

**OPINION 6**  
FORCE  
MAJEURE

**WORLD 9**  
3.3 MN AMERICANS  
SEEK JOBLESS AID

**SPORT 12**  
WIMBLEDON FATE TO BE  
DECIDED NEXT WEEK

CHANDIGARH, FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹2



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## Centre provides ₹1.7L cr succour to poor

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The economic package to help migrant workers, labour-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

tributed is estimated to be ₹16,000 crore.

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

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

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

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

"Wage earners below

₹15,000 per month in businesses having less than 100 workers are at risk of losing their employment," the Government said, adding that the assistance would help prevent "disruption in their employment". The package also hopes to provide succour to senior citizens, widows and divyangs, numbering 3 crore.

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

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

ARCHANA JYOTI RAGHUNATHA ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

## India has over 1-yr foodgrain reserve

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Sources said 58.49 million



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

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

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

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

### CUSHION AGAINST FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

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

## 88 new cases, highest single day hike

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

It has been decided that scheduled international commercial passenger services shall



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

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

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

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

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

(ICMR) Dr Raman R Gangakhedkar said there is no hard evidence to say there has been community transmission of the novel coronavirus in India.

The total count of positive Covid-19 cases in India reached the 694 mark, as per latest figures made available by the Union Health Ministry, as the country entered second day of the 21-day long lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a measure to contain the spread of the deadly contagion.

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

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

In a joint Press meet with Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "We have decided to allow all establishments that supply essential items or are part of the supply chain for such items to function 24x7 to prevent overcrowding during the day. This will require no additional permits and licences. E-commerce companies in Delhi can home deliver essential commodities and employees' identity cards to be considered valid," he said.

Addressing people via video streaming, Kejriwal said areas SDMs and ACPs must ensure opening of shops and factories supplying such as vegetables, general, ration, medicines in their areas.

### Modi to G-20: Human, not economy, focus

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged the powerful G-20 to put human beings rather than economic targets at the centre of the vision for global prosperity and cooperation.

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

Detailed report on P8

## 3-ply face masks can't be priced over ₹16/piece

Besides capping MRP till June 30, Govt allows distilleries and sugar mills to make hand sanitisers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In its efforts to make face masks and hand sanitisers available to the masses, the Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs on Thursday capped the price of 3-ply face masks made of melt blown non-woven fabric at ₹16 per piece till June 30 and also allowed distilleries and sugar mills to manufacture hand sanitisers in bulk.

Licences have also been issued to 45 distilleries in an order to maintain demand and supply balance of sanitisers under skyrocketing demand amid coronavirus.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Pawan Agarwal on Thursday said the retail price of 2-ply and 3-ply surgical face masks remain the same. The rates will remain in force up to June 30. The Consumer Affairs Ministry had notified MRP



for 2 ply and 3 ply "surgical" face masks at ₹8 and ₹10 per piece, respectively on March 21. But for 3 ply melt blown face

masks, it had said MRP would at the rate that prevailed as on February 12.

"We had a meeting with face mask manufacturers. They were facing some challenges because of lack of clarity on MRP front. So, we have decided to fix the MRP of 3 ply melt blown face masks at ₹16 per piece," Agarwal added.

On allowing distilleries and sugar mills to manufacture hand sanitisers in bulk,

Agarwal said the department had received 100 applications, of which we have given licence to 45 distilleries so far apart from 564 other manufacturers.

"These companies will manufacture hand sanitisers in bulk. More than 55 distilleries are likely to be given permission in one or two days and many more are being motivated to produce hand sanitisers," he said.

### CAPSULE

MARKET CLOCKS BEST 3-DAY RALLY IN YEARS

Mumbai: Equity benchmarks surged for the third straight session on Thursday, logging their best three-day gains in years.

PAK FORCIBLY MOVING +VE PATIENTS TO POK

Mirpur: Amid strong protests by locals, the Pakistan Army has started to move Covid-19 positive patients from Punjab province to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and Gilgit Baltistan — the two most marginalised areas.

## Punjab to release 6000 prisoners to decongest jails

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Not less than 6,000 convict prisoners and under-trials will be released on parole and interim bail, respectively, for six weeks amidst the coronavirus scare. The move, aimed at decongesting state prisons in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, was taken in line with the Supreme Court's directions regarding the same.

Disclosing, Punjab Jails Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa on Thursday said that the Supreme Court had constituted a high powered committee under the chairmanship of Punjab Legal Services Authority chairperson with Principal Secretary (Jails) ADGP (Prisons) as members.

"The committee has circu-

lated detailed criteria and procedure to initiate the release of prisoners. The convict prisoners will be released on parole for six weeks and under-trial prisoners on interim-bail for six weeks," said Randhawa.

The Minister informed that there were around 24,000 prisoners lodged in 24 jails across the State against an authorized capacity of 23,488.

As per committee report, while the primary aim was to protect the prisoners' health and restrict transmission of COVID-19 by decongestion of prisons, the overall good of the society and maintenance of order in the society in these extraordinary times was also kept in mind while making the recommendations.

The committee hence, rec-

ommended release of convicts on parole for a period of six weeks. "Prisoners sentenced up to seven years with maximum two under-trial cases (both on bail); and further should have availed last parole peacefully, are to be considered for release on parole," said the Minister.

The Minister pointed out that the prisoners already out on parole shall be given six week extension in parole in order to ensure quarantining of prisoners. As a one-time measure, the Superintendents of concerned jails have been empowered to process the cases of parole so as to expedite the process of release.

The under-trial shall be considered for a six-week interim bail, if or she is facing one or two cases, in which maxi-

mum punishment is seven years or less. Special cases under certain heads of crime such as Section 498-A, 420, 406, 324, 325, 379 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Excise Act and those under section 107/151 CrPc (Code of Criminal Procedure) shall also be considered for the bail.

Camp courts shall be held on jail premises itself for grant of interim bail.

However, those convicted or charged under POCSO Act, 376 IPC, 379-B IPC, acid attack, UAPA, Explosives Act and foreign nationals shall not be considered for release. Also, conditions have been put on for those covered under NDPS Act cases.

The committee has relaxed the conditions further for release of prisoners suffering

from chronic diseases like diabetes, HIV, pregnant women and those above 65 years of age.

To ensure order in the prisons, the DLSA chairperson has been asked to visit the jail on every alternate day to inter-act with prisoners and taking necessary precautions.

The Department of Prisons and Correctional Services is also granting remission as per Punjab Jail Manual to eligible prisoners.

As per the Apex Court's directions, physical presence of under-trial prisoners before the courts has been stopped and recourse to videoconferencing has been taken. The transfer of prisoners from one prison to another is also done only to decongest the jails and ensure social distancing.

## Capt Amarinder asks police to be humane, sensitive in dealing with curfew violations

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Taking cognizance of reports of excesses against citizens for the enforcement of the curfew in the state, Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Thursday directed the Punjab Police to be more humane and sensitive in dealing with violations.

Urging the police personnel to exercise maximum restraint in the difficult situation, the Chief Minister asked them to find more compassionate ways of handling curfew violations, especially in cases of individuals found moving out for essentials.

Use of corporal means to punish violators could not be allowed, said Capt Amarinder, noting reports of a recorded telephone message purported to have been released by Gurpatwant Singh Pannu of the Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), and said any attempt by him or anyone else to provoke the youth would not be tolerated.

Continued on P2

PNS ■ SHIMLA

However, people were seen maintaining proper distance while standing in queues for buying essential items in New

**CM DIRECTS TO MAINTAIN SUPPLY OF ESSEN-**

Thakur said the State at present also has sufficient stock of pulses such as 'Dal Chana'

Secretary, Food and Civil Supplies Amitabh Awasthi, Managing Director Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Mansi Sahay Thakur, Director Food and Civil Supplies Abid Hussain and other senior officers attended the meeting.

PNS ■ SHIMLA


He said State Government has decided to extend the clo-

He said that liquor vendors would also remain open during the relaxation period of curfew in the State, adding that only one person of a family should be allowed during relax-

He said that as many as 2257 people have been kept under surveillance out of which 636 have completed 28 days of surveillance period. The investigations of 34 persons for

Director General of Police S.R. Mardi assured the Chief Minister that police would be extra cautious in effectively monitoring social distancing during the relaxation in curfew time.

## PTI ■ CHANDIGARH


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Brand

Punjab Animal Husbandry Department Director Inderjit Singh said that the department has written to several states for allowing supply of poultry feed.

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Parida said that sector response teams (SRT) comprising of officials have been constituted in each sector and

Administrations of Mohali and Panchkula so that there is no unnecessary movement in the city from these two districts. Governor directed the

process of sale, in each bus two to three vendors along with policeman have been deployed area wise.

## Kher responds, hits back at opposition

■ Panjab University constituted a 15-member Advisory committee and 20-member campus task force committee to deal with the situation arising due to spread of Coronavirus pandemic. These committees will stay in touch on the social media devices and implement necessary measures undertaken in the PU campus to combat COVID-19 and assist the students during suspension of classes.

Her work speaks through the headlines that no fresh case has been reported in the last 48 hours in the tricity, she added.

tary duties. Ever since the lockdown, she has made herself present and had constantly kept herself available to the Administration and heads of departments to brief her about the situation on the roads and

A day before, Congress had questioned her absence in the city at the time the residents are put under curfew restrictions to combat COVID-19 spread here.'

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Adviser said that rates will be fixed for these items from Friday onwards. The Administration is working on it to stop exploitation of consumers.

Her work speaks through the headlines that no fresh case has been reported in the last 48 hours in the tricity, she added.

Meanwhile, DGP Gupta said while by and large the police personnel were seen to be caring and gentle, there had been a few cases of some of them using force against those found violating the restrictions. Gupta said he had

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

"It was also ensured that they maintain due distance keeping in view the health con-

The Food Department is also working 24x7 to ensure supply of essential commodities to its people. On the directions of the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, elaborate arrangements had been ensured and supply of these articles had already commenced in a hassle-free and streamlined manner, he added.

