

**OPINION 6**  
FOREIGN POLICY  
PUT TO TEST**WORLD 8**  
GLOBAL DEATH  
TOLL NEARS 17,000**AVENUES 10**  
NEED FOR JOB-READY  
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# Jaan hai to Jahan hai, stay indoors: PM

## PM declares 21-day pan-India lockdown to defeat corona



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation on coronavirus pandemic in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Forget about leaving home for the next 21 days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Tuesday night, adding, "If you cross the Lakshman Rekha, you will invite the virus home."

In his second address to the nation within a week, the PM said the country will be under a complete three-week lockdown from Tuesday midnight to fight the spread of coronavirus.

"This lockdown will be strictly imposed in every village and every lane. According to health experts, 21 days are necessary to break the cycle of coronavirus. If these 21 days are not observed as a lockdown, it will take us back 21 years," the

PM said.

The essential services that were functional on March 22 during the Janata Curfew will remain operational even during the complete nationwide lockdown announced by the PM on Tuesday. This includes grocery stores, among other facilities.

"From midnight, the entire country will be in lockdown, total lockdown. To save India, to save its every citizen, you, your family... every street, every neighbourhood is being put under lockdown... 21 days' lockdown may seem to be a long time, but this is the only way to ensure everyone is safe. If we don't handle these 21 days well, then our country, your family will go backwards by 21 years," the PM said, folding his

hands.

Referring to efforts made by the world to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, Modi said that the precaution of social distancing is a tried and tested way of succeeding in curbing the pandemic. "There

### THESE ARE OPEN

- Shops, including ration shops (under PDS), dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, meat and fish, animal fodder. However, district authorities may encourage and facilitate home delivery to minimise movement of individuals outside their homes
- Banks, insurance offices, and ATMs
- Print and electronic media offices
- Telecommunications, internet services, broadcasting and cable services. IT and IT-enabled services only (for essential services) and as far as possible to work from home
- Delivery of all essential goods, including food, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment through E-commerce
- Petrol pumps, LPG, petroleum and gas retail and storage outlets
- Power generation, transmission, and distribution units and services
- Capital and debt market services as notified by the Securities and Exchange Board of India

is a misconception that social distancing is only for those who are sick. Social distancing is for everyone, even the Prime Minister! Some people are spreading false information, which will affect every single citizen of the country. And if all citizens are affected, the negative effects are unimaginable," he said.

### Implement Ayushman: Dharmendra to CM

**BHUBANESWAR:** Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to introduce the Centre's Ayushman Yojana in the State at this critical juncture when the whole world is in the grip of coronavirus outbreak.

Pradhan in a tweet said the Centre's scheme must be implemented in Odisha for the benefit of poor people who are fighting the deadly virus. He said the Centre, as well as the State have been trying their best to protect the people from the onslaught of COVID-19. It is high time the Government of Odisha came forward to do the needful for the implementation of the Ayushman health scheme at the earliest, said Pradhan.

PNS

## 'Take pledge not to go out of home'

### CM launches 'Mo Jiban' drive to fight COVID 19

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday launched a new programme called "Mo Jiban", under which he urged people of the State to take a resolute vow to stay home and not to go outside during the lockdown period to remain safe from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Patnaik urged people to pledge: "I am vowing in the

name of my children, father and mother that I will not go out of home during the lockdown period. If I go out of home, I may bring coronavirus with me to my home. It may harm my family. Thus, I will not go outside home. If I go on an urgent work, I will certainly wash my hands for 20 seconds before entering home on return. I will never allow coronavirus to enter my home and put my family in danger."

He also requested people to make videos of the promise and send them to him. He termed this request the most important one during 20 years of his public service as the Chief Minister.

## State's all 30 districts come under lockdown

Essential service establishments to remain open  
Govt asks transferred staffers to join posting places in 48 hours

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has declared total lockdown in all the 30 districts from March 24 midnight to March 29 midnight.

State Government Chief Spokesperson Subroto Bagchi informed the Press on COVID-19 on Tuesday that 'the Government has been taking proactive steps to contain the further spread of the virus.'

In the first phase, the Government had declared lockdown in five coastal districts on March 21 keeping in view the number of foreign returnees to these districts. Further, on Monday, the Government declared another nine districts to be included in lockdown.

A videoconference was held on Tuesday by Chief

Secretary Asit Tripathy with all district Collectors in which he instructed them to take prompt necessary steps to ensure lockdown.

The hostels under the ST & SC Development Department have been closed and the inmates would be handed over to their parents/guardians with their scholarship money. The Collectors have been instructed to monitor their safe return.

Essential service establishments such as hospitals, clinics, patho labs, medicine stores shall remain open while police, health, electricity, water supply, municipal service and agencies working for COVID-19 shall also continue during the lockdown period.

Banks, ATMs and the petrol pumps shall remain open during the period. Banks have been told to manage offices with 10% employees with guidance of the Collectors. Banks have already been instructed to maintain enough cash in their ATMs.

Shops of essential goods such as fruits, milk, bread, biscuits, bakery, grocery, vegetables, fish and meat will remain open.



## Total Lockdown in Odisha to prevent Corona outbreak



Don't go out with more than one person in your vehicle during urgent need



Don't go out if there is no emergency



Always maintain 1 meter distance from others when you are outside for essential needs



Always avoid crowd follow social distancing

### Stay at Home, Stay Safe

For further information contact Health Helpline No. **104**

We must remain calm, but not complacent  
We must remain prepared, but not panic

Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Odisha

[facebook.com/HFWOdisha](#)

<http://www.health.odisha.gov.in/>

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DSPL-325



# Barricades in city restrict pvt vehicles movement

**Only emergency workers, patients exempted**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police have erected barricades across the State capital city to restrict movement of private vehicles during the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The move came a day after many denizens of the city were on Monday seen commuting with their vehicles despite the restriction imposed on movement of private vehicles.

However, persons engaged in organisations or agencies permitted to operate during the period as listed in the Government's official noti-

fication regarding the lockdown were exempted. Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi has issued a clarification in this regard.

Emergency workers are being provided vehicle passes and can use their identity cards till passes are issued.



He asked the people not to panic. People are in two categories, emergency workers and others who might need to

Others would be permitted for specific purposes and durations, for example going to hospital, Sarangi added.

## Coronavirus: Construction works stopped in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the coronavirus outbreak, the State Government on Tuesday ordered immediate stoppage of all construction works across the State.

However, construction works for healthcare facilities and works related to COVID-19 would continue.

Notably, total lockdown in all 30 districts of the State will come into force from midnight of March 24 to midnight of March 29 due to coronavirus outbreak.

The Government on the day also ordered for a temporary closure of the Aahaar Centres across the State till March 29 (9 pm) during the lockdown period.

However, the Aahaar Centres operating near or in hospital premises would remain functional during the period.

## Grocery, vegetable, medicine shops open

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Despite declaration of lockdown in the entire State, till March 29 midnight to fight out the coronavirus (COVID-19), several essential services would be exempted from the ambit of the lockdown.

Service and basic facility providers such as hospitals, clinics, pathology labs and medicine, police, electricity, water supply, municipal offices and other agencies supporting the Government in preventing COVID-19 would remain open during the lockdown period.

Banks, ATMs and petrol pumps will continue operating during the period. Banks have been asked to manage offices with 10 per cent employees with guidance of the Collectors. Banks have already been instructed to maintain enough cash in their ATMs.

Shops dealing with fruits, milk, bread, biscuits, bakery, grocery, vegetables, fish, meat would remain open. Milk booths would not sell tea, coffee and other beverages.

# March 29 now deadline for bills submission in Treasuries

**Deadline for submission of the bills in Treasuries has been extended**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has asked all its departments to submit all their bills in the Government Treasuries by March 29.

In a letter to the Secretaries of departments and Heads of Departments, Finance Secretary Ashok K Meena stated that some Departments and Heads of Departments might not have been able to submit the bills in the Treasuries by March 13 and 20, 2020 for some reasons and others. Besides, they may find it difficult to adhere to the deadline

of March 26 for submission of the bills due to the lockdown declared by the Government for coronavirus.

In view of this, the deadline for submission of the bills in the Treasuries has been extended, said Meena.

The Secretaries of departments and Heads of the Departments have been asked to adhere to the revised deadline scrupulously as no further extension shall be allowed for submission of the bills.

For drawal of 10% arrears salary arising out of revision of pay under ORSP Rules, 2017 during the financial year 2019-20, the deadline has been extended up to March 26; and the last date for presentation of bills towards drawal of arrears claims in respect of DA @5% from 1.7.2019 to 31.12.2019 has been fixed as March 26, the letter stated.

## Civil society urges more corona test centres

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Civil society members have offered to volunteer the State Government's efforts in fighting against coronavirus while thanking CM Naveen Patnaik for the preventive measures taken well ahead of other States.

In a letter to Patnaik, they have also given a few suggestions for strengthening the fight against the pandemic in the State.

They suggested to get more testing centres including in MKCG MCH, VIMSAR, apart from the existing ones, including the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar and make the test totally free.

They also urged the State Government to provide ration at doorsteps for every family in lock-down areas, monthly financial support in advance to each family of the distressed slum dwellers, daily wage earners, construction and temporary workers, landless laborers, marginal farmers, physically challenged persons and also migrant workers.

# Sick Govt staff above 50 to get commuted leave

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In yet another preventive measure to tackle the spread of COVID-19, the State Government on Tuesday announced to grant commuted leave to employees above 50 years of age with specific health conditions.

As per a notification issued by the General Administration and Public Grievance GA and PG Department, commuted leave would be given to employees aged above 50 years and having underlying conditions like diabetes, respiratory problems, renal diseases, heart

and other life threatening diseases.

The leaves would be sanctioned without production of medical certificate for a period till April 4.

The instruction would be applicable to all State Government organisations, including autonomous bodies, statutory bodies, PSUs and corporations.

Earlier on March 19, the Government had ordered that employees who feel unwell due to symptoms of novel coronavirus should leave workplace and avail home quarantine for a period of 14 days.

# Allow health personnel's movement: DGP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the wake of coronavirus-related restrictions, DGP Abhay on Tuesday instructed police officials to allow movement of doctors, nurses and other health personnel basing on their identity cards till March 27.

In a letter, the DGP asked SPs/DCPs/DIGs/IGs of all the districts and the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Commissionerate police to allow free commuting of the health personnel. "Doctors, nurses and other healthcare personnel are crucial for society in general, more so in current scenario. We are working

to develop a web-based system of passes for all exempted category," read the letter.

Meanwhile, the Commissionerate police cancelled issuing passes after huge crowds were seen in front of the police stations in Bhubaneswar.

"Please use your I-Card for your moment. We will introduce an IT platform by tomorrow to automate the process of issue of vehicle passes," tweeted Commissioner of Police Sudhanshu Sarangi.

"Those who need to travel due to medical or other emergencies will be allowed if there is a patient or medical paper," said the tweet

## 35 foreign returnees in Gajapati so far

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

As many as 35 persons have returned from abroad to Gajapati district till now. Besides, 2,617 people working in different places of the country have come back to the district.

More than 2,100 persons have been put on quarantine in the district. But no swabs have been collected and sent for tests, informed Chief District Medical Officer Gunarani Patnaik.

Many people of the district are working as migrant labourers or engaged in companies in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. But after the coronavirus outbreak many of them have returned home. The Health Department has reached them and after conducting tests put them on home quarantine.

# 'Rest assured, AMOFOI marriage corona-proof'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Of all the marriages, the AMOFOI marriage of love birds by exchange of garlands in the most modest way is the best, said the organisation.

The truth is traditional marriage is very risky when the deadly disease Coronavirus (Covid-19) is around. Authorities may ban such a marriage because it is a health hazard.

Social distancing is now in operations in several countries of the World. Foreign travel has virtually come down to a negligible figure. Compared to all these difficulties the AMOFOI love marriage is Corona-proof.

AMOFOI marriage is held in the absence of the priest. It

takes only 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete the wedding process. The AMOFOI Certificate of Marriage in laminated form is handed over to the couple then and there. Its greatness lies in the fact that it requires only the presence of 8 to 9 persons to solemnise the marriage.

The AMOFOI Marriage Certificate carries 2 joint passport size photographs of the lovers. Such joint photos are affixed and they are sealed and signed by the AMOFOI secretary. In addition, the AMOFOI Marriage Certificate carries with it eight signatures.

AMOFOI Love marriage can be held even if the scare of the Coronavirus is very much there in the neighbourhood. To



remove the caste system in toto, we need to have more and more of AMOFOI brand of priestless love marriage. The lowest marriage is held by spending minimal amount of money.

Besides, the marriage promotes national integration, creates global unity and rejects all lines of division created out of the caste, creed and status mindset.

# Food for stray animals demanded

**People for Animals feeds monkeys, stray dogs**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The People for Animals and the Dhyan Foundation have started feeding monkeys at Kandagiri and Udayagiri and stray dogs at different places in the city in view of closure of food sources for them due to closure of roadside hotels and tourist spots for COVID-19 threat.

Foundation secretary Jiban Ballav Das said even as the Union Government has declared veterinary feeding as an essential service, but no government agency is yet to make any provision to provide foods to stray animals. Forest department has also not done any provision for survival of monkeys at Khandagiri-Udayagiri caves in this critical time.



"If animals will not get foods properly, we will face another challenge of mass death of animals due to starvation in coming days. Now, general people, Government and NGO, corporate houses should come forward to provide food and healthcare to all animals those," urged Das.

# Sammilani holds Meher death anniv

**Members garland poet's photo at homes**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Utkal Sammilani members observed the 96th death anniversary of Swabhab Kabi Gangadhra Meher individually in their houses at 9 am on Tuesday in view of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in the State.

Usually, the Sammilani's Mancheswar Industrial Estate Branch observes birth and death anniversaries of legends at its office here. As the coronavirus lockdown is now in force and gathering of any nature restricted now, it was unlikely that Meher's death

anniversary observed by the Sammilani. However, members were advised to make garlands of flowers in their house and offer it at photos of rooftops on their respective

houses at 9 am. Accordingly, all members did that and the tradition of garlanding programme was not broken, said branch president Dillip Dashsharma.



Even though there is total lockdown for coronavirus in Puri town, women gather on a roadside to observe Pantei Puja on Tuesday  
Ranjana Ganguly / Pioneer

# 'Gene Drive' to curb malaria raises ethical questions as well



GYANENDRA NATH MITRA

A new technology 'Gene Drive' for mosquito control is currently confined to the laboratory since it raises an ethical question, if such a technology could in future be misused to the detriment of humanity.

Malaria control: Ronald Ross (1987) discovered malarial parasites in the stomach of Anopheles mosquitoes and proved that bite of female mosquitoes, transfer these parasites to humans and cause malaria. According to Cumbers (2019) half a million lives are lost annually by malaria. Other

mosquitoes causing diseases are dengue, Zika, Chikungunya and yellow fever, each taking their toll of human lives and their livelihoods.

Several methods are used around the world for control of malaria. These include spray of insecticides, fumigation, destroying mosquito habitats, using bed nets for protection from their bites and many other innovations. All of these methods need to be implemented on a massive scale with sustained efforts regularly for protection from malaria. Mosquitoes and the malarial parasites they harbour have increasingly developed resistance to chemicals used for their elimination.

Recently many methods based on genetic control of mosquito population such as, use of sterile males, conditional lethal genes, microbe mediated infertility etc. have been tried but did not give desired results.

Gene drive: Andrea

Crisanti and Kyros Kyrion (2018), geneticist at the Imperial College, London, have developed a new method called 'Gene drive' for mosquito control.

Only female mosquitoes bite humans, to drink their blood as their food and produce eggs. If they are infected by malarial parasites, they pass on the parasites to the bitten person. When other mosquitoes bite the infected person, they are infected with the parasites. They transfer the parasites to other persons, when they bite them and the chain of infection spreads to a large human population.

Crisanti and Kyrion (2018) have developed a CRISPR Cas9 (Pioneer, June 20, 2018) based Gene Drive, which carries a molecular scissor called Cas9 endonuclease and a guide RNA (gRNA), which are essential for cutting the DNA at a specific site within the genome. The gene drive targets fertility genes, essential for develop-

ment of female mosquitoes. Similar to humans, mosquitoes carry two copies of each gene for every trait on each pair of their DNAs. They have altered the nucleotide sequences of one of the copies to carry the code of gene drive and a cargo DNA that causes female sterility. The Cas9 endonuclease present in the gene drive cuts the second copy of the DNA and incorporates female sterility gene through an indigenous DNA repair mechanism. When male mosquitoes mate modified females in a normal population, they produce only sterile female mosquitoes, which cannot bite or reproduce offspring. This results in a disproportionate increase in sterile females, which cannot lay eggs.

In course of time there is a collapse of the mosquito population. Their laboratory study showed that they could successfully bring the population of mosquitoes to zero within 6 months.

Theoretically gene drive once released into a fraction of population in the wild may spread nonstop to each individual in that population and beyond it and cause total elimination of the entire race.

Gene drives may also be developed to control household and agricultural pests replacing use of pesticides. It is a powerful technology, which has the potential for misuse by wrong people. With suitable modification it can be used to eliminate an entire race of animals, considered undesirable by human beings.

Gates foundation has invested more than \$75 million on gene drive research at the Imperial College, London. The US military is also funding such research possibly to develop it as a biological weapon not to be brow beaten by its enemies (Brossard and others, 2019). There are no laws to prevent such misuse.

The California Cherry Board is funding research on

gene drive to control invasive fruit flies that ruin their cherry crops (Regalado, 2017). It is also being considered for rodent control, wherever they have turned into uncontrollable pests.

An interdisciplinary panel discussion was held in November 2017 to examine complexities of Gene Drive application as a part of the Third Sackler Colloquium, in the University of North Carolina, USA. Social scientists, life scientists and journalists discussed the problem from each of their unique perspectives.

Journalism, especially science journalism, has an important role to play in helping the public understand complex and technical subjects, especially those that raise ethical issues. Technical assessment of risks involved in use of such a technology requires responsible decision making by multiple actors (Brossard and others, 2019).

In an article written by Jennifer Kahn in New York Times on January 8, 2020, entitled 'The Gene Drive Dilemma: We can alter entire species, but should we?' the author states that 'Gene Drive' seems almost tailor-made to tap into our worst fears: a powerful, invisible technology that spreads of its own, carrying out a fundamental transformation of nature. It is a situation that practically invites us to imagine evil corporations on the move or secret military experiments going amok.

There are several factors which may hinder successful application of Gene Drive. The engineered insects may not survive in harshness of the wild. They may not be attractive to wild mosquitoes for mating. Gene Drive may have to be designed exclusively for different insects taking into account their speed of multiplication and adaptability to specific environment.

What will be the impact of

application of gene drive on environment if an entire species is removed from the eco-system? Several species have already gone extinct due to climate change. This needs careful assessment.

However extinct of anopheles mosquitoes may not have much impact since it is one of the 3,000 mosquito species found around the world (American Mosquito control Association, 2020).

Gene Drive needs to be applied rationally for each species taking into account its overall importance to maintain diversity of an ecosystem. Since gene drive modified organisms can spread of their own in large geographical areas, decisions need to be taken involving countries and communities who are likely to be affected.

(Dr Mitra is a former Professor and Dean, OUAU. References quoted are available in the net. gnmitra@gmail.com)



## Impending summer

# Ensure uninterrupted power supply, Discoms told

## Energy Secy writes letter

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With summer fast approaching, the State Government has advised the Power Distribution Companies (Discoms) to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the consumers in the State.

Principal Secretary, Energy, Bishupada Sethi has written to all the authorities of Cesu, Nesco, Wesco and Southco on March 21, while advising them to go for optimum power management, which is highly essential in order to continue providing uninterrupted electricity supply to the consumers of the State.

Sethi has said as the summer is fast approaching and

power requirement of the State is likely to rise substantially, follow-up action is needed and better monitoring of repair and maintenance of power infrastructure is required.

