

OPINION 6
FOREIGN POLICY
PUT TO TEST**WORLD 8**
GLOBAL DEATH
TOLL NEARS 17,000**AVENUES 10**
NEED FOR JOB-READY
GRADUATES

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY MARCH 25, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Jaan hai to Jahan hai, stay indoors: PM

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



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

PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

In his second address to the nation within a week, the PM said the country will be under a complete three-week lockdown from Tuesday midnight to fight the spread of coronavirus. "This lockdown will be strictly imposed in every village and every lane. According to health experts, 21 days are necessary to break the cycle of coronavirus. If these 21 days are not observed as a lockdown, it will take us back 21 years," the PM said.

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

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

Referring to efforts made by the world to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, Modi said that the precaution of social distancing is a tried and tested way of succeeding in curbing the pandemic. "There is a misconception that social distancing is only for those who are sick. Social distancing is for everyone, even the Prime Minister! Some people are spreading false information, which will affect every single citizen of the country. And if all citizens are affected, the negative effects are unimaginable," he said.

The Centre and States are working to ensure that essential supplies are not disrupted, he said, adding that his Government had set aside ₹15,000 crore to strengthen the

THESE ARE OPEN

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

health infrastructure to tackle coronavirus. Asserting that India was at a critical stage in its battle against coronavirus, Modi said even a single mistake could see the deadly virus spreading like wildfire. "Some think social distancing is only for patients. That's not correct. Social distancing is the only way to fight the virus. It is for every citizen, every family, every member, even for the Prime Minister."

"Experts say if a person is infected today, it takes many days for them to display symptoms, and they unknowingly infect all who come in contact with them in this period. A single infected person can infect hundreds in weeks, it spreads like fire," the Prime Minister said. Referring to a WHO report, he pointed out that COVID-19 took 67 days to spread to one lakh people.

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Centre asks States to pay 3.5 cr construction workers from ₹52K cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday asked all Chief Ministers to provide financial aid to millions of construction workers from the cess available with them amid Covid-19 outbreak. Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar issued an advisory to all the States and Union Territories asking them to provide succour to nearly 3.5 crore construction workers from Rs 52,000-crore construction cess under their disposal.

The decision followed a letter by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi urging him to roll out emergency welfare measures for the construction industry workers.

"Under Section 60 of the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996, all States/UTs have been advised to transfer funds in the account of construction workers through DBT (direct benefit transfer) mode from the cess fund collected by the Labour Welfare Boards under the BOCW cess Act," Gangwar wrote to Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Generals.

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8-point compliance relief package

I-T, GST filing deadline extended to June 30

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced a slew of concessions on mandatory compliances relating to Income Tax, Goods and Services Tax (GST), insolvency and banking code and commerce and extended deadline, including that of filing IT, to June 30 from March 30, 2020, to help consumers and industry cope with the lockdown situation necessitated in the wake of the spread of coronavirus. There will not be any charge on withdrawal of money from ATMs too.

The Minister said an economic package is being worked out which would be announced soon by the Government to provide immediate assistance to people in the quarantined state.

The eight-point compliance relief package announced by the Minister included waiver of late fee and penalties, reduced interest on delayed tax payments and extension of due dates for various statutory compliance requirements.

Addressing an online Press conference here, Sitharaman along with Minister of State Anurag Thakur said people could use their debit card in



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses the media via video conferencing at North Block in New Delhi Tuesday on Tuesday

PTI

any nearest bank without having to pay any banking charges for next three months, no minimum balance would be mandatory for bank accounts and all consumers would pay reduced banking charges for digital transactions.

Interest rates for many delayed payments have been reduced from existing 12 per cent to only nine per cent.

The Minister said while the compliance relief measures were being announced now, an economic package in the offing. "We are very close to announcing an economic package, which will be announced sooner than later," she said.

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Govt bans export of life-saving goods

118 Govt labs to test 12,000 samples a day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facing flak for allowing exports of medical equipment and sanitisers when the country needed them the most to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, the Centre on Tuesday banned their exports with immediate effect. In addition, equipment used in intensive care units have also been brought under the purview of the export ban.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Tuesday said that at least 118 Government laboratories have been included in its network of coronavirus testing with a capacity to test 12,000

samples daily. The decision came on a day when two molecule diagnostic companies each in Punjab and Pune have developed indigenous testing kit, India's first, which have been approved by the ICMR.

The export ban came a day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the Narendra Modi Government of delaying its decision to ban the export of life-saving equipment like ventilators amid the coronavirus outbreak, suggesting a "criminal conspiracy". "Respected Prime Minister, why did the Indian Government allow the export of all these things till March 19 contrary to WHO's advice to keep sufficient stock of ventilators and surgical masks. Which forces encouraged these games? Isn't this a criminal conspiracy," Rahul asked in a tweet in Hindi.

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Bid to break virus transmission chain

12 new cases, number rises to 519; surveillance upped to trace infected

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the count of the coronavirus positive cases crossing 500-mark on Tuesday, the Centre asked all the States to further enhance surveillance to trace infected people to break the transmission chain across India and ensure funds for setting up of additional medical facilities like hospitals, clinical laboratories and isolation wards to combat with the endemic. More States and districts also announced imposition of curfew to strictly enforce "social distancing".

As per the Government data, 519 people in India have tested positive for Covid-19 so far, with 40 cured and 9 deaths, with an addition of 12 new cases on Tuesday. Eleven people have died due to the contagious infection, which originated in Wuhan city of Hubei province in China over three

months ago. Over 17,100 people have been killed and almost four lakh are infected worldwide.

In a letter to all the Chief Secretaries of the States, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba asked them to "suitably supplement" State and district surveillance teams as well as the Rapid Response Teams (RRT) to meet any urgency.

"It is absolutely essential that surveillance and contact tracing of all positive cases is taken up and no suspected or high risk person is left out. It is important that while these tasks are being monitored at the State level by the State Health Secretaries, this activity is directly and regularly monitored at the district level by the district magistrates, involving the official machinery available in the district," Gauba said.

The Centre during a video



Ahmedabad Fire and Emergency Service personnel spray disinfectant at the Blind People's Association campus during lockdown as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 in Ahmedabad on Tuesday

AP

conference had asked the State Governments on Sunday to identify and earmark hospitals dedicated for management of Covid-19 cases. Gauba asked the State officials to upload the details of both the surveillance

measures and the hospitals on the health online portal of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

All violations should be met with legal action, the Cabinet Secretary told the

No new case in Delhi: Kejriwal

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said no new case of coronavirus has been reported in Delhi in the past 40 hours, and the earlier number of virus-infected patients has also gone down from 30 to 23.

He said it was good that some patients have recovered but cautioned about a long battle ahead against the virus.

States and UTs.

The State Governments have been conveyed that public gatherings could lead to escalation of the prevailing situation as so far nearly 500 positive cases have been reported from different parts of the country. Of the total cases, 41 are foreign nationals and the eleven deaths reported so far, the Health Ministry said.

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CAPSULE

TOKYO OLYMPICS POSTPONED TO 2021

Tokyo: 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been postponed to no later than the summer of 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe, the International Olympic Committee announced Tuesday. The Games were scheduled for July 24-August 9, but after telephone discussions between IOC president Thomas Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a historic joint decision was taken for the first postponement of an Olympics in peacetime.

OMAR ABDULLAH FREED AFTER EIGHT MONTHS

Srinagar: Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah was on Tuesday freed after eight months in detention after the administration revoked the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) against him. A swarm of media personnel and supporters, many of them in masks, waited for him outside his residence after he was released. The National Conference leader, who turned 50 on March 10.

EC defers RS elections, to take decision after Mar 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Tuesday deferred the Rajya Sabha polls scheduled for March 26 due to lockdown in view of the coronavirus spread. The EC will review the situation after March 31.

The decision comes just a day after Parliament was adjourned sine die on the same grounds. While 37 Rajya Sabha members have already been elected unopposed, poll was to elect 18 others.

The seats include four each in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, three each in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, two in Jharkhand and one each in Manipur and Meghalaya. Another bypoll was announced later to fill the vacancy caused by resignation of BJP MP Birender Singh.

The deferment will reduce RS size, but there is no legal binding that all RS seats should be occupied at all times.

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Punish landlords evicting doctors: Shah to Delhi CP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday directed Delhi Police Commissioner SN Srivastava to protect the doctors and health professionals facing problem from their landlords. The Home Minister received petition from Resident Doctors' Association of All India Institute of Medical Science about the errant behaviour of their landlords asking them to vacate the rented homes.

In their complaint to Home Minister and the PMO, the association also requested for transport facilities. "This is to bring to your kind notice that doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers in Covid-2019 care are being asked to vacate their rented homes and some have been forcefully evicted from their temporary residence by landlords and house owners due to the fear



that those healthcare professionals make them more susceptible to coronavirus infection."

"Many doctors are now stranded on the roads, nowhere to go, across the country. We condemn such attitude and hereby, request you to release an order, as soon as possible, prohibiting the landlords/owners to evict the tirelessly working doctors and other healthcare professionals," said the doctors' association.

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Credible print media need of hour, ensure its supply, says Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that media has played a praiseworthy role in spreading awareness about the coronavirus outbreak as his Government directed the States to ensure operational continuity of print and electronic media.

He said that newspapers carry tremendous credibility and the local page of a region is widely read by people. It is therefore imperative that awareness about coronavirus is spread through articles published in this page. It is essential to inform people about where the testing centres are, who should get tested, whom to contact to get tested and follow home isolation protocols. This information should be shared in newspapers and web portals of the paper, the Prime Minister said.