Meanwhile, DGP Gupta said while by and large the police personnel were seen to be caring and gentle, there had been a few cases of some of them using force against those found violating the restrictions. Gupta said he had

directed CPs and SSPs to make it clear to the force down the ranks that there should be zero tolerance to physical beatings etc. No society can tolerate such visuals, he warned, adding that where needed, violators should be booked.

The DGP's warning came even as the police on Thursday registered 170 FIRs and arrested 262 for curfew and home quarantine violations. Out of total 170 FIRs, four were registered for violation of home quarantine guidelines, with three FIRs registered in Sangrur and one in Bathinda.



## Procurement of mustard, wheat to start from April 15: Khattar

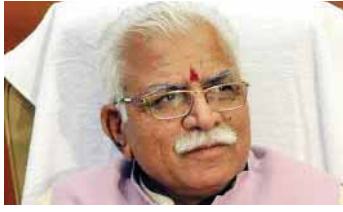
PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A mid apprehension by the farmers about procurement of wheat during the lockdown, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday allayed their doubts saying there is no need for them to worry as each and every grain will be bought though there could be some delay.

Addressing the people of the State, Khattar said that since it is not possible to make procurements till April 14, arrangements for procurement of Mustard and Wheat will start on April 15 and April 20, respectively if the situation is favorable.

Till then he has appealed to the farmers to stock the grain in their homes. In case any farmer is having trouble doing the same, the Minister said, he has been directed to link in to the matter, Khattar said, adding that to make up for the loss that the farmers will face due to delay in procurement and the lockdown soon a new scheme would be announced by the State Government.

He also made several announcements to combat COVID-19 and said that the State Government has decided to increase the ex gratia amount being given to the employees working in such adverse situation, whether they are working in the isolated wards made for Corona patients or deputed in the COVID testing laboratories or the employees involved in such works from ₹10 lakh. He said, "Now the ex gratia amount for doctors will be ₹50 lakh, ₹30



lakh for nurses and ₹20 lakh for other employees (whether Government or contractual)."

He said the State Government has launched a new website covidsharyana.in for the registration of any shop, store owner (kiryana, vegetable, milk and chemist, etc) who desires to register to offer services by delivering items in order to helping the people of the State and fight against the spread of Corona virus may register on this website. This website has been started so that people can get daily necessities on time. E-passes will be issued to those who register on this website, he added.

Khattar said that extensive arrangements have been made through District and Police Administration to deliver all kinds of daily essential commodities to the people. He said that along with the administration, online arrangements have been made for the cooperation of the volunteers in this portal. He said that in the last four days since the registration was open, 33,000 people have registered themselves as volunteers, which includes 546 Doctors, 255 Nurses, 1108

paramedical, 4700 home delivery assistants, 5700 social distancing communication, 5700 for public communication, 6200 for supporting the district administration have been included.

The Chief Minister also apprised that five laboratories have been made available in the State for the testing of Corona virus and two more testing labs are also being set up. Similarly, 2500 isolated beds and about 6500 quarantine beds have been made available.

The Government has set up the Haryana COVID-19 Relief Fund and the State 2000 people have voluntarily contributed to donate in this Fund and to date an amount of ₹5.84 crore has been accumulated in this Fund.

The Chief Minister shared that the Government of India is drawing his attention to the problems likely to be faced by farmers in the wake of delay in procurement of crops.

Selja said the State Government should set up a round-the-clock dedicated helpline for farmers where all their concerns should be clarified. Demanding waiving of

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Ex-gratia amount for doctors will be ₹50 lakh, ₹30 lakh for nurses and ₹20 lakh for other employees
- Procurement of Mustard and Wheat to start on April 15 and April 20, respectively
- Launch of a new website covidsharyana.in for registration of any shop, store owner (kiryana, vegetable, milk and chemist) to provide services
- 2000 people donated ₹5.84 crore in Haryana COVID-19 Relief Fund till date
- 33,000 people registered themselves as volunteers including 546 Doctors, 255 Nurses, 1108 paramedical

sum assistance of ₹84.46 crore in two installments of ₹4,000. Similarly, it is decided to give ₹1,000 per week to 3.85 lakh workers registered with the Construction Workers Board. Apart from this, BPL families will also be given ₹1,000 per week and for families who are not in the BPL list, separate arrangements will be made for their registration.

Meanwhile, BKU's Gurnam Singh said the Government should not wait till April 20 to procure wheat. "By that time, 90 per cent of wheat would have been harvested and procurement mandis are flooded with the crop at one go and will not help the situation. The Govt. Punjab should make arrangements to procure it from the fields at its own pace," he added.

Singh also said the Government should give advance of ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 per acre to the farmers who have to pay to farm labourers and to meet other expenses related to harvesting and storing of crop.

"The Government can deduct this amount later from farmers' accounts when they procure the produce and make payment to farmers for it," he said.

CONGRESS AND BKU RAISE FARMERS' PROBLEMS  
Haryana Congress president Kumari Selja wrote a letter to Khattar on Thursday drawing his attention to the problems likely to be faced by farmers in the wake of delay in procurement of crops.

Selja said the State Government should set up a round-the-clock dedicated helpline for farmers where all their concerns should be clarified. Demanding waiving of

crop loans, she also said that the credit limit of Kisan Credit Cards used by farmers should be increased.

As delay is expected in wheat procurement, the Government should make arrangement to store the produce of farmers or get it lifted directly from their fields, she said in the letter.

Meanwhile, BKU's Gurnam Singh said the Government should not wait till April 20 to procure wheat. "By that time, 90 per cent of wheat would have been harvested and procurement mandis are flooded with the crop at one go and will not help the situation. The Govt. Punjab should make arrangements to procure it from the fields at its own pace," he added.

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"The Government can deduct this amount later from farmers' accounts when they procure the produce and make payment to farmers for it," he said.

## Helpline clogged with phone calls reporting suspect neighbours in UT

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Amid the COVID-19 scare, the city denizens are clogging the Chandigarh helpline number complaints, including reporting their neighbours who came back from abroad in the recent weeks.

The complainants are requesting the local authorities to put abroad returnees under home quarantine.

More than 300 calls were received on Thursday.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, Yashpal Garg, CHB, CEO who is in charge of Chandigarh control room number -112 for COVID-19, said that more than 300 calls were received on Thursday.

He said that after curfew was opened in Chandigarh on Monday midnight, the number of calls on helpline number increased manifold.

Giving details about the types of calls received, Garg said that people have been reporting their neighbours who returned from abroad recently. They are requesting that such people should be put in isolation.

Notably, the first positive COVID-19 case in the city was a 23-year-old girl who returned from London recently. So far, seven positive cases have been reported till Thursday evening.

Apart from such complaints, the callers have queries about the curfew restrictions and when will the Administration give relaxations in it. The callers are also com-

**People have been reporting about their neighbors and others who returned from abroad recently. They are requesting that such people should be put in isolation**

plaining about not receiving essential items like vegetables, fruits, milk among others.

Few complaints were also received regarding some offices and shops opened defying curfew orders in the city, Garg said.

In view of large number of such complaints regarding non-delivery of essential items, we began calling these residents back for feedback. Numbers of 25 per cent complainants were picked up randomly today and calls were made to ask them whether they got the supplies by evening or not. Most of the residents have expressed satisfaction with home delivery service that began on Thursday, he added.

This is a central control room and calls are also being received regarding issues related to police and medical assistance. Calls from all three divisions of south, east and central are being received here, Garg said.

The 24x7 helpline number

was launched last week for residents to seek any query regarding the current situation amid COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

Garg further said, "Earlier, about 200 calls were received on the helpline but after the imposition of curfew, the calls increased manifold due to panic among residents."

Indefinite curfew was imposed in Chandigarh on Monday midnight to ensure social distancing to combat spread of COVID-19.

**2080 rounded up for defying curfew orders**

As many as 2080 people were rounded up by Chandigarh police for defying curfew orders in Chandigarh.

A report of 188 people released by UT Police, a total of 2080 people were rounded up till Thursday morning. From 7 pm on Wednesday to 7 am on Thursday, 316 people were rounded up.

So far, 900 vehicles were detailed while 84 were impounded including four wheelers and two wheelers, said an official spokesman.

Action has been taken against 64 persons under Section 188 (Disobedience to law) and 177 (Promulgation of public servant) of IPC. Three FIRs have been registered under Section 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 276 (Malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) IPC, the spokesman said.

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

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

At the same time, the Chief Minister also ordered that these packets should be made available at the offices of the Deputy Commissioners to support any such persons who do not get covered in the door-to-door distribution and may call the helpline numbers for food.

"While the economic package announced by the Finance Minister, Nirmla Sitharaman is welcome and would provide support to many sections of the society, there is unfortunately no immediate relief provided by the Centre to the daily wage earners and the unorganized sector workers,

who have been left in the lurch following the curfew or lockdown imposed," he said.

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

He updated the Congress president of the various measures being taken in the state to provide succour to the citizens in the current crisis.

The Chief Minister further said that all arrangements were being made to ensure home delivery of essential items and services, and to reach out to those in need at their doorsteps.

Clear directions have been issued to both, the police and civil administration, to streamline the support and delivery systems in every district, he said, adding that there was market intervention in the region and the situation would further stabilize on this count in the next couple of days.

The introduction of the e-pass facility launched by the Punjab Police was a step in this direction, he added. He also reacted to reports of crowding at medicine and

drugs stores in some areas, the Chief Minister assured that there was no shortage of medical supplies of any kind.

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

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

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

Sukhbir said that his inputs revealed that there was only a limited trust in the government's claims of maintaining supply of essential commodities, and appealed to the Chief Minister to operationalise all channels to ensure that people do not suffer on this account.

"The poor and especially the daily wage earners are facing extreme hardships. The government must take immediate and effective steps to help the poor and the needy in this

hour of challenge," he said.

Sukhbir demanded that the government must come up immediately with was to help the farmers with the harvesting and procurement of the standing crop. "The food supply chain cannot be allowed to be broken. If that happens, it can have disastrous implications for the country," he said

demanding immediate financial assistance from the Punjab Government to the farmers which could be adjusted in installments later.