He said that Discom authorities should give 'top most' importance to establishments such as hospitals, water supply and important Government offices in providing uninterrupted power supply.

Reactivating the mechanism to review the situation on a daily basis at 10 am is needed in which detailed review will be taken up, which will include other important issues and status of repair and maintenance also, advised Sethi.

Availability of adequate manpower and electrical equipment, especially transformers



of different capacity should be reviewed periodically in order to meet exigencies, he pointed out.

Dedicated control room for the purpose of monitoring at head offices of DISCOMS will be opened under direct supervision of CEO, Cesu and Authorised Officers of Nesco, Wesco and Southco.

The State Government is needed to be informed daily on the power situation and accordingly Discoms will send report, an official said in Department of Energy.

## 6 yrs on, Lathikata-Timjor bridge still lying unused

### As approach road not readied due to land problem

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

Lathikata-Timjor high level bridge on the Brahmani river in Lathikata block under Sundargarh district is yet to be functional even after six years of the laying of foundation stone by

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. This is, as the approach road to the bridge has not been readied. About 70,000 people under 11 panchayats are suffering due to this.

Chief Minister Patnaik had laid foundation stone of the Lathikata-Timjor bridge on January 22, 2014 but the bridge was completed during April 2019. However, the approach road to the bridge has not been readied.

An agreement had been made between contractor Rajalaxmi Construction and the Rural Development Department for construction of the Lathikata-Timjor bridge

and the approach road at an estimated cost of Rs 22,55,076 crore. The agreement was made for construction of 612 meter length high level bridge and approach road of 500 meter length in left side and approach road of 800 meter in right side. The approach road has not yet been constructed because land acquisition could not be done.

There are 18 panchayats under Lathikata block. On one side of Lathikata block there are seven panchayats and on the other, there are 11 panchayats and in between, there is the Brahmani river. On one side of Lathikata block, there are Lathikata block office, Tehsil office, market and some other essential offices, on other side of block, there are Birkera, Tainsor, Garjan, Bada Dalki, Birda, Jadakudar, Balanda, Lungel, Jhartarang, Kalunga and Chikatmati panchayat and about 70,000 people of these 11 panchayats are facing severe difficulties because the bridge has not yet functioned due to the problems in construction of the approach road. While the water level is low in the river, they cross the river through



wooden bridge in unsafe condition and when the water level is high, they also use boat to cross the river to reach the other side of river for their work.

"We have not been able to construct the approach road because we were not provided land for construction of approach road of 1,300 meter

length as the land acquisition for had not been done. The concerned authorities have started land acquisition process and we hope the land acquisition will be completed soon and thereafter we will start construction work of approach road," said Supervisor, Rajalaxmi Construction, Amiya Panda.

"Total 23 plots are required for 1300 meter length construction of approach road to the bridge. We have already started acquiring land and the construction work of the approach road will be completed by May 2020," said Executive Engineer, Rural Development Department, Rourkela, Sushil Samantaray.

## Man held for spreading corona rumour

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A person was arrested in Ganjam district on Monday evening for allegedly spreading misinformation regarding the coronavirus outbreak.

The accused was identified as Areya of Bada Arjapali. According to police sources, he had shared a fake message on WhatsApp that a person of Chattrapur area was affected by coronavirus.

The State Government has ordered for stringent action against rumour mongers in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

## S'garh locals urged to stay indoors during lockdown

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

Collector Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, in a Press release on Monday, advised people of Sundargarh to stay home during the lockdown period and practise social distancing and maintain home quarantine at least till March 31.

To prevent the spread of Coronavirus in the State, the State Government had announced total lockdown of five districts and eight towns, including Rourkela, from March 22 to March 29 in the first phase.

The Sundargarh Collector thanked the public for observing the Janata Curfew on

March 22 in a disciplined manner. He also urged the populace of the district to continue with the spirit during the total lockdown period.

"The people of district need not panic as the shops selling medicines, groceries, vegetables, milk, eggs, daily needs and food items will be open. Rest other shops will remain closed for the time being. Thus, the people are advised to limit their non essential trips outside for their own safety," said Kalyan, adding that those who returned from foreign countries should get them registered and remain isolated.

## State wants more time to complete Gram Jyoti

### As corona hits works in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the COVID-19 spread, which is creating severe bottlenecks to implement power projects, the State Government has approached the Union Government to allow it more time to complete additional infrastructure under the Centre's Deendayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY).

Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy has brought this to the notice of Union Power Secretary Sanjiv Nandan Sahai. Earlier, the Government of India in Ministry of Power had extended the timelines for undertaking additional infrastructure for household electrification under DDUGJY projects up to 31 March.

Tripathy pointed out that the progress of the projects



under both the schemes being implemented by two Central PSUs and OPTCL respectively, are under constant review for completion in time.

The State had to restore the electrical infrastructure in the aftermath of devastating cyclone storms (Titli and Fani) in the recent past that required deployment of manpower and mobilization of materials in

affected area from all sources. Titli and Fani were very severe cyclones and caused widespread damages to the State and hugely damaged electrical infrastructure in Odisha. However, the executing agencies have been directed to take all measures to ensure completion of the projects within the deadline fixed. While the project works are

being executed on war footing, the spread of COVID-19 spectre has impacted the progress of work in the month of March very badly as the contractors are faced with multiple hindrances like sharp shortage of manpower and materials. Tripathy has urged to provide more time for completion of the projects by June 30, said sources.

## Woman's charred body found in house

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

Mystery shrouded the recovery of a charred body of a woman in a house near Hatapada in the Chandragiri area of Gajapati district on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Pankajini Nayak of Adaba area in the district. She was staying at the rented house with a man of Aska area for the last two years.

The owner of the house spotted smoke billowing out of it in the morning and informed police. Cops have sent the burnt body for postmortem and started investigation.

The person, who was staying with the woman in the house, was absconding, police sources said.

## Gopalpur Port operations run normally

PNS ■ GOPALPUR/ BHUBANESWAR

The Gopalpur Ports Limited (GPL) is operating normally as it comes under the purview of Essential Commodities Act. The cargo handling operations are continuing in berths.

The port has taken all precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is strictly following the norms and directives received from the Directorate General of Shipping and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

While dealing with the incoming vessels, the port is complying with the SOP issued by the Shipping Ministry. It is also following its own standard operating procedures (SOP) to keep environment safe. Spreading of de-contaminant liquid is done on the ships' boarding areas for embarkation/disembarkation of operation staffs.

An employee's body is fully covered with surgical protection suit during his operation on a vessel. All staffs are facilitated with face masks



and hand sanitisers before and after operations.

The port authorities are committed to facilitating a safe and contamination-free environment to its people and peripheral villages. The port is pledged to carrying out its operations to keep the country supplied.

## 4 die, 4 injured in K'handi road accident

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

As many as four labourers were killed and four others injured when a tractor turned turtle at Kaduapadar village near Bhawanipatna of Kalahandi district on Monday night.

The deceased were identified as Gayatri Majhi, Saibani Majhi, Urmi Majhi and Manas Majhi, all residents of Labaneswar village under Bhawanipatna block.

According to reports, the labourers were returning to their village by the tractor

from Sagada village. The mishap took place at around 8 pm when the driver lost control over the vehicle. Soon after, the driver fled from the scene.

While two labourers were crushed under the wheels of the tractor and died on the spot, six others were rushed to District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) at Bhawanipatna, where two others died while undergoing treatment. Four others were under treatment in critical conditions till past reports came in.

## Low-quality water pipe work in Bhapur

PNS ■ BHAPUR (NAYAGARH)

The pipe water lying work in Manibandha village under Nayagarh district's Bhapur block is of very low quality, alleged villagers on Monday.

The pipes have been laid so unevenly at different places that they have been found unfit for carrying water from source points to household points. The concerned contractor and engineers are responsible for the weak work, alleged locals.

The locals further alleged that water pipes are being laid even as an existing stretch of pipes is working. Many questions have risen over the spending on the second phase of work, alleged locals further. They have demanded an inquiry into the matter by higher authorities.



## Wife murder: Man detained in Baleswar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Sadar police detained a man following unnatural death of his spouse after the latter's family alleged that she was killed by her husband and in -laws due to nonfulfillment of dowry demands.

The victim, Ambika Saw (19), whose marriage was solemnized in May last with Gouranga Saw of Bhipur panchayat under Rasalpur panchayat was missing since Monday morning according her in -laws statements. They, later on, found her body floating in

their pond.

While the in-laws maintained that she committed suicide, her parents alleged that she was strangled to death by her in -laws due to dowry and then they dumped the body in the pond in a bid to give colour of suicide to the murder case.

Surendra Ojha of Bajana village under Soro police station alleging that her daughter was killed lodged an FIR with police.

Gouranga said that there was an altercation between him and his spouse over buying a mobile phone on Sunday night.

## Lockdown in Koraput district in force

### Only essential commodities shops open

PNS ■ KORAPUT

District Collector Madhusudan Mishra on Tuesday urged all people of the district to strictly adhere to lockdown restrictions issued by the Government to prevent novel coronavirus (COVID-19) from spreading in the State.

The Collector chaired an emergency meeting on Monday evening on implementation of lockdown in the district. He said essential ser-

vices like hospitals, clinics, medical shops, grocery and restaurants (parcel for home) would remain exempted from the lockdown.

Fish, meat, milk, bakery, vegetables, fruits, ATM counters, LPG services, electrical spare parts, garages and petrol pumps will remain open.

But clothes, furniture, shoes and bags, paint shops, gift items, street food, tea shops, puja bhandars, electronic appliances, jewellery, marble, tile, hardware and automobile shops would remain open.

Vegetable, fruits and non-veg item sellers have been asked to maintain two-metre distance. The lockdown would remain in force in the district from March 24 to March 31.

## Red Cross distributes food to service providers

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Red Cross, State Branch, distributed food and water to the emergency service providers like policemen and transport facilitators etc who are working day and night to beat the World Pandemic Corona COVID -19.

Red Cross volunteers made them learn how basic hygiene like hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and social distance could save us from Corona with practical methodology.



After the proper hand-washing the volunteers distributed water and food at different areas like Acharya Bihar, Vani Bihar, AG Square, Rasulgarh, Rajmahal, Kalpana Square, Garage sSquare and House Square, etc.

## Corona hits daily wagers hard in Sambalpur

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Corona has not only triggered a health hazard, it has turned to be a curse for poor people whose livelihoods have been affected due to lockdowns.

Common people to contractors, no one is prepared to engage them in work in fear of contamination. Notably, these are mainly their employers. They result is they are passing through very hard days now.

"We can manage for a few days from our little saving. But this will not serve if the crisis continues for long days," said Raju Khara, a daily labourer of Budharaja area.

"We don't know how to feed our children and meet rest

of our needs thereafter," Khara added.

Many other labourers who gather at the Fatak railway station everyday at 8 am in search of works are in dire straits to get employers now-a -days. Even civil contractors have stopped their construction works and some of the labourers from out of Odisha and mainly from Murshidabad of WB have left for their respective homes.

But local labourers and those from Titlagarh area who have been staying here since long and working as daily labourers are passing through uncertainty. They are really the shocked ones for whom feeding their children is the main problem than anything else now.

# State Govts come out with relief packages to fight corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid coronavirus lockdowns and the resultant hardships being faced by daily wagers and construction workers, several State Governments have come out with relief packages which range from free rations to one-time financial assistance of ₹1,000 per family for below poverty line card holders.

The Indian Railways has also decided to release their full salaries even as it suspended all its passenger services till March 31 to contractual employees. In an order issued on Tuesday, the railways said that due to prevailing coronavirus situation in India and the stoppage of trains, several contractual staff engaged in on-board house-keeping service, sanitation, pantry car and commercial activities have been stranded and have to compulsorily stay at other places, while others have to be in readiness to attend the duties at a short notice.

Lauding the tireless services doctors, nurses and others attending to the patients suffering from Coronavirus, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami went ahead to announce a special one month's additional salary to them.

He also announced an economic package of ₹3,280 crore to mitigate the hardship faced by the underprivileged people.

Palaniswami announced ₹1,000 each for all family card holders. "The card holders can also avail rice, dal, edible oil and sugar for the month of April free of cost. Tokens will be issued to the consumers to avoid rush at ration shops. Unregistered pavement vendors will get an additional cash support of ₹1,000, besides the ₹1,000 announced for PDS card-holders. MGNREGS workers will get a special pay for two days," he said.

The Andhra Pradesh Government has also come out with a package including to give free rice along with 1 kg tur dal besides ₹1,000 cash to every family under the BPL category in the State.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced a poor-friendly scheme styled as "Prochesta" under which each daily wage labourer would get an assistance of ₹1,000 per

## Roll out emergency welfare measures for construction industry workers: Sonia to Modi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to roll out emergency welfare measures for construction industry workers because of the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown. In a separate letter to the Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States, Sonia asked them to help the construction industry workers.

For his party, party leader Rahul Gandhi in a statement urged the citizens to take precautions and at the same time appreciated the people who are leading from front to deal with the menace of corona.

Sonia pointed out to the Prime Minister that the construction industry employed over 44 million people, and the workers should be given wage support.

Over the last week, lakhs of migrant workers in major cities across India have left for their hometowns and villages, fearing



a prolonged economic downturn.

As the second largest employer in India, over 44 million construction workers are now faced with a precarious future. Many are stranded in cities and are deprived of their livelihoods due to stringent lockdown measures," Sonia said in her letter to the Prime Minister.

Pointing out that several countries, most notably Canada, have announced wage subsidy as part of its COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, the Congress chief said, "I request you to consider advising the State Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Boards to roll out emergency welfare measures, particularly wage support, to construction workers who are in distress."

In separate letters to the Chief Ministers of

Congress-ruled States, Sonia said the construction industry that was reeling under the impact of demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST) had been hit afresh by the pandemic.

"Given that a significant part of the cess lies unutilised, the State Welfare Boards may consider providing wage support to their registered beneficiaries... Keep me informed of the progress in this matter," she told the Chief Ministers.

Rahul appreciated the people involved in tackling the situation and urged the citizens to follow the self isolation rules.

He cited examples of countries like Korea, Singapore and Taiwan that have been able to contain the spread of dangerous COVID 19 Virus.

Amid scarcity of equipment for India's corona warriors, Rahul said that he is sad about the state of affairs as crucial time for preparedness has been missed. Congress has sought the resignation of Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal accusing him of allowing exports when the country itself required.

## The Andhra Pradesh Government has also come out with a package including to give free rice along with 1 kg tur dal besides ₹1,000 cash to every family under the BPL category in the State

month.

Her Telangana counterpart K Chandrasekhar Rao also announced an economic package worth of ₹3,520 crore to provide relief to 8.8 million families having white (below poverty line) ration cards. In view of possible loss of livelihood and other difficulties from the week-long lockdown, the government will provide 3.36 lakh tonnes of

rice at the rate of 12 kg person for all BPL families at a cost of ₹1,103 crore free of cost immediately.

Along with rice, the Government will also give a cash assistance of ₹1,500 per family towards purchase of other food items, at a total budget of ₹1,304 crore, according to the Chief Minister. This one-time economic package will benefit

85.4 percent of the total households in Telangana.

The Uttar Pradesh Government has released the first installment of ₹1,000 each to 20 lakh construction workers.

In addition, the Uttar Pradesh Government will release ₹1,000 each to daily labours, hawkers and e-rickshaw while Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu Governments have announced to give free rations along with ₹1,000 as one time relief to daily wagers/workers.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, for his part, announced a ₹500-crore relief package for the poor and the needy, and ₹30 crore for construction work-

## 1,186 Indian citizens rescued by armed forces from foreign countries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Contributing to the national effort in fighting corona virus pandemic, the armed forces have so far evacuated 1,186 Indian citizens from foreign countries. At present, 796 people are in quarantine facilities under military supervision and only two of them have tested positive. They are now undergoing treatment in civil hospitals.

Giving this information here on Tuesday, officials said those evacuated included medical staff and air crew. The defence forces had taken suitable measures nearly a month back after the outbreak of the pandemic in Wuhan, China and set up quarantine facilities all over the country. These included 12 such camps of the army besides at least quarantine and isolation facilities of the

Navy in Mumbai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam.

The naval base, Kochi under Southern Naval Command (SNC), is gearing up to provide quarantine facilities for Indian nationals and is also actively coordinating with the Kerala state health officials and Ernakulam district administration to explore the feasibility of provisioning civil hotels/resorts for quarantining. Besides all Army Hospitals have been kept on alert to meet any eventuality.

Meanwhile, in view of the measures instituted to contain spread of COVID-19 including social distancing, the Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) has allowed veterans having lifestyle diseases on long treatment to purchase all medicines at once based on the prescrip-

tion for the month of April.

An order regarding this said "One time sanction is hereby accorded to reimburse the above expenditure under individual reimbursement of medical claims. The bills for reimbursement to be submitted by veterans after May 15, 2020."

Retired soldiers and officers having lifestyle diseases on long treatment may purchase one month requirement of all medicines based on the prescription held -- prescribed by polyclinic, service hospital and empanelled hospital -- for the month of April, the order stated. Veterans need not go to Polyclinics to collect the medicines for the month of April, the order stated, adding, "This will be implemented with immediate effect till April 30, 2020."

## SAARC health professionals to hold video-conferencing on March 26

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In their effort to further hasten efforts to jointly fight the coronavirus pandemic, health professionals of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations will hold a video-conference on March 26. The SAARC nations include India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

Announcing this, the ministry of external affairs said the conference will be held to exchange experience of combatting corona virus so far including specific proposals dealing with the screening at entry points, contact tracing, quarantine and isolation facilities.

For his part, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held telephonic talks with Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani to review measures undertaken to meet the challenge. The two leaders discussed evolving situation in the region and reaffirmed their commitment to boost co-operation.

This telephonic parley came days after Modi took the lead in south Asian region and held video conference with heads of states of SAARC nations. That conference saw all the countries agreeing to jointly fight the pandemic with India also setting a fund of 10 million dollars to meet any contingency in the region and urged other nations to pool in.

During the conference the Indian prime minister also said more such interactions at various levels of decision makers will take place in the coming days to deal with the evolving situation. It is in line with the PM's commitment that the health professionals of the SAARC nations will hold a video-conference on March 26.

Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh have offered initial assistance to the Covid Fund created by SAARC nations. India has donated 10 million dollars in the fund while Sri Lanka has five million dollars. Maldives has donated two million dollars, Bangladesh 1.5 million dollars and Afghanistan one million dollars for the Covid-19 Fund.

Workers Board will be provided ₹2,000 as one-time relief, he added.

## Ex-CM Omar Abdullah freed from detention



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

While 'daddy's girl', Mehbooba Mufti continue to remain under detention, former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, sporting a salt and pepper beard, stepped out of the Hari Niwas Palace, 232 days after his detention order was revoked by the Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday.

Omar, along with PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and hundreds of other senior politicians were detained in Srinagar ahead of abrogation of Article 370 on August 5.

Minutes after arriving at his Guplar road residence, Omar, broke bread with his parents and also posted a picture by immediately logging in to his twitter account. "Had lunch with my mum & dad for the first time in almost 8 months. I can't remember a better meal even though I've been in a bit of a daze & don't remember what I ate", tweeted Omar Abdullah.

Before stepping out of the Hari Niwas palace, Omar was served an official order of the Home Department.

The order issued by Principal Secretary, Home Department, Shaleen Kabra, stated, "in exercise of the powers conferred under section 19(1) of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978, the government hereby revokes the detention order dated February 5, 2020, issued by the District Magistrate, Srinagar, of Omar Abdullah with immediate effect".

## Rana welcomes release, says it's step in right direction

IAN5 ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference Provincial President Devender Singh Rana on Tuesday welcomed the release of former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, describing it a step in right direction.

"It is a defining moment that will go a long way in further strengthening democracy and initiating genuine political activities in Jammu and Kashmir", Rana said in a statement issued from Sher-e-Kashmir Bhavan.

