you see a partial DOT number on the outer sidewall, look for the full number on the inner side. Some tyre manufacturers opt to brand the number on the inside to reduce the chance of injury to the tyre mold technician.

### AVOID USED TYRES

New tyres can be expensive, which is why used tyres are attractive to people who are strapped for cash. You'll often

find used tyres for sale in classified ads or at tyre-and-wheel shops that offer them as a low-cost alternative.

The problem with used tyres is that, while you can check their age, you have no idea how well they were maintained or what conditions they were used in. It is safer to avoid them entirely.

### MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING FRESH TYRES

There are instances when people have purchased what they thought were new tyres at retail stores only to find out that they were manufactured years earlier. A tyre from the prior year is common, but anything older is likely to have a shorter life span. You have the right to request newer ones. Check the date before you drive away to save yourself the hassle.

Make a tyre inspection part of your routine when evaluating a used car to buy. If you find that the vehicle you're interested in has old tyres, make that a part of the negotiation. The seller of the vehicle might be willing to discount the price so that you can buy new tyres, or even install new tyres before you purchase it.

### LEARN TO LET GO OF OLD TYRES

If your tyres have plenty of tread left but are approaching the six-year mark, it's time to get them inspected for signs of aging. And if the tyre shop recommends a set of tyres, spend the money and don't put it off. Getting rid of an unused spare or tyres with plenty of tread may seem counterintuitive, but if they are too old, it is the smartest thing you can do.

## Corona doesn't spread via tears



Contrary to some reports, researchers now claim that the novel Coronavirus doesn't spread via tears and it is unlikely that infected patients are shedding virus through eye fluid.

While researchers are certain that Coronavirus spreads through mucus and droplets expelled by coughing or sneezing, it is unclear if the virus is spread through other bodily fluids, such as tears, said the study published in the journal, *Ophthalmology*.

There is one important caveat, though. None of the patients in the study had Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye. However, health officials believe pink eye develops in just one per cent to three per cent of people with Coronavirus.

For the findings, researchers at National University Hospital in Singapore collected tear samples from 17 patients with COVID-19 from the time they showed symptoms until they recovered about 20 days later. Neither viral culture nor reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) detected the virus in their tears throughout the two-week course of the disease, the researchers said.

net and netizens by storm is Korean Netflix series *My Secret Terrius*, which was released in 2018. Viewers believe that the film had "predicted" the current virus outbreak. One of the sequences in episode 10 depicts a doctor and an information spy talking about a potential virus named Coronavirus, which has allegedly been tweaked to make its mortality rate reach 90 per cent as compared to the MERS, which only had 20 per cent mortality rate. The doctor says that "the Coronavirus has an incubation period of two to 14 days," which is a more serious concern. She adds that the virus has been "manipulated to attack the lungs directly within just five minutes of being exposed." The "mutant virus" could be used as a weapon and lead to a biochemical global terrorist attack. The film is unavailable or has been removed from the online platform in many countries now.

Other Hollywood films which are again making it big because of the pandemic scare are *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* (American documentary series, a Netflix Original, 2020), *Pandemic* (2016), *Outbreak* (1995), *Carriers* (2009), the series, *Containment* (2016), *I Am Legend* (2007), and *The Andromeda Strain* (1971). As the virus claims more and more lives, the films show how the average person must maintain social distancing, try hard not to touch his or her face, and only stay indoors. Nothing else can be done until a solution is found, which wouldn't happen overnight. Netflix Original film *Bird Box* (2018), which was a fictional and a metaphorical take on how a global pandemic can take over humanity, also depicted how people in order to survive must stay put in their homes to not let the plague reach them.

Director Steven A n d r e w Soderbergh also pointed out that *Contagion* feels "prescient" as it "not only gives an illuminating glimpse into what happened — but what might."