Terming the media as critical infrastructure, the Centre said the functioning of media

is needed in the current situation to deliver information to the public. Earlier, the Prime Minister interacted with over 20 journalists and stakeholders from print media from all over the country via video conferencing.

The PM said media has played a praiseworthy role in disseminating information to every nook and cranny of this nation. This makes the media all the more significant in fighting this challenge and spreading correct information about it at micro level.

He also suggested that information like location of availability of essential items during lockdown can also be shared in the regional pages.

"The Prime Minister asked the media to act as a link between Government and people and provide continuous feedback, at both national and regional level. He underlined the importance of social distancing."

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Shaheen Bagh cleared, 9 protesters detained

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following coronavirus outbreak, the Delhi Police on Tuesday removed people protesting against the citizenship law at Shaheen Bagh and other places in the national Capital.

According to RP Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast district, a total of nine protesters, including six women, were detained at Shaheen Bagh and taken to a nearby police station.

"People were requested to vacate the site as lockdown has been imposed due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, action was taken when they refused to end the gathering," said the DCP.

The agitators, mostly women, had been on a sit-in at the site for over three months to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). "Most of the protesters vacated the site after police made an appeal but a few refused. So, police detained them. A decision about resuming the protest



Police load in a truck the items seized from the anti-CAA protest site in Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

will be taken after the coronavirus situation comes under control," a volunteer at the site requesting anonymity said.

On Sunday, during the "Janta curfew", only five women were at the site while others had left their slippers as a symbol of solidarity. "The women were taking all precautions amid the coronavirus outbreak and sanitisers had been arranged at the venue to ensure utmost hygiene," a volunteer said.

Other protest sites, including Jafraabad in Northeast Delhi,

Turkman Gate in Central Delhi and Hauz Rani in South Delhi also were cleared by the police.

The move comes two days after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a complete lockdown in the national Capital till March 31 in order to control the spread of coronavirus.

The Delhi Police has imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc in the national capital till March 31 banning protests and other gatherings.

6 more test positive in Punjab, total cases 29

Chandigarh: Six more people tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday in Punjab, taking the number of confirmed cases to 29 in the State, said officials.

All six patients had come in contact with the 70-year-old Nawanshahr resident who had tested positive for the infection and died of cardiac arrest last week.

Among the fresh cases, three are family members of the septuagenarian in Nawanshahr while the others are residents of Phillaur in Jalandhar, officials said here.

All of them have been admitted to a government hospital, they said.

Twenty-one people have contracted the disease after coming in contact with

The Germany-returned septuagenarian. The septua-



genarian, a resident of Pathlawa village in Nawanshahr, had even gone to the Hola Mohalla celebrations in Rupnagar's Anandpur Sahib from March 7 to 9. The authorities had appealed to people to get themselves tested if they met him.

In Punjab, there are 18 positive cases in Nawanshahr,

five in Mohali, three in Jalandhar, two in Amritsar and one in Hoshiarpur. As of now, a total of 282 samples have been tested, of which 220 were declared negative while the result of 33 is awaited. Close contacts of all positive cases have been put under quarantine and surveillance, as per a medical bulletin. **PTI**

100 arrested for defying curfew in Punjab

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after the Punjab Government clamped a statewide curfew to combat coronavirus, over 100 violators were arrested in parts of the state for defying the orders even as people largely stayed indoors.

However, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh in a video message expressed satisfaction over the response to the curfew and said the State Government wanted people to stay indoors to check the spread of the disease.

Singh acknowledged that people were facing difficulties as they require milk, vegetables and other items.

"We have made arrangements. We have told the deputy commissioners to ensure the supply of milk. We are trying that milk and vegetables reach on their doorstep," said Singh.

The Punjab government had imposed the curfew after

finding that people were ignoring the statewide lockdown ordered by it. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered the imposition of a "full curfew with no relaxations".

On Tuesday, police registered 232 FIRs and arrested 111 people for the curfew violation, an official said.

Police also had to use mild force against those who violated the restrictions.

Wielding sticks, police personnel at many places forced violators, especially youths, to do sit-ups or even crawl on the road as a punishment for coming out of their homes without any reason. Some violators, who were on two-wheelers and travelled in cars, were slapped and hit with stick for defying the orders.

Videos of such violators even went viral on social media. They were allowed to go home after they apologised for roaming on streets, an official said. **PTI**

Insufficient resources for people if lockdown continues, says Biswa

Guwahati: Admitting that the Assam Government does not have enough financial resources to support the poor if the lockdown continues beyond March 31, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said some drastic steps may have to be taken in April.

Entire Assam has been placed under a lockdown from 6 pm on Tuesday till midnight of March 31 to combat the impact of novel coronavirus in the state.

The senior minister asked people to be mentally prepared for any situation as the state is heading towards an uncertain phase.

"There are lots of problems in the current situation. Many of the ruling and opposition members have expressed apprehensions



about tea garden workers, daily wage earners or people engaged in the tourism sector. We have never seen such a crisis in our lives. I do not have a quick fix answer now," Sarma said.

Taking part in a special discussion on the coronavirus situation in Assam Assembly, he said all allocations under different heads have already been exhausted as the financial year is nearing its end on March 31. **PTI**

Over 2,000 migrant workers return to Odisha, placed under home quarantine

Berhampur (Odisha): More than 2,000 migrant workers, who returned to Odisha's Ganjam district from other COVID19-hit States by train, were screened at the railway station here and asked to remain under home quarantine by the administration, officials said.

Most of the people who returned to the state on Monday night came from Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kerala, which have witnessed a high number of coronavirus cases so far, they said. We sealed all the platforms and made sure that the people who returned from other states were screened before they leave for their respective villages, Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange said.

Personal and travel details of the migrant workers were registered with the government, he said, adding, all of them were asked to remain under home quarantine for 14 days. **PTI**

Jaan hai to Jahan...

From Page 1

To reach two lakh people, it took 11 days. But it took only four days to reach another lakh, taking the total spread to three lakhs. Today's action would decide how much India could stop the spread of the pandemic, Modi said, and shared a social media post.

"Those who are inside their homes are informing people with the new innovative ideas. I am sharing the banner which I liked. Corona

means 'koi road par na nikle'," the PM said.

In the backdrop of reports of harassment of doctors and Air India staff by people under the impression that they could spread the disease, Modi appealed for compassion towards those engaged in serving the people during this critical time. Modi said that every citizen should be compassionate and grateful for those in essential services like doctors and nurses and police,

and even the media and hygiene workers who are sanitising public areas. Making a strong pitch for social distancing, Modi said, "People in countries like America have adhered to the quarantine guidelines laid down by the Government to the last letter, which is how they are starting to overcome the disease now. Social distancing - from the Prime Minister down to the last citizen in every village, has to follow self-isolation."

Bengal version of 'Shaheen Bagh' to continue anti-CAA stir in batch of 7

Kolkata: On a day police removed protesters against the amended Citizenship Act at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi, agitators at the Bengal version of the Shaheen Bagh here at Park Circus on Tuesday agreed to the State Government's request and decided that only a batch of 7 will continue the stir till the coronavirus crisis ends.

About 50 women protesters have been holding protest together at the Park Circus which will now come down to

seven on a rotational basis in conformity with the state government's lockdown notification on coronavirus that not more than seven persons shall assemble together as part of the social distancing drill against COVID-19.

The demonstration on the lines of Shaheen Bagh in Delhi began at Park Circus Maidan on January 7 with 60 women protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Burqa clad protesters chanting

"azadi" have been continuing with the agitation.

"We were requested by the government to stop gathering of protesters

and carry demonstration in smaller numbers on a rotational basis.

This has been allowed by the government," said Asmat Jamil, one of the organisers of the dharna. The seven people will sit at a safe distance from each other taking every precaution required, she said. **PTI**

MP Govt transfers woman officer who slapped BJP worker

Bhopal: A day after the reins of power Changed from the hands of the Congress to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, a woman collector who had allegedly hit a leader of the saffron party during a pro-Citizenship Amendment Act was transferred.

Video clips had shown Rajgarh Collector Nidhi Nivedita purportedly slapping a man during the BJP rally on January 20. Nivedita was on Tuesday shifted to the MP secretariat as deputy secretary

while Neeraj Kumar Singh was appointed in her place in Rajgarh. After the January 20 incident, BJP leaders, in the opposition at the time, including current chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, had condemned her behaviour and demanded action against her.

The Chouhan Government on Tuesday also transferred Rewa Municipal Corporation commissioner Sabhajit Yadav, who has had run-ins with prominent BJP leaders in the state. **PTI**

Bid to break virus...

From Page 1

Seven deaths were earlier reported from Maharashtra (two), Bihar, Karnataka, Delhi, Gujarat and Punjab.

Thirty-seven people have been cured/discharged/migrated, according to the official data.

"The Central Government has asked all the State Governments to deploy fiscal resources for establishing additional medical facilities such as hospitals, clinical labs, isolation wards, expanding and upgrading existing facil-

ities to combat the challenge posed by COVID19," an official statement said.

These facilities need to be well equipped with ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPEs), masks and drugs to treat the patients, it said.

Meanwhile, to impose the lockdown strictly, the authorities are tightening screw against the lockdown violators. Thousands of people were booked for violating the norms and issued warnings of arrest with jail terms up to a year if the violations continued.

In States like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, police circulated pictures of violators on social media with messages such as

they were "against the society as they will not stay at home."

The police confiscated vehicles people found violating the norms in States including Haryana and Rajasthan. In some cases police forced the violators to do sit-ups 10 to 20 times as punishments for coming out of their homes. Police also clicked pictures of violators. Barricades were put up across places under lockdown as police checked whether people out of their homes had genuine reasons to do so.