Rana expressed the hope that release of Omar will lead to release of all other political

leaders against whom there are no criminal charges. This is imperative for generating an atmosphere of trust and creating conducive conditions to resume healthy political discourse in the larger interest of the people.

He said that the National Conference has always been a strong votary of democracy and secularism, which he described as the cherished agenda of Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and political philosophy of the party that stands guarantee to steering Jammu and Kashmir to peace and prosperity.

is changed. "We will pick these issues once we defeat the virus first," he added.

Reacting to the release of Omar Abdullah, Mehbooba's daughter Iltija Mufti posted a tweet, "Glad he will be released. For all their talk of nari Shakti & women emancipation, seems like this regime fears women the most".

Omar also wrote series of tweets thanking team of lawyers and party workers.

"I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Kapil Sibal, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Reyaz Shariq and their legal teams for taking the fight against my unjust PSA detention to the SC. Thank you to my baby sister Sara for filing the petition to have me freed".

## 350 FIRs against lockdown violators in UP

IAN5 ■ LUCKNOW

About 350 FIRs have been lodged in the past 24 hours in Uttar Pradesh for violation of the lockdown in the State.

Additional chief secretary home, Avnish Awasthi, told reporters here on Tuesday that 250 FIRs had been registered on Monday and 100 on Tuesday.

He said that the State Government had started preparing to tackle the Corona virus from February and the results were apparent now.

He said that all departments of the State Government were working in close coordination to deal with the prevailing situation.

"More than one lakh people have come to the state form other places during the past ten days. We have gone in for a lockdown to ensure social distancing and also prevent spread of the virus," he said.

He lauded the fact that almost all anti-CAA protests had been called off in view of the Corona scare.

"We are now going to enforce the lockdown firmly and district magistrates have been authorized to impose curfew if people do not follow the lockdown rules," Awasthi added.

He further said, "The Chief Minister has said that morning walkers should stay away from public parks till April 15. All medicine traders and pharmacists have been asked to ensure that there is no shortage of medicines."

The Government has also decided that all government vehicles in emergency services will be fitted with loudspeakers to ensure direct communication with the people.

The Chief Minister has also set up four committees to monitor the Corona situation, to ensure that agriculture is not adversely affected and people celebrate Navratri in their homes. Another committee will monitor the availability of food and money for unorganized sector and labourers while the fourth will crackdown on hoarders and fake news.

## Cong's allegation on protective equipment bogus: BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday rejected as "bogus" the Congress's suggestion that India did not have adequate stock of protective personal equipment (PEP) and wondered if the Opposition party was missing the opportunity to "loot" the exchequer.

"Congress' allegations that India didn't have enough Protective Personal Equipment (PEP) in time is completely bogus. Perhaps they are missing the opportunity to loot the exchequer. Imagine the number of Vadra

cronies who would have become rich had the Congress been in power!" BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said.

"WHO advisory, dated 27Feb, 'healthcare workers who are involved in direct care of Covid patients need to use PPE'.

India had imported 21,000 coveralls in 1st week of Feb and another 30,000 in 1st week of Mar. Besides we have indigenous capacity to produce 35,000 suits per week!" he tweeted, attaching documents to back his claim.

## Entire Karnataka under lockdown till March 31, says CM

IAN5 ■ BENGALURU

In view of increasing number of coronavirus positive cases, the whole of Karnataka will remain under lockdown from Tuesday to March 31, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said.

"After assessing the situation of COVID-19, we have decided to lockdown not just nine districts but the whole state of Karnataka starting Tuesday till March 31. I request all citizens to cooperate and please stay indoors," tweeted Yediyurappa.

Earlier, the state announced lockdown in Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Kalaburagi, Chikballapur, Mysuru, Madhugiri, Dharwad, Mangaluru and Belagavi districts since most positive cases were reported from there.

Karnataka has 30 districts with a population of over six crore.

Speaking from his Dollars Colony residence on Tuesday, Yediyurappa requested people to celebrate the coming Ugadi festival in a simple manner in their homes.

Amid coronavirus scare, the Karnataka government has cancelled the Karaga festival.

Yediyurappa assured people of adequate supply of groceries and food.

"Please note there is no need for bulk buying, hoard-

ing or any sort of panic. Food supply and grocery shops will be open for all as usual. Your cooperation is extremely important here and we can fight this," Yediyurappa said.

Reiterating the lockdown conditions, he said the police will take action if anybody violates the lockdown.

Seeking public cooperation, the Chief Minister said tougher measures are needed to contain the virus.

Meanwhile, many people were found violating lockdown norms at KR Market in the city on Tuesday.

Police admonished such people and asked them to return home and forced shut shops and other commercial establishments in the market.

While the authorities were busy taking action against shops selling non-essential goods, police were stopping and checking vehicles and autorickshaws.

The Health Department officials have decided to stick notifications outside the houses of people suffering from coronavirus infection.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Bhaskar Rao tweeted: "Requesting citizens to ensure that 'stay indoor call' is implemented. No threat of law but don your role of an enlightened citizen. Nothing is more important than our lives. Please do this for yourself."

## Take corona threat seriously, warn microbiologists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst reports of people in various parts of India not taking coronavirus lockdown seriously, the Microbiologists Society of India has warned that such casual attitude may leave the hospitals flooded with patients by April-end and situation will be unmanageable.

Several videos have emerged of people taking out rallies and performing garba during the 14-hour curfew on Sunday, prompting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take to twitter and point out that people are still not taking the lockdown seriously.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the microbiologists association urged him to extend the Janta curfew for a period of two weeks to be strictly implemented to break the chain of transmission of Coronavirus that has sniped over 14,000 lives across the world. In India, the tally is almost nearing to touch 500 infected cases.

Dr AM Deshmukh, President of the Society in the letter said, "The Microbiologists Society sincerely appreciate the efforts you are taking to control coronavirus, a pandemic disease. We urge you to implement Janata Curfew for 14 more days to break the chain as 14 days is considered to be the maximum incubation period for this virus."

He added that the microbiologists "are sure" that implementation of the Janata Curfew for continuous 14 days will control the outbreak and "succeed to bring the outbreak in reverse direction".

Deshmukh also warned that the situation will be "unmanageable" by the last week of April if not taken seriously.

He asserted that the one-day curfew helped a lot and now we need to extend it to 14 days. If we do, then India will not have a single new case. According to his calculations, he said, India will record 1,000 positive coronavirus cases by 30 March.

## CRPF restricts movement of promoted officers

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF on Tuesday stopped officials and other ranks who have been promoted to take charge of the promoted posts at the headquarters of the higher formation in order to limit unnecessary movement amid the threat of the coronavirus pandemic.

The promoted officials who are eligible will be posted at the current station in order to check the spread of the deadly virus.

In a letter circulated to all the formations of the 3.25 lakh strong Force, the CRPF said, "In view of the Government's advisory to break the chain of COVID-19 non-essential movements have been restricted...matter regarding relief of transferees as well as promotes on transfer has been examined and approved by the DG (Director General)".

As per the approval, none of the officers/officials will be relieved on

transfer till further orders from the CRPF directorate here.

All officers/officials posted on promotion to the next higher ranks are permitted to take over charge of promoted post at present place of posting i.e. other than declared HQ (headquarter), if they fulfil all eligibility conditions of promotion as mentioned in their promotion orders, reads the order.

"Request (to) ensure action accordingly and forward consolidated report of taking over charge of promoted post by all promote officers/officials to the concerned branches of this Dte (Directorate) at the earliest," reads the order issued on Tuesday.

Through an earlier order, the CRPF had barred all non-essential administrative movement.



# Fourth death in Maharashtra, 107 +ve cases

**Mumbai:** A 65-year-old man who arrived here from UAE via Ahmedabad passed away due to COVID-19 late on Monday night, while the number of positive cases shot up to 107 in the State with 10 new cases, officials said here on Tuesday. The latest coronavirus casualty takes the death toll due to the disease in Mumbai to four in the past one week and the national toll to 10.

Another 94 suspected cases are admitted to various city hospitals, according to Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM).

The civic body said that the deceased was admitted to the Kasturba Hospital in a critical condition on Monday with fever, cough and breathlessness. He had a history of foreign

travel, arriving from UAE to Ahmedabad on March 15 and then to Mumbai on March 20. The victim also had complaints of high blood pressure coupled with uncontrolled diabetes and passed away late on Monday after a few hours of treatment. The new coronavirus positive cases in Maharashtra detected since last night include three from Pune and one from Satara.

The suspected cases include people with a history of recent foreign travel history to Peru, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

A total of 418 people with history of foreign travel are in quarantine in Mumbai.

The three earlier victims included a 68-year-old Filipino and two other men, both aged 63. **IAN S**



Passengers stranded at the airport take rest after no local transport was available following Government's imposition of lockdown in the State amid coronavirus pandemic, in Chennai on Tuesday

# Mumbai Police confiscates 2.5 mn masks worth ₹15 cr

**Mumbai:** In a major swoop, Mumbai Police have seized three truckloads of 2.50 million masks worth ₹15 crore hoarded illegally and busted a four-member gang, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said here on Tuesday.

"The masks were being hoarded by the gang and were intended for sale in the black market. The seizure includes over 325,000 N-49 masks, plus others of different varieties," Deshmukh told media-persons.

He said that at the height of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, Maharashtra is facing a massive shortage of all types of masks and this seizure is expected to ease the problems somewhat.

The seizure came after a tip-off received by Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh last week on a gang hoarding the heavy-demand masks for exorbitant prices.

Accordingly, a trap was set up by Senior Inspector of Police (Crime) Mahesh Desai who posed as a customer and finally managed to bust the gang by raiding locations in Mumbai and Thane.

While four persons have been arrested, the police are on the lookout for two absconders, said Deshmukh.

Deputy Commissioner of Police

**The seizure came after a tip-off received by Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh last week on a gang hoarding the heavy-demand masks for exorbitant prices**

(Crime) Akbar Pathan said the four accused were produced before a magistrate and remanded to police custody till March 27. Since one consignment was found near the Mumbai Airport Cargo Complex and another in a warehouse in Bhiwandi, Pathan said the investigations will focus on whether attempts were underway to export the masks to other seriously affected countries where they are in huge demand. It may be recalled that recently the Maharashtra Food & Drugs Administration had banned the sale of the N-49 masks without medical prescription after people resorted to panic buying leading to an artificial shortage.

So far, Maharashtra has recorded 107 COVID-19 positive cases besides four deaths including a 68-year-old Filipino. **IAN S**

# B'luru civic body deploys drones to fight COVID-19

**IAN S ■ BENGALURU**

**B**engaluru civic body has deployed drones for spraying disinfectants over all the areas of the city to combat coronavirus, a top official said on Tuesday.

"Disinfectants will be sprayed using drones to sanitise public spaces. Mechanical sweepers to be deployed for intensive cleaning. Jetting machines from BBMP will be employed in this exercise," tweeted Bruhat Bengaluru

Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner B.H. Anil Kumar.

Powered by six propellers, the drones have a capacity to lift 15 litre disinfectants provided by the civic body to spray in places where there is more human density.

Six nozzles under the propellers spray the disinfectant from the drone with a flight time of 20 minutes. A single battery can power the drone to spray the liquid in an area of three acres.

# Goa Opp raises doubts about zero virus case

**IAN S ■ PANAJI**

**T**he Congress in Goa on Tuesday raised doubts about repeated claims made by the State Government of zero COVID-19 positive cases, in absence of a single testing laboratory, in the coastal State.

A statement issued by the State Congress president Girish Chodankar also said, that no effort was made by the BJP-led coalition Government in Goa to start a virology laboratory, since the time the viral outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation.

"The COVID-19 alarm has not yet woken up this government. It is the people of Goa that needs to be appreciated for taking all necessary precautions. That is why the situation

seems under control, even though the government failed to establish a basic virology laboratory to test COVID-19 in Goa," Chodankar said in his statement.

"We wish and desire that no positive cases are traced in Goa, but we do not agree with government figures of ZERO positive cases in the state without virology laboratory or collection centre in the state," Chodankar also said the state government was in "denial mode" on the issue.

"Why is the Health Minister taking so much time to give permission to start testing labs facilities in Goa, when his own party at the Centre has permitted them," Chodankar said, referring to the central government's recent decision to approve six private laboratories for COVID-19 testing.

# Four more positive cases in Gujarat, total now 33

**Gandhinagar:** With four more new coronavirus positive cases reported in Gujarat, the total such cases in the western State climbed to 33 on Tuesday, as the authorities decided to put the entire State under lockdown.

Out of the four new cases since Monday, three got the infection locally while one got infected abroad, including a man, 32, from Surat had travelled to Saudi Arabia. Another man, 66, got infected locally. One man aged 53 and one woman aged 54 in Gandhinagar got infected

locally.

Gujarat is the only state in the country which has a list of 27,000 passengers, the residents who returned from abroad since March 1.

"We have screened 10 lakh persons under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) till date, including patients complaining of Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI), 108 services complaints about breathlessness and 104 complaint calls," said Jayanti Ravi, Principal Secretary Health.

"Out of total 33 positive

cases in Gujarat, we have recent blood samples of six patients after a week's treatment for testing and they have been found stable," added Ravi.

The Secretary said that 11,108 people in the state were under home quarantine. "We have received 2,424 calls regarding COVID-19 on the 104 services. We have a total of 1,583 isolation beds in the state in government hospitals and 609 ventilators. In the private hospitals those which are linked with the government, we have total 15,00 ventilators," added Ravi.

# With 3 more testing +ve, J&K cases mount to six

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**

**A**t least three new positive cases of coronavirus were reported from Srinagar and Bandipore districts of Kashmir valley while one patient from Srinagar fully recovered, bringing the total tally of active cases in Jammu & Kashmir to six on Tuesday.

Both Jammu and Srinagar districts witnessed complete lockdown along with other districts as Government authorities enforced it strictly after initial hiccups and violations by ignorant people.

"So far, 279 samples have been sent for testing of which 253 tested as negative. Only seven persons have tested positive and of them only six are active positive and one patient has recovered. Test reports of 20 patients were awaited," reported daily media bulletin released by the Health and Medical education department.

Sharing details of the fresh cases, Spokesman of Jammu and Kashmir government, Rohit Kansal

Tuesday tweeted, two more cases reported positive in Srinagar. One has confirmed travel history outside India. Full details regarding the second being ascertained".

In the evening, Kansal shared details of another positive case in a separate tweet. "Another positive case in Kashmir division. Patient, from Bandipora, with history of travel outside J&K but no history of travel abroad. Contact tracing on".

To further beef up capacity of the health care delivery system in these difficult times, the Government has decided to hire retired doctors (on contract) for a period of one year.

"Retired doctors to be hired against vacancies on contract for one year for Fight against Corona in underserved areas. Decision in emergency meeting of Advisory Council", tweeted Kansal.

In Jammu, GMC Jammu was declared as dedicated COVID hospital for Jammu province. The hospital authorities were directed to

ready it by Wednesday evening.

The OPD services at GMC and its associated hospitals shall remain suspended w.e.f 25.03.2020 till further orders.

GMC administration has also appealed to the general public of Jammu division to stop the routine walk in OPD services at GMC and its associated hospital and request to consult telephonically for their disease ailment from the list of doctors provided separately and available on the website www.gmc-jammu.nic.in of GMC Jammu. The telephone consultation time shall remain within 10:30 am to 04:30 pm.

Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar Dr Shahid Choudhary sharing details of a patient who recovered after receiving treatment tweeted, "Srinagar's first COVID-19 Positive case successfully treated".

According to official sources "a total number of 2928 persons have been kept under home quarantine while as 71 are in hospital quarantine."

# Manipur woman tests positive, first in N-E

**Imphal/Agartala:** Manipur reported its first case of coronavirus as a 23-year-old woman who returned from the United Kingdom tested positive, making it the first case in the North-East region of India, an official said on Tuesday.

According to a statement issued by K. Rajo Singh, the Director of Manipur's Health and Family Welfare Department, the woman is now undergoing treatment at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal.

"The woman was found infected during examination at the JNIMS. She is a resident of Thangmeiband Lourung Purely Leikai in Imphal west district. She had fallen sick on Monday," another official of Health and Family Welfare Department said on condition of anonymity.

The Manipur government has a list of 99 people who arrived in the state in recent times from coronavirus-affected countries and are now in house quarantine.

Two doctors of JNIMS, L. Shivadutta Singh, Research Scientist and Rajkumar Manojkumar Singh, Associate Professor and Principal Investigator, both of Department of Microbiology, issued the positive nCoV confirmation certificate at 6.40 a.m. on Tuesday.

Soon after the medical test report, Rangitabali Waikhom, District Magistrate, issued an order on Tuesday prohibiting movement of people in the entire Imphal west district. **IAN S**



A deserted Hawa Mahal area during the lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic in Jaipur on Tuesday

# Astrologers say corona result of Jupiter's asymmetric movement

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI**

**T**hough medical scientists are yet to come out with answers to doubts about coronavirus which has claimed millions of lives across the globe, astrology has the answer for what caused the pandemic.

Modern science and liberals may look down on this ancient system of Indian knowledge with contempt and disgust and they portray as reactionary and regressive any efforts to describe this branch of knowledge as a science.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the observations by persons who have mastered the science of astrology, it is interesting to note their conclusions about coronavirus.

Parapananga Unnikrishna Panickar and Pandhappalli Gopala Menon, two leading Thantrik scholars who learnt astrology as part of their training in Sanskrit literature pointed out to *The Pioneer* that the present pandemic is the result of the hazardous movement of planets from one position to another during a single calendar year.

"There is a law which governs the movement of planets from one Raasi to another. The established pattern stands disturbed and this is the reason behind the pandemic," said Panickar who usually shuns the media. Panickar is known for his closeness to former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa.

An authority on Sanskrit language and literature, Panickar says the pandemic is the effect of the asymmetrical movement of Jupiter. "The calendar year is experiencing this disordered movement of Jupiter and that too three times during 2019 to 2020. It vaults from Scorpio to Sagittarius and then to Capricorn. Moreover the coming together of Mars, Saturn and Jupiter is a dangerous sign, the result of which could be death and destruction," he told *The Pioneer*.

Interestingly, *The Pioneer* was privy to a closed door meeting held by Panickar for a top government official in November 2019 when he told the latter that the country and the world was in for major disaster in months to come either due to war or epidemic. "This

phase is known as Vasundhara Yogam, as per the Vedas. What is worrying is the fact that this phase has been aggravated by Kala Sarppa Yogam which also is an indicator of bad times," he had said.

"Loke Bahu Vinasahakrith," (World is in for destruction) Panickar had told the official who was facing a number of hardships.

Pandhappalli Gopala Menon, thantrik scholar based in Kerala's Kayamkulam, agreed with what Panickar told about the movement of Jupiter. "Jupiter is the divine planet which plays major role in our fortunes and misfortunes. It's disorderly movement and that too three times in a single year has resulted in natural disasters, earthquakes and pandemics. Kings (rulers) are forced to face crisis after crisis because of this planetary movements," said Menon.

He pointed out that the situation has arisen out of the misdeeds by people in higher places as well as their associates who engage in activities which do not sync well with Dharma mentioned in Vedas and Upanishads.

# Shutdown official in TN as cases up to 15

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI**

**W**ith the number of people diagnosed with Coronavirus touching 15, the State of Tamil Nadu has gone on a total lockdown at the stroke of 6 pm on Tuesday. The main railway stations at Chennai Central and Egmore wore a deserted look as Indian Railways suspending all long distance and suburban trains till March 31 in view of the threat posed by the contagious disease. The Central Bus Stand at Koyambaedu, a hub of intra-state and inter-state bus services was locked by 3 pm as public transport operations were suspended from Tuesday noon itself.

According to Dr Vijaya Baskar, minister of health, the three new cases reported on Tuesday were passengers who returned after journey to foreign countries. A 74 year-old male returned from USA, 52 year-old female who too is a US returnee and a 25 year-old female who came back from Switzerland tested positive and they are undergoing treatment in Chennai," said the minister.