W e l l , another film that has taken the inter-

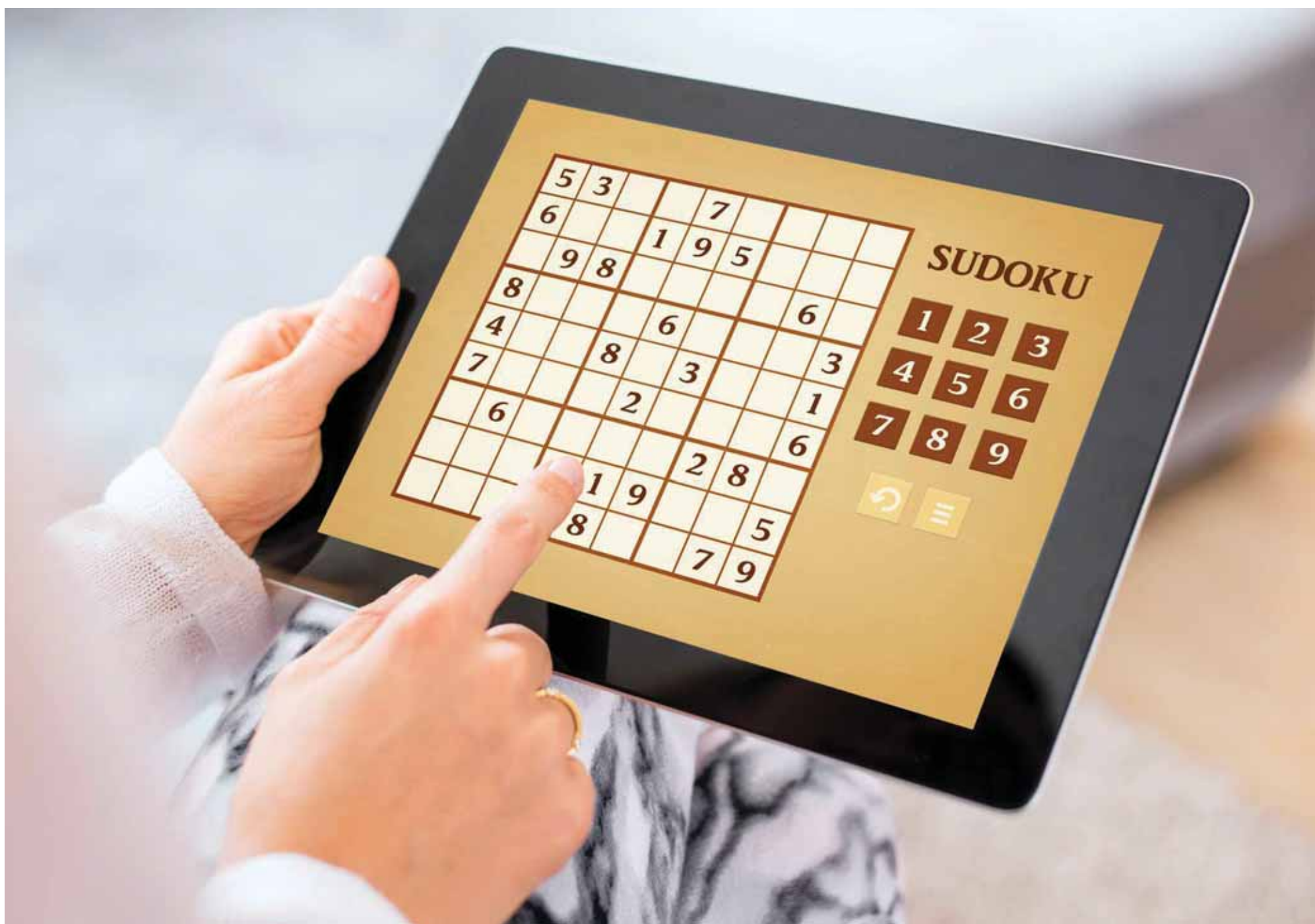
—IANS





## PLAYING PUZZLES SHARPEN OUR MIND

**Mind games are usually simple in design but have a big impact. Think of your brain like your abs. If you work out you are going to develop strong abs, says TEAM VIVA**



It is important to take care of both your mental and physical health. It is a critical aspect of keeping your overall health in good shape. Most of us are conscious of our physical fitness. But, it is the mental fitness that we mainly ignore. We need to change this attitude and give equal importance to both the aspects of the body. In this context, playing puzzles and mind games serve as a great mental booster. So, if you are not playing these games already, it's high time you start doing it.