As per data provided by the States, 232 FIRs have been registered and 111 people have been arrested for violating the curfew imposed in Punjab.

Kolkata Police have arrested 1003 people for deliberate violation of "Total Safety Restrictions".

The Gujarat police has registered 238 cases of breach of lockdown and 426 people in the last 24 hours for violating lockdown rules. In Ghaziabad, 110 FIRs registered against 494 people for violating lockdown.

In Mumbai and Ahmedabad, police have also asked the violators to push up 10 to 20 times on roads in presence of media. Taking a strict action against the lockdown violators, Uttarakhand Police on Tuesday caught people venturing out on streets of Karanprayag city here and clicked their pictures with a

pamphlet reading -- "I am enemy of society, I won't stay inside my home, I want to spread coronavirus." To teach them a lesson, police personnel handed them a pamphlet which states, "I am enemy of society, I won't stay inside my home, I want to spread coronavirus", and posted it on social media.

In West Bengal, the police in Cooch Behar is seen beating up a person found to be roaming in the streets without any credible reason. The police also punctured the tyres of e-rickshaws being driven in the city amid the state-wide lockdown imposed by the government including rural and urban areas to control the spread of COVID-19.

Credible print media...

From Page 1

Modi asked media to generate awareness about its importance, inform people about the lockdown decision by States, and also highlight the impact of spread of the virus, through inclusion of international data and case studies about other countries in the papers," said the PMO in a statement.

The PM emphasised that it was important to tackle the spread of pessimism, negativity and rumour mongering. Citizens need to be assured that the Government is committed to countering the impact of COVID-19.

"The journalists and stakeholders from print media appreciated the role played by the Prime Minister in communicating effectively and leading the country from the front. They said that they will work on the suggestions of the Prime Minister to publish inspiring and positive stories. They also thanked him for reinforcing the credibility of print media and noted that the entire nation has followed his message of coming together to face this grave challenge," said the PMO.

EC defers RS...

From Page 1

"The prevailing unforeseen situation of public health emergency indicates the need for avoidance of possibilities of gatherings of any nature, which expose all concerned to possible health hazard," the EC said in a note. In its order, the EC said it has reviewed the situation in detail and the public health emergency indicates the need for avoidance of possibilities of gatherings of any nature, which expose all concerned to possible health hazard." The poll process in the elections would necessarily include the gathering of polling officials, agents of political parties, support officials and members of respective Legislative Assemblies on the poll day, which may not be suitable in view of the prevailing unforeseen situation and related advisories in the country," the EC noted. Section 153 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 specifies that the Election Commission for reasons which it considers sufficient, may extend the time for the completion of any election by making necessary amendments in the notification issued by it under section 30 or sub-section (1) of section 39; and accordingly, the Election Commission has deferred the poll and extended the period of the Rajya Sabha election. The list of contesting candidates, already published for the said elections by the respective Returning Officers shall remain valid for the purposes of remaining activities, as prescribed under the said notification, the EC said." Fresh date of poll and counting for the said biennial elections shall be announced in due course after reviewing the prevailing situation," it said. The EC on February 24 had announced the polls in 55 seats from 17 States to the Upper House and on March 18, on the last date of withdrawal.

Appeal for Identification



General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body **Name:** Unknown, **S/o** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 55 years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Built :** Medium, **Wearing:** Black Colour Jacket and Black Colour Pant. He was found dead from opposite SPM Shop No. 1479 Delhi and Dead Body has been preserved in Subzi Mandi Mortuary for 72 Hours.

In this regard, **DD No. 17A dated 20.03.2020** has been lodged at PS Lahori Gate, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this male but no clue has come to light so far. Any, person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S.: Lahori Gate, Delhi
Ph. : 011-23953776
8750870122

DP/150/N/2020

Govt bans export of life-saving...

From Page 1

Rahul Gandhi also tagged a news report which claimed that India did not stockpile coronavirus protective equipment for health workers despite WHO guidelines in this regard.

The Congress on Monday also demanded the dismissal of Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and the Ministry's Secretary for "allowing the export of masks and ventilators" till March 19 despite WHO caution on the coronavirus outbreak much earlier. "Dear PM, should you not sack the Union Commerce Minister and the Commerce Secretary for permitting

exports of ventilators, surgical masks, face masks, raw material for masks till March 19," Congress chief spokesperson Surjewala said.

"Was this not playing with the health of doctors and paramedics staff and with coronavirus patients who need ventilators. How was their export allowed?" Surjewala said.

"This is criminal as our own doctors, nurses, patients are facing acute shortage of masks and other equipment, besides ventilators," he said.

Rejecting the Congress charge, BJP leader Amit Malviya said, "The Government of India had banned the export of N95 masks, body overalls and 2-3 ply masks on 31 Jan itself, much before any WHO advisory. N95 respirators and body overalls being the most critical personal protective gear for COVID-19 haven't been allowed to be exported since."

Centre asks...

From Page 1

The Minister has stated in the letter that in this challenging situation, it is imperative that we devise probable mechanism to support unorganised workers, who sustain their livelihood on daily wages.

The Minister also said that State building and construction workers welfare boards have collected sufficient funds. The cess has been levied and is being collected at 1 per cent of the cost of construction as notified by the Central Government in its official gazette.

The BOCW Welfare Cess, 1996, provides for levy and collection of cess at such rate not exceeding 2 per cent, but not less than 1 per cent of the cost of construction as the Central Government may notify.

Sonia pointed out to the Prime Minister that the construction industry employed over 44 million people, and the

workers should be given wage support.

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

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

The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act 1996 provides for various welfare measures for workers. The Act also provides for State Welfare Board and the constitution of welfare funds. It is reported that the Welfare Boards collected Rs 49,688.07 crore till March 31, 2019. However, only an amount of Rs 1,93,79,922 crore had been

spent," she noted.

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

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

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

8-point...

From Page 1

The compliance relief measures cover Income Tax, GST, customs and central excise, compliance and regulations related to Companies Act, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, fisheries department, banks and commerce.

Sitharaman said the last date for filing Income Tax returns for financial year 2019 was being extended to June 30, 2020. "For delayed payments made till 30 June, interest rate is reduced from 12 per cent to 9 per cent," the Minister said, adding the measure was limited to FY19.

In the case of delayed deposit of tax deducted at source, interest payable would be halved to 9 per cent from 18 per cent for payments made till 30 June. The Minister also said the direct tax dispute settlement scheme "Vivad se Vishwas" was being extended till June 30 without the additional 10 per cent

charge that was otherwise applicable. "Earlier, up to March 31, there was no additional charge. Everything is now extended to June 30," she said.

The Minister announced that the companies with less than Rs 5 crore turnover will not have to pay interest, late fee, or penalty, however, for bigger companies, no late fee and penalty will be charged but the interest will be levied at a reduced rate of 9 per cent.

The Minister said the March 20 deadline for various actions like filing of appeals, furnishing of returns, investing in savings instruments or investments for rollover benefit of capital gains tax benefit under various laws administered by the revenue department has been extended to June 30. For settling disputes in customs and excise taxes no interest will be levied if payment is paid by June 30. Sitharaman said customs and excise will be doing duties 27 x 7 until June 30.

Similar relief in compli-

ances in the fisheries or aquaculture sector was also announced by the Minister.

The Government waved off mandatory board meetings by the companies in the wake of the lockdown. On the volatility in the stock market, Sitharaman said the SEBI has already issued guidelines in the backdrop of developments and monitoring it daily thrice in a day.

उपग्रह पावर ट्रान्समिशन
कार्पोरेटेशन लिमिटेड, ई-निविदा
विस्तारिकरण सूचना इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित ई-निविदा संख्या टी-05, 06, 07 एवं टी-08/20-21, दिनांक 06.04.2020 को अवकाश के कारण दिनांक 08.04.2020 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। मुख्य अभियंता (परिचरणा प्रविष्टि), 130-डी, परिचरणा नग्न, विक्टोरिया पार्क, मेरठ। पत्रांक-2519/गुआ(पापग)मेरठ/ T-05 to 08/2020-21 दिनांक-24.03.2020, "राष्ट्रहित में ऊर्जा बचाव" साधारण बन्ध के स्थान पर एलईडी बल्ब का प्रयोग करें।। कृपया वेब साईट etender.up.nic.in पर विस्तार में सभी सूचना विवरण / संशोधन / विस्तार हेतु निविदा खुलने की तिथि तक लॉग ऑन करें।

Amid lockdown, ₹5K each 5,146 detained, 1K vehicles impounded for construction workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday the Delhi Government will give ₹5,000 to each construction worker as their livelihood has been affected due the outbreak of coronavirus under the Construction Workers Welfare Board Fund (CWWBF). Notably, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has said that no positive case of corona has been detected in last 40 hours. Interacting with media via video conferencing, Kejriwal announced that the number of night shelters in the city has been increased and more food is being distributed for homeless people. Kejriwal said that due to curfew, several people were not able to get food, and urged the public to send such people to the nearest shelters of Delhi Government, where food was arranged. "Today I want to tell you that in the last 40 hours there

has been not a single new Coronavirus positive case in Delhi. Earlier we had total 30 such positive cases and among them, many people are getting better and going home." "Till now 5 people have survived and gone home. Right now we have only 23 positive cases in Delhi. But I want to tell you that this is good news but there is no need to cheer yet because the number of cases can increase any time if we do not put proper restrictions or if you do not follow the restrictions. In Italy, in the last 24 hours, more than 600 people have died and in America, in the last 24 hours, more than 150 people have died," Kejriwal added. He said that this is an alarming situation worldwide that is why Delhi Government has imposed such tough restrictions like lockdown and curfew. "We are trying our best because we understand that these restrictions have brought many difficulties in your life but this is something we have to do because we want to save you,

your family, your neighbours and every resident of Delhi," said Kejriwal. He further added that the beauty of India is humanity. "Yesterday I requested the residents of Delhi to come together and help each other in this tough time. Today I am very happy that many people are coming forward and helping each other. In Delhi, nobody should suffer in hunger and it is our collective responsibility to stand beside each other." Urging house owners in Delhi, he appealed them not to force the tenants if they cannot pay the rents. "I am not suggesting to not take the rent but the owners can delay the collection or take it in instalments. It is very encouraging that many people have responded to this call and I have received hundreds of messages where people have described how they are helping each other," "I am proud of such citizens and I want to tell them that you are the real patriots of India."