Urging the Chief Minister to intervene urgently to rush food to the poorest of the poor, Majithia said that the State was witnessing heart rendering scenes of women pleading for food for their hungry children.

The situation has become such that the poor are claiming that they might not fall to coronavirus but would definitely fall prey to hunger. It is difficult to see such suffering. I have sure, like the Chief Minister, that the situation must be extremely disturbed. While the entire rural poor are affected, daily wagers who are unable to earn their livelihood are in utter despair. The government must step to ensure food is available to the poor at the earliest," he said.

## Police criticized for using force against violators

**170 FIRs lodged, 262 persons detained for violating guidelines**

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Even as the people continue to violate strict curfew rules issued by the State, police has come under fire from all sections for using the force to check the violations.

On Thursday, as many as 170 FIRs, including four against those who violated curfew, and 262 persons have been registered and 262 persons have been arrested for violating the quarantine and curfew guidelines.

Lashing out, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Badal expressed his "strong disapproval" of the insensitive way being shown by the Punjab Government in implementing the "constructive measures" to fight coronavirus pandemic.

Reiterating SAD's full support to the people of the Union and the Punjab Governments, Sukhbir said that the people of Punjab were not prepared for the sudden curfew and were taken by surprise by its suddenness.

"While I understand the urgency of the matter, the Government needed to ensure

its implementation through sensitive and persuasive means rather than use of brute force against those violating curfew, especially against the women. It is against the spirit of the women to do sit ups that too by male cops. This is totally unacceptable," he said.

He added that there are so many psychological, practical and legal means available to avert crisis rather than panic the curfew regulations, and thus "there is no need to humiliate the self-respecting Punjabis who have by and large been cooperating with the government's measures in this direction."

"Any curfew of such long duration can be effective only with the people's cooperation. The government must use the media, especially the electronic and online media, to spread awareness rather than panic the curfew regulations, and thus "there is no need to humiliate the self-respecting Punjabis who have by and large been cooperating with the government's measures in this direction."

However, he appealed to the people to fully cooperate with the administration in observing curfew regulations. "It is in our own interest to stay at home and look after the elders and children during this challenging period," he added.

**40,153 COPS ON GROUND**  
A total of 40,153 police

employees, in different ranks, have been deployed on ground in various districts or police commissionerates across the State for enforcement of curfew and sealing of affected clusters — Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr) and Jalandhar rural districts — besides maintenance of essential supplies and law and order.

Out of the total, 425 gazetted officers, including 528 police home guards, besides 1937 volunteers have been deployed across the state.

Since Sunday, a total of 839 FIRs have been registered with 1291 persons being arrested, with the names of Jalandhar, Tarn Taran, Fatehgarh Sahib, and Mohali topping the list.

**PUNJAB POLICE LOGS INTO INNOVATION**

Coronavirus has not only brought out the tough side of the Punjab police, but also its innovative capabilities.

Making the best use of its social media profiles to send across the 'stay at home' messages, the state police chief Dinkar Gupta has shared interesting GIFs from his official Twitter handle with #PunjabFightsCorona.

Showing why one should stay behind closed doors, DGP shared a tweet with a picture of a man sitting on a bench with the text "Rest at Home" above it and a picture of a coffin on

another with words "Rest in Peace" — sending across a clear message loud and clear.

"You can stay behind closed doors, or below the sealing of those walls," he tweeted with the gif.

In another tweet, the DGP has shared a gif written "VIRUS" with flashing letter "U"; saying "only U can break the chain". I virus, 1.3 billion people, not all of give curfew a chance to win. Practice the safety measures you can," he wrote.

In fact, the police has also roped in renowned Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh to narrate a video titled "Gandhi ji Gurbaksh ji" (Missing Gurbaksh ji), who has returned from Italy and has gone missing, infecting people.

**DIAL 112 FOR ASSISTANCE**  
In view of the tough side of related policing issues, Dial 112 for help. Launching a dedicated number 112, the Punjab Police said that it would work as curfew helpline to address any curfew related policing issues.

Punjab police said that any person could dial 112 for seeking facilities like emergency travel, hospitals, supply of food, groceries, medicines, LPG, hassle-free movement of trustworthy essential goods, delivery of goods through e-commerce platform.

## 547 arrested for violating lockdown orders in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Police has arrested 547 to date people for flouting the lockdown orders enforced to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Till 4 pm on March 26, 318 FIRs have been registered, 547 people arrested and 1,934 vehicles seized, and fines of Rs 10,20 lakh have been imposed (on violators). Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Navdeep Singh Virk said.

Director General of Police, Haryana, Manoj Yadava is in constant touch with commissioners of police and superintendents of police to ensure strict compliance of the lockdown orders, a police spokesman said.

Essential and emergency services are exempted under the orders, officials said. The government has said it will be arranging delivery of essential items at doorsteps so that people stay indoors. On

Thursday, Chief Minister M. L. Khattar appealed to the people to follow social distancing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

In a televised address, he said, "Corona Haryana say hargah, bharaat say bhagega (corona will be defeated in Haryana and the virus will be eliminated from India), this is our pledge." "Everyone should cooperate with the administration and volunteers. Together we have to rise to fight it," Khattar said.

Haryana Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya has directed authorities to ensure that the homeless, daily-wagers, street vendors, beggars and other needy people receive cooked food. He has also issued directions to ensure dry ration is delivered wherever it is necessary.

Red Cross officials have been asked by the governor to coordinate with the district administration and provide all possible assistance to the people.

## Haryana asks medical colleges to reserve 25% beds for COVID-19



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Government on Thursday asked all government, government aided and private colleges in the State to reserve at least 25 per cent of the beds and create exclusive COVID-19 hospitals. Also, expenditure on the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients whether in government or private colleges would be borne by the State Government.

This was informed in the meeting of Crisis Coordination Committee held under the Chairpersonship of Chief Secretary Keshni Anand Arora here. It was informed that adequate stock of N-95 masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) Kit is available in

the State. While, delivery of 15,000 such masks has been received, order for additional 20,000 N-95 masks has been placed.

Order for 22 lakh 3-ply face mask has been placed by the Health Department. Apart from this, the supply of 8000 body suits has been received. This is in addition to 200-300 body suits arranged by the CMOs at their own level. Also, 722 ventilators have been kept reserve for COVID-19 and order has been placed for about 300 new ventilators.

It was informed that directions have been issued to all Range IGs to ensure that commercial vehicles carrying essential commodities are not unnecessarily challenged or impounded.

## Capt seeks financial assistance from Centre To clear pending liabilities under MGNREGA

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Amid COVID-19 crisis, Punjab Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh on Thursday sought immediate financial assistance from the Centre to clear all pending liabilities under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme.

Capt Amarinder, in a letter to the Union Minister of Rural Development and Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra

Singh Tomar, raised the issue of pending wage liabilities of MGNREGA workers in Punjab. He apprised the Union Minister that as on March 24, 2020, wage liabilities of Rs 84 crore were pending for approximately 1.30 lakh workers in the State.

The Chief Minister pointed out employment under wages, the MGNREGA workers would not be able to sustain their families in the prevailing COVID-19 emergency, with no fresh employment oppor-

tunities available during the current pan-India lockdown. Expressing concern over the precarious situation, the Chief Minister urged the Union Minister to immediately release the pending wage liabilities without any further delay, to provide the much-needed relief to the beneficiaries for sustenance of their families.

The release of funds would also help the State handle the present difficult situation to some extent, the Chief Minister further pointed out

financial year, Punjab had achieved initial approved labour budget of 200 lakh person-days and the Ministry had enhanced labour budget to 234 lakh person-days.

As on March 24, 2020, the State has generated 230 lakh person-days, with additional liability of Rs 120 crore pending against payment for materials, he said while underlining the need for release of sufficient funds to meet all these liabilities at the earliest.

## Two new cases in Punjab, tally 33

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Thursday reported two new corona positive cases taking the total tally to 33 in the state.

Among the fresh cases, a Nawanshahr-resident woman contracted the infection from already positive patient while a resident of Jalandhar city with no travel history also tested positive and admitted to a Ludhiana hospital.

A new case of corona positive has come up in Nizamat Nagar area of Jalandhar city where a 72-year-old woman tested positive. She was admitted to the hospital on March 21 following complaints of cough, fever and breathlessness since March 16. Later, she was admitted to Christian Medical Hospital in Ludhiana and her test report got positive. Presently, she is on medication and non-invasive ventilation.

After the confirmation, the health workers sealed and sanitized the area. It has been learnt that woman's daughter-in-law, who has returned from Italy, had visited her, and she also attended a religious programme.

"Another fresh positive case of coronavirus has been reported from Pathankot village in Nawanshahr. She is the mother of Sarpanch, who was already tested positive after coming in contact with Baldev Singh," said

a health official.

With this, the total number of positive cases in Nawanshahr alone has reached to 18, while the contact cases of Baldev Singh with positive coronavirus has touched 23. The health authorities have collected a total of 722 samples so far, of which 346 were found negative for the coronavirus infection, the daily bulletin said, adding that the result of 376 samples was still awaited.

# Rajnath reviews future action plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

tine suspected coronavirus patients.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The CRPF quarantine facilities will be located at 19 locations across the countries. While Pinjore (Haryana) will have 190-bedded facility, Guwahati, Jammu, Narela, Neemuch, Kolkata and Imphal each will have 150-bed facility.

The CRPF will have 120-bed facility followed by Ranchi (75 beds), 209 CoBRA (75 beds), Mokamaghat (75) and Mizafapur (75). Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Coimbatore, Bhatnagar, Pallipuram, Hyderabad and Gandhinagar will have bedded facility at the campuses of CRPF. The CRPF will have the most number of isolation wards with a capacity to lodge 40 patients.

The CRPF will have quarantine facility will be located at Shivganga near Madurai.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

The Defence Minister expressed appreciation on the proactive role played by the Armed Forces and various departments of MoD in evacuating Indian nationals as well as foreigners from COVID-19 affected countries and ensuring their proper care at various quarantine facilities. He urged the Armed Forces and other departments to gear up their preparations and provide all required assistance to the civilian administration at various levels.