Monotonous repetition, never ending lectures, and repeated testing are not good ways to learn. The best way to learn is to remove the boring and have fun. This article will explain the benefits of mind games.

First, it is important to understand what exactly these games are. Mind games are activities that are fun but challenge your brain. Games that make you think, strategize, and remember information are all games that will help train your mind. In fact, many of these basic characteristics are what you find in many of the games you already play.

The purpose of these games is to improve your memory, thinking, reaction time, and cognitive ability. These games are especially impor-

tant later in life to keep these factors strong. While it may seem hard to believe, by simply playing certain games you can help avoid degeneration and memory loss by continuing to work your brain and keep it sharp.

Mind games are usually simple in design but have a big impact. Think of your brain like your abs. If you work out your abs you are going to develop strong abs. However, if you do not work out your abs they will lose their definition and strength. Mind games are built to work your brain to keep it sharp and alert.

One great example of a mind game is chess. Chess is a game full of strategy. You cannot simply move a piece and hope to win. Instead, you have to plan ahead, outwit your opponent, and only then can you win. Regularly playing chess sharpens your strategic thinking and will keep your mind strong to a certain extent.

Treating your brain right from the inside out is a great first step, so a healthy diet is very important. There are many things that make for a healthy diet, and it's not the same for everyone, but getting enough nutrients into your diet is one crucial step. This post on getting sim-



**To put it differently, playing a game or two of these mind games are enough to keep your brain sharp. In fact, playing it regularly can also benefit you afterwards. Yes, it even helps in reducing memory loss in elderly people**

ple superfoods into your diet is one good place to start.

You also want to be sure you get enough sleep at night. Going through your day without proper sleep can be like operating under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

It can make it difficult to concentrate, lower your reaction time and make you more susceptible to accidents. Sleep is so very important, and most people just simply don't get enough of it.

If you have trouble in this area, try some natural helps for a good night's sleep so that your brain can be healthier.

What are some other things you can do to take care of your brain? It sounds obvious, but protecting it from physical injury is also really important. You should of course wear a safety helmet when riding a bike or skating and of course when playing any kind of contact sport. And of course you should wear a protective hard hat if you're doing anything like construction-type work.

The same goes for children – always ensure they wear proper safety gear to protect them from brain injury. We actually have talked about this a lot with our kids. There is a local group that hands out

free sports tickets to kids who promise to wear their bike helmets whenever they bike, and our boys have both played hockey (their league is non checking, so it is not much of an issue for them), which has been part of the focus of some of the really bad news about concussions and sports these days.

Yes, brain health is serious business. Too many hits to the head and your life can be changed forever.

Just like you can exercise your body, you can also "exercise" your brain with fun games and activities that help flex and strengthen your brain.

This has been suggested for adults as a way to help prevent dementia or Alzheimer's, but it can also have benefits to children, even those who are still growing.

Some will say that these games are like having a personal trainer for your brain. So, how does this idea of brain games for brain health work for kids and how can we "get buff brains" so to speak?

Learning is always easier when it's fun; and brain games make learning these skills seem like nothing more than a fun game. Your children may not even realize they are building brain skills in the process. Mind games require you to

remember certain information. In crosswords, you need to understand the clues and bring out words from your memory to give the correct answer. Similarly, in Sudoku, you need to remember the pattern to fill the correct numbers in grids. And all these put a lot of stimulation on your memory power. And that's all you need to keep your memory top-notch.

Improves thinking and reaction time since, these mind games put you through a lot of thinking, it makes your thought process quick. Also, you become smart enough to answer any question in a brief period. In short, it works a great way in improving your thinking and reaction time.

To put it differently, playing a game or two of these mind games are enough to keep your brain sharp. In fact, playing it regularly can also benefit you afterwards. Yes, it even helps in reducing memory loss in elderly people. This is the reason doctors recommend Alzheimer and Dementia patients to play mind games. Your physical health remains strong when you work out. So, you should do the same for your mental well-being and put your brain to some work out too.





