

WORLD 7

COVID-19 INFECTIONS TOP 6L GLOBALLY

MONEY 8

WILL SPEAK TO BANKS TO FACILITATE CASH FLOW, ENSURE TIMELY ACCESS: FM

SPORT 10

VIRAT 'BOSS' OF INDIAN CRICKET



sunday pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2020; PAGES 12+4 ₹4



USUAL SUSPECTS

SWAPAN DASGUPTA

India has not lost its head in corona crisis

As of Saturday morning (9.45 am), the fourth day of the national lockdown, the number of coronavirus cases in India has touched 873. Does this mean that we are still behind the curve or, as many of the "experts" suggest, this is just the lull before the country experiences the pandemic tsunami?

Like the overwhelming majority of India, I don't know. Over the past three weeks all of us have been subjected to so many conflicting versions of this global epidemic that has changed the world in ways that none of us thought was possible that we have stopped trying to be amateur pundits. When the WHO announced that every corner of the world was vulnerable to the what President Donald Trump evocatively describes as the "Chinese virus", every person seemed to have a view of what needed and didn't need to be done. These ranged from doing as little as possible but acquiring immunity through different means to suggesting policy prescriptions. Today, the voices of the loud know-alls are becoming less and less heard. The "experts" have their views, but no one is sure whether this expert view will outlive 48 hours.

A strange form of collective helplessness is visible. As law-abiding citizens, the overwhelming number of Indians have confined themselves to their homes, hoping that after April 15 they will be able to pick up the pieces and return to the daily routine. Meanwhile, watching a re-run of the Ramayan, what many of us experienced each Sunday morning in the late-1980s, will have to suffice.

In moments such as this, there is an irresistible temptation to outsource decision-making to a higher authority. For most it is God — articulated in different ways. But this unseen force isn't the only one we bank on. The secular authority we put our trust in moments of anxiety is the Government. Although the trust is never blind, there is the temptation to let others — with information, expertise and resources at their command — take decisions and do the thinking on our behalf. This relationship of the citizen with the state is based on trust and — but only to a limited extent — coercion. If the trust broke down, there is no lathi-waving policeman who would succeed in imposing a national lockdown.

A national lockdown has been successfully undertaken in a country of India's size and diversity. I don't know if the lockdown will achieve its objectives. I pray it does. But regardless of the outcome, how we have conducted ourselves makes me proud to be an Indian. It also makes me proud of our leader

of the all-powerful French state broke down and produced social chaos. It was this upheaval that led to collaboration with the Germans and the trust placed in Marshal Petain and his fragile Vichy regime.

It may sound politically incorrect to say so, but imminent military defeat does not always lead to social breakdown and chaos. By the beginning of 1945, for example, it was sufficiently clear that the collapse of Nazi Germany was only a matter of time. There was just no way that Hitler's regime would be able to withstand the combined might of the USA and the Soviet Union. The Germans didn't give up and fought bitterly, despite the huge military and civilian casualties. But what has escaped attention is the fact that an unending tale of military defeats since mid-1944 and the decimation of nearly every German city by enemy bombers didn't lead to a social breakdown, as happened with less provocation in France. Till the very end the authority of the German state remained intact.

It is of course possible to read these two experiences with reference to the type of regimes France and Germany had at these moments of upheaval. France in 1940 was democratic while Germany in 1945 was a regimented, totalitarian state. Maybe totalitarian states have a better record of holding a society together in times of crisis. If, for the moment, the theory of COVID-19 being a grand Chinese conspiracy is ignored, it is worth looking at the relative success of the authorities in managing the total lockdown of Wuhan. True, the extent of inconvenience was perhaps understated by the absence of an open media and the rigid control that the state maintains over its citizens. But in the face of the pandemic, such extreme measures can be condoned.

It is the inability of democracies to emulate the Wuhan model that has led to Western European countries shying away from cracking the whip, leaving the last mile to people's good sense and failing to meet the desired objective. Apart from Northern Italy and Spain where the number of deaths have skyrocketed, most other democratic countries have faltered in imposing lockdowns.

It is in this context that the national lockdown in India must be seen. Frankly, if it hadn't been Narendra Modi at the helm, lesser leaders would have preferred to have settled for half-measures, citing a combination of economic constraints and human deficiencies. India is a democracy and there is total freedom for intellectuals, contrarians and the fifth columnists to point to deficiencies, real and imaginary. The international media, particularly those based in the Anglophone world, also find it easy to present India as a land of chaos, heartlessness and stupid bigotry. There is enough in the subcontinent to feed this appetite. But what needs careful scrutiny is the fact that a national lockdown has been successfully undertaken in a country of India's size and diversity. The economic costs of this lockdown will be unimaginably high. But the fact that we have put people over money is reason enough to believe that India hasn't lost its head in a crisis.

I don't know if the lockdown will achieve its objectives. I pray it does. But regardless of the outcome, how we have conducted ourselves makes me proud to be an Indian. It also makes me proud of our leader.

Migrants march to different tune

As exodus hits social distancing, Shah asks States to use disaster relief fund to rehab migrants

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The panicky march of the thousands of migrant workers is turning out to be a major stumbling block for the Centre in its effort to enforce social distancing to curb the spread of coronavirus. With experts warning that such unruly assembly could help the contagion to explode — two migrant workers from Rajasthan tested positive on Saturday — the Home Ministry has come out with measures to deal with the grave situation.