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Air Staff Air

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Farmers, daily wageers, poor women, people with disabilities

## Opp welcomes Central package to tide over coronavirus crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Unconscionable that the central government finds it necessary to spend Rs.20,000 crore at this precise moment when the PM and his cabinet are busy with beautification schemes. Central Vista plan must be scrapped, earmarked funds must be transferred to tackle Corona crisis and its impact on the poor, said Yechury.

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

The Congress chief also

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

By rigorously adopting social distancing.

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Telemedicine here. The Government feel that with the emergence of the higher likelihood of maintenance of records and documentation hence minimises the likelihood of missing out advice from the doctor other health care staff.

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

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

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

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

It also clearly specify the categories of medicines that can and cannot be prescribed. As per the guidelines, doctors are strictly prohibited from insisting on telemedicine, when the patient is willing to travel to a facility and/or requests an in-person consultation and misuse patient images and data, especially private and sensitive in nature. If found violating, penalties will be as per the IMC Act, ethics and other prevailing laws.

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The people will be able to download the books by Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand and on Mahatma Gandhi. All in all there are books for everyone in the family to read and enjoy. More titles will be added to the list," said an HRD Ministry official. Available in Hindi, English, Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Kokborok, Mizo, Bodo, Nepali, Tamil, Punjabi, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and Sanskrit, the books cover all genres of fiction, biography, popular science, teacher's handbook, and majority books for children and young adults.

Some of the ICT initiatives launched by the HRD Ministry, UGC and its Inter University Centres (IUCs) - Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) and Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC), in the form of digital platforms (which call for access by the teachers, students and researchers in Universities and Colleges for broadening their horizon of learning," said a HRD ministry release.

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

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

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

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

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thirteen patients are admitted at a Leh hospital.

According to official sources, the deceased patient had been positive for COVID-19. Uttar Pradesh and Jammu recently after being part of a religious congregation attended also by people from Indonesia and Malaysia. He

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

The J&K Government has

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

Meanwhile, second day of the 21 day long lockdown

## 50 contacts of Kashmir's first victim quarantined

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

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

Health officials said the deceased patient had a che-

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

"He had attended a religious congregation in Sopore

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

The fact that he had been evading isolation and treatment as per the standard operating procedure (SOP) for such patients, was also worrisome.

"The fact is that he was symptomatic a full blown case before he was isolated and admitted in very worrisome", said a doctor.

IANS

## No Friday prayers in Kashmir mosques

IANS ■ SRINAGAR

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, DC Srinagar Shahid Choudhary tweeted: "Closure of all religious places in #Srinagar is under way. With active cooperation of Management committees, Reverted shrines

of #Srinagar, Nagshband Saheb show the way. #StayAtHome"

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

## Goa converts 5 tourist resorts into quarantine facilities

IANS ■ PANAJI

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

On Wednesday, three persons had tested positive for coronavirus.

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

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

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

Goa has isolation wards at four centres.

# Tamil Nadu positive cases rise to 28

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

TG Vinay, Madurai district collector, told reporters that the health department officials are tracking the persons who had met the Indonesians and had been proselytizing the districts of Salem, Madurai and Erode. The person who died on Wednesday, an office bearer of a local mosque management committee, had accompanied the Indonesians during their engagements in Madurai.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chief Minister Edappadi

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

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

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

## Didi hits street to teach physical distancing

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

The man is in a critical condition, the doctors said. The Thursday's case takes the total number of corona infections in Bengal to 10. The State has witnessed one Corona related death with the victim succumbing to the disease last week.

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

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

Banerjee who had been working frantically to prevent

WITH 1 FRESH CASE IN WB TOTAL AT 10

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

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

Market where she advised the people on social distancing and wearing masks. Elsewhere the State Government on Thursday decided to open the School of Technical Education and a facility for testing Corona infections. According to sources STM has been provided with about a thousand kits from Pune Institute of Virology and is likely to be functional immediately.

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was confusion in the total number of patients who tested positive for Coronavirus. In the morning, State Health Minister Rajesh Tope tweeted: "The current count of COVID-19 patients in the state of Maharashtra is 124 yesterday evening. Each in Mumbai & Thane such 2 patients have been identified as positive. 15 people from these have been recovered and are discharged from the respective hospitals."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## BJP MLA asks cops to shoot down lockdown violators

IANS ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A 74-year-old woman, resident of the Chikkaballur district, had a history of travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. She had returned to India on March 14 and died on March 24," said a health official.

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

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

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

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

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

Among the positive cases confirmed on Thursday all were men. A Mysuru resident, 35, with no travel or positive case contact history emerged as a designated hospital, here.

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## UP Govt to trace returnees from coronavirus-hit places

**Lucknow:** With the help of village heads, the Yogi Adityanath Government in UP is tracking people who must have slipped outside the state in the past two weeks.

The helpline 1076 is available to any UP resident who might want to file a health-related complaint.

Awasthi said all MLAs, MLCs, Ministers would give money from their funds for the medical facilities in the state.

The Chief Minister has instructed formation of district control room in each district as well as carrying out a cleanliness drive in the state during the lockdown.

Meanwhile, Principal Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said 38 coronavirus cases had been reported in UP.

The returnees from other states have been advised to stay at home for 15 days. If a person shows any symptoms of Covid-19 during the home isolation, he/she can call the helpline number 18001805145, issued by the Department of Health.

Giving details of medical facilities, he said Over 600 isolation beds had been set up and emergency health services were operational in the state.

A three-tier arrangement is being made for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. The community health centres are being turned into Covid-19 hospitals in districts. IANS

## Man kills brother for stepping out during lockdown

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

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

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

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

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

According to the police, Rajesh had been advising and warning Durgesh repeatedly against stepping out of home. However, Durgesh was not paying heed to his elder brother's advice.

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

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

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

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



PAPER WITH PASSION

## Humanitarian crisis

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



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

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

## Data crunch

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



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

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

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



AJOY KUMAR

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

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

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

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

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

## WE CAN STOP CORONA

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF RESPIRATORY DISEASES LIKE COVID-19



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

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

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

In the case of Governments, the customer is the vast population of this great country. Therefore, as it is becoming more obvious day by day, a top-down approach does not work.

Instead, we need a clear line of communication between the Prime Minister and the public. This includes taking a press conference where the media, which has been and will be crucial in highlighting the shortcomings of the Government's measures, can highlight questions that the public, too, have been raising. Such press conferences can be done effectively through social media platforms like Facebook live events with limited access to accredited journalists. However, to limit this only to the Prime Minister would be a big mistake. Chief Ministers, too, need to follow a similar approach. This is why Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal must be applauded for being proactive in this regard.

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

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

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

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

Of course, it is easier to speak than it is to write and easier to write than to practise. But to write that I want the country to come out of this crisis as a shining example to the world. While I support the Modi Government wholeheartedly in its efforts to tackle the virus, wholeheartedly does not mean unthinkingly. In order to beat the Coronavirus, wholehearted and not unthinking support is the need of the hour.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

## SOUNDBITE

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

Indian cricketer  
—Mithal Raj

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

Megastar  
—Amithabh Bachchan

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

Top US scientist  
—Anthony Fauci

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

NC leader  
—Omar Abdullah

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Lockdown imperative

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

Varun Dambal  
Bengaluru

### Myths vs facts

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

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

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

### Misreading Kashmir

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

It has now dawned on the Government that the absence of the Abdullahs from the scene is so inconsequential to the new narrative it has designed for the Kashmiri populace. Without elected leaders, there can be no engagement with the people, who have been erased and forgotten for so long. Either it runs an inanimate State with mounting disillusionment or gathers its wits and acumen to infuse the real meaning of integration of the State with the pulse of the nation, with or without Article 370



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

R Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

sively containing the virus.

This development makes the role of independent agencies as well as of the media crucial in finding out the truth. Curiosity might kill the cat but the other option entails reading tampered tea leaves in order to find out what really happened in China.

Gaurav Agarwal  
Guwahati

### Beef up tracking system

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

Shambhavi  
Via email

### For the sake of existence

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

Manisha  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## FIRST COLUMN

## COD a boon for everyone

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



DINESH TYAGI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## POINT COUNTERPOINT



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

## What can we do for India?

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



CHITTARVU RAGHU

The Prime Minister had appealed for a "Janata (people) Curfew" on March 22 in a bid to prevent the deadly Coronavirus from spreading into the community on a larger scale. At that time, Narendra Modi's appeal got an overwhelming response from all citizens and we stood together to do his bidding. Unfortunately post the Janata Curfew, people are not taking the 21-day lockdown duties contemplated under Article 51A of our Constitution. Modi seriously and are coming out of the homes.

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

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

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

The Government has got every right to give appropriate directions in such times of calamities and we are obligated to follow the same. In case we do not discharge our obligations in relation to our fundamental duties/obligations as contemplated under Article 51A, the State would be entitled to register cases against us under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), more particularly Section 269 and 270 of the IPC. Section 269 says that "Whoever unlawfully or negligently does any act, which is and which he knows or has a reason to believe to be, likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life shall be punished with imprisonment up to six months."

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## COVID-19 will hit the farm sector

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



INDIRA SHEKHAR SINGH

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

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

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

devoured by the Coronavirus mayhem, too.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (BfR) statement: "There is currently no evidence that food, including seed, is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus. Shipments of seeds via surfaces, which have recently been contaminated with the virus is, nonetheless, possible through surface infections. However, this is only likely to occur during a short period after contamination. Due to the relatively low stability of Coronavirus in surfaces, which have recently been contaminated with the virus is, nonetheless, possible through surface infections. However, this is only likely to occur during a short period after contamination. Due to the relatively low stability of Coronavirus in surfaces, which have recently been contaminated with the virus is, nonetheless, possible through surface infections. However, this is only likely to occur during a short period after contamination. 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# G20 nations to inject \$5 trn into global economy

## Modi pitches for new crisis management protocol

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

The Prime Minister called for ushering in a new global-

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

He said empowering the WHO was necessary for development of effective vaccines to deal with global pandemics.

"Let us put — as much as rather than economic targets — the centre of our vision for global prosperity and cooperation," Modi was quoted as saying by the sources.