शिवराज सिंह चौहान  
मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

# COVID-19 (कोरोना वायरस) घबराएं नहीं, जानकारी ही हमारा सुरक्षा कवच है



कोरोना संक्रमण को फैलने से रोकने हेतु घर में ही रहें। एक बिना लक्षण वाला संक्रमित व्यक्ति दूसरों को संक्रमित कर सकता है। इसलिए पड़ोसी, दोस्त इत्यादि से आपसी संपर्क कम करना आवश्यक है।

लगभग 95% लोग जो आज तक कोरोना से संक्रमित हैं वे ठीक हो गए हैं।\*  
कोरोना संक्रमित युवा पूर्णतः स्वस्थ हो जाते हैं।

कुछ संक्रमित व्यक्ति लक्षण दिखाए बिना ही पूर्णतः स्वस्थ हो जाते हैं



यदि आप हाल में विदेश यात्रा करके आए हैं तो 14 दिनों के लिए घर से न निकलें, होम कोरांटीन अवश्य करें

## होम कोरांटीन (14 दिनों के लिए)

- यथा संभव अकेले रहें, अन्यथा परिवार के अन्य सदस्यों से कम से कम 1 मीटर की दूरी बनाये रखें
- बुजुर्गों, गर्भवती महिलाओं, बच्चों और कम रोग प्रतिरोधी क्षमता वाले व्यक्तियों से दूर रहें
- घर के अंदर कम से कम विचरण करें
- घर से बाहर कतई न जाएं
- हाथों को बार-बार साबुन व साफ पानी से 20 सेकण्ड तक धोयें। प्रयोग की गयी सभी वस्तुओं को साफ रखें
- कप, गिलास, खाने के बर्तन, टॉवल अन्य सदस्यों के साथ साझा न करें
- मास्क पहनें रहें जिसे 6-8 घंटे के अंतराल से बदलते रहें
- यदि लक्षण दिखाई देते हैं (खांसी / बुखार / सांस लेने में कठिनाई), तो तुरंत डॉक्टर से मिलें

कुछ संक्रमित व्यक्ति हल्के लक्षण दिखा कर पूर्णतः स्वस्थ हो जाते हैं



किन्तु

संवेदनशील वर्ग वाले व्यक्तियों को दूसरों की तुलना में कोरोना वायरस के संक्रमण से खतरा ज्यादा होता है

## ध्यान दें

- वृद्धजन (60 वर्ष से अधिक उम्र के व्यक्ति), डायबिटीज, अस्थमा एवं हृदय रोग के मरीजों तथा कम रोग प्रतिरोधी क्षमता वाले व्यक्तियों को संक्रमित होने से बचाना है
- प्रत्येक परिवार अपने बुजुर्गों तथा संवेदनशील व्यक्तियों का विशेष ध्यान रखें
- जितना संभव हो संवेदनशील व्यक्ति से दूरी बनाये रखें, यथासंभव परिवार का एक ही व्यक्ति उनसे संपर्क रखे
- घर के बाहर से आने वाले (जैसे कर्मचारी, नौकर आदि) का भी अंदर आने से पहले साफ होना जरूरी है। हाथों एवं वस्त्रों को यथा संभव साफ रखें

## केवल निम्न व्यक्तियों को जांच की आवश्यकता है

- लक्षणात्मक व्यक्ति जिन्होंने प्रभावित देशों में यात्रा की हो
- पॉजिटिव व्यक्ति के साथ रहने वाले परिवार के सदस्य
- पॉजिटिव मरीज को संभालने वाले सभी स्वास्थ्य कर्मी
- स्वास्थ्य विभाग द्वारा पूर्व यात्रा या लक्षण की जानकारी के आधार पर पहचाने गए संवेदनशील व्यक्ति

**कोरोना वायरस संक्रमण का खतरा घटाएं ये सरल उपाय अपनाएं**



नियमित रूप से साबुन और पानी से 20 सेकण्ड तक हाथ धोएं



खांसते या छींकते समय नाक और मुंह किसी कपड़े या कोहनी से ढकें



जिस व्यक्ति में खांसी, जुकाम या बुखार के लक्षण हो उससे दूरी बनाएं



अगर खांसी, बुखार या सांस लेने में कठिनाई हो तो तुरंत डॉक्टर से मिलें