The measures include raising tents along the highway to accommodate these workers and provide them food and medical assistance. The march of the migrants has alarmed health experts, who feel that it will defeat the very purpose of the lockdown. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has also expressed unhappiness over the move by States Governments to arrange buses for migrant workers who want to return to Bihar.

"The entire purpose of lockdown will be defeated if thousands of migrants are sent to Bihar by buses. My Government has already asked the Bihar Resident Commissioner in New Delhi to coordinate with different State Governments and reimburse the cost involved in providing food and shelter to migrants who are on their way to Bihar. We have already announced ₹100 crore package for them," said Nitish on Saturday.

Nitish was right in his apprehension. At least two migrant workers, who travelled from Indore to Rajasthan amid coronavirus lockdown in the country, have now been found positive for COVID-19.

Against the backdrop of these developments, Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday spoke to many Chief

Ministers to accommodate the migrant labours in the States itself by providing food and shelter, rather than transporting them to their home States. Shah said the Government is committed to offer all support to migrant workers during the lockdown period and suggested that schools and colleges can be used for sheltering the migrant workers.

The Home Ministry changed the guidelines of State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) to allow States to use the fund for the purpose of rehabilitation of the migrant workers.

"With the intent of Modi Government to provide all possible support to migrant workers, the Union Home Secretary has again written to States requesting them to immediately set up relief camps for migrant workers/pilgrims, etc, who are returning to their domicile States or trying to do so during this lockdown period. States have been advised to give wide publicity and awareness, using public address systems, technology and by utilising the services of volunteers and NGOs," said the Home Ministry in a statement.

The Ministry also asked States to set up tented accommodation to ensure that these persons will stay in the relief camps till the lockdown orders are in place. The shelters are to be organised, keeping in view various precautions including social distancing, with adequate medical check up drives to identify and separate cases requiring quarantine or hospitalisation.

Meanwhile, Road Transport Minister Nitin Gakari asked NHAI chairman and toll operators to provide all help to migrant workers by providing food and water. "I have advised chairman NHAI and Highway Concessioners/toll operators to consider pro-



Migrants wait to board buses for their native villages, during a nationwide lockdown imposed in the wake of coronavirus pandemic, at Anand Vihar in New Delhi on Saturday

viding food, water or any kind of support to migrant workers/citizens who are trying to reach to their respective native places. At this time of crisis we have to be compassionate for our fellow citizens," he said.

Commerce and Railways Minister Piyush Goyal has appealed to Industries and trade bodies to take care of their workers and not allow them to go to home States in the time of crisis. In a video conference, Goyal said, "Don't let your workers go away" to the industrialists across the country. Talking to representatives from various manufacturing, industry and trading associations, He said they are not only their assets and resources, but also could become potential carrier of COVID-19, if they are allowed to migrate to leave en-masse during this pandemic.

Turn to Page 4

Delhi-UP border choked as labourers rush to Bihar, UP

Kejriwal says Govt has arranged buses for migrant workers, but urges them to stay on

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Left without any source of income, thousands of migrants mostly from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on Saturday hit the streets and highways connecting Delhi-NCR in hope to get support from the Government to reach their homes.

Their exodus choked Delhi-UP border at Ghazipur and Anand Vihar bus terminal



Migrants walk to their villages amid the nationwide lockdown at Delhi-Uttar Pradesh Border on Saturday PTI

was crowded with people trying to get into buses to head for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on

Saturday said his Government has arranged for buses to transport migrant workers who were already walking back via roads to their respective home States.

Also, the CM appealed to migrant workers leaving Delhi to stay back. Kejriwal in his Press briefing on Friday announced that food will now be served in 325 Government schools after which the Government will officially have the capacity to feed 4 lakh people across 500 centres.

Delhi Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam went to Anand Vihar to meet migrants.

Turn to Page 4

Cases cross 1K, fight stepped up

No community transmission; dedicated Covid hospital set up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The count of confirmed COVID-19 cases raced to 1,029 on Saturday, but the Centre maintained that India is yet to witness community transmission of the viral infection and it is focusing on management and prevention of the disease by ramping up Covid-19 hospitals, sample testing, contact-tracing besides intensifying social distancing measures.

According to Statewise confirmed case tallied by dif-

ferent monitoring sites, the total number of positive cases stood at 944 on Saturday evening. However, the Health Ministry's Saturday morning count showed 938 positive cases in the country. The tally was not revised till late in the evening. The pandemic has claimed 20 lives in the country.

With cases on the rise, the Centre has asked the State Governments to set up health check-up camps and tents for migrant labourers who are travelling back to their native places to prevent them from spreading the disease, if any.

Giving details of the steps being taken to combat coronavirus which has killed over 28,000 people across countries, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Aggarwal said that doctors from the States are being trained on management



A police officer requests commuters to stay at home during a nationwide lockdown to limit the spread of the virus in Chennai on Saturday PTI

of Covid-19 patients with the help of AIIMS of Delhi while rigorous contact-tracing is underway. Many States are in the process of setting up dedicated Covid-19 hospitals.

They have also been asked to ramp up their capacity to manage an increasing number of cases. At least 17 States have started work on it.