He also stressed on developing three adaptation responses, affordable and human healthcare system that can be deployed globally to deal with healthcare crisis.

AFP ■ RIVAYDH

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

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

The talks came amid criticism that the G20 has been slow to address the COVID-19 pandemic, which has left more than 21,000 dead worldwide according to official data, and triggered financial shock waves across the world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

"This is a virus that respects no borders. The outbreak we are battling is our common enemy. All must work together to build a strongest global network of control and treatment that we have never seen," Xi said through videoconference.

Xi's statement came amid growing international criticism of China's reported failure to be fully transparent in reporting the COVID-19 outbreak in the central Chinese city of Wuhan last year.

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

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

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

## Around the Globe

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



## VIRUS TOLL OVER 21,000

AFP ■ MADRID

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

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

Amid squabbling between the leaders of China and the US over who is to blame UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for the world to act together to halt the menace.

"COVID-19 is threatening the whole of humanity," he said. "Global action and solidarity are crucial. Individual country responses are not going to be enough." The global lockdown — which also took in India's huge population this week — tightened further on Thursday as Russia announced it was rounding all international flights, while Moscow's mayor ordered the closure of cafes, shops and parks.

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

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

whole," ratings agency Moody's said.

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

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

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



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

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

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

AP ■ MADRID

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

Health care systems in Europe and New York buckled under the strain, with Spain's death toll climbing to more than 6,000.

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

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

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



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

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

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

## Infections near 5L as health systems buckle



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

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

Trump has expressed hope churches could return to normal by Easter on April 12, and grumbled that "our country wasn't built to be shut down."

Apparently concerned that the outbreak's devastating effects on financial markets and employment will harm his reelection chances, Democrats

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

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

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

New York has emerged as a virus hotspot. The city's mammoth convention center is being turned into a hospital. The state recorded more than 350 deaths and 10,000 cases.

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

On Thursday, the Health Ministry reported reported deaths due to the virus at 6,000 and 655 deaths, bringing the total cases to over 56,000 and more than 4,000 fatalities — second only to Italy's death toll of about 7,500.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY



General public is hereby informed that this boy namely Manish S/o Pramod Gupta R/o Jhuggi N-18-A633, G.K. Block, Wazirpur, Delhi Age: 13 years, Height: 3'6", Face: Oval, Complexion: Fair, Build: Thin, wearing chocolate colour pant, cream colour shirt and black colour shoes in feet, has been missing since 07.11.2013 from the area of P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 464/13 dated 09.11.2013 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi.

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

E-mail: cbc@cbl.gov.in  
Website: cbc.nic.in  
Fax: 24368639,  
Tel.: 24368638/24368641

SHO: P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi  
Tel. No.: 011-27636000,  
27631600

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL



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

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

E-mail: cbc@cbl.gov.in  
Website: cbc.nic.in  
Fax: 24368639,  
Tel.: 24368638/24368641

SHO: P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi  
Tel. No.: 011-29551326, 29551597,  
8750870835

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

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

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

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

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

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

## 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 Reconstruction 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.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Event / Notice Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Ashish Puri, Ruchika Puri, G-72, South City Phase-I, Gurpur, Haryana A/c: LBDEL00001256268	Flat No.- 1429, Type-I, Second Floor, SF Sector-37, Noida Uttar Pradesh, North East- Road, South East- Open, South West- Flat No-1447, North West- Flat No-1448	07-Feb-2020, Rs. 1135635/-	30/09/2019
2.	Ravinder Sharma, Sweety Sharma, B-219, CDRI, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi, A/c: LBDEL00001481592	Mayur Dhwaj Co-Operative, Group Housing Society Ltd, Geeta Colony, Flat No-402-C, Sector-14, Alia Mayapuri, Dhwaj Co-Operative, Group Housing Society Ltd, Geeta Colony	07-Feb-2020, Rs. 1762803/-	30/04/2016

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

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

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

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

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

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



# 3.3 MN AMERICANS SEEK JOBLESS AID

Nearly 5 times earlier high

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

Though it may seem crass, the federal government actually has long made a calculation when imposing regulations, that the benefits to the "public good" outweigh the costs. That's the logic behind the law, that places a price tag on a human life. It has been used to consider whether to require seat belts, airbags or environmental regulations, but it has never been applied in a broad

public health context.

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

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

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

# Taking aspirin may not reduce dementia risk

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

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

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

# US grants Iraq shortest sanctions waiver yet for Iran gas

AFP ■ BAGHDAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

## business

# Market clocks best 3-day rally in years

As stimulus calms investor jitters amid lockdown

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

After the worst-ever crash on Monday, the Sensex has recovered by 3,665.53 points or 15.26 per cent over the last three sessions. The NSE Nifty has regained 1,031.20 points or 13.55 per cent in three days.

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

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

All sectoral indices ended with gains with BSE telecom, capital goods, banking, finance, realty and FMCG indices surging up to 10 per cent. The broader markets also gained momentum with the Nifty Midcap and Smallcap indices rising 3 per cent each, in an effort to cushion the economic blow of the 21-day lockdown in wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Finance Minister Sitharaman announced a slew of measures worth Rs 1.70 lakh crore to help citizens survive the crisis.

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

"Finance Minister announced Rs 1.75,000 cr package for the poor and needy, however measures addressed to corporate or SMEs are still missing. Perhaps this will be followed by monetary stimulus by RBI along with forbearance on loan repayments."

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

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

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

According to traders, volatility remained during the day as March derivatives contracts expired. The Indian Rupee surged by another 78 paise to close at 75.16 against the US dollar on Thursday after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced various welfare measures to tide through the coronavirus crisis.

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

## Crisil cuts FY21 growth estimate sharply to 3.5%

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

with any relief measures for their customers.

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

The additional liquidity facility COVID-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL) will provide funds up to Rs 200 crore and will be available till June 30, SBI said in a circular issued on Thursday.

Following the suit, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India and Bank of India. Besides, Indian Bank, Bank of Maharashtra, Syndicate Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank and Andhra Bank have also introduced relief schemes till date for meeting liquidity requirements under COVID-19 emergency.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce companies E-paytm Mall, Amazon and Flipkart have temporarily stopped taking orders for non-essential items due to restrictions imposed during the nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus.

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

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

Nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of coronavirus. The companies had on Wednesday complained about their delivery staff being punished by local police despite strict safety protocols to exempt them from lockdown restrictions.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

# Asia markets mixed as US lawmakers debate stimulus

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

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

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

## SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY



General public is hereby informed that one boy **Name:** Tushar Aswal, S/o Suresh Aswal, R/o H.No. 30-1, Imart Block, Ganga Rama Vastika, Tikar, Nagar, New Delhi, Age: 16 years 11 Months, Height: 5'9", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, Build: Medium, Wearing: Blue Jeans, Blue, Shirt, Green Jacket and White Colour Shoes in feet has been missing since 15.03.2020 from his home, Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 139/20 dated 16.03.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Tikar Nagar, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform the following.

**SHO**  
E-Mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Website: [cbi.nic.in](http://cbi.nic.in)  
Ph: 011-24368639  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that one person **Name:** Ashok Kumar Gupta, S/o: Duni Chand, R/o: H.No. Q-41, Budh Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi, Age: 39 Years, Height: 5'7", Face: Round, Complexion: White Fair, Build: Medium, Wearing: Blue Colour Jeans & Grey Colour Pant & Black Colour Sweater has been missing since 16.03.2020 from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 29A, Dated 16.03.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing person please inform the undersigned.  
**Web-site:** [cbi.nic.in](http://cbi.nic.in)  
**E-Mail:** [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
**Ph:** 011-24368639  
**DP/104/RD/2020**

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(SECTION 82 Cr.Pc.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Manish Sethi, S/o Bhushan Sethi R/o A-91, Abchal Nagar, Chander Vihar, Nangoli, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 904/18 vs 379/41/1482 IPC, P.S. Pashim Vihar East, Delhi** it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused person **Manish Sethi**, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Manish Sethi**, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Manish Sethi, FIR No. FIR No. 904/18 vs 379/41/1482 IPC, P.S. Pashim Vihar East, Delhi**, is required to appear before the court on or before 27.04.2020.

By order  
M. M. -07, Room No. 289, 2nd floor  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF PERSON ACCUSED

See Section 82 Cr. PC

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

**DP/12/SHD/2020- (Court Matter)**  
By Order  
Ms. Aakansha Vyas  
Metropolitan Magistrate  
Karkardooma Court, Delhi

## PUBLIC NOTICE

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

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the secured creditor and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction 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.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Rajat Sharma, Monika Sharma, B-18, 2nd Floor, Paryavaran Complex, Delhi, Saurajpur A/c No:- NHND000001261503	Flat No B-501, 5th Floor Nines City Tower B, Village Khirki Daula, Sector 76, Gurgaon-122001	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 13625473.99/-	05/11/2019
2.	Lalit Sami, Dinesh Sami, House Grand Stand, Plot No-041, T5 B, Opposite Justice, Gopal Trust Hospital, Gurgaon, Haryana A/c No:- NHND000001269303	Flat No. Valencia- 101 1st Floor, Oasis Grand Stand, Plot No- Hra-12/A, Oasis Venetia Heights Greater Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 3212386/-	05/11/2019
3.	Parveen Kumar, Mrs. Vikas, Sanjeev Kumar, B-67 Vikas Vihar Dumdum Raibari Colony, West Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHND000001260070	Flat No 12A-02 Floor 13, Tower C, Upside Sector, Surajpur Plot No. Hra-12/A, Oasis Venetia Heights Greater Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 13619922/-	06/10/2019
4.	Jeeshu Kumar, Monu, House No. 128 Block 26 Triok Park, Preet Vihar East Delhi New Delhi Preet Vihar East Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHND000001267607	Flat No No- 1967, 19th Floor, Oasis Venetia Heights Greater Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 2950782/-	05/11/2019
5.	Harkesh, Manju Singh, 45/22, Shanti Bazar Lane, North Dumdum Raibari Colony, North 24, Parganar, Calcutta, A/c No:- NHND000000889033	Khevali No 1290 Min, Khatoni No 2039 Min, Kharsa No 2764, 2768, 2767 Mouja Bahadurgarh, Surajpur Line Park Bahadurgarh	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 1526014/-	07/08/2019
6.	Sanjay Kumar, Kanchan Patel, 26/128 Block 26 Triok Park, Preet Vihar East Delhi New Delhi Preet Vihar East Delhi, Delhi, A/c No:- NHND000001273584	Flat No- 1112, 11 Floor, Oasis Grand Stand, Plot No. Gh 01, T5 01 B, Sec-22 D, Yamuna Express Way Noida	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 1275999/-	11/09/2019
7.	Dharam Pal Singh Rathor, Shikha Rathor, B-58, Preet Vihar, Delhi, A/c No:- NHND000001107678	H. No. C-498, Yojna Vihar Delhi	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 816132.87/-	09/08/2019
8.	Rampal, Amit, Lalgarh 145, Palwal, Palwal, A/c No:- LHDWJ00001296958	409, Kailda Colony Khevali Khata No 48075602 M, Kila No 26 (40-10) Kila No 1 Palwal, 1, Palwal- 121105 Haryana	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 10037127/-	06/12/2019

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

Date: 27-03-2020  
Place: Delhi/NCR  
Authorized Officer  
For ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd.