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tight security arrangements were put in place on Tuesday in the national Capital for strict implementation of the lockdown — announced as a deterrent against the spread of coronavirus. "Till 5 pm on Tuesday, police registered 299 cases under section 188 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) while police detained 5146 people under section 65 of Delhi police act and under section 66 Delhi police act. Police have also impounded 1018 vehicles. Total curfew passes issued on Tuesday were 2319," police said. Police used public address systems to ask people not to come out or assemble at religious places even as most of the roads were deserted. On Tuesday, the Delhi police have earmarked a separate lane at the Delhi-Noida border for emergency vehicles to pass during the lockdown imposed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. The police have also put up a board which reads — doctors, media, ambulances, police and other exempted vehicles should use the lane.



"Separate lane at Noida Border to facilitate Emergency Services' Vehicles," Deputy Commissioner of Police East district Jasmeet Singh tweeted. The move comes after many

commuters complained that they were having difficulty entering Delhi from Noida amid the lockdown. On Sunday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had

announced a complete lockdown in the national Capital till March 31 in order to control the spread of coronavirus. The same day, the Delhi Police imposed prohibitory orders under section

144 of the CrPC till March 31, banning protests and other gatherings. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code bans assembly of four or more people at a place.

Hi! If you have questions on #lockdown, tweet them: Cops

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code bans assembly of four or more people at a place. Meanwhile, the police have earmarked a separate lane at the Delhi-Noida border for emergency vehicles to pass during the lockdown imposed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. The police have also put up a board which reads -- doctors, media, ambulances, police and other exempted vehicles should use the lane. "Separate lane at Noida Border to facilitate Emergency Services' Vehicles," Deputy Commissioner of Police East district Jasmeet Singh tweeted. The move comes after many commuters complained that they were having difficulty entering Delhi from Noida amid the lockdown.

33 cases registered against violators in G'gram

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Gurugram Police have registered 33 FIRs over violations of its lockdown orders amid the coronavirus crisis. The FIRs have been registered under relevant sections of the Epidemic Disease Act-1897. The police have also registered cases in matters pertaining to violation of section 144, opening a shop despite orders of closure and crowding a place. The city Police have imposed prohibitory orders across the city, banning gatherings of more than five people. "We have registered 33 offences under the Epidemic Disease Act and other various section of the IPC. The Gurugram police have appealed to the residents of Gurugram to stay indoors and not to step outside unnecessary. The people must understand the seriousness of the coronavirus epidemic. We have urged the residents of the city to obey the gov-



ernment orders and we do not want to implement complete curfew like other states," said Commissioner of Gurugram police, Muhammad Akil. The police chief has also claimed that due to the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus pandemic, the crime rate in the city has decreased by 10 to 12 per cent. However, the Haryana government ordered a complete lockdown in the entire state on Monday. The lockdown has

already been imposed from March 23 to 31. During the lockdown, no public transport will operate but essential services related to health, food, water and power supply will continue. Dairies, grocery shops, chemists and petrol pumps will remain open and persons associated with essential services will be allowed to go to their destinations during the lockdown. "The lockdown is an important step was taken by the high-

er authorities. I request all of you to follow the guidelines given by the state government to fight against coronavirus, Akil said. Apart from this, the district administration has set up an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) in the district for prevention and precautions against infections due to Corona epidemic. In this centre, information related to corona epidemic infection will be collected. The telephone number of this EOC is 1950. It has been set up in the Mini Secretariat. Also, Quarantine Enforcement Teams have also been formed in the district as per the instructions of the District Deputy Commissioner. "A team consists of 4 to 5 members. Keeping in mind the convenience of the people, 8 quarantine teams have been formed in the four zones of the district. These teams are making sure that those who are quarantined follow it as per the rules and do not leave their homes," deputy commissioner Amit Khatri said.

Zoos face hardships in arranging food, water for animals due to restrictions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A large number of zoos across the country have been facing "severe hardships" in arranging food and drinking water for animals due to the restrictions imposed for containment of the novel coronavirus, the Central Zoo Authority said on Tuesday. The authority, a statutory body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has now written to states and Union territories to specify supply of food and drinking water, and upkeep and health care of captive animals in zoos as "essential services" to exempt them from the restrictions. A number of states and Union territories have imposed lockdown or curfew, shutting everything except essential services such as

police, health, groceries, banks, pharmacies, petrol pumps etc, as the country grapples with the deadly virus which has claimed 9 lives and infected around 500 people in India. "It is learnt that certain zoos are facing severe hardships in supply of food, drinking water, upkeep and healthcare of animals in captivity due to restrictions imposed for containment of Covid-19," CZA Member Secretary S P Yadav wrote in a letter to chief secretaries of all states and Union territories. "In view of this, respective state governments and administration in Union territories are requested to specify the activities of food and drinking water supply, upkeep and healthcare of captive animals in zoos as 'essential services' and exempt them from the restrictions," the letter read.

SDMC to deploy tippers to collect waste from quarantined houses

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DEHI

South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) will deploy one dedicated tipper in each zone to collect municipal solid waste from quarantined homes. The municipal staff will also be given Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit to protect them from catching infections. The decision was taken in a high-level meeting called by SDMC Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti to monitor the situation and take all possible measures to combat coronavirus pandemic which was attended by all the concerned officials. In the meeting, it was decided to implement guidelines for proper collection and disposal of municipal solid

waste from quarantined homes, a senior official said. The Commissioner instructed the concerned officials to provided the list of such homes to concessionaire for making route plan for covering these houses with the direction that all the concessionaire to deploy one-one tipper in every zone to collect municipal solid waste from quarantined homes. Bharti also applauded the work being carried out by 20000 sanitation workers, 200 doctors, 750 nurses and 1100 dengue breeding checkers (DBC) working relentlessly in field against all odds. He further said that PPEs which includes sodium hypochlorite solutions, liquid hand soaps, and gloves have

been provided to concessionaire so that it can be distributed to the staff engaged for garbage collection for their safety. Apart from these knapsack sprayers has also been arranged for spraying one per cent sodium hypochlorite solution for sanitizing the domestic hazardous waste before receiving for final disposal. Bharti said that a group of additional commissioners, nodal officer, district health officer, Concessionaire and executive engineer, Department of Environment Management Services (DEMS) has been created for coordination and updating list of quarantined households on daily basis for smooth functioning.

KVs will promote all students of Classes 1 to 8, say officials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kendriya Vidyalayas in the country will promote all students of classes 1 to 8 irrespective of whether they appeared for exams or not, officials said on Tuesday. "The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) has decided that students of classes 1 to 8, whether appeared in session ending examination 2019-20 or not due to any reason, may be promoted to the next higher class and their verification of fee be done accordingly," an official said. Classes and exams are suspended in Kendriya Vidyalayas and all other schools till March 31 in view of Coronavirus.



A view of deserted roads on the second day of the complete lockdown in the national Capital to contain the spread of coronavirus

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Railways to manufacture medical equipment

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



works, Varanasi, rail wheel factory, Yelehanka to manufacture essential items which can be utilised for the treatment of affected people by this pandemic," it said in a statement. Railways have already suspended the operations of passenger train services across the country till 31st March 2020. Currently, Indian Railways is operating only freight trains

across the country. Indian Railways is making all efforts to ensure availability of essential commodities through its uninterrupted freight services. During the situation of lockdown in various states, Indian Railways Staff deployed at various good sheds, stations and control offices is working on 24/7 basis to ensure that the supply of essential items for the nation does not gets

affected. On March 23rd, a total 474 rakes were loaded for essential commodities like food grains, salt, edible oil, sugar, milk, fruits and vegetables, onion, coal and petroleum products. During the day, total 891 rakes were loaded by Indian Railways which also includes other important commodities like 121 rakes of Iron ore, 48 rakes of steel, 25 rakes of

cement, 28 rakes of fertiliser, 106 rakes of container etc, it said. The statement further said that a close coordination is being maintained with the State Governments so that rakes of essential commodities are handled smoothly without any delay, amidst various restriction imposed in the wake of Covid-19. To monitor the uninterrupted movement of essential commodities over Indian Railway system, an Emergency freight control is working in the Ministry of Railways. Freight movement is being closely monitored by officials at very senior level, a senior railway official said. The official further said that Indian Railways staff deployed in control rooms for operation of freight trains, line staff, maintenance staff, security personnel and medical staff in Railway hospitals is working continuously 24/7.

CCSHAU to donate part of salaries to corona relief fund

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the Haryana Government announced the creation of a Corona Relief Fund to prevent the spread of the global epidemic, the management of CCSHAU (Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University) decided to donate part of their salaries to Corona's relief funds. The decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Professor KP Singh, Vice-Chancellor. "All the employees including officers, teaching community and non-teaching staff will be giving some portion from their one month salary, which will be contributed to the Haryana Government under the Corona Relief Fund," the university said in a statement. Singh said "Through this initiative, the lives of infected patients can be saved. He assured that the funds raised for the Corona Relief Fund will be used for the betterment of state's health system.