Turn to Page 4

Govt procures 5 lakh testing kits from US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid clamour over lack of a coronavirus testing facility in India, the Government has been able to procure five lakh additional testing kits from the US.

R Gangakhedkar, the Head of ICMR, said on Saturday the country has now 111 Government testing labs and only 30 per cent of facilities are put to use so far.

He said 44 private laboratories have been given approval for testing and 400 people have been tested in private sector.

Gangakhedkar added that the country is now fully equipped to deal with the situation.

Turn to Page 4

CAPSULE

GOVT PROBES KERALA MAN ROLE IN KABUL ATTACK

New Delhi: Central security agencies are looking into the role of a Kerala man believed to be a member of the ISIS, which has claimed responsibility for the Kabul gurdwara attack in which 25 people were killed, officials said on Saturday. Mohammed Muhsin (28), a resident of Kasargod, went to the UAE in 2018 from where he is believed to have joined the ranks with the global terrorist organisation in Afghanistan, they said.

BRAIN FEVER STRIKES BIHAR, 2 KIDS ADMITTED

Muzaffarpur: Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), also known as brain fever, that had killed about 200 children in the State last year, has struck this north Bihar town again in what could be a double whammy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

PM's Covid fund: Donations pour in

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Donations started pouring on Saturday soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a special fund — PM CARES Fund — seeking contributions from public to deal with the coronavirus crisis.

One of the first to contribute was film star Akshay pledging ₹25 crore. Cricketer Suresh Raina contributed ₹52 lakh — ₹31 lakh to PM's fund and ₹21 to Uttar Pradesh CM's fund.

"That is a brilliant fifty, Raina" said Prime Minister to

Raina's tweet.

Ratan Tata declared that Tata Sons will spend ₹1,000 crore and Tata Trusts will offer ₹500 crore for the development of medical facilities.

The Tata Group said these funds will be used for research, procurement of Covid-19 test kits and other medical equipments, including for the welfare of those working in health sector.

The IAS Association committed ₹21 lakh and one day salary of IAS officers to the fund.

Turn to Page 4

Sea of corona queries floods Govt helplines

28 cr hit Union Health Ministry portal in 1 day

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Left locked down within the four walls of homes and flooded with scary information from various platforms on coronavirus, scared citizens are hankering for credible inputs on precautionary health measures and treatment practices online.

The Government's websites seems to be the most reliable at this difficult phase as on Friday itself, 28 crore people



logged in to the Union Health Ministry portal seeking answers to the range of queries they have on their mind about the viral infection.

Talking about the high online traffic, Lav Aggarwal, Joint Secretary Union Health

Ministry said just a few days ago, around 22 crore people had clicked on the Government website while on Friday, nearly 28 crore hit the Government portal.

He was responding to complaints that many times the

helplines launched by the Centre and States crashed. Obviously such issue arose from overloading.

"As the situation has evolved by every progressive day, we have increased the number of helplines. But load has increased," he said.

For the benefit of people and to ensure that their problems are sorted out at the earliest, the Ministry has raised the number of helplines. "We had started from 10 helplines which we increased to 30. But now, in view of increased load on the existing ones, the Ministry has expanded helpline services to 150 which keep on ringing," said a senior health official.

Turn to Page 4

'An actor should never say never'

Known for shows like Kalash and Bepanah Pyaar, APARNA DIXIT loves experimenting with roles and genres. She speaks with MUSBA HASHMI about her latest show and how she has evolved

■ What is your role in Pyaar Ki Luka Chuppi?

I play Srishti, a small-town girl with values. She is extremely talented but when it comes to love and family, she is emotional and thinks only from her heart. Her satisfaction lies in little pleasures of life and is family-oriented who believes in success but not at the cost of relationships. A lot of people will find the character relatable.

■ One thing that you like and dislike about your character?

I love everything about my character. From being soft spoken to respecting everyone, Srishti is a love driven person and has no anger or ego issues. The only thing that I dislike is, how she allows people to take her for granted which she will start realising soon. With different experiences in life, she is now learning to take a stand for herself.

■ From Mahabharata to now Pyaar Ki Luka Chuppi, how has your journey been?

My journey has been beautiful. I have played some amazing characters in the past and made friends for life in this journey. I feel grateful to be a part of this industry which has blessed me in ways for which I can't be thankful enough.

■ What was the most challenging project?

The most challenging project is also the one that is close to my heart — *Kalash*. I loved the graph that my character had. I got to play various shades and try different looks.

■ How do you think you have evolved as an artist?

An artist is always evolving. With

every new character that you play, a new project that you do, you learn something new. You become better at the craft day by day. As an artist, I am always on the go to learn and explore new things. It is a never-ending process.

With every new character that you play, a new project that you take, you become better at the craft day by day. As an artist, I am always on the lookout to learn and explore new things. This is a never-ending process

■ How do you think TV has evolved?

The last couple of years have seen an evolution in content with the shifting paradigm. Over the last decade, television has evolved progressively. The industry is witnessing a revolution by portraying strong independent female protagonists. Serials are being made where the conversation is around strong women characters. There are stories of empowerment of women

from small towns and villages of India which are finally being told. Content on TV is progressively influencing the lives of audiences who are now readily accepting strong headed women who are finally speaking up for themselves.

■ Having explored different genres, which one did you enjoy the most?