## Trend

### Kishen Kanhaiya is special to me: Anil

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

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

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

The film will air on Zee Bollywood tomorrow.



### 'Samisha Shetty Kundra completes 40 days today. The first milestone for a mother and her

child, as per Hinduism. It only makes me realise that there are so many other things we should be grateful for even if some things don't go as planned. For next 20 days, I'm going to document one thing that I'm grateful for every day.'

—**Shilpa Shetty Kundra**

### Actor HRITHIK ROSHAN

has stressed that the safety of the most fundamental caretakers of the city and society. I have procured N95 and FFP3 masks for our BMC workers and other caretakers."

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



### Miley suffers anxiety in isolation

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

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

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

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



# LIFE IMITATES FILMS

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## Tiring effect

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

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

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

### DETERMINING THE AGE OF A TYRE

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

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

—AP

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

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

### MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING FRESH TYRES

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

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

### LEARN TO LET GO OF OLD TYRES

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

Rebecca Katz, director of the Centre for Global Health Science and Security at Georgetown University, recently revealed that she made her students watch the film's ending to "educate them about the interconnectedness between animals, the environment and the humans."

Film writer Scott Z Burns recently told a magazine, that while the disease in the film was more deadly than the COVID-19, Scott was more interested in using the virus to explore how the pre-existing conditions in society make us susceptible to fear as well as the virus. He said, "The similarities between *Contagion* and the Coronavirus are immaterial, accidental, and really not that important. What is more important is the societal response and the spread of fear and its knock-on effects, which are proving to be accurate" and that's why the film is gaining popularity among netizens across the world.

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

Well, another film that has taken the inter-

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

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

## Corona doesn't spread via tears



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

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

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

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

The study researcher Ivan Seah also took samples from the back of the nose and throat during the same time period. The findings showed that when a sick person coughs or talks, virus particles can spray from their mouth or nose into another person's face.

You're most likely to inhale these droplets through your mouth or nose, but they can also enter through your eyes, according to the research.

The study also revealed that you can also become infected by touching something that has the virus on it — like a table or doorknob — and then touching your eyes.

While the patients' tears were clear of virus, their noses and throats were teeming with COVID-19, the researchers said. The authors wrote that the findings, coupled with the low incidence of pink eye among infected patients, suggest that the risk of virus transmission through tears is low.

The researchers hope their work helps to guide more research into preventing virus transmission through more significant routes, such as droplets and fecal-oral spread. —JANS





## PANDEMIC PANTRY

The virus has sent a nation of restaurant-goers back to the kitchen

Last Tuesday night in Tennessee, bluegrass musicians David and Virginia Blood were busy making sandwiches. Pittsburgh, real estate agent Michelle Bushee was stirring a pot of homemade black-bean chili in her kitchen instead of shepherding curious buyers through potential dream homes. Marty Prudenti, whose nights are usually spent working backstage at New York City's Lincoln Center, was in his Long Island backyard grilling burgers for his twins. And in Texas, Babette Maxwell — who would otherwise have been running at least one of her three teenage sons to sports practices or school events — was Googling recipes to engineer homemade versions of her boys' favorite Taco Bell items.

Throughout the globe, lives have been radically upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is worry and washing of hands. But one bright spot is emerging from self-quarantine and mandatory working from home: In this nation that so often denies or gobbles processed food on the run,

people are suddenly cooking a whole lot more.

Before the coronavirus emerged, Kim Bierly often worked late at her office and then met her husband for a quick dinner at one of the restaurants in their central Pennsylvania neighbourhood. If they didn't eat out, they'd reach into the refrigerator and choose something packaged to heat up.

"I've always enjoyed cooking," Bierly says. "But it was being saved for weekends. And by the time you get to the weekend you had all the other things you need to do. So it would be something quick or something prepared."

Now working from home, she's pulling out old recipes — the kinds of things she remembers her mother making, like stuffed pork chops or the bubbling pot of chicken and noodles. "I think we need comfort right now," she says, "and food is comfort." Unavoidably, these home-cooked dishes come with a side of stress. We're trying to protect ourselves from germs at the grocery store, and may wonder whether supermarket shelves will become empty in the coming weeks. But those worries are encouraging people to get creative by trying new ingredients and sharing advice on how to use unfamiliar vegetables or cuts of meat bought out of necessity.

What can you do with the canned foods that have been idling since last year at the back of your kitchen cab-



inets? Facebook groups like Pandemic Pantry have sprouted up as gathering places for strangers to share advice.

Michael Volpatt, owner of the gourmet Big Bottom Market in Sonoma County, California, tackled the subject of canned goods on a recent installment of the impromptu cooking show he began hosting from his kitchen on March 14. Scrolling through Facebook while gathering ingredients to make himself dinner that night, Volpatt noticed the Facebook "Live" button on his phone screen. With his store closed, he realised it was a way to connect with friends and customers, and not be alone while preparing his meal. "Hey everybody," his first broadcast began. "I've never done Facebook Live before. But I figured since I'm kind of staying at home and going to do some cooking later on, you're going to join me."

A growing audience now watches and comments nightly as he prepares everything from his mother's marinara sauce to pot pies made with his Big Bottom Market biscuit mix, which appeared on *Oprah's* Favorite Things list in 2016. "It's heartwarming," Volpatt says, "and it takes a lot of the awkwardness of this whole experience away."

Returning to old recipes and learning new ones can be both a necessity and a welcome distraction during this strange time. "Cooking brings back good memories," Bierly says, "like standing there at the pot on my stove, cooking the spaghetti and thinking of when my mother used to do that."

Food Network president Courtney White says her channel has seen a double-digit ratings increase in the past week, as viewers watch marathons of comfort food-focused shows like Guy Fieri's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." FoodNetwork.com has also had a double-digit increase in visitors and page views, White says. And many of the channel's chefs have been broadcasting informally from their home kitchens via social media, while viewers pepper them with questions in real-time.

Alone at our stoves, we're realising how good it can feel to make dinner from scratch by using just a few ingredients consciously and carefully. Families are also getting their kids involved.

"Now, more than ever, we hope you'll find moments of peace when gathering around the dinner table," the co-founders of the retail chain Savory Spice wrote in a website post to their customers over the weekend. "We hope you'll find moments of joy when preparing food with your little ones. We hope the simplicity of a home cooked meal is a quiet reprieve from the chaos outside."



## What's for dinner?

While you are cooking food at home, the menu combination should be easy to prepare and satisfying

Just about now, you might be tired of cooking and eating what's in your refrigerator. We are all used to asking what's for dinner? What are we in the mood for? pizza, sushi, Mexican? And then going to a restaurant to get it.

Now, with the Coronavirus forcing many of us to stay home more, it's time to look at mealtime and cooking at home a little differently. Instead of asking, "What I am in the mood for?" I am looking more closely in my pantry and my refrigerator and letting my ingredients dictate what I make.

For example, a few months ago, I was lured to purchase a big bag of mixed unsalted nuts because they were labeled "Omega-3 Nut Mix." I thought I would eat a handful of "anti-oxidants" a day for my health but they have gone largely uneaten. So, this week, I mixed up my favourite sweet and savory spices with both brown and white sugar and made my baked Sugar and Spice Canned Nuts. Sure, the sugar adds a few more calories but now they are a delicious and welcome nibble instead of sitting unused in the pantry.

Likewise, I had a head of broccoli in the refrigerator that was about to expire. I couldn't bear the thought of steamed broccoli so I decided to roast it simply with olive oil and kosher salt at 400 degrees Fahrenheit until the tips were deeply caramelised. Broccoli is additive roasted this way, as is cauliflower, and any leftovers are delicious the next day with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar and good olive oil.

If you have a pork tenderloin and a package of bacon in your fridge or freezer, you can make a simple two-ingredient main dish. A bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin dresses up your pork preparation with few ingredients and only a little more effort. If the bacon is room temperature, it will stick to itself as you overlap each piece and wrap the tenderloin. I do this with beef tenderloin as well. The smoky flavour and fat of the centre-cut bacon both protects and bastes the lean meat as it roasts. I grill mine indirectly but you can roast it in an oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit oven set on a rack in a sheet pan. When the bacon-wrapped tenderloin is done, sprinkle it with your finishing salt and carve into thick slices to enjoy the benefit of the bacon crust.

Finally, while you are cooking dinner at home, think about each meal in simple terms: a main (usually an animal protein, or a bean or hearty vegetable dish), a green or other non-starchy vegetable, and a starch. That menu combination is easy enough to prepare and still very satisfying. During this time of uncertainty, ease and comfort are equally important. If you are making a stew or a pot of gumbo that has vegetables and protein in it, all you need to add is a starch like rice or fresh, hot cornbread.

And enjoy the cooking. A friend of mine at Traeger Wood Fired Grills sent an email this week and reminded me that "good food equals good mood." Pass it along!