The minister also released data about the number of persons screened by the health authorities till 3 Pm Tuesday and asked the people not to panic. Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy announced a series of measures in the Assembly which he said would bring down the difficulties faced by the poor during the total lockdown of the State till March 31. Ration card

holders which come under the category of below poverty line are being offered free ration and a cash compensation of Rs 1,000 each to tide over the problems arising out of the week long shut down. The chief minister also announced that medical and para medical staff who are working in isolation wards of the government hospitals would be given a month's salary as additional pay in lieu of the services rendered by them in this difficult times.

Elsewhere in the State, Islamic preachers who come from East Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia have come under the scanner following reports about some of them testing positive for corona virus. Two of the three persons who tested positive for Corona virus last Saturday were Thai nationals who had come to preach in Tablighi Jamaat (Society for Spreading Islamic Faith) in Erode district.

Intelligence officials told *The Pioneer* that though they had informed the State authorities about the trips undertaken by the foreign nationals to various districts like Erode and Vellore, allegedly for religious preaching, the State Police or law enforcing agencies have failed to take any action fearing repercussions from the minority communities. "We don't know whether these persons who come on short-term visa are authorized to engage in preaching. Ewe have done our job and that's all," said a senior intelligence official.

# WB extends lockdown to whole State till March 31

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

**T**he Bengal Government on Tuesday extended the ongoing Corona-induced lockdown to the entire State and till March 31. Earlier the measure was taken for only urban municipal areas and till the midnight of March 27.

Announcing the situation to be grave Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee following a review meeting said "we have assessed the situation and it has been decided that the ongoing lockdown will be extended to the entire state from 5 pm today," adding the "lockdown which was earlier scheduled till March 27 will now extend to March 31." The Chief Minister said "these are extraordinary and grave situation. So the entire State will now come under the lockdown. Earlier it was confined to the urban municipal areas only ... I will ask the people not to panic but remain alert and cooperate with the Government."

Providing reasons behind the Tuesday's decision the Chief Minister referred to a case study saying "we have gone through a case study where we found that the first one lakh infections took 67 days whereas the next one lakh infections took 11 days only" and more alarmingly "it took just four days for the third one lakh infections. Hence the gravity of the situation is huge and we have to take some hard decisions to save the lives of the com-

mon people."

Banerjee who on Monday held an all-party meeting inviting suggestions from the political parties on Tuesday announced a one-time help of ₹1,000 for the workers in unorganized sector. "We are bringing a scheme through the 'Prachesta' scheme whereby Rs 1,000 each will be given to the workers of the unorganized sector," considering the loss of income they would suffer during the lockdown period, she said. The Chief Minister earlier took an extraordinary decision to convert the 3,000 bed Calcutta Medical College and Hospital --- the oldest such facility in Asia --- into a fully dedicated medical care centre for Corona patients and personally paid surprise visits to all the medical colleges and other hospitals including the Belegata ID Hospital and Rajarhat quarantine centre.

Meanwhile Bengal saw two more Corona cases taking the number up to nine in the past one week. While the first patient recently visited London the second patient made a trip to Egypt with whole of his family. While the patients have been admitted to Belegata ID Hospital their families have been sent on quarantine, sources said. The Health Department sources were awaiting the pathological reports of a third patient who on Tuesday was admitted to the NRS Medical College Hospital with fever and acute respiratory problem.



## Economic pandemic

Very few Indians can sustain a prolonged shutdown but can the Government jumpstart the economy once India reopens?

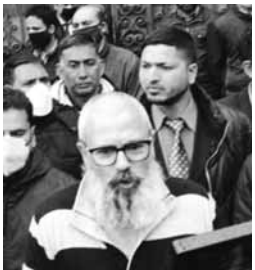


truly speaking, the press conference held by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman offered no relief package when much was desired considering the stressed times due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. All that it offered were announcements of deferments for tax compliance issues. Undoubtedly, this was much-needed. Such concessions, coupled with reductions in interest penalties and extension of some schemes and the fact that there will be no minimum balance or debit card charges over the next three months in banks, is welcome. However, the country and its citizens were expecting something more: They wanted a relief package. From large corporations to daily-wage labourers, everyone was expecting some measures on the part of the Government to mitigate the economic impact of COVID, some sort of a relief package, some numbers or a liquidity measure. This was a fine-print press conference, an obvious one after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) extended the financial year to June 30. Sure, there were some positives pertaining to the bankruptcy and insolvency code as account departments across firms are not functional. While the Government managed to pat itself on the back for the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), it was necessary to implore the public to not go to the banks. It is becoming increasingly clear that March 31 is not an expiry date to the Wuhan contagion's spread in India. This will only show just how successful the lockdown, the biggest across the world, has been in controlling the spread of the disease. Fighting the outbreak is crucial but the economic policies of the Government have received much criticism, too. As it is even before the pandemic struck, the Indian economy was already in the grip of a slowdown. Post the spread of the disease, forecasts have reached a new low. Oxford Economics slashed the country's January-April growth forecast to three per cent, a number not seen even during the worst of the global financial crisis. The main equity gauge slumped by a record 13.2 per cent and the rupee weakened past 76 a dollar for the first time ever. Foreign investors have already started selling Indian assets at an unprecedented pace. It is also very likely that the lockdown, at least in some form or the other, will carry on till mid-April. And even when India reopens for business, trains and planes will take weeks to get back to their normal schedules. As far as foreign travel is concerned, it appears that a few commercial flights will operate to international destinations till the middle of the year until the disease subsides in Western Europe and the US. This will hurt both Indian immigrants abroad and their families back home. Meanwhile, there will be a lot of tragic stories, of children being unable to attend their parents' funeral, for example.

What is clear, however, is that an extended lockdown will lead to a lot of shock for the economy, and not in a good way. While some State Governments are providing free rations, limited financial help for daily-wage labourers and the homeless as India's migration to urban centres reverses, it may be impossible to reach the countless millions who have gone back to Bihar and Jharkhand. How much money can Governments provide? Where will the money be spent? Can India even afford to give money out like that when the very survival of certain sectors of the Indian economy — aviation and travel being top of the radar — are at stake? This will not be an easy task for the Narendra Modi Government. It is fate that has determined that he is our Prime Minister during this crisis. How he handles this further will not just determine the course for the next few years but for the next three decades.

## Back to the people

Omar Abdullah is free and used his appeal, that at one time was considered incendiary, to calm his people amid virus fears



Yes, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah has been released from detention. But the circumstances surrounding his release are just as hazy as his arrest. In the dark shadow of COVID-19, Omar decided that though it was a different Kashmir he was returning to, there was a bigger question of life and death at the moment and so spread the Government's message of social distancing and quarantine. If the Government's charges for booking him after the abrogation of Article 370 — that his messages were divisive and could incite people and youngsters — are an estimate of his appeal, then Omar certainly proved how the Government bungled in underestimating his positive net worth. For he used the same appeal to ask his people to be calm in the time of a horrid pandemic and follow protocol, politics could come later. Clearly, NC chief Farooq Abdullah, who was released earlier and Omar, both of whom had been allies of the BJP Government, and not too troublesome ones at that, could have been used to normalise the bridge with civil society in Kashmir despite its changed status as a Union Territory. And by equating the old political leadership with terrorists, when in fact the Abdullahs were much of a filter, the Modi Government cannot walk the talk of ushering in development in Kashmir. It still needs the mediatory presence of local parties but has blunderously pushed them away. In their absence, the ruling BJP could not conduct the panchayat and local-level polls successfully, although it has been hoping to build a new narrative ground up with candidates friendly to it. Such was the boycott then that over 12,000 panchayat seats continue to be vacant. Panchayats have made it clear that any electoral process would have to be preceded by the release of jailed NC and People's Democratic Party (PDP) leaders. Clearly, without traditional politicians, the BJP is finding it extremely difficult to re-engage with people. Already payments are pending for work done under MGNREGA scheme over the last several years. And in the trough of COVID-19, the Government might face more ire locally. Neither has the BJP been able to raise an alternative front or a political climate. It may have encouraged the formation of the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) drawing rejects from PDP and NC, but it cannot generate reassurance, least of all credibility.

Besides, the Modi Government has failed to justify why it used the Public Safety Act (PSA) to book Omar. The law was passed in 1978 by Sheikh Abdullah, who founded the NC. Over the years, it has been used indiscriminately to curb dissent, invoked most frequently against separatist leaders and protesting teenagers. One can understand the dynastic hatred involved in arresting Omar under a law passed by his grandfather. But beyond the theatrics of a "great fall," it is the dossier of charges against him that defied reason and bordered on the ridiculous. Omar's ostensible crime was the capacity to influence people and his ability "to convince his electorate to come out and vote in huge numbers even during the peak of militancy and poll boycotts." If this swaying ability, something that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime used to build a bridge over the conflict, is not an asset, then one wonders what is. If his persistent calls to resolve the conflict through democratic processes are not Centrist, then one wonders what separatism is. For these abilities, which the current regime could have used to transition to a new narrative, have been wasted away. Omar, the genial, quiet and engaging fighter, once seen as a puppet prince, will now be Kashmir's face of quiet resistance. The captivity has given him the halo he needed.

# opinion06

## Foreign policy put to test

For Nepal, balancing India and China is challenging; expecting it to also balance America and Beijing would be walking a tightrope. For India, regaining space lost to China will be a long haul



ASHOK K MEHTA

I go to Nepal twice a year. Once during Holi and the other on Tihar (Nepali *bhai doo*) that comes after Dussehra. The normal format is: Fly to Kathmandu, spend two to three days there, then fly to Pokhara for a two-week trek and then revival. The pre-Holi Kathmandu weather this year was a spoilsport — cold, bleak and rainy — amid the Corona scare, though Nepal had registered just one case and that figure remains intact even today. Just this week, Nepal went into total lockdown till March 31. One-third of its population of 30 million people works abroad, mainly in the Middle East, South-east Asia and India. Their earnings account for nearly one-third of its gross domestic product (GDP) of \$35 million.

Many Nepalese wear face masks throughout the year in Kathmandu and elsewhere due to garbage and pollution. Everything appeared normal at the Tribhuvan International Airport, including the temperature gun aimed at people. The country has for the moment cancelled its inaugural Sagarmatha Sambad, a three-day conference on climate change, which Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali said would be postponed to October. He also said he was pleased with India-Nepal relations now that the Foreign Secretary-level Kalapani dialogue is about to start shortly and the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report appeared on the horizon.

My lecture at Nepal's Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement on a holiday (Saturday, March 6) was well-received. It was preceded by a presentation on the Coronavirus and the world economy. The theme of my presentation was: "India-Nepal Relations: Mind the Gap — Where China Fits in." *The Kathmandu Post*, the capital's leading English newspaper, was recently stung by a stern rebuke by the Chinese Embassy for reproducing a syndicated column on Coronavirus by a former US Ambassador, who was critical of China. While this intrusion was condemned by the Nepalese media, not a word was said by the Prime Minister KP Oli-led Government.

During the royal rule, the Chinese used to say that they do not interfere in the internal affairs of the host Government. This is now a thing of the past. That the Chinese assault on freedoms guaranteed by the Nepalese Constitution went officially unresponded was not surprising. Any similar affront by India would have attracted loud and collective protests by the media and the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), which is invariably pro-China. Clive Hamilton's *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* and Jonathan Manthorpe's *Claws of the Panda: Beijing's Campaign of Influence and Intimidation*



in *Canada* are books reflecting on China's global outreach and blatant intrusions.

Like in the rest of the world, politics is on long pause in Nepal. Reason: Oli's health and the spread of Coronavirus. The main topic of discussion after Oli received his second kidney replacement is his political rejuvenation. Unless his health deteriorates, rendering him dysfunctional, he will continue to lead the country by remote control. Fortunately, the Coronavirus epidemic appears controlled for now and life goes on happily without fear or scare throughout Nepal.

I arrived in Pokhara a day before Holi on an Air Buddha flight, which took all of 25 minutes. The only BMW in Pokhara, belonging to Nepali Congress' Buddhiman Gurung, drove me to Lameahal, 15 km east of Pokhara. Holi is celebrated on the 6,000 ft high newly-built Manithan temple at An Phu village, where the *bhale* (male chicken) or *boka* (male goat) are sacrificed till the brown hilltop turns red. The *pujari* (priest) has to first persuade *bhale* and *boka* to accept becoming the sacrificial offering before their beheading by the *khukuri*-wielding priest. Side by side, dry colours mix freely with local dance and

drinks as tribal Gurungs bring out their best. From Lameahal, one has to cross the Seti river on a swing bridge, climbing about two hours to reach An Phu top, which makes for a healthy daily trek.

Meanwhile, with regime change in the Oli-led NCP unlikely till next elections in 2023, it is the latent power struggle between Oli and party president Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda that is making the gossip. Given Oli's uncertain health, Prachanda has played his cards cleverly to ensure that sooner than later, the power hierarchy in Kathmandu could look like this: Madhav Kumar Nepal, former Nepal Prime Minister, Jhalanath Khanal, the President of Nepal, and Prachanda, the undisputed president of the party. The opposition Nepali Congress in Nepal, like Indian National Congress, is on a decline. Nepali Congress (NC), which was split into three factions — SB Deuba, RC Poudyal and KP Sitaula — has two additional wings: The Koirala legacy and Ganesh Man Singh groups. Both NCP and NC will have their first and 14th general conventions in 2021.

While in NC, Deuba remains the top leader, other parties have opted for joint or

collective leadership to avoid infighting. For example, the royalist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, which merged recently, has three presidents. The Rashtriya Janata Party (RJP) has a six-member presidium led by Mahanta Thakur. The Samajwadi Party (SP) has a triumvirate leadership — former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, Upendra Yadav and Ashok Rai. The RJP and SP, who together rule number two province, are considering merger after unification talks. They have been pressing the Oli Government to amend the Constitution, incorporating pending issues of the Madhesis, *janjatis* and marginalised communities.

Two years on, the Opposition parties are complaining that the ruling NCP is besieged by scandals — gold, wide-bodied aircraft, NCell and a close aide of Oli, Banskota — and misgovernance but have no alternate vision plan to offer. While China will ensure the NCP stays united and the Government does not fall, India is loath to being seen as having favourites or indulging in regime change. The Government is seized with matters like the US-sponsored Millennium Challenge

Corporation (MCC) and the Indo-Pacific, which are seen as means of challenging China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and containing it. Die-hard communist members of NCP are unwilling to countenance this. For Nepal, balancing India and China is challenging enough; expecting it to also balance the US and China would be walking a tightrope.

For India, regaining space lost to China will be a long haul. In the meantime, it can invest in improving its declined image, damaged by the blockade of 2015, which gave rise to anti-Indianism and fillip to China. It has chosen a competent and promising Ambassador, Vinay Kwatra, for the job. On March 18, when I was at Pokhara airport bound for New Delhi, one of my Nepalese friends made this irresistible offer: "Mehtaji, why don't you stay in Lameahal till the Coronavirus dries up?" Back in Noida, I am confined to Ram Vihar instead of climbing to An Phu top and breathing a daily dose of crisp Himalayan air.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander IPKF South, Sri Lanka and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff.)

### SOUNDBITE

The Government must take lessons from Italy. There will be massive economic pain. But it is possible to handle the economic consequences than the loss of numerous lives.

Congress leader  
—P Chidambaram



Basically, *bhagwaan ne laath naari hai and bola hai ki* behave like humans, don't become god. One small virus called Corona has put everyone in their places.

Actor  
—Anupam Kher



China and India are the only two countries with that large a population. We would like to share our experience and provide necessary assistance to the Indian side.

Chinese spokesperson  
—Geng Shuang



So happy that Omar Abdullah's unconstitutional detention has been revoked. It is about time the Government restores the democratic rights of people in the region.

Congress leader  
—Priyanka Gandhi



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Justice prevails

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Finally, a closure" (March 21). Over the last couple of months the four men convicted in the Delhi gang rape case had filed numerous curative and mercy petitions in a final effort to commute the death sentence; three of them had even approached the International Court of Justice in hopes of relief.

However, all of them were finally hanged to death last Friday, thus bringing to an end one of the darkest chapters in the history of India. It is impossible to imagine how much the woman's family must have suffered for the last seven years awaiting the delivery of justice. One hopes that this serves as a warning to those who view women as a commodity and consider them to be less than human.

Shahin Ahmed  
Mumbai

#### Grease the wheels

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Finally, a closure" (March 21). At long last, justice has been delivered

#### As a responsible citizen, stay at home

For a country accustomed to decrying every legislation enacted by the ruling Government, it was, perhaps, for the first time that the entire nation was on the same wavelength as that of the Prime Minister. Following his call to observe *janta* curfew, people stood by him and stayed indoors in order to stall the community spread of Coronavirus. Termining the voluntary exhibition of solidarity "successful" would, however, amount to a sacrilege of sorts. A sense of achievement can said to have been attained only when the scourge of the contagion is totally wiped off. Until then, quantifying such efforts to restrict the spread of the virus is uncalled for.

Of course, the nation would have derived some satisfaction from the fact that most citizens voluntarily came forward to be a part of the mission to try and break the transmission chain of Coronavirus. However it remains to be seen whether the public is willing to accept the *janta* curfew as something more than a token acceptance of the extensive and exhaustive campaign against the virus undertaken by the Government. The Coronavirus threat is as good as a "national emergency" and not a "forced national holiday." A day after the Prime Minister's call, people flocked the streets the very next day. With newer strains of virus putting the world in

in the 2012 Delhi gang rape case. All four men, who were convicted of the gruesome crime that led to the death of a 23-year-old paramedic student, were hanged on March 20 in Tihar jail. It took seven long years to provide a sense

of closure to the family of the woman.

However, in cases which are as grisly as this, it is important for strict punishment to be meted out at the earliest. This might lead to a decline in the number of crimes



jeopardy every other day, it has virtually become a fight for survival for human beings. Hence, every individual must learn the nuances of preventing and safeguarding oneself against the risks of the lethal disease. It has been said that social distancing is the best precautionary measure. Hence, public participation by way of physical distancing and adoption of the prescribed measures gain all the more significance. Staying at home is, thus, imperative.

Pachu Menon  
Margao

committed against women. One hopes that the justice system in our country picks up its pace to deal with such cases efficiently in the future.

NR Ramachandran  
Chennai

#### No more umpire abuse

Sir — The spread of the Coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc. All major sporting events are either being postponed or cancelled. It doesn't make any sense to play professional sports without spectators. More than anything else, there will be no one to doubt the umpire's eyesight or abuse them. It only took a worldwide crisis to achieve this.

Dennis Fitzgerald  
Melbourne

#### Break the chain

Sir — It's praiseworthy that the Government has been doing its bit to combat COVID-19 but people should not be misled by any kind of superstition. The beating of *thali* will not stop this virus. Instead, every citizen must be made to understand that the only way to tackle this deadly disease is by staying indoors to break the chain.

Shaily Chakraborty  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### India's lost opportunity

It is possible to convert all homes into learning centres through the use of communication technology. But we were not ready for it



CB SHARMA

Health and education are the main concerns of all families and Governments during calamities. Governments which can think, plan and lead their country during difficult times are sure to survive any disaster. The world is passing through a great crisis right now due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Hospitals are being flooded with patients and schools have been closed. This is no time to find fault but it is definitely an opportune time to assess how prepared India was for this situation. And what we should do now, so that once this crisis is over the country is ready for a similar situation, if and when, it arrives.

What is in short supply during a crisis is professionals and experts. For now, healthcare professionals are in short supply and also teachers, because children can't reach school and teachers can't reach homes of the learners. In terms of medical facilities, we can convert school buildings into hospital wards but how can we turn every household into a classroom? By no means can we multiply the number of teachers and arrange doorstep educational facilities. But it is possible to convert all households into learning centres through the use of modern communication technologies. Thankfully we are able to maintain electronic communication right now and this can be used to beam academic lessons to all households. This is the time to review some of the initiatives we took in this direction.