Having played various characters over the years, daily soaps have been the most enjoyable to me as I get to dramatise all emotions and the situations and story lines are also quite relatable. I absolutely enjoy every bit of my time on the sets which makes me enjoy my work all the more.

■ A role that you would say no to. I believe as an actor it is important to explore every role. An actor should never say never.

■ Upcoming projects.

Currently, I am only focusing on my show *Pyaar Ki Luka Chuppi* which airs on Dangal TV. If you engage yourself in different projects at the same time, you tend to lose focus. Therefore, I want to concentrate only on this show first. Rest only time will tell.



Plan Your Stay At Home Sunday

No chai breaks, no gossip sessions, no work buddies for 16 more days. While it's for our safety, work from home can get exhausting. From staring at your laptop for 10 hours to shuffling between multiple team calls, the one thing that can pump up your day, is some soothing music with a Bollywood *taadka*. Right?

We feel you and hence MTV Beats is here for you with a special line-up of artists and shows that you must follow to pump yourself up, while you stay put glued to your keyboards.

Jam it up with your favourite artists!

The next few days we are all going to be locked down at our homes for the sake of our own well being. But who says the lockdown has to be sad or boring? We have curated a special line up of artists who will dedicate a few minutes of their day during each of your working days from home with #MusicBeatsMusicFromHome. Watch your favourite artists jam on the social media pages of MTV Beats and make the social media environment, musically +ve.

Log in and move to the melodious tunes of Darshan Raval, Dr Palash Sen, Shalmali, Nikita Gandhi, Shashwat Singh, Jonita Gandhi, Dhvani Bhanushali, Tulsi Kumar and Akull, who join you for jamming live on Instagram their homes for a week. An exciting surprise awaits you by a popular singer in the live session, stay tuned to know who and what that will be! Fans can also dedicate songs to their loved ones with MTV Beats Farmaish, where the artists will perform to the song requests during the Live and also call out the endearing dedications.

Not just that, fans will also get a chance to do a social-distancing chat and interact with the artist during the LIVE using the dual



video feature on Instagram. Who knows, you can be the lucky one talking to Darshan Raval tomorrow! So, keep your eyes on the Instagram page of MTV Beats, sharp at 5 pm.

Work from home playlists for all the busy-bees.

When work from home gets tough, MTV Beats gets going! As you dabble through a never ending to-do list, soothe yourself by listening to Bollywood melodies like *Hawayein* from *Jab Harry Met Sejal*, *Humraah* from *Malang* and *Shayad* from *Love Aaj Kal* and more on the channel. We're sure that nothing will motivate you more than a soulful splash of your favourite songs. Tune-in to the work from home playlist specially curated for the Bollywood *keeda* in you, anytime on MTV Beats.

Time to turn up the heat at home.

Party Kami Hai, Hum Party Karenge...but Apne Ghar Pe! Take a break from the monotony and dance your heart way with MTV Beats. Tap your feet to the rocking beats of *Haa Main Galat, Illegal Weapon 2.0, Muqabala* and wake up the disco dancer in you, with the House Party Playlist

to keep you pumped up and happy all the time.

Fitness is the new fun, with Sunny Leone.

21 din, Fitness in! Who would want to miss out on a workout when you have Sunny Leone as your fitness trainer? The ever-gorgeous Sunny Leone is here to give you some easy fitness tips on how to be Fit and Fab with FitStop, starting 26th March, every day at 9am only on MTV Beats. Sweat it out with your charming gym trainer and make your workout regime a fun-tastic one!

Choose your favourite 'Desi Kalakaar of the Month'.

Baitha Baitha kya karein, karna hai kuch kaam! MTV Beats is here to entertain you, all day long! Head to the social media pages of MTV Beats to choose your favourite 'Desi Kalakaar of the Month' with three easy steps. Together with the mentors, Akasa, Amit Mishra and Meet Bros, you can also judge and vote for your favorite participant on Desi Kalakaar, with just one click! Singing superstar ban ne ke liye chahiye sirf talent aur internet connection, and MTV Beats is here to give you the best platform with MTV Beats ke Desi Kalakaar.

TELLYTALE

PUJA'S WEDDING POSTPONED



Actor Puja Banerjee, who recently made her comeback on TV with Star Bharat's mythological show as grown-up Vaishno Devi, had recently announced her wedding with actor Kunal Verma on social media. She made an announcement that she will tie the knot on April 15 and started preparing for her wedding.

Puja and Kunal's wedding was supposed to take place in a traditional Bengali ceremony. However, the couple is now contemplating postponing their nuptials due to the coronavirus scare.

According to sources, Puja had applied for leaves and production house had granted her the same. As of now their wedding shopping has also come to a halt and Puja is spending time at home with her family due to lockdown situation in the city.

Puja shares: "The situation is such that we have to sit with our families and decide the situation after March 31."

Well let's hope, Puja and Kunal get married soon and their fans get to witness this grand moment in the coming days.

MEET KANNIKA'S BEST FRIEND

Kannika Kapur, also known as Suman from the most loved show of Sony Entertainment Television *Ek Dujhe Ke Vaaste 2* reveals on how she would select her partner. Kannika is her Daddy's princess and certainly would not take any decision without considering with her father and she has the same clause for her future boyfriend.