## R E C I P E S

### SHEKUBURA

#### WHAT YOU NEED

##### For the dough:

- Wheat flour: 1 kg
- Unsalted butter (cut into large chunks): 400 gm
- Egg yolks: 5
- Sour cream: 250 gm
- Sugar: 1 tsp
- Salt: ¼ tsp
- Vanilla powder (optional): ½ tsp
- Dry yeast: ½ tsp
- Lukewarm milk: ½ cup

##### For the filling:

- Skinned hazelnuts: 500 gm
- Pound walnuts: 200 gm
- Granulated sugar: 700 gm
- Ground cardamom mixed with frangipani: 2 tsp both

### METHOD

● Put the flour and the butter in a large mixing bowl. Using your hands, rub them together until you obtain fine crumbs. In a small bowl, using a spoon, mix the egg yolks, sour cream, salt and vanilla powder.

● In another small bowl, put the yeast, one tablespoon flour and one tablespoon sugar. Fill it with ¼ cup of lukewarm milk. Let it stand for about two minutes. Then add the egg-sour cream mixture and yeast mixture to the flour-butter mixture.

● Using your hands, mix the ingredients until fully incorporated and a rough and inconsistent dough is obtained. Transfer the dough to your work surface. Put the remaining ¼ cup of lukewarm milk in a separate

bowl. Constantly wetting your hands with milk, knead the dough for a few minutes to make it smooth.

● Shape the dough into a ball. Put it back in the bowl, cover with plastic wrap and leave aside to rest for about 30 minutes.

● To prepare the filling, if you are using already skinned nuts, grind them finely in a food processor. In a mixing bowl, combining the ground nuts with sugar. Add the ground cardamom, frangipani and vanilla powder (optional). Mix until fully incorporated.

● To skin hazelnuts and walnuts at home: Place raw hazelnuts in a large frying pan and roast over medium heat stirring frequently until the skin cracks and begins to flake off after 10 minutes.

● Working with small batches of



nuts at a time, place them on a kitchen cloth and rub with it to remove the skins. Most of the skins will come off although some will still cling to the nut (especially on walnuts).

● To skin almonds at home: Put the almonds in a pot and pour boiling water over them to barely

cover their tops. Let the almonds sit in the water for about two minutes (do not keep them there for too long, or they will lose their crispiness and will be too soft). Drain off the water, pat them dry and slip the skin off by squeezing the almonds between your thumbs and fingers.

### SHORGOGHAL

#### WHAT YOU NEED

##### For the dough:

- Active dry yeast: 2¼ tsp
- Warm water: 1 cup
- All-purpose flour: 6 cups
- Salt: 2 tsp
- Milk (at room temperature): 1 cup
- Egg (at room temperature): 1
- Clarified butter: 7 ounces

##### For the spice filling:

- Fennel seeds: 2 tsp
- Cumin seeds: 2 tsp
- Turmeric: ½ tsp
- Salt: 1 tsp
- Ground black pepper: ¼ tsp
- All-purpose flour: 2 cups
- Clarified butter: 4 ounces

##### For the butter spread:

- Clarified butter (ghee): 0.5 litre

##### For the top:

- Egg yolks: 2

- Nigella sativa seeds (can substitute poppy seeds): 1 tsp

### METHOD

● In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm water and let it stand until frothy for 10 minutes. Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl. Add the salt and mix well. Add the yeast mixture, milk, egg, and butter and mix the ingredients with your hands.

● Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic for 10 minutes. If the dough is still sticky, add more flour and knead. Put the dough back into the large mixing bowl, cover with a kitchen towel or plastic wrap and let rise for one and a half hours in a warm spot, until it doubles in bulk.

● To prepare the spice filling, toast the fennel and cumin



seeds (or anise seeds) on a hot skillet for about two minutes, until their aroma rises (toasting will intensify their aroma and flavour). Grind the spices in a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle. In a medium mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients for the filling except the butter. Stir to mix. Gradually add the melted butter and rub with your fingers until you obtain fine crumbs. Set aside.

● Melt the butter and set aside to cool and keep two large baking sheets ready.

You will need a large work surface divided into two sections: one to roll out the dough and another to assemble the layers. Sprinkle some flour onto one half of the work surface on which you will roll out the dough. Generously oil the other half of the workplace (or sprinkle with flour, too).

● To prepare the dough layers, shape the risen dough into a log and divide into nine equal pieces. Shape each piece into a ball. Work with one ball at a time and cover the rest with a kitchen

towel.

● Using a thin, long rolling pin, roll out one ball into a 20-inch circle that is about 1/16-inch thick. When you roll the dough, from time to time sprinkle it with flour and spread all over the circle to prevent it from sticking to the rolling pin and for easier rolling. Wrap the rolled-out circle around the rolling pin and unwrap on another side of the work area.

● Drizzle five to seven tablespoons of the butter spread onto the circle and spread over with your hand. Roll out the second dough ball and place on top of the first layer. You can roll it out into a smaller circle. Now, with your hands, hold the edges of the second layer and very gently stretch in all directions (first one side, then the other) to fit the bottom circle, then stretch them together until a large

rectangle is obtained.

Continue rolling up the remaining dough balls in the same fashion, placing them on top of each other, brushing with butter (except the final layer, which should not be buttered) and stretching with your hands. Again, roll the subsequent balls smaller than the first one — you will stretch them after you have placed them on the previous buttered layer.

● Each stretched layer should be almost see-through. Take care not to tear the layers when you stretch them.

● Once all the layers are ready, gently pull the sides of the layered rectangle to stretch as far as it can go. The thinner and wider the layers, the flakier it will be.

Courtesy: Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB).

### BLUEBERRY OATMEAL COOKIES

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- All-purpose flour: 1½ cup
- Baking powder: ½ tsp
- Salt: ½ tsp
- Unsalted butter: 1 cup
- Light brown sugar: 1 cup
- Eggs: 2
- Vanilla essence: 2 tsp
- Oats: 3 cup
- Blueberries: 1 cup

### METHOD

● Preheat oven to 350 degrees C. Adjust the oven racks to the middle position and line baking sheet with parchment paper.

● Whisk the baking powder and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.

● Cream together the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy. For about three minutes.

● Beat the eggs, one at a



time, and then mix in the vanilla.

● Stir the mixture with a rubber spatula. Then stir the oats and blueberries.

● Using two heaping tablespoons per cookie, roll the dough into balls and place them onto a cookie sheet, spacing them at least two inches apart.

● Bake until the cookie edges are just turning golden brown about 20 minutes.

● Cool the cookies on the baking sheet and then transfer to a wire rack.

Store cookies in an airtight container.

Courtesy: Del Monte.



# Rohit still hopeful on IPL 2020

INANS ■ MUMBAI

Star Indian opener and Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma felt that the time he spent with Ricky Ponting at the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise was "magic".

Ponting was captain of MI in 2013, when they were yet to win an IPL title. He resigned from the post and handed it over to Rohit but stayed on as part of the coaching staff. His contribution is often seen instrumental in helping MI win their maiden IPL title that year and he would return to the franchise as a head coach, before moving to Delhi Capitals.

"Ricky Ponting to me was magic," said Rohit on Thursday in an interaction with former England captain Kevin Pietersen on Instagram.

"The way he handled the team when he was captain during the first half and then he gave the captaincy to me midway. That takes a lot of guts and after that to be involved as he was as a support staff member. He was supporting all the younger players in the team and he was guiding me in captaincy," said Rohit.

Rohit said that he feels MI have made a few good purchases at the auction this year and hopes that the season starts whenever things settle. "We have got a few good additions to the squad like Chris Lynn, Trent Boult, Nathan Coulter-Nile."

"Boult is a good buy on a pitch like Wankhede with the swinging ball, I was looking forward to that. Along with (Ipsart) Bumrah he would have made a good combination. Still looking forward, fingers crossed. At some stage if things settle down, it should happen," said Rohit.

Rohit also said that current Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene is someone who gives a lot of clarity to his players. "Mahela is very calm, very composed. He only tells you to do things he sees as right



Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma bats during team's practice session

@mipaltan/Twitter

or not to do them if they are wrong. His messages are very clear," said Rohit.

The 2020 season of the IPL was scheduled to start on March 29 with defending champions MI facing Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium in what was a repeat of the 2019 final. However the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic forced the organisers to push the tentative starting date to April 15, which itself is now clouded in uncertainty due to the three-week lockdown.

## 'ITCHING TO PLAY'

Indian limited overs vice-captain is held up in his apartment like everybody else these days due to three-week lockdown but said that he is making do with running up and down the stairs of his building to stay fit. "It's very hard actually (to stay fit)," said Rohit. "I live in a building which has about 54 floors and we had to stop all the indoor and outdoor activities. So just keep running up and down the stairs. Not 54 floors but about two or three floors up and down and doing some conditioning exercises here and there."

Rohit had been recovering — from a calf injury which he sustained during the fifth T20 between India and New Zealand — at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru before it was shut down due to the spread of the pandemic.

He however said that he is completely fit now, although he is yet to do an official fitness test because the NCA is not working. He said that he has been keen to play the game again after spending two months on the sidelines and was looking forward to the IPL.

"Definitely miss playing the game. I was injured for two months so have been itching to play. When I got the news that everything was going to be postponed I was very sad. I was really looking forward to playing in the IPL," he said.

## Stokes continues IPL preparations despite cancellation threat

PTI ■ LONDON

Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes continues to train for the 13th IPL even though he is aware that the T20 league may become yet another sporting event to be cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic.

"At the moment my next competitive cricket is going to be in the IPL," Stokes, who was bought by Rajasthan Royals in the 2018 IPL auction for ₹ 12.5 crore, told the BBC.

"That hasn't changed yet so I have to think I will be playing on April 20."

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had said last week that the country season would not start until at least the end of May, while England's tour of Sri Lanka was also postponed due to the dreaded disease. And given the current circumstances, a cancellation of the year's IPL looks inevitable.

However, Stokes said he needs to keep working on his fitness to be ready if and when the IPL happens. "I have to get my head round that I am playing even though in the back of my mind I know I am



Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler in action for Rajasthan Royals in IPL 2019

probably not," he said.