In 2002, during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government, it was decided that we needed to launch a satellite for education as schools, teachers and related facilities were in short supply. As a consequence in September 2004, we launched a satellite exclusively for education known as Educational Satellite (EduSat). The cost of a satellite is massive and it is not an easy decision to dedicate one solely to education. But India definitely needed to do this because of the large number of learners, who could make use of it in the absence of good teachers in institutions established in different parts of the country. The satellite had a life of seven years but it died in 2010 and we could not even use ten per cent of its capacity.

In 2015, once again, the then Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Smriti Irani took two initiatives. One was starting a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform known as SWAYAM and the second was a bouquet of Direct To Home (DTH) educational channels known as Swayam Prabha. Both the platforms cover content from pre-school to doctoral studies. Both have a larger participation than any other platform of any other country but still it is not able to fill the gap it was expected to, in the present crisis. A large number of Secondary school students are watching channel number 27, Panini and Senior Secondary students are watching channel number 28, Sharda of the Swayam Prabha DTH channels. However, compared to the number of learners, who are confined to homes, the viewership is minuscule. The broadcast is backed by a live question-answer session where the teacher answers queries of the students when they call on the toll-free numbers that have been provided to facilitate this.

This was the foresight of the leader and had we pursued with our efforts and hooked up all Secondary and Senior Secondary learners to these platforms at that time, we would not have had to worry about closing down our schools, at least for academic transaction.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted India to reach out to learners in all the States and also our neighbouring countries through satellite and he had mentioned this in his speech in Parliament. In keeping with the PM's wish Irani also initiated the Bharat Vani project where-in textbooks were developed in 100 mother tongues of India. And in keeping with Modi's wish to provide content to the learners in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries in their own language, Irani responded by forming a task force to develop learning material in text and media formats and many more. Our satellite broadcast reached 95 per cent of our landmass and also our neighbours. If we develop material in languages like Nepali, Bengali, Tamil, Urdu and so on, we would be beaming good content to not only our citizens but also to learners in SAARC nations. This was the best time to not only help our own schoolchildren but also children in the South Asian countries, stay back home and continue their studies. By not pursuing the Bharat Vani project, we have lost the opportunity to be of help to our students, neighbours and failed our PM's mission. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the largest open school in the world, has in the last five years developed e-content which is available on the SWAYAM and has four 24x7 DTH channels. We could have filled the gap, which has been created by the closure of the schools across country due to Covid-19. Language and location would have been no barrier. The NIOS broadcast and live classes are becoming popular by the day. But it had massive potential and it could have played a larger role if we had prepared distance/open schooling through dual mode schooling. It is a missed opportunity and it is too late to do anything now. However, we must learn from our mistakes and take these initiatives to their logical conclusion once the Coronavirus threat is over.

(The writer is Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling)

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME (IOC PRESIDENT) BACH HAS PUT HIS OWN MOTIVES ABOVE THE ATHLETES' WELFARE AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT.  
—BRITISH CYCLIST  
CALLUM SKINNER



IT IS MIND-BOGGLINGLY COMPLEX TO MAKE A CHANGE (CANCELLATION) AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SPORTING EVENT.  
—MICHAEL PAYNE  
IOC'S FORMER HEAD OF MARKETING

# Much ado about Gogoi

There are many other judges who retired from the Bench and who later took up political postings offered by the parties in power



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Ranjan Gogoi, the newly sworn-in member of the Rajya Sabha, is the cynosure of all eyes as well as the favourite whipping boy, at the moment, depending on which side of the fence people are on.

His critics say that the decision of the former Chief Justice of India (CJI) to accept the nomination to the House of Elders by the President of India is an act against all ethics mentioned in the Constitution of India. Since this writer is no authority on the Constitution, let the experts discuss the issue and quote the relevant portions from the Indian Constitution which show beyond doubt that Gogoi has cocked a snook at the founding fathers' vision.

Those who support Gogoi point out that there were instances of retired judges of the Supreme Court getting nominated to the Rajya Sabha in the past and there is nothing "official" about the former's decision to take up the offer of the Government of India.

Given Gogoi's extensive knowledge and experience of the law, he does qualify to be a notable who can contribute valuably to the Upper House. Also, he is not the first retired Chief Justice to have benefitted from the executive's generosity. There have been others like him who have propped up by several regimes as a reward for services that were "friendly" to them. There's enough counter-logic going around as to how Justice S Fazl Ali was the first Supreme Court judge to be made Orissa Governor in 1952 and was the beginning of the Congress' endorsements of judicial luminaries that continued till the party was in power.

From Assam itself, there's the example of Justice Baharul Islam, who began as an advocate in the Assam High Court in the early 1950s and went on to serve a decade-long term as Rajya Sabha member.

As far as controversial rulings go, then the Congress suitably accommodated former Chief Justice Ranganath Misra, who gave a clean chit to the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. After his retirement, he was made the first chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and was even elected to the Upper House on a Congress ticket in 1998. The examples are so many that at one time, there was much debate over how judges should not be encouraged to take up the offer of the Government's post-retirement benefits, like heading commissions of inquiry, simply because that could cloud their impartial judgments and colour their opinions in sensitive cases.

One wonders, why then is there such discomfort over Gogoi's induction in the Rajya Sabha? Is it that there's much criticism of Gogoi because he was at one time considered a "rebel" judge and, therefore, now looks like a test case of how the institution of the executive superseded that of the judiciary and a one-time warrior appeared to have fallen in line? For the uninitiated, Justice Gogoi and three of his brother judges shot into national prominence on January 18, 2018, when they staged a press conference in the national Capital, which was described as extraordinary by the "pundits" in the media. The judges cautioned the nation by giving "advance information" about the threat faced by the nation and the judiciary. Gogoi had specifically made a reference to the selective allocation of sensitive files. Therefore, there was a sense of expectation built around him, one of them being that he would ensure the independence of the judiciary. The four senior-most

“THE EXAMPLES ARE SO MANY THAT AT ONE TIME, THERE WAS MUCH DEBATE OVER HOW JUDGES SHOULD NOT BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE UP THE OFFER OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POST-RETIREMENT BENEFITS, LIKE COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY, SIMPLY BECAUSE THAT COULD CLOUD THEIR IMPARTIAL JUDGMENTS AND COLOUR THEIR OPINIONS IN SENSITIVE CASES. ONE WONDERS, WHY THEN IS THERE SUCH DISCOMFORT OVER GOGOI'S INDUCTION IN THE RAJYA SABHA?”



judges of the apex court led by Gogoi warned that democracy was in peril. "Unless this institution of the Supreme Court is preserved, democracy will not survive in this country," warned J Chelameswar, a colleague of Gogoi, during the press meet, who, too, has retired.

I remember many Opposition leaders waxing eloquent on the four judges who held the extraordinary press conference. Immediately after the meet, a Left leader went to the residence of Chelameswar (through the back entrance).

Nothing discernible happened after this extraordinary washing of dirty linen in public. The then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra retired on October 2, 2018, and Ranjan Gogoi was sworn in as the new Chief Justice. The rebel judges or the "young Turks" of the Supreme Court retired one by one and all are living happily ever since.

People living in South India are not fortunate enough to get the latest news on the "palace intrigues" taking place in the power corridors in New Delhi. Gogoi retired on November 17, 2019 and Sharad Bobde was sworn in as the new Chief Justice of the country. This is an ongoing process as the judiciary, too, works on the principle "me today, you tomorrow." Justice Bobde, too, would be retiring once he reaches the magical figure of 65, the age for superannuation.

The issue is whether the former Chief Justice of India was right in accepting the Rajya Sabha nomination offered by the President of India so soon after his retirement. Well, there are no records to show that Gogoi was even remotely connected with any political party till the day he retired from service. He is the son of KC Gogoi, former Chief Minister of Assam who was a Congress

leader. Ranjan Gogoi's career at the Bench began in 2001 when he was appointed as a judge of the Guwahati High Court in 2001 and culminated with his appointment as the country's 46th Chief Justice in 2018. But there were many legal wizards in the Supreme Court who had stints in politics before their elevation to the Bench and till this day one is yet to hear about the ethics practiced by these gentlemen.

VR Krishna Iyer, a noted judge who became a pioneer of judicial activism in India and has ever since been eulogised for his concerns for human rights and the poor, was appointed as a judge of the Kerala High Court in 1968. Before entering the precincts of the judiciary, Iyer was a full-fledged politician, a Communist to be precise. He was the Home Minister in the EMS Namboodiripad-led Communist Government of 1957, which was dismissed by Jawaharlal Nehru following the liberation struggle waged by the Congress in association with the powerful Church and the Muslim community. It was during the tenure of Iyer as Home Minister that Kerala saw the first-ever police firing on cashew company workers agitating for their rights.

Iyer, who was defeated in the next Assembly election, was elevated to the Bench in 1968 at the instance of Namboodiripad. This has been mentioned by Iyer himself in his autobiography *Wandering in Many Worlds* (Longman Pearson 2009). "EMS Namboodiripad sent his Cabinet colleague, Gouriamma, to persuade me to accept the offer. She pleaded that State power was a necessary tool for transformation of India into a socialist republic. She pressed home this point and left," writes Iyer on page 159. The book hit the shelves across the nation in 2009 and Gauriamma is yet to react to what Iyer

has written.

The Communists and the Congress were hands in glove, though it was invisible to most. Iyer's was not a one-off inclusion of a professional politician into the Bench. We have the case of Kurian Joseph, who as a student of the Sree Sankara College, Kalady was the leader of the student wing of the Kerala Congress (Mani), and had the backing of the party all through his career. He was one of the judges who took part in the "extraordinary press meet" along with Gogoi to warn the nation that democracy was in danger.

Joseph has reportedly said that Gogoi compromised the noble principles of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary by accepting the nomination to be a MP. "According to me, the acceptance of nomination as member of Rajya Sabha by a former CJI has certainly shaken the confidence of the common man on the independence of the judiciary, which is also one of the basic structures of the Constitution of India," Joseph has been quoted as saying.

Let's accept what Joseph has said about Gogoi, but we have had many judges and Chief Justices in the past, who, had no hesitation in accepting the crumbs thrown at them post-retirement. Joseph's predecessor from Kerala, KG Balakrishnan, had no qualms in accepting the post of the Chairman of the NHRC. There are many judges who retired from the Bench who later took up political postings offered by the parties in power. HR Gokhale, Baharul Islam are just some of the names that come to the mind. We cannot expect every judge to be like MN Venkatachaliah and SH Kapadia, synonyms for justice and propriety.

(The writer is Special Correspondent, The Pioneer)

# Together we can beat the Coronavirus

Experts say that quarantine is one of the most effective ways of containing an epidemic. Therefore, it is imperative that more than the steps taken by the Government, we impose self-restrictions at an early stage to limit the COVID-19 spread and help each other in this trying time



KALYANI SHANKAR

Most of India is in a lockdown as the country collectively tries to prevent the deadly Coronavirus from spreading into the community. We began the exercise to beat the virus on March 22 with the unprecedented voluntary 7 AM to 9 PM "Janta (public) Curfew" in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's televised appeal to people to stay indoors.

Given our numbers, a whopping 1.3 billion people, it was by far the biggest social-distancing exercise in

the world against the Coronavirus outbreak.

The country has been in a lockdown ever since and the Prime Minister gave a hint of what was to come when he said that India should be prepared for a long haul. Modi tweeted on Sunday night, "Today's #JantaCurfew may get over at 9 PM but that doesn't mean we should start celebrating. Do not consider it a success. Today the countrymen have declared we are capable, if we decide we can beat the biggest challenge together."

India stands at the tipping point, having reached Stage-III of the pandemic as confirmed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on March 22. From here it could take a flat curve like Korea or an upward curve like Europe. The "Janta Curfew" was Modi's idea of mobilising public support to fight the Coronavirus through extended lockdowns soon afterwards. It was a bid to create

greater awareness in the country about the danger of the pandemic and remind everyone of their duty towards the nation.

All epidemics evoke fear and panic since they result in fatalities and the Coronavirus is no exception. However, in its management, four elements are important: Science; the public healthcare system; political will and public support. Where science is concerned, human trials of the Coronavirus vaccine have already begun and doctors are experimenting with the use of various drugs that already exist to fight the pandemic.

However, in India, much more needs to be done on the public healthcare front, which is not equipped to handle a medical emergency of this scale. As far as political will and support is concerned, Modi's appeal and the subsequent lockdowns by various State Governments across the nation show that we are doing well on this front. And the fact that the Prime

Minister's appeal for the "Janta curfew" and the subsequent lockdowns received overwhelming support across the spectrum shows that people are behind the Government, too.

India was never as united as it is today. Several Chief Ministers, Members of Parliament, political parties, sports personalities, film stars and TV celebrities came on board to make the "Janta Curfew" and the lockdowns that have followed it, a success. The support for the Union Government also came from unexpected quarters, including the Congress and other Opposition parties.

Even religious institutions don't seem averse to the Government's measures, as temple authorities across the country have come on board and closed temples in an unprecedented move. Priests in a temple in Varanasi decided to put masks on the idols and posters have

been put up urging devotees to refrain from touching the idols. Even most churches across India are shut and most Sunday services were either suspended or held online. This is quite a feat given that this is the Holy Lenten month for Christians across the globe and churches are usually full at this time of the year.

Now that the country is in a lockdown, the question is what lies ahead? The challenge before the Modi Government is formidable. Many nations have announced support for their economies and businesses and people who are losing out on their livelihoods. The UK proposes to spend 330 million pounds and the US close to a trillion dollars. Even European countries like France, Spain and Italy are getting ready to spend billions of euros. The Modi Government, too, will have to mobilise all the resources at its disposal to keep the country pandemic-free and also ensure that the

livelihoods of people are safeguarded. The Centre and the States will have to focus on how to deal with lakhs of people who will be in dire straits due to the lockdown. This is particularly so in the case of construction workers, taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers, daily-wage earners, domestic help, small business enterprises and so on. The Government has to think of a huge economic package to tide over the present crisis. The more drastic the precautionary health measures, the greater will be the fallout on the economy. Modi has announced an economic task force under the Finance Minister but they are yet to come up with welfare schemes, though Nirmala Sitharaman did extend the last date of filing income tax returns on Tuesday. However, some States like UP, Telangana and Delhi have come out with relief packages.

Also, at a time like this, the people have to realise that pursuing one's

own self-interest is not done and each citizen also has to think of public interest. While we all have the legal right to buy as much hand sanitiser and face wipes we can find, what about the welfare of the society in which we live? India believes in *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the whole world is one family) so now is the time to prove this with our behaviour.

Experts say that quarantine is one of the most effective ways of containing an epidemic. Therefore, it is imperative that more than the steps taken by the Government we impose self-restrictions at an early stage to limit the Coronavirus spread and help each other in this trying time. As Dr Paul, head of the medical task force at the Centre, commented in a TV show, "The Coronavirus is a once-in-a-century epidemic and has to be fought as such." Indeed desperate times need desperate measures.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

# GLOBAL DEATH TOLL NEARS 17,000

AFP ■ PARIS

The number of deaths around the world from the novel coronavirus cases stood at 16,961, according to a tally compiled by AFP on Tuesday from official sources.

More than 386,350 declared cases have been registered in 175 countries and territories since the epidemic first emerged in China in December. The tallies, using data collected by AFP offices from national authorities and information from the World Health Organization (WHO), likely reflect only a fraction of the actual number of infections.

Many countries are now only testing cases that require hospitalisation. Italy, which recorded its first coronavirus death in February, now has more fatalities than China with 6,077, as well as having 63,927 declared infections with 7,432 recoveries.

China — excluding Hong Kong and Macau — has to date declared 81,171 cases, including 3,277 deaths, with 73,159 people recovered. It reported 78 new cases and seven new fatalities since Monday.

The third worst hit country is Spain with 2,696 fatalities and 39,673 infections, followed by Iran with 1,934 fatalities and

24,811 cases, France with 860 deaths and 19,856 cases, and the United States with 499 deaths and 46,440 cases. Since 1900 GMT Monday, Iceland announced its first death while Myanmar reported its first case. By continent, Europe has listed 199,779 cases and 10,724 deaths to date, Asia 98,748 cases and 3,570 deaths, the US and Canada together 48,519 cases with 523 deaths, the Middle East 29,087 cases and 1,966 deaths, Latin America and the Caribbean 6,217 cases with 112 deaths, Oceania 2,225 cases with nine deaths and Africa 1,778 cases with 57 deaths.

## DEATHS MOUNT IN US, EUROPE

### Americans hope for relief; authorities say the US is on track to eventually overtake China's nearly 82,000 infections

AP/PTI ■ BERLIN

Medical personnel help each other suit up at a federal COVID-19 drive-thru testing site.

As virus deaths mounted and Americans hoped for some economic relief Tuesday from their divided government, health officials and leaders warned that the world was entering a critical period that would determine just how deeply the pandemic slices through their nations.

While Chinese authorities said they would finally end a two-month lockdown in hard-hit Hubei province where the coronavirus outbreak first began, nations in Europe, North America and elsewhere pressed harder to enforce the stay-at-home restrictions placed on 1.5 billion people worldwide.

Those measures could significantly impact the trajectory that the virus will take as it spreads across the world. World Health Organization warned that the outbreak is accelerating but said nations and individuals can all have an important impact.

We are not helpless bystanders, said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000.

We can change the trajectory of this pandemic. One viral social media video showed Italian mayors, sometimes profanely, berating their fellow citizens for not staying inside.

On Capitol Hill, a nearly \$2 trillion plan that would prop up businesses and send checks to American households has stalled in Washington for days, but officials said they expect to reach a deal later Tuesday.



Democrats have argued that it was tilted too much toward corporations rather than helping American workers and health care providers.

It appears that it will be soon that the U.S., which has more than 46,000 infections and 530 deaths, overtakes hard-hit Italy in the number of infections.

Authorities say the U.S. is on track to eventually overtake China's nearly 82,000 infections and how soon that happens depends on how seriously Americans take the state-at-home restrictions.

In New York, now one of the world's biggest virus hot spots, authorities rushed to set up the thousands of hospital beds they will need in just weeks to protect the city's 8.4 million people. More than 12,000 people have tested positive in the city and 125 have died. A state-wide lockdown took effect Monday.

The mayor warned that the city's hospitals are just 10 days away from shortages in basic

supplies, while the state's governor announced plans to convert a New York City convention center into a hospital.

This is going to get much worse before it gets better, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tightened all travel restrictions, demanding that people do not visit family members or friends and stick with only the people they live with.

Nearly 384,000 people worldwide have been infected and more than 16,500 have died from the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University. In Italy, Spain and France, the pandemic is pushing national health systems to their breaking points.

The outbreak has killed more than 6,000 Italians, the highest death toll of any country. Officials said Monday the virus had claimed just over 600 more lives, down from 793 two days earlier, offering some glimmer of hope.

trains Tuesday on some London subway lines.

I cannot say this more strongly: we must stop all non-essential use of public transport now," London Mayor Sadiq Khan tweeted.

"Ignoring these rules means more lives lost. Asian stock markets reacted positively Tuesday, markets in Japan and South Korea posting significant gains after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis.

The move toward lockdowns has been influenced by the success of such measures in China, where the virus was first found late last year in the central city of Wuhan. China barred people from leaving or entering the city on Jan. 23, and soon expanded that to cover most of Hubei province, home to 70 million people.

On Tuesday, after more than a week in which China said the vast majority of new virus cases were imported from abroad, authorities said the restrictions in Hubei would end. People cleared by health authorities would be able to leave the province after midnight. Wuhan itself will remain locked down until April 8.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Some 102,000 people have recovered, mostly in China.

In contrast to other European nations, German health authorities offered some hope that the country has flattened the exponential spread of the virus, which has already infected nearly 30,000.