Kannika is best friends with her father and shares all aspects of her life with him. Her father too understands her and supports her and guides her wherever the need be. Kannika who recently turned 25 has revealed



that her father has no problems with her dating somebody. It is just that the guy should follow some clauses set by her father. Speaking about the same Kannika Kapur aka Suman said: "I am comfortable sharing my personal life with my parents and they have been supportive of it. I am currently not dating anyone but my father has surely set some clauses for me if I date someone in the future." When asked about what kind of a guy she or her father wants, she said: "The guy should be as responsible as I am. Currently I am focusing on my career and I expect the guy to do the same. Looks doesn't matter to me, but the guy should focus on building up his own career and support me in what I do. It is okay for me to date a guy who is outside of the industry, he should also respect my parents and treat them like his own. Also, he should have my father's approval. In short, my king will select my prince charming."

The current track of Kannika's show is taking a major twist as Shruvan's secret would be revealed in Anish's party and the new friends Suman and Shruvan would be seen fighting while Suman slaps Shruvan. What is this secret? Will the two star-crossed lovers unite back?

ENT SPECIALISTS ON IBD

Sony Entertainment Television's latest offering, *India's Best Dancer* is garnering a lot of positive attention for its interesting content and the variety of talent that is being showcased on the dance show. The contestants who have come from different cities across the country are battling it out with each other only to bag the coveted title of India's Best Dancer. While the judges, Malaika Arora, Geeta Kapur and Terence Lewis are evaluating contestants on three factors mainly ENT, which is Entertainment, Nessness and Technique, they are having a tough time scrutinising them considering the phenomenal talent that is being featured in the show.

One such talent who left the judges spellbound with her performance is Swetha Warrior from Kerala. Swetha performed western-classical fusion along with choreographer Aishwarya on the song *Dilbar*. She got positive comments from all three judges for her act. However, Malaika was quite intrigued by her performance and was happy to know that both Swetha and her choreographer Aishwarya hail from Kerala, which is also where Malaika belongs to. So much so that Malaika even coined a term for the two, she said on the show she would like to call them "Malla ke Mallus." Seeing them perform took the dancing diva back to her roots in Kerala and she even complimented their act in Malayali.

Swetha, who was happy to receive good remarks from judges, said: "I started dancing when I was three and half. My mother is my inspiration. She is a professionally trained dancer and I still learn from her." Swetha's mother was touched seeing her daughter perform on stage and the mother-daughter duo later even performed Bharatanatyam on the song *Aarni*

Je Tomar in front of the judges.

SIDDHAANTH'S TRANSFORMATION

Siddhaanth Vir Surryavanshi has been a popular TV face for years now and he has a



massive fan following, especially amongst the ladies. Being part of several top shows, we've seen him don several looks. But for Zee TV's upcoming fiction show — *Kyun Rishon Mein Katti Batti*, the actor wanted to have a slightly different look. Playing a dashing, jet setting businessman on the show, he had to look a certain way and the makers experimented with several looks with the actor before arriving on one!

To be the hot and happening Kuldeep as they had envisioned, Siddhaanth had to reinvent his fitness regime. He along with the makers wanted to break the image of onscreen fathers and hence, they planned to make him look like a desirable man with quite the physique. Thus began the actor's transformation where he had to lose some of his belly fat, build six pack abs and gain some muscle. For the same, he went on a special diet and worked out regularly for a period of six months and, well, the results speak for themselves. But the transformation wasn't easy for Siddhaanth! The actor had recently undergone a surgery and just as soon as he recovered, he took on the role and committed himself to playing it to the hilt!

The actor revealed: "You know, there is this notion in everyone's mind that all the fathers on TV shows look a certain way. But who says dads can't be sexy? So, to break this mindset, we finalized on a ripped look and I knew there was a lot of hard work in store for me, especially post my surgery. After being diagnosed with stage one arthritis in my shoulder last year, I had to get a surgery done for the same. In fact, when the show was offered, I was still undergoing rehab. But my transformation phase helped me not only get into the skin of the character but also feel fitter overall."

Talking about his regime, Siddhaanth mentioned: "I just worked out regularly for six months, not missing one day or one session. Having three different trainers allowed me to focus on all the aspects of my body and they helped me tone down and get into the shape that we envisioned for Kuldeep. I also focused on my diet, which comprised of healthy alternatives and protein-rich food which helped us achieve the ripped body look."

QUOTEUNQUOTE

Seeing my children's happy faces, spending time, wrestling and cuddling with them, is my happiness potion. I think the best thing that this catastrophe has brought is that we are getting to spend times with our families. Gyms are shut but for me fitness can never take a back seat. I've been working out at home religiously. Maintaining a positive mindset is even more important now.



— Ashish Chowdhry who plays MJ in *Beohadh 2*



In times of the deadly Covid 19, I am majorly following reliable news sources in order to stay informed and avoiding public places and spending time with my family which we rarely get because of our busy schedule. Also, keeping my self busy by doing gardening and helping my wife with cooking and other household work.

— Tushar Dalvi who plays Sai in *Mere Sai*

I know the time is not right and everybody is on panic mood and scared. Even though we understand that being completely locked-down at one place and being home-bound is not easy to bear for so long but I would request all to avoid stepping out. We know the way Covid-19 is increasing day by day and people are falling sick and dying and we need to do our part to save us and others around us. Also, if you step out from your building to buy groceries, please get it for elderly in your society too and don't let them go out.