"I have to build up and get myself physically in a position that if it does happen I am good to go. I cannot take three weeks off and expect the body to be ready for April 20 because it doesn't work like that. It might happen and if it does I don't want to be behind."

"There will be a lot of advice given to us and if it was an option to go we will have to take the sensible one."

**'SHORTENED IPL'** England wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler is hoping for at least a curtailed IPL this season, aware that it would be difficult to conduct the "massive tournament" in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

"No news at the moment. We saw, initially, that it was going to be postponed. It's very hard to see this changing in the timescale of the future, so I don't see that as a possibility at the moment," Buttler said in a skysports podcast.

"Obviously, it's such a massive tournament for world cricket, so hopefully some of it can go ahead — perhaps a shortened tournament."

## Mithali wants women's IPL next year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI should not "wait forever" to start the women's IPL, said India women's ODI captain Mithali Raj, urging the board to make it happen next year on a smaller scale before gradually developing it.

"I personally feel they should start a women's IPL by next year, even if it's on a slightly smaller scale and with some changes in rules, such as say, have five to six foreign players in the first edition instead of four as is the case with the men's IPL," Raj told ESPNcricinfo.

After India lost the T20 World Cup in the finals earlier this month, former skipper Sunil Gavaskar had called for a full-fledged women's IPL from next year to unearth talent.

In 2019, a three-team women's tournament was held featuring sides called IPL



Mithali Raj, Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana pose for photo after pre-match conference of women's tourney in 2019

Velocity, IPL Trailblazers and IPL Supernovas.

This year, the BCCI had decided to organise a four-team women's T20 challenge to

run parallel to the men's IPL playoffs, but now it has been put on hold along with the main event due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

India don't have enough women cricketers for a full-fledged IPL but Raj said it can still be conducted if existing IPL franchises own teams to begin

the process.

"I agree we don't have the depth in the domestic pool yet, but the key is to get the existing franchises to form teams, even if (only) five or six of them are keen to begin the process, because in any case, the BCCI was going to have four teams," she said.

"You cannot wait forever; you have to begin at some point, and gradually, year by year, you can keep evolving the league and then bring it down to four foreign players."

Raj also said that ten session Shafali Verma, who impressed with the bat in the T20 World Cup, should be included in the ODIs too.

"It's not a bad idea to consider her for the ODIs. She is young but that should not be a criterion for not giving her opportunities in the ODI side," she said.

NEW DELHI: The members of the ICC Board will meet via video conference on Friday to discuss contingency plans for its multiple tournaments.

While a couple of ICC Board members confirmed that no concrete decisions are expected during the conference call, it became imperative that a meeting was necessary to discuss contingency plans.

The most high-profile ICC flagship event in 2020 is the Men's T20 World Cup, which is scheduled for October-November besides the various bilateral series which are part of the World Test Championship. The points system in case of cancelled series will be a topic of discussion.

One such series, England's away tour of Sri Lanka, has already been postponed.

"Right now, the situation is such that no decision can be taken as no one knows when normalcy returns. Obviously



where it will be slotted considering the FTP calendar is choc-a-bloc. It's not one series that will be affected but a few more which are lined up," he said.

There is England hosting West Indies and Pakistan in June and July while New Zealand travel to Bangladesh in August. India next play Test matches in November against Australia in an away series.

"So like what could be the ideal points distribution system. We're giving 60 points each to both teams will be fair deal is something that members need to discuss," he added.

As of now, there is no imminent threat to the World T20 in Australia but if lockdown continues for two more months. The complete FTP will be topsy-turvy, an official of a member nation said.

He said that points allocation of Test Championship games that will be postponed will be another issue.

The members will give a lowdown of the situation in their respective countries.

"But we need to be ready with plans if this lockdown continues for two more months. The complete FTP will be topsy-turvy," an official of a member nation said.

He said that points allocation of Test Championship games that will be postponed will be another issue.

"The England versus Sri Lanka series got postponed but



## Shooter Rajput presses reset button

NEW DELHI: Armed with the experience of staying aloft in the face of adversities, brave-hearted Indian shooter Sanjeev Rajput promptly pressed the "reset button" after learning of the Olympics' postponement.

"This is a very different situation, an extraordinary situation where sports couldn't have happened at all. The well-being of human lives is above everything else," ace rifleman Rajput said.

"Yes, I have been preparing for the Olympic Games for more than three years, hoping to go there and perform at the biggest stage."

"But we simply don't have any choice now but to postpone the Olympics. I support the decision, we know it is for our well-being," the 39-year-old rifle ace said.

Confined to his flat in Faridabad, which is close to the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range, Rajput is now doing all he can at home.

"Of course we must remain indoors for the next three weeks or till the time the situation improves. But I am doing dry practice (or dry firing) at home besides yoga and meditation."

Rajput, who was dropped from the 2016 Olympic team at the expense of a shotgun shooter, said.

During dry practice, the shooter fires a firearm (on an object hung on a wall) without live ammunition.

Rajput secured his Tokyo quota in Rio de Janeiro last year when he gunned down a silver in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event.

Since the 2008 Games, he has secured an Olympic quota four times on the trot.

Asked about the changes to his plans now that the Olympics have been pushed to next year, the shooter stressed on "peak performance."

"Peak performance is something that needs a lot of emphasis. It means we follow the plans designed for us and peak at the right time, which is the Olympics in this case," he said. PTI

## Wimbledon fate to be decided next week

AFP ■ LONDON

Wimbledon could be postponed or even cancelled after All England Club chiefs called an "emergency meeting" next week to discuss whether to go ahead with this year's tournament amid the coronavirus outbreak.

Wimbledon is set to start in London on June 29, but the continuing spread of the virus has caused havoc with the sporting schedule and the grass-court Grand Slam could be the next major event to be delayed.

"The AELTC can confirm that it is continuing a detailed evaluation of all scenarios for the Championships

2020, including postponement and cancellation, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak," an All England Club statement said.

"An emergency meeting of the AELTC Main Board is scheduled for next week, and in preparation we are communicating closely with the LTA, and with the ATP, WTA, ITF and the other Grand Slams." Pressure is growing on the All England Club to make a decision.

"At this time, very short window is available to us to stage the Championships due to the nature of our surface suggests that postponement is not without significant risk and difficulty. Playing behind closed doors has been formally ruled out."

Given it takes two months to get the Wimbledon site ready for the event, a decision needs to be made soon and All England Club chief executive Richard Lewis expects the call will be made at the emergency summit.

Remarks at the first meeting of the taskforce.

"Additional expenses are going to be quite massive we assume. With regards to our revenues, we need to make a lot of effort there," he added.

Muto gave no estimates for how long the process of postponing the Olympic and Paralympic Games could cost.

But according to the Nikkei daily, organisers estimate it will cost an extra \$2.7 billion, including for venue rentals, rebookings, hotels and additional payments for staff and security guards, among others.

Those costs could still

This was every athlete's worst fear and it has come true: (Everybody knows that competing at the Olympics is the toughest test for an athlete but I believe waiting for an opportunity to be on that stage is tougher! I don't really know what to say right now but inside me there is a rollercoaster of emotions!

This is a very crucial time for the world and the greater sporting fraternity. Though I am very deeply disappointed, it is important more than ever to see the silver lining in this dark cloud. Now is the time for all of us to be stronger than ever, keep fighting these extraordinary circumstances and believe with all our might that we will overcome this challenge. We need to summon all our reserves of determination, refusal, and work towards our goals! While there is more to this chapter, a new story is already being written, but WE WILL OVERCOME!

We are all together in this, one world, one goal! This is that unique chance to do something for your family, your community, your country, and OUR world!

The postponement of Tokyo Olympics was her 'worst fear' and India's medal hopeful Vinshi Phogat says and the extended wait is going to be tougher than competing at the Games. She qualified for Tokyo after finishing on the podium at the last year's world championships.

## Italian football chief ready to finish season in August

MILAN

Italian football federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina Wednesday said he was determined that the Serie A season would be concluded even going into August.

All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3 as of now.

"We will do everything to complete the championships, if necessary we will ask for the support of UEFA and FIFA to go beyond June 30 and play also in July or August," Gravina told Radio Marle.

"It's premature to think of a date, but we must think positively, also for the health of Italians and hope that this situation will end as soon as possible."

The FIGC chief had last week expressed his hope that the championship could resume on the weekend of May 2.

As for the suspended championship, Gravina rejected either the ceiling or assigning the title as the table stands where champions Juventus were leading by a point when the season was halted. "This would lead to an unpleasant scenario. As long as possible, I will continue to reject these options," AFP

## Ronaldo is world's best footballer right now: Pele

INANS ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazilian football great Pele has described Cristiano Ronaldo as the world's best contemporary footballer, rating the Juventus forward ahead of Barcelona's Lionel Messi.

But the 79-year-old believes neither Ronaldo nor Messi are as good as he was during a celebrated career with Santos, the New York Cosmos and Brazil.

"Right now, Cristiano Ronaldo is the best, because he is the most consistent over the past 10 years, although Messi should not be forgotten," Pele said in an interview on the *Filhardo* YouTube channel.

The former Brazil No 1 also cited Zico, Ronaldinho, Ronaldo Nazario, Franz Beckenbauer and Johan Cruyff in his list of all-time favourite players. He did not mention former Argentina forward Diego Maradona, widely regarded as Pele's only rival for the title of the greatest player in history.

"There is only one king. Pele was better than all of them," he said. "If I have to be honest, well, I'm telling you the truth: my father and mother closed the factory. There will only ever be one Pele."

Pele is the only footballer to win three World Cups, and scored over 1,000 goals in a professional career that spanned 22 years.



come down depending on the outcome of the negotiations, the business daily reported.

Muto said organisers would not rip up their existing plans, but added: "I guess we need to step back a bit."

"Sometimes you need to go back to the drawing board," he said.

The Olympics have never faced this much disruption in peacetime, and the decision to delay the event has created unprecedented challenges.

Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Muto said staff "will experience difficulties they have never experienced