## UK's lockdown in question as trains remain packed

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK's strict three-week lockdown announced by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to control the spread of the deadly coronavirus remains in question with the country's underground trains seen packed during the rush hour on Tuesday as people continue using the limited services in operation.

Johnson on Monday enforced the strictest curbs on movement of people for at least three weeks as the death toll from COVID-19 in the country rose to 335.

In a televised address to the nation, Johnson issued the central message of: "you must stay home" and gave police powers to enforce the order. However, there are concerns around the clarity of the message and police forces around the country said they had been inundated with calls asking what was still allowed.

Transport Secretary Gant Shapps in a tweet on Monday advised people to stay at home

if possible.

"Concerning to see images of packed trains this a.m. The advice is clear: STAY HOME if possible. That is the way to SAVE LIVES," he said. "We are working with train operators to introduce a small number of trains for KEY WORKERS to have space to be safe," he added.

The government has said that those in construction can go to work on a site as long as they adhere to the social distancing advice of not being within 2-metres of someone who is not in your household. However, London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who controls some of the UK capital's biggest construction projects as the head of Transport for London, said he wanted to shut construction sites as part of the lockdown. "I've expressed my concerns to the Prime Minister directly... In my view, the only construction workers that should be working are those that we need for safety. I think that this is a time to understand the scale of the challenge we are facing," he said.

## Spain virus death toll rises by 514 to 2,696

AP ■ MADRID

Another 514 people have died in Spain over the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 2,696, as the number of infections surged towards 40,000, the Government said on Tuesday.

As the health authorities step up the number of tests, the number of people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 rose by nearly 20 percent to 39,673, the health ministry said.

At the same time, the death toll showed an increase of 23.5 percent over the figures from Monday.

The new figures came as the Government of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was to seek parliamentary approval to extend the state of emergency for an extra two weeks, until April 11, in a bid to slow the spread of the virus.

Officials are hoping the rate of infections will peak within the coming days.

The Madrid region has suffered the brunt of the epidemic with 12,352 infections — just under a third of the total — and 1,535 deaths, or 57 percent of the national figure.

## Spanish Army finds bodies in nursing homes among residents

AP ■ MADRID

Spanish army troops disinfecting nursing homes have found, to their horror, some residents living in squalor among the infectious bodies of people that authorities suspect have died from the new coronavirus. Prosecutors have launched a judicial probe.

Defense Minister Margarita Robles said the elderly were "completely left to fend for themselves, or even dead, in their beds." She said the discovery included several nursing homes and several bodies but did not give exact locations for the nursing homes or exactly how many bodies were found.

The news came as Spain on

Tuesday announced a record daily rise of 6,584 new coronavirus infections, bringing the overall total to 39,673. The number of deaths also jumped by a record number of 514 to 2,696.

Madrid took over a public skating rink Tuesday after the city morgue overflowed. To date, 1,535 people have died in the hard-hit Spanish capital, more than half of the national total. The region has over 12,350 infections.

"This is the tough week," Fernando Simón, head of Spain's health emergency center, told a daily briefing.

Simon also said 5,400 health workers have been infected by the coronavirus that is relentlessly marching

across the world from China, some 14 % of the country's total cases.

Security forces guarded the outside of the Palacio de Hielo ice skating complex on Madrid's northeastern outskirts as funeral vans entered the building via an underground car park. Madrid authorities took up the rink's offer after the city's municipal funeral service said it could take no more coronavirus bodies until it restocked with more protective equipment.

The city government said bodies would be held at the rink until they can be taken to be cremated or buried.

Madrid has adapted two city hotels as hospitals to help with the overflow of virus



patients and plans to take over five others. Madrid's hotel association has offered 40 hotels to

help medical workers.

Madrid also set up a field hospital in the Ifema trade fair

complex that recently housed the COP25 U.N. climate conference.

## Italy records 743 deaths

AFP ■ ROME

Italy reported a sharp rise in its coronavirus death toll Tuesday, with 743 more victims, breaking a two-day trend that had fuelled hopes the epidemic may be on the wane. The daily toll was the second highest recorded in Italy since the crisis began, at the civil protection agency said that while the number of new cases was up on Monday's figure, the infection rate was slowing. The civil protection chief also said the nation of 60 million was on course to overtake China's total number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in a week.

## China to lift lockdown in Hubei province, Wuhan amid warnings of 2nd wave

PTI ■ BEIJING/WUHAN

China on Tuesday decided to lift the three-month lockdown on more than 56 million people in the central Hubei province, the epicentre of the deadly coronavirus outbreak, on Wednesday amid warnings by experts of a looming second wave of the COVID-19 infections in the country due to the steady rise in "imported cases".

The prolonged lockdown of Hubei's capital Wuhan will end on April 8, lifting the mass quarantine over the city with a population of over 11 million.

Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the virus cases were first detected in

December last year on Monday reported one new confirmed case of the COVID-19 after reporting zero cases for five consecutive days.

Hubei province and Wuhan city which together have over 56 million population were kept under strict lockdown since January 23 with a ban on all movement of

people and transportation.

China is embarking on a major step to open up its coronavirus epicentres just as India and the world is seriously grappling with the fast-paced spread of the disease which has become a global pandemic forcing most of the countries to go into a lockdown mode.

## WHO: India has tremendous capacity in eradicating coronavirus pandemic

PTI ■ GENEVA

India, which led the world in eradicating two silent killers - smallpox and polio - has a tremendous capacity in eradicating the deadly coronavirus pandemic that has now claimed nearly 15,000 lives and infected over three lakh others globally, according to a top WHO official.

The executive director of the World Health Organisation, Michael Ryan, said India, the world's second most populous country, has a tremendous capacity to deal with the coronavirus outbreak as it has the experience of eradicating the small-pox and polio through targeted public intervention.

"India led the world in eradicating two silent killers and eliminating them from the country," he said during a press conference in Geneva on Monday on the COVIVID-19 pandemic.

India, through targeted public intervention, ended smallpox and gave a great gift to the world. India also eradicated polio, he noted.

"India has tremendous capacities. It is exceptionally important that countries like India lead the way to show the world what can be done," Ryan said.

"India led the world in eradicating two silent killers, small-pox and polio so India has a tremendous capacity," Ryan said.

"There are no easy answers. It is exceptionally important that countries like India show the way to the world as they have done before," he said. Diseases such as polio and smallpox, which once claimed many lives in India, have been defeated with targeted public interventions. While India attained the polio-free status in 2014, the country got rid of smallpox in 1977.

Ryan's remarks came as the WHO said the number of deaths due to the coronavirus soared to 14,652, with more than 334,000 people infected worldwide.

### SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely:** Chanchal, S/o: Sh. Deen Dayal Gupta, R/o: H.No. A-188, 2nd Floor, GD Colony, Mayur Vihar, Ph-III, Delhi, **Aged:** 20 years, has been missing from the area of P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi since 08.03.2020 vide DD No. 59A, Dated 11.03.2020, has been lodged at P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:



Chanchal

**Height:** 4'10", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Clothing:** Blue colour check shirt, Black colour jeans and Black colour belly in her feet.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Gazipur, Delhi at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641

S.H.O

P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi  
Ph: 011-22610839, 22610954

DP/58/ED/2020.

### SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON



General public is hereby informed that one person **Namely:** Jabir @ Jabar, S/o Abdul Hussain, R/o H.No. E-1134, JJ Colony Bawana, Delhi **Age:** 33 years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Oval, **Hair:** Black, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Black Colour Jeans & Khaki jacket in feet has been missing since 03.02.2020

at 04:00am.

In this regard a vide DD No. 16A dated 06.02.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Narela Ind. Area, Delhi.

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

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

E-Mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

P.S. Narela Ind. Area, Delhi  
Ph. 011-27787592, 27787593

DP/40/ON/2020

### SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one person (depicted in the photo) namely **Kailash Rai, S/o Late Shri Awadh Narayan, R/o Cj-47, Rajiv Gandhi Camp, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi, Age** 65 years has been reported missing from his house since 04.02.20 at 10.30 am. In this regard a DD No. 31-A dated 05.02.20 has been lodged at PS Naraina, New Delhi. His physical description is as under:-

**Kailash Rai**

**Height:** 6'2", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Clothing:** Wearing Cream colour shirt & sweater, blue colour lower and black & red colour chappal. He is mentally disturbed.

Any person is having any information or clue about this missing person may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail ID: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Tele: 011-24368638, 24368641

PS: Naraina, New Delhi  
Ph: 25891181, 25892010, 8750871122

DP/58/WD/20

### SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one person (depicted in the photo) namely **Sunny Kalia S/o Dinesh Kalia R/o H.No. D-2/A, 92C Janakpuri, Delhi** has been reported missing since 10.03.2020 from his house In this regard a DD No. 28A Dated 12.03.2020 lodged at Police Station-Mayapuri, Delhi. His physical description is as under:-

**Sunny Kalia**

**Aged -** 37 years **Complexion:** Fair, **Height:** 5'7" **Face:** Round, **Physique/Built:** Thin, **Clothing:** Black Colour T-Shirt and Black Colour Upper Jacket and Blue Colour Jeans Pant & Cream Colour Shoes in his feet.

Any person having any information/clue about this missing person may inform SHO, Kirti Nagar, Delhi at E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax: 011-24368639

P.S. Mayapuri, Delhi  
Ph: 011-28117644, 28116097

DP/55/WD/2020



# After coronavirus, man dies of hantavirus in China: Official media

PTI ■ BEIJING

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic, a man in China's southwestern Yunnan province has died of hantavirus, a disease spread by rodents, official media

here reported on Tuesday.

The person from Yunnan province died while on his way back to the eastern Shandong province for work on a chartered bus on Monday, state-run Global Times tweeted. "He was tested

positive for #hantavirus. Other 32 people on bus were tested," the tweet said without divulging further details. Hantaviruses are a family of viruses spread mainly by rodents and can cause varied disease syndromes in people

worldwide, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which is the leading national public health institute of the United State. Hantaviruses in the Americas are known as "New

World" hantaviruses and may cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS).

Each hantavirus serotype has a specific rodent host species and is spread to people via aerosolised virus that is shed in

urine, feces and saliva, and less frequently by a bite from an infected host, according to the CDC.

The hantavirus report came as China is currently grappling with coronavirus which has

resulted in the death of 3,277 people in the country, mostly in its epicentre Hubei province and its capital Wuhan.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths from the coronavirus cases stood at 16,961 across the

world, according to multiple reports.

More than 386,350 declared cases have been registered in 175 countries and territories since the pandemic first emerged in China in December.

## Russia to use mobile phones to track people at risk of coronavirus

MOSCOW: Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Monday gave the authorities five days to develop a system to track people who have come into contact with anyone with coronavirus by using mobile phone geolocation data.

Under the new system, people would be sent information if they came into contact with someone who was infected and the same information would be passed on to special regional headquarters set up to fight the respiratory disease pandemic.

The Kremlin said the measure was legal and part of a raft of measures Russia is taking to try to halt spread of the virus.

The measure will trace "citizens who are in contact with patients with new coronavirus infection on the basis of information from cellular operators about the geolocation of a cell phone of a particular person, which would allow citizens to be notified (over the phone) if they have been in contact with a person suffering from the new coronavirus, sending relevant messages to inform them of the need for self-isolation..." the communications ministry said in a statement.

Russia closes its borders to foreigners amid the coronavirus outbreak. President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday said the coronavirus situation was "under control" in Russia and outbreaks of infection had been contained.

Russia, which has a temporary ban on the entry of foreigners in place, has 438 confirmed cases of coronavirus so far and one virus-related death - less than many European countries.

On Monday, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin told residents of the Russian capital over the age of 65 and those with chronic illnesses to remain at home. Russia is gradually tightening quarantine rules and readying its healthcare system for more cases. Sobyanin told the elderly and other vulnerable residents to only make trips to pharmacies and shops if absolutely necessary from Thursday until April 14.

Where possible, he also advised the elderly to leave the city and stay at their dachas - out-of-town cottages on private plots of land which many Russian families traditionally own. **Agencies**

## Volunteers sew masks for health workers facing shortages

AP ■ CHICAGO

Bill Purdue waterproofs basements for a living, but he has spent the past few days in his buddy's Washington, Indiana, auto trim and upholstery shop cutting rectangles of cotton fabric that his friend sews into face masks.

Fashion designer Briana Danyele left Italy last month to return to her mother's Greer, South Carolina, home, where she has turned the living room into a mini sewing factory, making masks that she embroiders with the words, "We Got This!"

They're among scores of people answering pleas from hospitals, doctors and nurses so desperate for personal protective equipment amid the viral pandemic that they've turned to the public, saying do-it-yourself face masks are better than nothing.

And for those sitting at home worrying as the virus strains hospitals and the economy teeters, sewing masks makes them feel less helpless.

The efforts mirror those in other countries, including Spain, where mask-making volunteers include a group of nuns and members of the Spanish Air Force.

## Can blood from coronavirus survivors treat newly ill?

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hospitals are gearing up to test if a century-old treatment used to fight off flu and measles outbreaks in the days before vaccines, and tried more recently against SARS and Ebola, just might work for COVID-19, too: using blood donated from patients who've recovered.

Doctors in China attempted the first COVID-19 treatments using what the history books call "convalescent serum" -- today, known as donated plasma -- from survivors of the new virus.

Now a network of U.S.

hospitals is waiting on permission from the Food and Drug Administration begin large studies of the infusions both as a possible treatment for the sick and as vaccine-like temporary protection for people at high risk of infection.

There's no guarantee it will work. "We won't know until we do it, but the historical evidence is encouraging," Dr. Arturo Casadevall of Johns Hopkins University's school of public health told The Associated Press.

Casadevall drew on that history in filing the FDA application. The FDA is "working

expeditiously to facilitate the development and availability of convalescent plasma," a spokesman said.

Here are some questions and answers about this latest quest for a treatment.

### WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS POSSIBLE THERAPY?

It may sound like "back to the Stone Age," but there's good scientific reason to try using survivors' blood, said Dr. Jeffrey Henderson of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, who coauthored the FDA application with Casadevall and another colleague at the Mayo

Clinic. When a person gets infected by a particular germ, the body starts making specially designed proteins called antibodies to fight the infection. After the person recovers, those antibodies float in survivors' blood -- specifically plasma, the liquid part of blood -- for months, even years.

One of the planned studies would test if giving infusions of survivors' antibody-rich plasma to newly ill COVID-19 patients would boost their own body's attempts to fight off the virus. To see if it works, researchers would measure if the treatment gave patients a better chance of living or reduced the need for

breathing machines.

One caution: While regular plasma transfusions are a mainstay of medicine, very rarely they can cause a lung-damaging side effect.

### COULD IT ALSO ACT LIKE A VACCINE?

Sort of, but unlike a vaccine, any protection would only be temporary. A vaccine trains people's immune systems to make their own antibodies against a target germ. The plasma infusion approach would give people a temporary shot of someone else's antibodies that are short-lived and require repeated doses.

## Researchers use AI to find old bombs from Vietnam war

IAN ■ NEW YORK

Researchers have used artificial intelligence (AI) to detect Vietnam War-era bomb craters in Cambodia from satellite images - with the hope that it can help find unexploded bombs in near future.

The new method increased true bomb crater detection by more than 160 per cent over standard methods, they said.

The model, combined with declassified US military records, suggests that 44 to 50

per cent of the bombs in the area studied may remain unexploded. "As of now, attempts to find and safely remove unexploded bombs and landmines - called demining - has not been as effective as needed in Cambodia," said study researcher Erin Lin from Ohio State University in the US.

For the findings, published in the journal PLOS One, the researchers started with a commercial satellite image of a 100-square-kilometre area near the town of Kampong Trabaek

in Cambodia.

The area was the target of carpet bombing by the US Air Force from May 1970 to August 1973. The researchers used a type of artificial intelligence called machine learning to analyse the satellite images for evidence of bomb craters.

The study involved a two-stage process. In the first stage, the researchers used algorithms developed to detect meteor craters on the moon and planets. That helped find many potential craters, but it wasn't

good enough. Bombs do create craters similar to (although smaller than) those made by meteors, the researchers said.

The second stage of the process builds on the intricacies of how bomb and meteor craters are different. The computer algorithms developed by the researchers consider the novel features of bomb craters, including their shapes, colours, textures and sizes. After the machine "learned" how to detect true bomb craters, one of the researchers checked the

computer's work. According to the study, the human coder found 177 true bomb craters.

The first stage of the researcher's model identified 89 per cent of the true craters (157 of 177), but also identified 1,142 false positives - crater-like features not caused by bombs.

The second stage eliminated 96 per cent of the false positives while losing only five of the real bomb craters. So its accuracy rate was about to 86 per cent, identifying 152 of 177 craters.

## business

## Investor wealth jumps ₹1.82 lakh cr as mkts bounce back

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investor wealth on Tuesday jumped Rs 1,82,769.92 crore as stock markets bounced back after posting the worst one-day fall in the previous trade.

Indian stocks rebounded on Tuesday in line with global recovery on hopes stimulus measures by the governments to mitigate the impact of coronavirus outbreak. The benchmark index Sensex soared by 692.79 points or 2.67 per cent to close at 26,674.03.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies rose by Rs 1,82,769.92 crore to Rs 1,03,69,706.20 crore.

On Monday, the benchmark index had tanked

3,934.72 points or 13.15 per cent to close at 25,981.24.

"Post a sharp decline in the previous session, the Indian markets witnessed healthy buying interest led by positive global cues and rising hopes of a stimulus package from the government. The broader markets underperformed wherein the BSE midcap ended higher by 1.6 per cent and smallcap ended flat," according to Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd. Equity benchmark recovered over 1,400 points in opening session tracking gains in Asian peers after the Federal Reserve announced measures to support the US economy.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit

financial services said, "Amidst the lockdown, extension of deadlines and relaxation of norms brings in great relief to the taxpayers and businesses in the country. The focus should be on the low income earners, as they are the worst hit from the lockdown. The waiver of charges on cash withdrawal from ATMs, will be helpful for citizens."

On the sector front, the IT index was the top outperformer gaining nearly 7 per cent, followed by FMCG and Healthcare which were up 3.13 per cent and 2.33 per cent.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Infosys was the top gainer, rising 12.69 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, HUL and RIL.

## ‘Unprecedented collapse’ for eurozone businesses

AFF ■ BRUSSELS

Businesses in the eurozone "suffered" an unprecedented collapse" in March because of the novel coronavirus pandemic, according to a closely watched indicator released on Tuesday by IHS Markit.

Provisional data showed the slump in activity in the 19-nation zone in March "far exceeding that seen even at the height of the global financial crisis," with the company's PMI survey diving to 31.4.

A reading below 50 points indicates a contraction. In February, the index had stood at 51.6. The latest reading for March is the lowest since IHS Markit started its PMI survey in 1998.

The indicator reflected a near-shutdown of eurozone economies as COVID-19 sweeps across Europe.

Major economies Italy, France, Germany and Spain are all deeply affected and have implemented severe social and business restrictions to try to slow the virus's spread, by keeping potential carriers at home.

The eurozone's economic struggle was worsened by some EU member states closing off their borders to neighbours, limiting the flow of goods and people within the single market. EU countries are starting to deploy massive state spending and loan guarantees to prop up businesses and employment, with the EU

dropping its strict rules on budget deficits.

The IHS Markit survey showed the services sector was pummelled the worst, sliding to well below where it was at during the 2009 global financial crisis. Manufacturing was also hit, supply chains were being badly degraded, and there was "a record fall in export business as cross-border trade flows seized up". Employees are being let go at the fastest rate since June 2009.

"Expectations of future output also deteriorated markedly to reach an all-time low, with record degrees of pessimism about the year ahead seen in both manufacturing and services," IHS Markit said.

## Announcements made by FM will help businesses tide over COVID-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India Inc on Tuesday said the government's move to extend the deadline for filing income tax and GST returns and raise threshold of default that could trigger insolvency of a company would help businesses, especially MSMEs, tide over the negative impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the government has waived charges on cash withdrawals from ATMs of other banks as a precursor to a broader stimulus package for the economy distressed by the coronavirus outbreak.