— Rishina Khandari who plays Rani in *Ishaaron Ishaaron Mein*

These are tough times. While we can't physically fight this virus, we can all do our bit and prevent it from spreading further by staying indoors and strictly observe social distancing. Given the schedule that we normally follow, it surely gets difficult to stay put indoors but this too shall pass. On the positive side, I'm spending a lot of time with my family and we are ensuring ways and means to keep ourselves occupied. From board games to movies to gardening and DIYs, we have been at it. I hope and pray for the well-being of everyone.

— Sourabh Raaj Jain who plays Chef Neil Oberoi in *Patiala Babes*

I am spending enough time reading all the novels in my 'To Read list'. I don't get enough time on the set to read despite sitting with it after almost every shot. Currently, I am reading a book that comprises of the most unusual poetries written that I started reading a couple of weeks ago. I hope to complete reading this book in the coming week. Other than reading, I also love folk music. I intend to sing and upload videos of it on my social media channels to keep myself as well as my fans entertained.

— Kamna Pathak who plays Rajesh in *Happu Ki Ultan Paitan*



The biggest thing I miss out the most on is spending time with my family especially my daughter. Now that I have some time, we've made a sort of to-do list to spend time together. Most of it includes trying all her craft DIYs (laughs) which she likes watching. Besides that cooking some delicious meals for her and my husband. Although I would have loved visiting my extended family back in Indore with her but looking at the current scenario it is in our best interest to stay at home. And this is something I would like to urge all the viewers too. Please take all the necessary precautions and stay indoors...*Kyunki hum ghar ke andhar, toh corona baha!* Stay safe and stay indoors.

— Shubhangi Atre who plays Angoori in *Bhabhiji Ghar Par Hain*



Due to shoot schedules, my fitness regime would often get neglected and I was able to work out for one or two days in a week. Now that I've got some time off, I have begun exercising at home and I'm enjoying it. Prior to taking up the character of Anjani in &TV's *Kahat Hanuman Jai Shri Ram*, I was pursuing Yoga which is performed in an extreme hot environment. I have once again begun practicing it at home where I switch off the A/C and fan and do the regular yoga asans. It helps in maintaining my weight plus brings an abundance of positivity especially at a time when we are enveloped in an environment of serious health concerns. My sincere urge to everyone is to take good care of your health by staying indoors and keep up with the exercise routines.

— Sneha Wagh who plays Anjani in *Kahat Hanuman Jai Shri Ram*

Shooting for a daily soap is hectic and during that time I didn't get time to watch even my show. So, finally now I am binge watching my show. Also I am a big time foodie and staying away from family, I don't get much of my favourite dishes so, I am learning to cook.

— Mohit Kumar who plays Shruvan in *Ek Dujhe Ke Vaaste 2*



In this Quarantine season as the shoots are on hold, I am trying to use most of my time catching up with my hobbies. I really like painting but because of busy schedules I don't get enough time. But right now, I am making painting which I wasn't able to complete or the ones I wanted to make from long time.

— Akanksha Puri of *Vignaharta Ganesh*



PM Narendra Modi ji gave a directive of 21-days lockdown which I will dedicatedly follow. I have been at home since last 15 days and I will be indoors unless the lockdown is lifted. I have stored basic essentials and I will only step out if I need to buy groceries or medicines. There are people who don't understand and leave their houses on bikes or cars, I really urge those people to stay at home as if we save ourselves, we will save the country. This is the chance to stay home and spend time with your family, eating healthy food, doing yoga and keeping yourselves fit and I myself am doing that.

— Bharti Singh host of *India's Best Dancer*

Delhi is under Lockdown until 14 April to contain the spread of Covid-19

A large section of the underprivileged are suffering as a result of the lockdown. The government is taking several steps to ensure no one has to sleep hungry.

- 1 7.5 kg free ration is being provided to 71 lakh people.
- 2 ₹ 4,000 to ₹ 5,000 pension is being given to 8 lakh senior citizens, widows and the specially-abled.
- 3 ₹ 5,000 will be given to all registered construction workers.
- 4 Arrangements for distributing cooked food to people are being made at various locations.

DIP/Shabdarth/D/0362/19-20

Come forward and join us in this effort

- 1 Ensure no one in your street or colony goes hungry.
- 2 If your domestic help is unable to report to work, do not cut their pay. If possible, offer them an advance.
- 3 If you have leased your property and your tenants are unable to pay rent immediately, give them one month relaxation so that they can pay the rent in installments.

This is our duty to society, a true act of patriotism.
If we don't stand with each other in these times,
then when will we?
We will defeat Corona together. Jai Hind!



Buses ready but better stay on: CM to migrants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said his Government has arranged buses to transport migrant workers. The CM also appealed to migrant workers leaving the national Capital to stay back. Meanwhile, his Deputy, Manish Sisodia also made a similar appeal, while stating that the Delhi Government has deployed 100 buses for people attempting to walk home from the city.

"The Governments of UP and Delhi have arranged buses. Still, I appeal all to remain where they are. We have made arrangements for stay and food. Please stay at home. Do not go back to your village, otherwise the objective of the lockdown will fail," Kejriwal said in a Hindi tweet.

A Delhi Transport department officer said buses were deployed after a large number of people started walking to their home states. The DTC and cluster buses will drop them at points along the border with UP where buses from that state will carry them ahead, he added.