DTC buses to allow only essential service providers

IANs ■ NEW DELHI



The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) announced on Tuesday that only those involved in providing essential services will be allowed to travel in its buses. In an order dated March 24, DTC Managing Director Garima Gupta asked all the depot managers to ensure that all operational buses have a sticker pasted on the front left windscreen saying "for staff of essential services only and on government duty." "In these buses, the conductors should allow the entry of passengers and employees of essential services after checking their official identity card. These passages/employees will have to buy tickets or show their passes, as applicable," the order said. The DTC also asked the depot managers to issue duty passes to all the employees on duty so that they can move between their workplace and homes and vice-versa. While on Sunday and Monday, only 25 per cent of the DTC buses were running, the government has increased the number to 50 per cent of the total buses from Tuesday to avoid inconvenience to the essential service providers.

State Govts come out with relief packages to fight corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

He also announced an economic package of ₹3,280 crore to mitigate the hardship faced by the underprivileged people. Palaniswami announced ₹1,000 each for all family card holders. "The card holders can also avail rice, dal, edible oil and sugar for the month of April free of cost. Tokens will be issued to the consumers to avoid rush at ration shops. Unregistered pavement vendors will get an additional cash support of ₹1,000, besides the ₹1,000 announced for PDS card-holders. MGNREGS workers will get a special pay for two days," he said.

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



a prolonged economic downturn.

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

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

In separate letters to the Chief Ministers of

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

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

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

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

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

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

month.

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

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

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

85.4 percent of the total households in Telangana.

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Navy in Mumbai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam.

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

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

tion for the month of April.

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

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

SAARC health professionals to hold video-conferencing on March 26

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

During the conference

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

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

ers who are likely to face financial troubles due the coronavirus outbreak.

About 1.5 lakh workers registered with the Building and Construction

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

Ex-CM Omar Abdullah freed from detention



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

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

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

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

IAN S ■ SRINAGAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

350 FIRs against lockdown violators in UP

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cong's allegation on protective equipment bogus: BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

Entire Karnataka under lockdown till March 31, says CM

IAN S ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yediyurappa assured people of adequate supply of groceries and food.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Take corona threat seriously, warn microbiologists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRPF restricts movement of promoted officers

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

transfer till further orders from the CRPF directorate here.

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

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

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

Fourth death in Maharashtra, 107 +ve cases

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Mumbai Police confiscates 2.5 mn masks worth ₹15 cr

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deputy Commissioner of Police

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

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

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

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

■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

Goa Opp raises doubts about zero virus case

■ PANAJI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Four more positive cases in Gujarat, total now 33

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

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

locally.

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

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

"Out of total 33 positive

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

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

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

■ JAMMU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ready it by Wednesday evening.

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

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

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

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

Manipur woman tests positive, first in N-E

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Astrologers say corona result of Jupiter's asymmetric movement

■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Shutdown official in TN as cases up to 15

■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

WB extends lockdown to whole State till March 31

■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

mon people."

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

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

Economic pandemic

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



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

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

Back to the people

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



Yes, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah has been released from detention. But the circumstances surrounding his release are just as hazy as his arrest. In the dark shadow of COVID-19, Omar decided that though it was a different Kashmir he was returning to, there was a bigger question of life and death at the moment and so spread the Government's message of social distancing and quarantine. If the Government's charges for booking him after

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

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

Foreign policy put to test

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



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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

Congress leader
—P Chidambaram



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

Actor
—Anupam Kher



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

Chinese spokesperson
—Geng Shuang



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

Congress leader
—Priyanka Gandhi



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice prevails

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

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

Shahin Ahmed
Mumbai

Grease the wheels

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

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

of closure to the family of the woman.

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

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

NR Ramachandran
Chennai

As a responsible citizen, stay at home

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

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



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

Pachu Menon
Margao

No more umpire abuse

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

Dennis Fitzgerald
Melbourne

Break the chain

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

Shaily Chakraborty

Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

India's lost opportunity

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



CB SHARMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—BRITISH CYCLIST
CALLUM SKINNER



IT IS MIND-BOGGLINGLY COMPLEX TO MAKE A CHANGE (CANCELLATION) AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SPORTING EVENT.

—MICHAEL PAYNE
IOC'S FORMER HEAD OF MARKETING

Much ado about Gogoi

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



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

has written.

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

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

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

(The writer is Special Correspondent, The Pioneer)

Together we can beat the Coronavirus

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

the world against the Coronavirus outbreak.

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

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

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

All epidemics evoke fear and panic since they result in fatalities and the Coronavirus is no exception. However, in its management, four elements are important: Science; the public healthcare system; political will and public support. Where science is concerned, human trials of the Coronavirus vaccine have already begun and doctors are experimenting with the use of various drugs that already exist to fight the pandemic. However, in India, much more needs to be done on the public healthcare front, which is not equipped to handle a medical emergency of this scale. As far as political will and support is concerned, Modi's appeal and the subsequent lockdowns by various State Governments across the nation show that we are doing well on this front. And the fact that the Prime

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a senior journalist)

GLOBAL DEATH TOLL NEARS 17,000

AFP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEATHS MOUNT IN US, EUROPE

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

AP/PTI ■ BERLIN

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The risks remain for doctors, nurses and others on the front lines: Italy has seen at least 18 doctors with the coronavirus die. Spain says 12% of its cases more than 3,900 health care workers have become infected.

A Madrid ice rink is now being used as a makeshift morgue as the number of bodies of virus victims in the Spanish capital mounts.

Overwhelmed by a virus hotspot in its eastern city of Mulhouse France was getting help from hospitals in neighboring Germany and Switzerland.

Confusion rippled through Britain on the first morning after Johnson ordered a three-week halt to all nonessential activity.

The government has told most stores to close, banned gatherings of three or more people and said everyone apart from essential workers should leave home only to buy food and medicines or to exercise. But photos showed crowded

trains Tuesday on some London subway lines.

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

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

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

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

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

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

UK's lockdown in question as trains remain packed

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

if possible.

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

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

Spain virus death toll rises by 514 to 2,696

AP ■ MADRID

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spanish Army finds bodies in nursing homes among residents

AP ■ MADRID

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

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

The news came as Spain on

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

help medical workers.

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

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

Italy records 743 deaths

AFP ■ ROME

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING/WUHAN

China on Tuesday decided to lift the three-month lockdown on more than 56 million people in the central Hubei province, the epicentre of the deadly coronavirus outbreak, on Wednesday amid warnings by experts of a looming second wave of the COVID-19 infec-

tions in the country due to the steady rise in "imported cases".

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

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

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

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

people and transportation.

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

WHO: India has tremendous capacity in eradicating coronavirus pandemic

PTI ■ GENEVA

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

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

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

India, through targeted public intervention, ended smallpox and gave a great gift

to the world. India also eradicated polio, he noted.

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

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

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

While India attained the polio-free status in 2014, the country got rid of smallpox in 1977.

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

SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

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

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

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Gazipur, Delhi at **E-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in** **Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641**

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

DP/58/ED/2020.



Chanchal

SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON

General public is here by informed that one person **Namely:** Jabir @ Jabar, **S/o** Abdul Hussain, **R/o** H.No. E-1134, JJ Colony Bawana, Delhi **Age:** 33 years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Face:** Oval, **Hair:** Black, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Black Colour Jeans & Khaki jacket in feet has been missing since 03.02.2020 at 04:00am.

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

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

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

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

SHO
P.S. Narela Ind. Area, Delhi
Ph. 011-27787592, 27787593
DP/40/ON/2020



SEARCH FOR MISSING

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

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

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

E-mail ID: cbc@cbi.gov.in
SHO
Tele: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax: 011-24368639

PS: Naraina, New Delhi
Ph.: 25891181, 25892010, 8750871122
DP/58/WD/20



Kailash Rai

SEARCH FOR MISSING

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

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

Any person having any information/clue about this missing person may inform SHO, Kirti Nagar, Delhi at **E-mail : cbc@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in**

Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
SHO
Fax : 011-24368639
DP/55/WD/2020

P.S. Mayapuri, Delhi
Ph.: 011-28117644, 28116097
8750871121



Sunny Kalra

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

world, according to multiple reports.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Volunteers sew masks for health workers facing shortages

AP ■ CHICAGO

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

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

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

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

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

Can blood from coronavirus survivors treat newly ill?

AP ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

Now a network of U.S.

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

There's no guarantee it will work.

"We won't know until we do it, but the historical evidence is encouraging," Dr. Arturo Casadevall of Johns Hopkins University's school of public health told The Associated Press.

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

Researchers use AI to find old bombs from Vietnam war

IAANS ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

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

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

in Cambodia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Investor wealth jumps ₹1.82 lakh cr as mkts bounce back

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

On Monday, the benchmark index had tanked

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

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

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit

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

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

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

‘Unprecedented collapse’ for eurozone businesses

AFF ■ BRUSSELS

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

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

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

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

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

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

dropping its strict rules on budget deficits.

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI n New Delhi

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

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

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

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

remain low for a prolonged period," he said.