"Waiver of penalty, late fee and interest on GST will also help industry cope up with the huge cash crunch, and thus, tide through these tough times," CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said. Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said the extension of GST return filing timelines together with the deferment of e-invoicing and new returns announced earlier would allow businesses to focus on resumption of business processes once normalcy resumes in future.

Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY, said, "Extended time for payment under the Sabka Vishwas Scheme as well is a welcome measure as companies were struggling for making the payment in the lockdown scenario." ASSOCHAM President

Niranjan Hiranandani said the industry looks forward for the broader economic packages like One Time Roll Over for debt restructuring across the industries to be announced soon for resurrecting its economic health.

"These proactive steps are the need of the hour to mitigate some of the hardships that the businesses are going through," said Sohinder Gill, director general, Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles. Suntuity Renewable Energy India Director (Operations) Imaan Javan said, "We express relief towards the finance minister's move of extending the date of filing IT and GST returns from March 31, 2020, to June 30, 2020. The decision taken by the finance minister is a timely move considering that the economy is on its knees as of now" said.

The last date for filing income tax returns for 2018-19 as well as that for linking PAN with Aadhaar has been extended by three months to June 30. The last date for filing GST annual returns for 2018-19, which is due on March 31, has also been extended till the last week of June.

As outbreak of coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns across cities create large-scale economic disruption, Sitharaman announced the threshold of loan default that could trigger insolvency proceedings has been raised to Rs 1 crore from the existing Rs 1 lakh now.

## Moody's downgrades ONGC rating on uncertain oil prices, Govt guidelines on dividend

PTI n New Delhi

Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday downgraded state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) rating in view of the uncertain oil price environment, depleting cash reserves of the government and government guidelines constraining its ability to lower dividends.

The rating agency downgraded ONGC's local and foreign currency issuer ratings to Baa2 from Baa1. It also downgraded the ratings of the unsecured bonds issued by ONGC and those issued by its subsidiary ONGC Videsh Ltd.

The outlook on all ratings remains negative, it said. "Given the increasingly uncertain oil price environment, ONGC's depleted cash reserves, and government guidelines that constrains state-owned enterprises' ability to lower dividends, ONGC's ratings are materially challenged at the previous rating level and its credit profile insufficient to remain above India's Baa2 sovereign rating. The rating outlook is negative in line with the outlook on India's sovereign rating," said Vikas Halan, senior vice-president, Moody's.

"Further, the downgrade reflects our expectation that ONGC's credit metrics will weaken beyond the tolerance level for its ratings, if oil prices

remain low for a prolonged period," he said.

Against the backdrop of a significant deterioration in oil prices over the last month that is predicted to persist for most of 2020, ONGC decided to pay an interim dividend of Rs 5 per share last week, resulting in cash outflows of Rs 6,300 crore, which has reduced its cash reserves.

ONGC had consolidated cash and cash equivalents of Rs 6,700 crore as on September 30, 2019. "ONGC's dividend policy is based on the guidelines issued by the Government of India in May 2016, which requires all government-owned companies to pay a minimum annual dividend equal to 5 per cent of their net worth even if they do not have sufficient profits," Moody's said. Despite depleted cash reserves, ONGC is expected to meet its debt repayment obligations given its access to capital as a state-owned company. "However, its lower cash reserves have diminished the company's capacity to protect its credit profile from oil price shocks," Halan said.

ONGC's cash reserves, which provided protection against the oil price decline in 2016, have been depleting over the past three years because of high dividends, share buyback in 2019, and its acquisition of Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) in 2018.

## DoT writes to states to permit working of telecom personnel

PTI n New Delhi

The Depareached out to state governments over difficulties faced by personnel of service operators in their movements due to lockdowns imposed by authorities to contain coronavirus outbreak.

Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash in a letter to chief secretaries of state and advisors to administrators of union territories has noted that telecom providers at network operation centres and call centres to shut down operations in the view of the restrictions.

work from home during the ongoing restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus.

While telecom services have been listed within the essential services, employees maintaining the network and managing operations have complained of facing problem in their movement.

"Instances are being reported where the local authorities have asked the personnel of the telecom service providers at network operation centres and call centres to shut down operations in the view of the restrictions.

"Hence, it will be necessary that instructions reach the field level to permit personnel maintaining and providing telecom services to continue their work without interruption," the letter said.

Employees of all organisations, that do not fall under list essential services, have been asked to work from home for business continuity using their phone and broadband connections.

Prakash has requested to state governments and UT administration designate nodal officer with the name and

phone number who can be contacted by the telecom operators and internet companies in the event of any difficulty.

Telecom companies like Reliance Jio have announced free broadband service to new customers and doubled data limit for all existing customers to support work from home in fight against coronavirus. State-owned telecom companies BSNL and MTNL took lead last week to announce free broadband plans and additional data for their customers to support work from home.

## Netflix, Facebook to reduce bitrate to help mitigate network congestion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Video streaming major Netflix and social networking giant Facebook are reducing bit rates for videos on their platforms as part of their efforts to help mitigate mobile and broadband network congestion amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Netflix said it will reduce traffic on telecommunication networks by 25 per cent while maintaining the quality of service for users in India, while Facebook said it will temporarily reduce bit rates for videos on Facebook and Instagram in India.

Companies like Amazon Prime Video are also temporarily lowering bit rates — a measure of how much data is being transferred — to ease pressure on telecom network infrastructure.

Consumption of digital content has gone up manifold as people are forced to stay indoors as almost the entire country is under lockdown to contain the spread of the deadly COVID-19.

A Facebook spokesperson said, "To help alleviate any potential network congestion, we will temporarily reduce bit rates for videos on Facebook and Instagram in India".

## IMF urges action to face ‘big drop’ in Mideast growth

Dubai: The International Monetary Fund called for urgent action from Middle East governments Tuesday as the coronavirus pandemic threatens a persistent slump in oil revenues and a "big drop" in growth. The International Monetary Fund said a dozen Middle East and North African countries had already approached it for financial support. It urged governments across the region to swiftly draw up rescue packages to head off a protracted recession.

"The region is likely to see a big drop in growth this year," the IMF's regional director for the Middle East and Central Asia, Jihad Azour, said in a report. **AFF**

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 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.	Omveer Singh, Shashi Bala, House No 709 Gali No-1, Main Shyam Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, A/c No- LBDEL00001043825	Plot No. 87, Gali No. 1, Shyam Park Main, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad	11-Feb-2020, Rs. 648886.36/-	05/06/ 2019
2.	Lakshminarasimhan N R, L. Vajjanthi, 1332 A First Floor, Sector-29 Housing Board Colony, Faridabad, A/c No LBDEL00000370533	Mig-A, 1332, First Floor, Sector- 29, Housing Board Col. Faridabad Haryana	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 190535.7/-	05/11/ 2019
3.	Pradeep Kumar, D-12/4 Koyla Vihar, Ardee City, Gurgaon, Haryana A/c No- LBDEL00001655298	Shop No-UG-246-D, Ad Measuring Area Is 272 Sq Feet & UG-218D, Ad Measuring Area Is 272 Sq Feet Block-B, Sushant Shopping Arcade , Sushant Lok-1 Gurgaon Haryana	07-Feb-2020 Rs. 19628820/-	30/08/ 2008

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 :** 25-03-2020  
**Place:** Delhi/ NCR

**Authorized Officer**  
**Secured Creditor**



Lack of job-readiness remains a major concern for a large number of graduates. DR BK PANIGRAHY tells you how institutes can tackle this and make students job-ready



# FILL SKILL GAP

According to different estimates, India produces around 15 lakh engineers every year and three lakh management graduates. However, an important question here is whether all of them are employable? Do degree holders also bring with them the skills needed on the job? The answer unfortunately is in the negative!

India's industry leaders and corporate houses have long been complaining of the gap between market demand and student academic knowledge. Lack of job-readiness remains a major concern for a large number of graduates and organisations underscore that they have to invest considerable time and money in equipping the fresh hires with the requisite training to be able to join the workforce effectively. Most engineering students in India have main-frame knowledge but lack job specific skills. This statement was confirmed when a machine learning based assessment of software development skills was conducted for over 36,000 engineering students. The recently concluded aspiring minds study found out that there is a massive skill gap when it comes to job specific requirements with employability for electronic engineers 7.07 per cent, designer engineer's 5.55 per cent, civil engineers' 6.48 per cent and for chemical design engineer's 1.64 per

cent.

Theoretical knowledge of the domain, through absolutely critical, is not sufficient to make engineering graduates job ready. This is why apart from domain-based education, educational institutions must also modify their curriculum patterns to serve the objectives of giving practical knowledge, skill training and personality development.

**Personality Development and communication skills**

No matter how good an engineer you are, you also need to be a congenial personality to be able to work in a team. Interpersonal skills and the art of communicating effectively are very important skills particularly for people whose work requires people handling. Personality development and communication skills programmes will assist people in realising their true potential as well as instill in them some significant interpersonal skills. Colleges must focus on inculcating traits like positive attitude, right body language, power dressing, importance of commitment and choosing the correct words

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND THE ART OF COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY ARE IMPORTANT. PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION SKILL PROGRAMMES HELP PEOPLE REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL

while communicating — both written and verbal.

**Industry internship programmes**

Prior industrial experience and exposure to practical training are the most critical elements that make an individual job-ready. This is why it is very important to ensure that students undergo several internship programmes during the course of their education.

**Closer industry-academia ties**

For educational institutions to be able to train students in what is exactly needed on the job, they must have a close understanding of the same. This is why it is extremely important for educational institutions to develop closer ties with the industry. This must be done through regular visits and mentorship programs with industry leaders. At the same time, industry members must also be taken on board while deciding the curriculum of courses and modifications needed in it.

**Foreign language courses**

Engineering is a thriving industry which employees around 10-15

million people across the globe which means engineers from one part of the world may at some point or another work with those of a different country which is why a foreign language course will come in handy especially when they have to work together. From automotive, aerospace, construction to civil, chemical and IT engineers play a key role in many sectors which is why colleges and universities must offer foreign language courses to engineering students as it helps them adapt well to challenges and make them a global entity.

**Flexible curriculum**

Future engineers need to be more than just technically competent as they must be able to refresh their skills continually to remain relevant in an ever-changing world. Introduction of provisions for additional courses, electives and micro specialisation will help students gain the upper hand in job interviews as well pursue other topics of interest study of which can come in handy if the need to utilise the specific knowledge arises.

The writer is Registrar, IIIT Naya Raipur

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

**You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; in just the same way, you learn to love by loving.**  
— Anatole France

## BTECH-MTECH COURSES

The KIIT Group of Colleges invites applications for admissions to various courses in 2020-2021 session. The courses offered are BTech (CSE ECE, EEE, Civil Engineering & Mechanical Engineering), MTech (ECE & CSE), MBA, BBA and BCA.

**Eligibility:** Candidates must have appeared/passed Class XII examination for bachelors degree, and appeared/passed graduation for masters degree programmes.

**Last date to apply:** June 30, 2020

**How to apply:** Log on to [www.kiit.in](http://www.kiit.in) or call on 9811626767.

## BANKING & FINANCE

TKWs Institute of Banking & Finance invites applicants for admissions to its postgraduate diploma in Banking and Finance for PG Diploma in



Banking & Finance.

**Duration:** One year  
**Eligibility:** Minimum qualification is graduate in any stream with 50 per cent marks, students awaiting final year results may also apply.

This programme starts by providing fundamental clarity and then advances to expose the participants to all essentials of banking & finance.

**How to apply:** Log on to [www.tkwsibf.edu.in](http://www.tkwsibf.edu.in) or the admission forms can be obtained by filling the application by paying an amount of ₹1,000 through demand draft in favor of TKWs Delhi.

## Pratham conducts online classes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The global pandemic coronavirus has impacted more than 1, 50,000 people across the world. It is estimated that more than 5000 deaths have already been reported. The world is united and working hard to fight against the deadly virus.

Many cities have been highly affected by the deadly virus. The densely cities like Delhi, Gurugram, Bangalore, Mumbai among others are badly hit by the virus. The Government is taking all precautionary measures to curb the repercussions of the virus.

Counsellors are present at the centers and will be available for counselling. All centres are equipped with hand sanitizer and all employees are wearing masks.

The institute is ready to deal with the crisis and ready with the Crash Course with same vigour and perseverance.

■ **Online live classes:** Live interactive classes with high rated technology will be given to all the students from the highly dedicated in-house faculty. It will give you a seamless immersive experience through the Pratham Student Information System (PSIS).

■ **Dedicated telegram group:** Dedicated subject wise telegram group will be created which would be handled by the faculties for clarifying student doubts.

■ **E-lectures of all classes:** Due to some reason, if any student is unable to attend the online live classes, he/she would be able to attend the complete two-hour class via the pre-recorded lectures. Students will have access to all pre-recorded e-lectures via their PSIS account.

# E-learning way forward

Implementing e-learning plans including digital and distance learning will ensure the continuity of education among children at a critical juncture in their student journey, says NARENDRA SHYAMSUKHA

Coronavirus has affected approximately 119 countries in the world claiming the lives of more than 13,000 people and currently infecting around 48,000 patients. This has led to massive preventions and containment drives by Governments and world health bodies across the globe to stop this disease from causing any further havoc. Some countries like China and Italy where the disease has caused more damage than others have enforced complete lockdown whereas other countries are increasing its awareness about its symptoms as well as telling people to take early diagnosis as when detected early in patients it has better chances of being effectively treated.

Some education institutes and other professional places have shut down to prevent the number of cases from rising as well as offered employees to work from home in order to limit contact. Students are the future of the world which is why education institutions should take safety precautions to fight against this

global epidemic and protect children successfully.

**Disseminate critical information**

With the help of collaboration and coordination with State and local health departments schools and colleges can disseminate critical information about the disease and how it is transmitted. They must also promote everyday disease prevention strategies like if you are sick stay at home, avoid close contact with those who are really sick, quality checking of food, cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or the crook of your arm, wash hands with soap and water as well as avoid touching nose, eyes and mouth.

**Temporary suspension of foreign exchange programmes**

Many universities across the world have suspended their foreign exchange programmes for the health the safety of all students. Study trips have also been rescheduled with many universities and schools switching to online teachings in place of classroom sessions. Graduation cere-



monies have also been postponed for students who finished their academic studies as well as diplomas. Implementing e-learning plans including digital and distance learning will ensure the continuity of education especially among children who are at a critical juncture in their student journey. However, the biggest

challenge here is to impart education to students who don't have a computer or laptop at home. This problem can be solved by asking their parents to educate them and sending them the lessons by mail or post. Moreover, the schools which are still open have ensured that there are no group events or extracurricular

activities, school assemblies, pep rallies, field trips as well as sporting events.

**Regular health sessions**

According to a child care specialist children are important drivers of influenza infections because they have more interactions with people than adults and give off more of the viruses. Sessions on how to self isolate yourself if there's a chance you could have coronavirus are also important and helpful for students who have been diagnosed with the disease or have a family member who is a patient.

Coronavirus self isolation advice urges patients to stay at home and not go to work, avoid using public transport like trains, buses as well as taxis, ask family and friends to do errands for you and avoid having any visitors. These classes will help allay the fear of being shunned by others as they will understand that for their own safety and that of others this treatment in isolation is the correct way.

The writer is Founder & Chairman, ICA Edu Skills

# Numbers speak

ITCOUNTS



The person with the 19 number karmic debt will learn independence and the proper use of power. He will be forced to stand up for himself, and often be left to stand alone, difficulties will be faced and overcome through personal struggle.

One of the central lesson for people with the 19 karmic debt is that you stubbornly resist help. The 19 karmic debt can become a self-imposed prison if you do not open up to the reality or interdependence and the mutual need for love.

It is developed from the abuse of power in a past life-acting in a completely self-centered manner, blind to everything except a selfish fulfillment of one's own desires, don't want to listen to others, don't accept the help or advice of others. The subject may be completely immersed in his own concerns and may have great difficulty becoming aware of others' needs.

In this life, the subject will continue to meet with substantial difficulties unless he can look past his own needs to the needs of others, or he can work toward independence no matter what forces are tending to keep him weak and dependent. Awareness of the karmic debt will produce clarity about one's own needs, others' needs and the relation between them. If, instead, the subject continues to be egotistical, dominating and aggressive, or lazy, fearful



J.C. CHAUDHRY

and servile, the problems will be magnified.

The most important lesson for the 19 karmic debt is: while you seek to stand on your own feet, you are still a human being deeply connected with others, and in need of the support, assistance, and human understanding that all people need. Those with 19 karmic debt will learn the hard way that 'no man is an island', and that we are indeed, 'all bits of the main'.

The writer is a renowned entrepreneur, motivational speaker and numerologist

## Plethora of opportunities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu, has reported yet another exceptional placement season.

During the latest placement season over 100 companies issued placement letters to more than 600 students, with an average CTC of ₹4,50,000 per annum. With another month to go, 92 per cent of the students have already found jobs in the industry. What is more, nearly one third of the students received more than one job placement letter. For 21 students who got international placements the average CTC was ₹21,00,000.

The graduating class of 2016-2020 was picked up by IT majors CISCO and Amazon (for cloud computing and data analytics), FESTO (for robotics and automation), IBM (for AI & machine learning), Infosys (for IoT, python and aircraft structures), Intel (for embedded systems), and MathWorks (for signal & image processing).

Software products and services companies like Cognizant, HCL Technologies, Hexaware, TCS, Tech Mahindra and Wipro were the other large recruiters. Aditya Birla Clothing, Ashok Leyland, Brakes India and Tube Investments were among the companies looking for core engineering skills.

## Gap-year programme on offer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rishihood a social impact university with a mission to transform the way students make career choices and decisions during the most crucial phase of their lives has announced the launch of gap-year programme for students post high school. The programme is in association with IGenPlus, an organisation with a vision to move schooling from educating for a career to preparing for life.

The university will be serving as residential cum training ground for gap-year students. The programme

is a nine-month long course aiding students to explore and design their own career path post their Class XII Board exams. The programme aims to enable students to critically assess a multitude of career options during this era of disruption.

According to a recent Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019 up to 81 per cent of Gen Z would consider joining the gig economy and almost half of the respondents prioritise aspirations which have the possibility of making a positive impact on communities and society at large.

The programme aims to expand

a student's career horizon by facilitating students with an 'ecosystem' centric approach to learning rather than isolated training and research.

The curriculum is a blend of activities and sessions targeted towards multidimensional academic learning. Students will gain a wholesome experience through interactions with industry experts, out of the box workshops, personality development and self-discovery, international exposure and networking opportunities. Three months of the course is reserved for internships and shadow programmes with industry experts.

## FORE students shine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The students from FORE School of Management are on a winning spree as they showcased their talent in management and business skill at National Level competitions. It was organised by various prestigious Institutes such as Indian Institute of Management, Indian Institute of Technology, Management Development Institute and bagging laurels across the country.

The splendid journey of victory endures with a series of

seven consecutive winnings at popular competitions.

Every year, different branches of IIM organise events where the students can showcase their management skills, HR skills, as well as business management strategies to touch the cherished milestone envisioned ever since the foundation of the institutions.

The students made their institute proud after performing their best in various events and exhibit their capability of becoming managerial leaders of the future.



Agriculture has a growing scope in India as India has been an agro-based economy. Agriculture is the prime source of generating food for living beings. The growing population has increased the demand for food and the increasing population is going on occupying more and more land and the land for cultivation of crops is going on decreasing.

The demand for food grains is going on increasing and the land for cultivation of crops is going on decreasing; such a situation deserves the emergence and development of agriculture technology to maximise food productivity to cater to the growing demand of increasing population in India and abroad. The technology in the domain of agriculture needs to be enhanced and hence more people will be required who would have the knowledge, skills and competencies in the converged domain of agriculture technology.