"100 buses of Delhi Government and nearly 200 buses of UP Government are transporting people trying to leave Delhi on foot. Yet I appeal all to follow the lockdown. It's a solution to control the effect of coronavirus. There is threat of coronavirus on venturing out," Sisodia tweeted.

A large number of people, including women, elderly and children, from various states like UP and Bihar have started leaving Delhi and other neighbouring cities as factories, hotels, shops and other establishments have closed due to the 21-day nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the

spread of coronavirus. Delhi Social Welfare Minister Rajender Pal Gautam also appealed those leaving Delhi to stay, saying the Government will use school buildings as night shelters for them. The Delhi Government has started providing free food to nearly four lakh poverty-stricken and needy people at 224 night shelters and 325 schools.

However, there was no concrete plan for the thousands of migrant workers, labourers and daily wage earners in the city who have lost their jobs and livelihoods due to the lockdown.

26,447 e-passes for essential service providers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the nationwide lockdown over coronavirus in India, the Delhi Government is ensuring e-passes are smoothly issued to the essential service providers along with normal passes.

As per Government data, the Delhi Government has issued 26,447 e-passes to the essential service providers.

Besides issuing passes to the essential service providers, Government is also issuing passes to the vehicles carrying the essential commodities.

As per the data, Delhi Government has issued over 1300 e-passes and over 500 normal passes to the vehicles carrying essential commodities.

"Many State Governments have sought more information on the e-pass system implemented by the Delhi Government to implement the same in their respective states," a Government official said.

Interestingly, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal came up with a solution for private-sector employees engaged in essential services who need to be out during the Coronavirus lockdown and are being stopped by the police.

The Delhi Government has given the responsibility of issuing this passes to all the



officers of District magistrates of 11 districts.

"Till date, the Delhi Government has issued 26,447 e-passes to the people providing essential services and 1364 e-passes to the vehicles carrying essential commodities while The Government has also rejected 46,299 applications for e-passes and 47,914 applications are pending approval. In addition, the Delhi Govt has received 10,744 duplicate applications, whose e-passes have already been issued.

According to database with Delhi Government, New Delhi district has witnessed the highest number of people who have received these passes, followed by South Delhi.

A Delhi Government offi-

cial said that after the lockdown was announced the Delhi government witnessed that many of the essential service providers are facing problem to travel because they do not have company ID cards.

The Delhi government has also requested the police that till the time the government is working to provide these passes the police should allow people who are carrying essential commodities. The Delhi government has also clarified that no citizen will require such passes to visit the nearby markets or shops to buy essential commodities.

The Delhi Government has started a helpline number-1031- where people can call to get these passes. Chief Minister

Govt starts distributing ration for next month

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has started distributing ration for the next month in the wake of the 21-day lockdown, said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday.

"The Delhi Government has started distributing ration for the next month. 7.5 kg per person, which means one-and-a-half times more than the normal," Sisodia said in a tweet in Hindi.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced last week that those receiving ration from fair-price shops would get 50 per cent extra for the next month.

There are around 72 lakh beneficiaries of the public distribution system in the national capital.

According to the Union Health Ministry, 39 coronavirus cases have so far been reported in Delhi. The number of COVID-19 cases in India climbed to 873 on Saturday with the death toll rising to 19.

Govt procures 5 lakh testing...

The Modi Government faced a lot of criticism for testing fewer people for coronavirus.

"More than 5 lakh probes that were imported from the USA have arrived, which means we can test an additional 5 lakh people. More so, labs have still have reagents to test more than one lakh patients," Dr Gangakhedkar said.

Gangakhedkar said currently ICMR is utilising 30 per cent of its testing capacity. He added that serological test procurement has been revised from 10 lakh to 5 lakh, and the process is ongoing to validate Abbott's Point-of-Care testing kit.

The ICMR announced that the medical body was changing the criteria for testing of coronavirus. India will now be switching from random sample testing to testing of all patients with severe acute respiratory infections (SARI). By testing 15 people per million, it is testing the lowest number of people in the world.

ICMR initially tested only those people who had travel history and showed symptoms. Currently, the Government testing capacity stands at about 10,000 samples a day. In contrast, South Korea is

testing 20,000 samples a day. Officials said that India's initial testing protocol for coronavirus was narrow: till March 20, the country was only testing symptomatic patients with international travel history and those who had come in contact with laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 cases.

In an urgent communication, the Centre has asked all States to earmark hospitals only for treating COVID-19 patients and ramp up their capacity to manage an increasing number of cases. At least 17 States have started work on it.

On March 17, ICMR scientists stated India had 1.5 lakh testing kits. One million probes - an integral part of the testing kit - had been ordered from Germany and another one million probes had been requested from the World Health Organisation, they added.

It listed 12 approved rapid testing kits, with 11 having certification from the European regulator. The test kits certified by the European regulator include those by one Singapore-based firms Sensing Self Ltd, two US-based firms BioMedomics and CTK Biotech Inc, and at least five China-based firms like Getein Biotech, Hangzhou Biotest Biotech Co Ltd and Beijing Tigsun Diagnostics Co Ltd. Another Chinese firm Wondfo got its test kit validated by National Institute of Virology in Pune.