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

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

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

DoT writes to states to permit working of telecom personnel

PTI n New Delhi

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

Telecom Secretary Anshu Prakash in a letter to chief secretaries of state and advisors to administrators of union territories has noted that telecom infrastructure is critical for maintaining communication, use of broadband, encouraging e-commerce and facilitating

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

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

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

Netflix, Facebook to reduce bitrate to help mitigate network congestion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dubai: The International Monetary Fund called for urgent action from Middle East governments Tuesday as the coronavirus pandemic threatens a persistent slump in oil revenues and a "big drop" in growth. The International Monetary Fund said a dozen Middle East and North African countries had already approached it for financial support. It urged governments across the region to swiftly draw up rescue packages to head off a protracted recession. "The region is likely to see a big drop in growth this year," the IMF's regional director for the Middle East and Central Asia, Jihad Azour, said in a report. **AFP**

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Omveer Singh, Shashi Bala, House No 709 Gali No-1, Main Shyam Park, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, A/c No- LBDEL00001043825	Plot No. 87, Gali No. 1, Shyam Park Main, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad	11-Feb-2020, Rs. 648886.36/-	05/06/ 2019
2.	Lakshminarasimhan N R, L. Vajjanthi, 1332 A First Floor, Sector-29 Housing Board Colony, Faridabad, A/c No LBDEL0000370533	Mig-A, 1332, First Floor, Sector- 29, Housing Board Col. Faridabad Haryana	11-Feb-2020 Rs. 190535.7/-	05/11/ 2019
3.	Pradeep Kumar, D-12/4 Koyla Vihar, Ardee City, Gurgaon, Haryana A/c No- LBDEL00001655298	Shop No-UG-246-D, Ad Measuring Area Is 272 Sq Feet & UG-218D, Ad Measuring Area Is 272 Sq Feet Block-B, Sushant Shopping Arcade , Sushant Lok-1 Gurgaon Haryana	07-Feb-2020 Rs. 19628820/-	30/08/ 2008

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

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

Authorized Officer
Secured Creditor

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



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

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

cent.

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

Personality Development and communication skills

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

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

while communicating — both written and verbal.

Industry internship programmes

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

Closer industry-academia ties

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

Foreign language courses

Engineering is a thriving industry which employees around 10-15

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

Flexible curriculum

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

The writer is Registrar, IIT Naya Raipur

FILL SKILL GAP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

— Anatole France

BTECH-MTECH COURSES

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

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

Last date to apply: June 30, 2020

How to apply: Log on to www.kiit.in or call on 9811626767.

BANKING & FINANCE

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

Admissions OPEN

Banking & Finance.

Duration: One year

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

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

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

Pratham conducts online classes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E-learning way forward

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

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

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

global epidemic and protect children successfully.

Disseminate critical information

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

Temporary suspension of foreign exchange programmes

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



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

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

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

Regular health sessions

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

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

The writer is Founder & Chairman, ICA Edu Skills

Numbers speak

IT COUNTS



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

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

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

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



JC CHAUDHRY

and servile, the problems will be magnified.

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

The writer is a renowned entrepreneur, motivational speaker and numerologist

Plethora of opportunities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Gap-year programme on offer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

The programme aims to expand

FORE students shine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The splendid journey of victory endures with a series of

seven consecutive winnings at popular competitions.

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

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

2020 Tokyo Olympics postponed

AFP ■ TOKYO

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been postponed to no later than the summer of 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe, the International Olympic Committee announced on Tuesday.

The Games were scheduled for July 24-August 9, but after telephone discussions between IOC president Thomas Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a historic joint decision was taken to delay the Olympics — the first time that has been done in peacetime.

Abe said Bach was in “100 per cent agreement” when Japan asked the IOC to push back the Games.

In a joint statement, the pair said that based on current World Health Organization information, the Tokyo Games “must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community”.

“The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could stand as a beacon of hope to the world during these troubled times and that the Olympic flame could become the light at the end of the tunnel in which the world finds itself at present.

“Therefore, it was agreed that the Olympic flame will stay in Japan. It was also agreed that the Games will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020,” the statement concluded.

The Olympics, which has experienced boycotts, terrorist attacks and protests, but has been held every four years since 1948, is the highest-profile event affected by the virus that has killed thousands and closed sports competitions worldwide.

Bach said the decision to postpone was “about protecting human life”.

CROWDED CALENDAR

Squeezing in the 16-day Games into what will already be a hugely crowded 2021 calendar is another major headache, with arguably the two biggest sports, swimming and athletics, due to hold their world championships that summer.

However, World Athletics has already said it was prepared to shift its world championships, scheduled for August 6-15 next year in Eugene, Oregon, to accommodate a rescheduled Games.

“World Athletics welcomes the decision of the IOC and the Japanese Government to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to 2021,” track and field’s global governing body said.

“It is what athletes want and we believe this decision will give all athletes, technical officials and volunteers some respite and certainty in these unprecedented and uncertain times.”

British sprinter Dina Asher-Smith, the world 200m champion, posted on Instagram: “#Tokyo2021, Same fire, new dates. Stay at home and stay safe everyone xxx.”

The international federation of the number two Olympic sport, swimming, added that it would also work with local organisers “in order to determine flexibility” for their scheduled July 16-August 1, 2021 world championships in the Japanese city of Fukuoka.

World football’s governing



The Olympic Rings are displayed at the entrance of International Olympic Committee headquarters during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in Lausanne on Tuesday AP

body FIEA said it “firmly believes that the health and well-being of all individuals involved in sporting activities should always be the highest priority, and as such we welcome today’s IOC decision”.

DEVASTATING FOR TOKYO

The decision to postpone will be a devastating blow for the city of Tokyo, which had won widespread praise for its organisation, with venues finished well ahead of time and tickets massively oversubscribed.

British Olympic Association chairman Hugh Robertson said it was “heartbreaking news for our many friends in Japan who have done superbly well to prepare for what I know will be an outstanding Games”.

“However, the IOC had no option under the present circumstances but to reach the decision they did.”

The IOC came under increasing pressure in recent days to postpone the Games, with 1.7 billion people across the planet in lockdown to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Training has become impossible for many athletes and exposes them to the risk of contracting or spreading the disease. Competitions and qualifying events have been scrapped, while international travel is severely limited.

On Sunday, the IOC had initially given itself a deadline of four weeks to come up with a proposal to postpone the Games, a Herculean task that touches on every aspect of Tokyo 2020 planning from venues to security to ticketing.

But after Canada and Australia withdrew their teams and the powerful US Olympic Committee and World Athletics also joined the chorus calling for a postponement, the writing was on the wall.

Tokyo was spending some \$12.6 billion to host the Games, according to its latest budget, and experts believe a postponement could cost it some \$6 billion in the short-term before recouping it when they eventually go ahead.

Japan put brakes on torch relay

TOKYO: Japan postponed the Olympic torch relay on Tuesday after the Tokyo 2020 Games were delayed for a year, extending what has already been a troubled journey for the ceremonial flame.

The torch, lit earlier this month in Greece, had been due to start its nationwide tour on Thursday from Fukushima, an area devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown.

“The Olympic torch relay, which was scheduled to start from 26th (March), will not start,” Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori told reporters.

Mori said the flame will remain in Fukushima for now, but it was not clear how long it will stay there.

COVID-19 has overshadowed the flame’s progress after the elaborate lighting ceremony in ancient Olympia proceeded without spectators, to avoid spreading the disease.

The Greek leg of the torch relay was then scrapped when large crowds mobbed Hollywood



actor Gerard Butler as he lit a cauldron in the city of Sparta.

The flame arrived to a muted welcome in northern Japan in front of a few dozen officials and guests, after plans to invite 200 schoolchildren were abandoned.

It has been on display in Japan and attracted large crowds, despite calls from organisers to avoid mass gatherings because of the virus.

Mori said he recognised the decision to postpone the Games would be “very disappointing” for athletes.

“I am sorry about that,” he said. “I also know that athletes have strong spirits able to overcome difficulty. I hope that they

will do their best.”

He said the Games had been postponed for a year rather than a shorter period because there was no certainty on when the pandemic would be over.

“There are many opinions, and there is no agreement. Will it end in three to four months?” he said.

“Unless the coronavirus (pandemic) ends, we won’t be able to even start the torch relay,” he added.

“This year is off the table.”

Organised under the slogan ‘*Hope Lights Our Way*’, the torch relay was considered a key part of the bid to showcase recovery in parts of northeastern Japan that were devastated by the 2011 disaster.

Mori pointed to his own health problems — he was diagnosed with cancer — as proof that difficulties can be surmounted.

“We have no choice but to have hope. I myself suffered cancer... But I was saved by a new drug. I am here, allowed to live. “Let us hope for these things.”

Bach says new dates for Olympics not discussed

AFP ■ LAUSANNE

IOC president Thomas Bach says he did not discuss new dates for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

One option would be July 23-August 8. That is exactly one year from the now-postponed July 24-August 9 dates.

Bach says the exact dates is a question for the Tokyo organizing committee and an International Olympic Committee panel overseeing the preparations.

He said “alarming figures”

in the past few days about the coronavirus were key to deciding the Tokyo Olympics must be postponed.

Bach cites the World Health Organization “saying in the last couple of hours that Africa has to prepare for the worst.”

The IOC has been advised by the WHO, which said Monday the pandemic is accelerating.

Bach says the original health issue for hosting the Tokyo Olympics was “could Japan offer a safe welcome” and the IOC was confident it could.

Athletes relieved of stress, says IOA welcoming IOC decision

NEW DELHI: The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Tuesday welcomed the IOC’s decision to postpone the Tokyo Olympics by one year in view of the worsening COVID-19 pandemic, saying the country’s athletes have been relieved of having to train during a global health crisis.

“IOA welcomes the decision of IOC. Discussions were held by IOC with organisers and all stakeholders prior to this,” IOA Secretary General Rajiv Mehta said.

“Soon after the lockdown is over, IOA would be holding meetings with athletes, federations, sponsors, etc. To revise plans.