The agricultural production in India is more or less consistent and is not increasing significantly in the absence of some breakthrough technological innovation in the domain of agriculture. In situations of unpredictable monsoon, it is imperative on the part of agriculture professionals to evolve and develop the latest technologies to maximize agricultural yield and productivity. This gives a big opportunity to further maximize per acre productivity so as to maximize the overall revenue with the farmers.

The 7.73 billion global populations today is inching towards 8 billion. The Indian population of 138 crores is inching towards 150 crores at a very fast pace. The increasing population of India and the rest of the world is increasing the pressure of demand for food which in turn is mounting up the pressure for increasing the agricultural output.

Agriculture in India contributes to around 14 per cent of the GDP but it involves the employment of around 42 per cent of the Indian population. The agriculture sector witnessed super normal productivity due to better monsoon which ultimately led to lower prices to the farmers for many agricultural products.

If one can pursue a career in agriculture sector there are certain traits are required.

# BE GROUNDED

Students are required to have knowledge, skills and competencies in agriculture and technology, says DR RANA SINGH



## SKILLS

The students are required to have optimum knowledge, skills and competencies in the domain of agriculture, technology and allied areas. They should have a strong passion in the field of agriculture and allied technologies.

The students are required to have an optimal blending of domain knowledge as well as knowledge about the emerging technologies in the domain. A qualification from an institute of repute is not just an option but has become mandatory to enable one to penetrate the Agriculture sector. Technology skills and engineering skills optimally integrated with the domain knowledge of agriculture would be an added advantage.

**SCOPE** The job opportunities in the domain of agriculture technology will also, increase with the increase in the rate of growth of population in India and

**Job opportunities in agriculture technology will grow with the increase in the rate of growth of population in India and abroad opening a plethora of career options to choose from**

abroad. There are a plethora of career options to choose from.

Agriculture Scientist, Agriculture Equipment Manufacturer, Agricultural Equipment Maintenance Manager, Agriculture Portal Developer, Agriculture Software Developer, Agricultural App Developer, Plant Protection and Quarantine Manager, Agricultural Pesticides Manufacturing Manager, Agriculture Research and Development Manager, Agricultural Product Marketing Manager, Agricultural Supply Chain Manager, Agricultural Equipment Maintenance Manager, Agricultural Products & Services Manager, Agricultural Product Patenting Manager, Agricultural Software Services Manager, Agriculture Technology Research Manager, Agriculture Manager, Agriculture Technological Products E-Commerce Portal Developer, Agriculture Technology Development

Manager, Agriculture Technology Accelerator / Centre Manager, Agriculture Technology Incubation Centre Manager, Agriculture Technology Commercialization Centre Manager, Agriculture Equipment Designer, Agriculture Equipment Electrical Services Manager and various other allied positions.

## REMUNERATION

Agriculture Technology has been offering a decent salary start. The sincere students passing out from the programme may expect a salary in the range of 2.5 lakh to 6 lacs. The MNCs may also offer a good salary in the range of 3 to 9 Lacs. The students are advised to focus on availing the internship opportunity and focus on experiential learning. The students should also focus on acquiring strong technology and information technology skills.

The writer is vice-chancellor of Sanskriti University

## ‘Doors opening for allied healthcare workers’

The country’s healthcare sector is on a growth trajectory offering plenty of lucrative options in radiography, says ARUNA SINGH

Have you ever noticed people in hospital gowns who escort patients for an X-Ray CT-Scan or chemotherapy? They are the one who operate the machine for you and later interpret the results for doctors. The word used for them are radiographers. They are equipped with the technological skills to handle imaging equipment and the interpersonal skills necessary for patient care. Educational and licensure requirements vary by state and profession, though completion of a certificate or two-year degree programme is common for radiologic technologists. Today, India’s healthcare sector on a growth trajectory, the career opportunities for such allied healthcare workers with expertise in diagnostic science have never been better. Services of diagnostic professionals can be essential for medical treatments and their demand is on the rise.

**Nature of work:** Radiologic technologists perform medical imaging exams and administer radiation therapy treatments. With the help of various imaging technologies, these professionals take pictures of a patient’s body for radiologists, who will then interpret the images. Radiologic technologists often specialise in a particular exam technique, such as mammography or bone densitometry. These professionals can also assist oncology teams in delivering radiation therapy to cancer patients. The technicians work in hospitals, clinics, imaging centers, private physician offices or even mobile imaging service centres.

**Opportunity:** You could specialise in dozens of clinical areas ranging from prenatal care to orthopedics. You could manage an entire radiology department, including its budget and personnel. You could teach, inspiring new generations of radiologic technologists, or you could perform research that leads to breakthroughs in diagnostic imaging or radiation therapy. With additional education, you could become a radiologist assistant, expanding your capabilities by serving as a radiologist extender. The boundaries of your career in radiologic technology are determined only by your own abilities and interests.

**Skills:** Good communication skills, a focus on detail, and careful attention to procedure are essential to success as a radiologic technician. Physical strength is needed to position patients, and at times, to lift them onto examination table. As with health care professionals in general, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and high ethical standards are necessary as well.

**Eligibility:** The curriculum for radiologic technology and related programmes includes coursework as well as a series of supervised



Aruna Singh  
Principal, Delhi Paramedical and Management Institute

clinical exercises where students learn how to position patients and perform procedures. A background check, immunisations, and a physical examination may be required prior to entering these programmes. Applicants can pursue certificate courses, diploma courses, as well as bachelor’s course in the field of radiology. Duration of the diploma course is one-year and two-year, eligibility is 10+2 preferably with Physics, Chemistry and Biology/Math or equivalent in any stream from a recognised Board or university.

**Remuneration:** The average starting salary ranges between ₹7,000-₹10,000 per month in Government/private hospitals. However, earnings are more in private practice as compared to salaried jobs. A large aging population in need of imaging to diagnose and treat medical conditions should keep demand strong for radiologic technologists. The Bureau of Labour Statistics predicts employment growth of about nine per cent between 2014-2024 for this profession, and 17,200 new positions will need to be filled.

Opportunities are also there in Middle-eastern countries. In these countries radiographers get salaries between ₹30,000-₹50,000 per month. In the UK, the average starting salary of a newly qualified radiographer is around £17,000 per year which is much more than what it is in India.

We are living in a time where there is no dearth of disposable income amongst middle class Indians; the pleasure-seeking principle has modified the lens through which an individual explores the possibilities open to him. There is an explosion in the demand for hedonistic attributes of products and services associated with essential necessities.

The mushrooming of SMEs (small and medium scale enterprises) brought on by an increasing trend towards entrepreneurship, has led to a greater demand for graphic and communication designers to design their web pages and develop out-of-the-box communication design strategies for their promotional content on social media.

**A growing demand for designers:**

Hence, there is a growing demand for designers in almost all major disciplines of design — spatial design, architecture, communication design, graphic designing and fashion designing. Having a flair for design is an essential attribute but it needs to be backed by a sound technical education in that particular discipline. You need to have a conceptual understanding of the dictums of that pedagogy, along with a study of what has worked in the past, what has not, and knowledge of evolving global and local trends.

A qualification from an institute of repute is not just an option but has become mandatory to enable one to penetrate the design community. Immersing oneself for a few years through the rigours of a design

## MINDIT

college, delivering outcomes under the pressure of project deadlines and working in teams, imparts the requisite skill-set and training for entering the design ecosystem.

During the tenure of your studies, you will get several opportunities to volunteer and participate in seminars, lectures, workshops, events and master classes. Never forfeit these opportunities to network with industry professionals. You can leverage them to your advantage by making contacts with professionals to procure projects and find mentorship.

**Freelance projects:** After you have

understood the fundamentals of design in the first year and assessed your own designing sensibilities, you will be able to take on freelancing projects by the time you enter second year. These will help build your portfolio and be a point of connect with the design industry before you get absorbed finally.

**Internships:** An opportunity to intern with a good design studio can lay the brickwork towards a rewarding career. Ensure that you add significantly to your design portfolio during your internship. Displaying your talents and dedication to

your internship project can result in the much coveted offer from the company, after you graduate.

**Academia:** All those of you who are passionate about teaching, can enter the world of academia by gaining an in-depth industry exposure of 6 to 10 years as a professional or as an entrepreneur. After having worked for a decade or so, you will come to understand the nuts and bolts of the industry and its workings.

**Getting the required exposure:** There are many design exhibitions and art fairs held in the various metropolises of India, each year. India Art Fair (IAF) is conducted in Delhi each year; it features both veterans and upcoming artists. Amazon India Fashion Week (AIFW) is another exhibition where

upcoming fashion designers and established players participate each year. India Interior Retailing - Conference, Awards and Exhibition is another exciting event, usually held in October in Delhi. The UXINDIA was held at Hyderabad in 2019. That was a great platform where graphic and communication designers of India and the world had converged to discuss new ideas and trends. Try to optimise the opportunities that present themselves to you and attend as many events as possible. Such kind of exposure will stretch your imagination beyond the confines of the college walls and enable you to come up with ingenious yet commercially viable ideas.

The writer is Dr Jitin Chadha, Director, Indian Institute Of Art and Design



The University of Leeds invites applications for scholarships for the academic year 2020-2021. These opportunities are open to pursuing a master's degree program in the UK.

There are ten scholarships of up to £12,000 offered by the campus.

**Eligibility:** Must hold a First Degree at undergraduate level equivalent to at least a UK Upper Second Class Honours degree. Should either have graduated with the appropriate First Degree or be in their final year of study. All given supporting documents must be scanned and ready to upload with an online application. Required documents include degree certificate, academic transcripts and scanned copies of any UK visa/permits you currently hold or have previously held if you are applying as an international student.

**Language requirement:** Applicants make sure that they are able to meet the English language requirements in order to be able to study at the university.

**How to apply:** Apply for a relevant taught programme of study and be in receipt of a Student Application Number then complete the online

application form.  
**Application deadline:** May 1, 2020.

**The SciencesPO American Foundation**

invites applications for Stephen M Kellen UG funding for international students in France and Germany. The Stephen M Kellen scholarship covers two years of tuition fees at Sciences Po and the living allowance of \$6,000 per year. All nationalities are eligible to apply.

**Eligibility:** The candidate must be admitted to Sciences Po's dual BA with Freie Universität Berlin.

The grant is awarded to a student who exemplifies the values promoted by Stephen M. Kellen: Excellence – as reflected in academic achievement. Vision – as demonstrated through a written submission on a selected topic. Generosity – as shown in a commitment to service to others.

**English Language Requirements:** Language requirements are: French B2, German B2 or English B1.

**How to apply:** Send the following to [scholarship-at-usscpa.org](mailto:scholarship-at-usscpa.org): Completed application form, Personal statement describing the motivation for studying in the city of Berlin (1,000) in English, Essay on an Actuality theme (2,000 words) in English.

**Application deadline:** June 30, 2020

## DIGITAL MARKETING AT IGI AVIATION SERVICES

Location: Delhi  
Stipend: ₹5,000-₹6,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073660](http://internshala.com/i/3073660)  
Application deadline: April 2, 2020

## HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) AT IGI AVIATION SERVICES

Location: Delhi  
Stipend: ₹7,000-₹8,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073661](http://internshala.com/i/3073661)  
Application deadline: April 2, 2020

## DIGITAL MARKETING AT YMGRAD

Location: Delhi  
Stipend: ₹6,000-₹12,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073662](http://internshala.com/i/3073662)  
Application deadline: April 2, 2020

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (SALES) AT D'WELL RESEARCH

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹3,000-₹5,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073663](http://internshala.com/i/3073663)  
Application deadline: April 3, 2020

## EVENT MANAGEMENT AT DAY DIAMOND

Location: Bengaluru  
Stipend: ₹5,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073657](http://internshala.com/i/3073657)  
Application deadline: April 3, 2020

## IOS APP DEVELOPMENT AT SUREBOT TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Location: Bengaluru  
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073658](http://internshala.com/i/3073658)  
Application deadline: April 3, 2020

## CONTENT WRITING AT SATTVA CONSULTING

Location: Bengaluru  
Stipend: ₹15,000-₹18,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/3073659](http://internshala.com/i/3073659)  
Application deadline: April 3, 2020

## STUDY ABROAD

‘Germany’s higher education has something for everyone’

Want to study abroad? Take up courses in engineering and science in Germany, says SUKHJIT SINGH ANAND

The German higher education is one of the best in the world. Whether it's cars or education, people everywhere recognise Made in Germany as a seal of quality. One can benefit from Germany's long and famous university tradition especially in the fields of engineering and science. A German university degree is highly respected by employers around the world.

The country's higher education system has something for everyone. There are almost 450 State-accredited universities with some 15,000 degree programmes in Germany. The universities offer degree programmes in every possible subject and academic level.

Around 12 per cent of students at German universities come from foreign countries. One can make friends from around the world, become acquainted with different countries and expand horizons. Germany due to its aging population is in huge need of young work force. More than 35% of their population is above 55 years. Going to Germany at a young age, getting

familiar with their culture and language makes one the most deserving candidate. Germany in general is in need of fice lakh engineers and IT professionals.

The wages being offered are unmatched to India. As a fresh engineering graduate an individual gets nothing less than ₹2.5 lakh per (month approximately) and as a post graduate you can earn at least ₹3 lakh per month.

German student visa is Schengen Visa hence allowing you access to the 26 Schengen or EU countries. Thus providing an opportunity to explore the entire European culture while studying and adding a new dimension in ones personality. The visa also allows working for 20 hours per week as a part time job when pursuing the degree programme.

You are permitted to work for 120 full days or 240 half days in a year.

This visa also allows multiple entry and exits in Germany. Once the study programme gets over irrespective of the university, course and location the student is allowed to get a 1.5 years of job seeking visa. Three-year of full-time job makes the student eligible for a Permanent residency as well.

The writer is Managing Partner, The Calculus ([www.thecalculushgroup.com](http://www.thecalculushgroup.com))



## IN BRIEF

### ONLINE CLASSES FOR THEIR REGULAR STUDENTS

With the motto of not letting Corona Virus(Covid-19) affect studies, the JK business school started their online session(Classess) for their students through G-suite to resume classes and fight against Coronavirus. This initiative helped the students in not hampering their education and syllabus due to college shut down. With the help of online classes, students are able to complete their courses and also clearing the doubt in real-time.

Through G-suit students are getting online presentations, classes,

assignments and can clarify their doubts in real-time. All classes are recorded and shared with students.

Prof (Dr) Sanjeev Marwah, Director, JK Business School said: "We have started online sessions. In this technological era we are using technology as a solution. It will help everyone to be safe and also not compromise with their studies. Our faculty are available any time for solving the query of students, they can be reached through phone calls or video calls other than the online session."

### CONVOCATION CEREMONY AT TKWSIBF

The TKWs Institute of Banking and Finance (TKWSIBF) held its convocation ceremony for the students of one-year PG diploma and three-year advanced diploma at India International Centre.

The programme was launched by the chief guest RK Dubey, former chairman of Canara Bank, Rajendra Goel, Chairman of

TKWs, Harpreet Kalsi, Asia Head of Sunlife Financial, Ujala Bedi, Director of Navjyoti India Foundation, and Yusuf Hashmi President of ISACA by lit the lamp in front of Goddess Saraswati.

To become a \$5 Tn economy, India needs a robust banking sector with a new age ideology. In the first decade, TKWSIBF has produced

1,000 future bankers who are bringing change in the way banks and financial companies are working.

"In the next 10 years, we will work to help our alumni grow into leadership roles and influence the model of banking in the entire nation," Prof Amit Goyal, TKWSIBF's founding director said in his address at the event.

### IIT KANPUR-LA TROBE VARSITY RESEARCH ACADEMY

The IIT Kanpur-La Trobe University Research Academy will boost both organisations' research capabilities and bring together experts to create a globally recognised centre for research.

The academy will be based in Kanpur, with a strong presence at La Trobe's Australian campuses for visiting research academy staff and up

to 40 PhD students, who will be eligible to apply for scholarships. Speaking at the launch, IIT Kanpur Director, Professor Abhay Karandikar said: "We are excited about the setting up of the research academy as it will facilitate a close partnership between two universities, strengthen our research ecosystem and lead to on-ground translation of this work."





# the pioneer



## JHARSUGUDA'S INDUSTRIAL SCENE

THE PIONEER | BHUBANESWAR | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 25, 2020

12

# Industries reviving: Achhe Din for J'suguda

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA

Jharsuguda district has several industrial houses, including Vedanta Aluminium and Power, Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC), TRL-Krosaki Refractories and SMC Power Generation. It also has a unit of Ultratech Cement of the Aditya Birla Group. Sesa Sterlite is envisaged to produce 2,400 megawatt from its four 600 MW units, but is able to generate between 1,200 to 1,400 MW. Sterlite management (now Vedanta) said they desperately need coal block to ensure a level playing field, adding as of now they are procuring costly coal through linkage facility.

An Automated Terminal at Jharsuguda has been commissioned at an investment of Rs 140 crore and is having the facilities of safe and efficient TT Bottom loading facilities, automated quality and quantity control, automated scheduling and automated tank farm management. The project creates in generating enormous employment indirectly in terms of haulage and house-keeping, security, maintenance, canteen and TT crew. The total tank capacity is 49,000 kiloliter with 2,200 KL per day sale of petrol, diesel and kerosene to cater to more than 350 sale points round the year.

OPGC, which has already established IB Thermal Power Station producing energy of 420 MW at Banharipali, is developed to a 1,232-MW power plant. Concast Steel and Power and Jai Hanuman Udyog industrial units have been restarted while it is being speculated that MSP Metallurgical and Action Ispat will start by end of this year. Adani Enterprises has signed a coal mining agreement with NLC India for development and operation of Talabira II and III coal blocks. Several other industries are also planning to establish their units. The



industrial atmosphere of the district has attracted investors to use local resources.

After growth of the large scale industries centering Mahanadi Coalfields, the economic scenario of the district

has gradually changed. Besides, the district has some ancillary industries related to MCL and Rourkela Steel Plant. Among all these developments, some small industries have closed their operations citing lack of

raw materials and coal linkages. The industrialists said that they shut their units after the Government closed mining operation, especially iron ore. Both the State and the Centre have started advocating for opening of mines and industrial growth. The positive attitude of the Governments would take the district to a new height.

The district headquarters town is fast emerging as an economic hub of Odisha. The State Government has formed a master plan for the city's development. Now, the town has got air connectivity. Consequently, the district is now heading on growth path.

**Sushri Deepali Das Jharsuguda**

*If you have will power, utilise it for the sake of poor, destitute and down trodden, and help mankind. There is no religion bigger than service to mankind. I am committed to the people of Jharsuguda constituency and their welfare during 2020. I firmly believe that the people of Jharsuguda will bless me and give an opportunity to serve them. Please come forward, let's all collectively take pledge, engage ourselves in creating a New Jharsuguda. These are my prayers to Maa Samaleswari, Maa Pataneswari and Baba Jhadeswar.*

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**MCL**

**ALL GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS ARE A SERIES OF SMALL EFFORTS.**

**LET'S KEEP ODISHA CLEAN**

Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), a Government of India Enterprise under Ministry of Coal, operates 15 open cast and 5 underground coal mines in Angul, Jharsuguda and Sundergarh districts of Odisha. The company contributes to 25 percent of total production by Coal India. Ever since its inception, MCL has been a front-runner in introducing innovative ideas and technology to minimise the impact of coal mining on environment. Extending Swachh Abhiyan to waste management level with new technology and best practices, the company has achieved huge advancements in cutting down and safe disposal of solid waste in its mines. Committed to inclusive growth, MCL is the top spender under CSR in Odisha.

**Swachh Odisha**

*Ujwal Bharat Ka Hai Sapna, Swachh Koylanchal Ho Apna*

**Mahanadi Coalfields Limited**  
(A subsidiary of Coal India Limited)  
**Corporate Office:** At/PQ- Jagruti Vihar, Burla, Sambalpur, Odisha-768 020

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