“This decision today, relieves our

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

DELAYED OLYMPICS WILL BE TESTAMENT TO DEFEAT OF VIRUS: JAPAN PM

The postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will be held in around a year as a “testament” to humanity’s victory over the new coronavirus pandemic, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. He said he had secured agreement from the head of the International Olympic Committee to postpone the Games and then hold them “in a complete form as a testament to mankind’s defeat of the new virus”.

DELAYED OLYMPICS WILL STILL BE CALLED TOKYO 2020: GOVERNOR

The postponed Olympics will retain the name “Tokyo 2020” despite being held next year, the city’s governor said. “The name will remain Tokyo 2020,” Yuriko Koike told reporters. “First, no cancellation has been confirmed. It’s clear. And a goal — by summer in 2021 — has become concrete. It’s also a very concrete guide for athletes as well. I think it’s a big thing,” Koike said.

OLYMPICS POSTPONEMENT ABOUT PROTECTING HUMAN LIFE: BACH

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach said the decision to postpone the 2020 Tokyo Olympics due to the coronavirus pandemic was “about protecting human life”. Bach said the new dates for the first Games to be postponed during peacetime would be decided by an IOC panel overseeing the Games and the Tokyo organisers.



‘Life comes first, we can wait’

India’s Olympic-bound athletes welcome Tokyo Games postponement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Life comes first, sport can wait. This was the collective view of India’s top Olympic-bound athletes, including stalwarts such as M C Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal, as they lauded the Tokyo Games’ postponement.



—MC MARY KOM

“The situation right now is not good. Life always comes first, everything else can wait. Players’ safety is paramount. I think it’s (postponement) good for everyone. Now I get more time to prepare, our training plans can be extended. And it’s not just for me, it is true for everyone around the world.”

“Happy that it’s postponed even though some of us haven’t qualified. We are eager to know what the qualification (process) would be like going ahead. As an athlete who’s played Olympics before I would say it’s good as everyone can chill now and not worry about preparations amid a lockdown. We all have to be safe first and then we can think about preparations.”

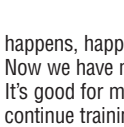


—SAINA NEHWAL



—BAJRANG PUNIA

“It’s a good decision because everyone is disturbed. Athletes’ health is paramount. No one is training properly. It’s not just about India, it’s also about the entire world. We first have to save people from this epidemic.”



—MIRABAI CHANU



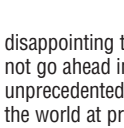
—RAHI SARNOBAT

“Whatever happens, happens for a good reason. Now we have more time to prepare. It’s good for my performance. I will continue training.”



—CHIRAG SHETTY

“...Since training had stopped, we would have needed another three-four months time to prepare. So, we wanted postponement. Now we can refresh ourselves and restart the competitions (training).”



—RAVI DAHIYA



—CHIRAG SHETTY

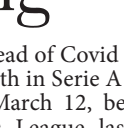
“At the moment it’s the right decision to take. It’s sad but at the moment it is a sensible decision to take...There’s disappointment obviously but well things are not really in your hand.”



—SJOERD MARIJNE



—ANJUM MOUDGIL



—SHARATH KAMAL

“I just had a meeting with the team and broke this news to the group. Though it is disappointing, the girls told me, ‘It’s ok, Coach. We will continue to work the way we are and this probably gives us more time to prepare for the Olympic Games & be our best.’”



“I think that’s the best that can happen in this situation but as an athlete it’s a bit hard as a lot of training has gone in preparation for the 2020 Olympics. Now the preparation has to carry on for another one more year.”

IPL cancellation on cards after three-week lockdown

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI will be under tremendous pressure as cancellation of Indian Premier League looks inevitable after Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a 21-day lockdown to tackle COVID-19 pandemic.

When the BCCI had postponed the IPL to April 15 earlier this month, it had said hosting the tournament would only come into the picture if the situation around the pandemic improves. However, it has only worsened since then with cases surging towards the 500-mark in India.

Speaking to PTI, BCCI president Sourav Ganguly did not have much to say considering the grim scenario.

“I can’t say anything at the moment. We are at the same place where we were on the day we postponed. Nothing has changed in the last 10 days. So, I don’t have an answer to it. Status quo remains,” Ganguly’s helplessness was palpable.

Kings XI Punjab owner Ness Wadia was more forthright.

“The BCCI should really consider postponing the IPL now. As a premier event, we need to act with great responsibility. Contemplation of IPL is inhumane right now,” KXIP co-owner Wadia said.

“Let’s say even if the situation improves by May and I hope it does, who is going to come and play? Will the (foreign players) be even allowed to enter the country?” he asked.

Earlier on Tuesday, the concall of BCCI officials and team owners was postponed as the COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the country and around the world.

The star-studded eight-team league was originally scheduled to start on March 29 in Mumbai.



It seems the BCCI is deferring the announcement hoping against hope for things to improve.

“If Olympics can be postponed by a year, IPL is a much smaller entity in that regard. It is becoming increasingly difficult to organise. At this point the government is not even thinking about allowing foreign visas,” a BCCI official in know of things said.

Currently, each stakeholder is discussing ways to limit the financial damage with insurance companies as well as broadcasters.

“With 21 day lockdown, it is virtually impossible that things will return to normalcy by April 14. It might improve but a lot of restrictions will be in place. So it will be foolish not to cancel the league,” a BCCI veteran said.

UEFA postpone CL, Europa League finals

AFP ■ NYON

UEFA announced on Monday that it has postponed the Champions League, Europa League and women’s Champions League finals, originally scheduled for May, due to the coronavirus pandemic, with no new date given.

European football’s governing body had already postponed the competitions until further notice earlier this month.

UEFA said that “no decision has yet been made on rearranged dates”.

“The working group, established last week as a result of the conference call among the stakeholders of European football, which was chaired by UEFA president, Aleksander Ceferin, will analyse the options available,” UEFA said in a statement.

“The group has already begun its examination of the calendar. Announcements will be made in due course.”

The 2020 men’s Champions League final had been due to be played at Istanbul’s Ataturk Stadium on May 30, with the Europa League final to have been staged in Polish city Gdansk three days before.

The women’s Champions League final was scheduled for May 24 in Vienna.



Napoli, Lazio backtrack on return to training

AFP ■ NAPLES

Italian clubs Napoli and Lazio have both postponed their planned return to training this week due to the coronavirus pandemic which has killed over 6,000 people in Italy.

Italian football has been on hold since March 9 because of the COVID-19 outbreak which has become the Mediterranean nation’s biggest disaster since World War II.

But some clubs had been thinking of resuming training behind closed doors.

“SSC Napoli announces that sports activities are suspended until a date to be decided,” the southerners said in a statement.

The resumption of training sessions will be established in relation to the evolution of the health emergency

regarding the spread of Covid 19.”

Napoli are sixth in Serie A and last trained on March 12, before their Champions League last-16 second leg against Barcelona was postponed.

They had been planning to return to training on Wednesday.

The south of Italy has not been as badly hit by the virus as the epicentre in northern Lombardy.

League rivals Lazio and Cagliari also pushed back the date for a return to training.

Capital club Lazio — just a point behind champions and Serie A leaders Juventus — have had said they wanted to start training as early as Monday, as had Sardinian outfit Cagliari. All sport in Italy has been suspended until April 3.

Bundesliga clubs take pay cut

BERLIN: Footballers at Germany’s top teams including Bayern Munich have agreed to take pay cuts to help clubs survive the economic impact of the coronavirus, media reports said on Tuesday.

Newspaper *Bild* reports that players and club officials at champions Bayern have accepted a 20 per cent cut in their salaries.

Like all top European leagues the German top flight is losing income from broadcasting, sponsorships and ticket sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, with matches in Germany suspended until at least April 2.

Bayern has a massive wage bill which reached 336 million euros (364 million dollars) last year, almost half of club turnover.

Players at Borussia Muenchengladbach were the first in the Bundesliga to propose a pay cut, followed by others at Werder Bremen and Schalke 04. Borussia Dortmund and Bayer Leverkusen players are in talks over pay cut proposals with management. **AFP**



FOCUS

China vows more cooperation internationally to control rapid spread of disease

China vows closer international cooperation with Russia and other countries to control the novel coronavirus pneumonia pandemic, which experts say further demonstrates its vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

In a phone conversation on March 19 night with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, President Xi Jinping said that the epidemic broke out ferociously, and China had to rise to the challenge and respond to it bravely.

That is because it not only concerns the lives and health of the Chinese people but also the public health security of the whole world, he said, calling for closer

international cooperation in epidemic prevention and control, experience sharing on containment and treatment and facilitation of joint research.

Xi stressed that at this special moment when both countries are fighting the illness, China and Russia have been supporting each other and cooperating closely, which has demonstrated the high level of China-Russia relations in the new era.

Putin said that remarkably effective measures taken by the Chinese government have not only contained the spread of the disease inside China but also made important contributions to safeguarding the health of people in other countries.

Russia greatly appreciates and is pleased with China's efforts, he said, adding that China has set a good example for the international community by lending a helping hand to other pandemic-affected countries in a timely manner.

What China has done represents a resounding answer to the provocation and stigmatization by a certain country over COVID-19, the Russian president said.

Li Yonghui, a researcher of Russian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the virus can be defeated only by concerted efforts.

"Joint efforts such as cooperation in vaccine

development, providing assistance across borders and sharing of epidemic information are a reflection of the connotation of the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind," Li said.

Ruan Zongze, executive vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies, said the pandemic further enhances the global community's understanding of this vision.

"The epidemic concerns people's health and lives, regardless of borders or skin color. The most powerful weapon against it is solidarity and cooperation," Ruan said.

The Chinese government has announced it would provide assistance, including

testing kits, masks and protective suits, to 82 countries, and the World Health Organization and the African Union, with many shipments having already arrived in recipient countries.

"China is practicing its vision with actual deeds by providing assistance within its ability to other countries," Ruan said, "and this will further improve and enhance China's relationship with international society."

Meanwhile, a certain country that is trying to politicize the pandemic, label the virus and stigmatize China is running into opposition from the global community and such attempts are contemptible, Ruan added.

“China has been actively engaged in international cooperation on the prevention and control of the epidemic in an open, transparent and responsible manner. The fight against the epidemic requires the solidarity and coordination of the international community, and China will work with other countries to jointly safeguard global public health security.”

China launches first clinical trial of coronavirus vaccine

The first clinical trial of the novel coronavirus vaccine in China has kicked off as volunteers taking part in the project started to share their experience on social media, the Science and Technology Daily reported on March 21.

The clinical trial was filed on Chinese Clinical Trial Registry on March 17, the newspaper said.

According to its registration information, the trial is jointly sponsored by the Institute of Biotechnology, Academy of Military Medical Sciences, People's Liberation Army and CanSino Biologics Inc based in Tianjin.

The trial is being carried out on healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 60 in two medical facilities in Wuhan, Hubei

province. The study is set to be completed by Dec 31, according to the registry.

All 108 volunteers are from Wuhan that was hit hard by the outbreak. They will receive a series of follow-up examinations within six months after injection to see if their bodies have generated antibody to the virus, the registry said.

Wang Junzhi, a senior expert on drug and vaccine development, said earlier this month that China is simultaneously conducting nine vaccine development projects, and most of them are expected to complete preclinical trials and begin human tests in April. In general, China's vaccine development against COVID-19 is among the world's front-runners, he added.

(China Daily)

Foreign trade firms quicken pace to resume production



Workers are busy at the garment workshop of a foreign trade company in Xingtai City, north China's Hebei province. (Xinhua)

China's foreign trade firms quickened its pace to resume production slowed down by the novel coronavirus as a raft of supportive policies started to take effect, a commerce ministry official said March 19.

About 67 percent of the country's key import and export firms recovered over 70 percent of production capacity, said Jiang Fan, the official. The figures did not include those in Hubei Province that has been hard-hit by the virus outbreak.

To facilitate the sector's production resumption, the ministry has resorted to policy tools such as export tax rebates and export credit insurances for foreign trade firms and introduced measures to help them secure orders

and maintain market shares, according to Jiang.

Noting that the outbreak has rippled around the world and inflicted negative impacts on the global industrial chain, Jiang said that China has confidence in keeping its foreign trade stable.

China's foreign trade sector has a strong resilience and sound development prospects, and will remain open to the outside world, Jiang added.

The ministry also vowed to take targeted measures to help firms tackle issues such as the lack of labor, capital and raw materials while encouraging localities and business organizations to provide necessary legal and information-related services.

(Xinhua)

IN-PICS

Heroes are back home



Photo by Yang Zheng



Photo by Huang Zhechun

1,135 Yunnan medical workers fly back to Kunming from Hubei province recently as the COVID-19 outbreak has subdued in the hard-hit province. After the outbreak of the epidemic in China, a total of 1,156 Yunnan medics were sent to Hubei to join the battle against the epidemic in ten

batches.

"We fought shoulder to shoulder to win the battle, and harvested lifelong friendship," said Cui Pengyu, team leader of the second batch of Yunnan medics assisting Hubei. "It's our responsibility to stand with the Wuhan citizens, to let solidarity be the antidote



Photo by Huang Zhechun

to our shared threat," he said.

The Yunnan medical teams fought the virus mainly in Wuhan and Xianing, two cities of Hubei province. After the outbreak of the epidemic, China adopted the policy of "pairing-up support" to help cities and prefectures

of Hubei(excluding Wuhan) to combat the disease. And Yunnan was assigned the task of helping Xianing city. As of March 17, the Yunnan medical teams to Xianing had cured 98.21% of the patients. And those in Wuhan treated more than 600 of the infected.

(Yunnan Daily)

Yunnan imposes quarantine on passengers with international travel history

In order to further contain imported COVID-19 cases, the Command of Leading Group on Novel Coronavirus Prevention and Control of CPC Yunnan Provincial Committee and People's Government of Yunnan Province specifies a number of measures in the Announcement No.13 on March 17, as the following:

Quarantine

All travelers landing in Yunnan with international travel history within the last 14 days, (including foreign passengers and residents of mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) will be quarantined for 14 days upon arrival.

Transfer passengers showing symptoms like fever and cough will be sent to designated hospitals for further medical check.

Expenses

During the quarantine period, food and accommodation need to be at the expense of travelers themselves.

Transfer passengers who show no symptoms shall be allowed to proceed to their next destination.

If there is a need to stay overnight, passengers will be sent to designated hotels in which food and accommodation shall be at their own expenses.

The medical expense of the imported cases covered by basic medical insurance system (BMIS) will be reimbursed according to relevant regulations. People who are not covered

by BMIS shall bear their own medical costs. If they do have difficulties to do so, those who are determined eligible shall be provided with medical assistance depending on relevant laws and regulations. The medical expense of people with commercial health insurance shall be covered by insurance according to the contract.

Monitoring

Authorities and public institutions at all levels, businesses and hotels in Yunnan shall fulfill their duties in registering people returning/coming from overseas, monitoring their health, and reporting to relevant authorities.

Declaration

All passengers arriving in Yunnan with an international travel history over the past 14 days need to declare their health conditions faithfully. Those who deliberately conceal international travel history and physical contacts with confirmed COVID-19 patients, will be considered legally liable.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Mega project to relocate 100,000 mountain dwellers

Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Southwest China's Yunnan province is one of the least developed regions. Local officials are working to relocate mountain dwellers into new houses this month.

Along the Nujiang River Valley, most of the locals live on mountain slopes. Ci Asheng's family has been living in a farmhouse for 20 years. But soon they will move into an apartment in a new residential complex, provided for free to those living below the poverty line.

"I wish to move into the flat, as traffic here is not convenient. Over there, it will be easy for me to send my children to school, and send the elderly into hospitals if necessary," said Ci Asheng.

Miles apart down the valley, workers are adding the final touch to this relocation site.

Across Fugong County in Nujiang Prefecture, the poorest in the region, more than 15-thousand mountain dwellers will move into places like this. And in all of the prefecture, some 100-thousand people will be relocated this month.

"The ecological systems of these mountains are fragile, and the areas are prone to geological disasters. By

relocating, people will have better access to services like water, electricity and roads. It will stop the root causes to their poverty. Since most of them use firewood to cook, relocating them to towns will also protect the environment," said Yang Yongzhou, Communist Party Chief of Fugong County.

Now in Fugong, the first group of seven-thousand people has already moved into new apartments.

(CGTN)

“Lifting all rural residents living below the current poverty line out of poverty by 2020 is a solemn promise made by the Communist Party of China Central Committee. The country's poverty alleviation tasks are near completion, as the number of impoverished people fell to 5.51 million at the end of 2019 from 98.99 million at the end of 2012.”

BIODIVERSITY IN YUNNAN

Editor's note

Dubbed “Kingdom of Animals” and “Kingdom of Plants”, Yunnan province is one of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots with the richest species diversity. In recent years, Yunnan has made consistent efforts in

protecting wild animals and their living environment. It has greatly improved the nature reserve system. And the idea of green development has deeply rooted in the heart of the people living in the province.

Newborn monkeys bring joy to rangers

"One more baby monkey!" Lai Jiandong, Head of the Wildlife Protection Station, Yunnan Baima Snow Mountain National Nature Reserve is jubilant these days, as the reserve has welcomed five newborn Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys, one of the world's most endangered primates, during the period from January 25 to March 6.

Lai shared some exciting moments about these new arrivals. On the morning of March 4, a reserve staff was conducting quantity monitoring when he spotted a newborn in the family of "Shuaige"(handsome guy). Based on the data collected, the staff determined that the cub was born overnight. Good

news keeps pouring in: two days after, on March 6, the family of "Xingsheng"(Prosperity) greeted a new baby as well.

The survival of the Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys hinges on their habitats, said Lai, as better ecological environment provides abundant food for them. Thanks to the conservation efforts, the number of Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys in Baima Snow Mountain has been on the rise in recent years.

Lai said he regards the baby monkeys as his own kids. He hopes that they'll grow up healthily, live happily with their population in Baima Snow Mountain.

(Liu Ziyu)

CULTURE

Gao Yuwen: Committed carver on leather wares



Photo by Meng Zhigang

In his carving workshop, which is located on Fengzhu Street in Kunming, artist Gao Yuwen was focusing on his creation. Tapping the cowhide gently and wielding the needle and thread, Gao gave birth to fine patterns on leather items.

Born in east Yunnan's Qujing City, Gao Yuwen used to work for Xuanwei Power Plant when young. Longing for an easy and free life, he left the power plant and started a clothing business with his senior brother. In 1999, Gao took up leather carving, which attracted him so much that he embarked on a life of art.

Gao Yuwen only carves on cowhide. "Cowhide has a fine texture, and it is soft, plastic and cowhide," said Gao. Once a cowhide piece is chosen,

Gao will carefully observes its density in texture, pondering on stitching, inking, coloring and more. The delicate steps make his carvings invaluable. Gao's patterns include Chinese and Western styles, but he personally prefers the traditional Chinese subjects, mostly based on history and legends.

At the suggestion of doing something easier to save time and effort, Gao said it is meaningless for him to do ordinary ones and he pursues uniqueness and customization. In the past two decades, Gao Yuwen has created tens of thousands of leather wares, but none of them is a duplicate.

"I'm carver, so I'll stick to the art in my lifetime." Gao said movingly.

(Wang Shixue)