Northern Rly makes 1st prototype of isolation coach for corona patients

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to fight the coronavirus outbreak in the country, Northern Railway has successfully made the first prototype of hospital isolation coach for the treatment of corona patients by converting non-air-conditioned train coaches.

In order to construct an isolation cabin prototype for the patients, the middle berth has been removed from one side of the coach while all three berths have been removed in front of the patient berth, a senior official said, adding that all ladders for climbing up the berths have also been removed. The bathrooms, aisle areas and other areas have also been modified to prepare the isolation coach.

Each railway zone would manufacture a rake with 10 coaches every

week after once the best practices were finalised in the next few days, it said in a statement. "Then we will serve the hinterlands or whichever region needs the coaches," Northern Railway Spokesperson Deepak Kumar said.

To make the modified isolation ward, the middle berth was removed, the lower portion of the compartment plugged by plywood and a provision of partition provided from the aisle side for the isolation of the compartment, the railways said. Each coach would have 10 isolation wards, it added.

For medical equipment to be plugged in, the railways has provided 220-volt electrical points in each compartment, which have air curtains segregating one patient from the other.

Essential workers can apply passes online: Delhi Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Saturday said people can apply for movement passes on their website during the 21-day nationwide lockdown.

According to a senior police official, the applicants can visit the website of the Delhi Police to apply for a movement or curfew pass. A movement pass is required for those in essential services to move without any hassle during the lockdown.

On Friday, the Delhi Police Commissioner, SN Shrivastava had issued an order approving the smooth delivery of essential goods, including food, groceries and medicines, in the national Capital.

Earlier, when the curfew

for public safety was imposed, several employees of e-commerce firms had complained that police were not allowing them to ply on road.

On Wednesday, a meeting between senior police officials and e-commerce companies was held where police said they will allow these companies to deliver food and groceries.

However, on Thursday, Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava released another order withdrawing the online firms to re-start their services. Though the order also stated that the police will revise the guidelines for the online companies.

On Friday, the CP has again issued an order complying with the guidelines given by the Ministry of Home

Affairs (MHA). The MHA has said while the country needs to be in a "lockdown", supply and storage of essential goods, including health infrastructure and food must be allowed.

"The Delhi Police order has been forwarded to all the Special CP's, Joint CP's and Addl CP's in Delhi. They will follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that was given by MHA on Thursday," the order stated.

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, people must ensure social distancing while maintaining the supply of essential goods. Under the MHA's order, a ration shop dealing with groceries, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meat, animal fodder, seeds and pesticides will be allowed to sell.

PM's Covid fund: Donations pour...

From Page 1
Sameer Nigam, the CEO of mobile based money transfer company Phone Pe, pledged ₹100 crore to PM CARES Fund by collecting extra ₹10 per each transactions.

"This will inspire and enable a large number of Indians to donate to PM-CARES! - when India Fights Corona," Modi responded.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Brila has asked all the MPs to send consent forms to allot Rs 1 crore each from their MPLAD Funds.

Earlier, the Prime Minister appealed to public for generously donate to the newly created fund - PM CARES Fund. The new Fund, operating through State Bank of India, will function as a public charitable trust under the name of 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund) is chaired

by Prime Minister as chairman of the trust with members include Defence, Home and Finance Ministers.

"It is my appeal to my fellow Indians. Kindly contribute to the PM-CARES Fund. This Fund will also cater to similar distressing situations, if they occur in the times ahead. This link has all important details about the fund. People from all walks of life expressed their desire to donate to India's war against COVID-19. Respecting that spirit, the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund has been constituted. This will go a long way in creating a healthier India. The PM-CARES Fund accepts micro-donations too. It will strengthen disaster management capacities and encourage research on protecting citizens. Let us leave no stone unturned to make India healthier and more prosperous for our future generations," said Modi

in social media giving details of the account details for the special fund. The donations are fully tax exempted and public donate money through online and mobile banking also, also part from the traditional payment ways like though cheque, demand draft or depositing cash at the State Bank of India's account also.

"Distress situations, whether natural or otherwise, demand expeditious and collective action for alleviating the suffering of those affected, mitigation/control of damage to infrastructure and capacities etc. Therefore, building capacities for quick emergency response and effective community resilience has to be done in tandem with infrastructure and institutional capacity reconstruction/enhancement. Use of new technology and advance research findings also

become an inseparable element of such concerted action," said Government in a statement.

Citizens and organisations can go to the website pminindia.gov.in and donate to PM CARES Fund using following details:

Name of the Account: PM CARES
Account Number: 2121PM2020
IFSC Code: SBIN000691
SWIFT Code: SBIN-INBB104
Name of Bank & Branch: State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch
UPI ID: pmcares@sbi
Following modes of payments are available on the website pminindia.gov.in - Debit Cards and Credit Cards
Internet Banking
UPI (BHIM, PhonePe, Amazon Pay, Google Pay, PayTM, Mobikwik, etc.)
RTGS/NEFT

From Page 1

There he requested them to stay back in the city as the Delhi Government has made special arrangements for their food and other basic necessities in various shelters across Delhi. In the video uploaded on Minister's official Twitter account, he is seen making an appeal to the labourers.

"My appeal to the people walking back to their villages is to return to their homes in Delhi. The Delhi Government has ensured that each one of you has an adequate supply of food. We have arranged for food and other necessities in our night shelters as well as in various Government schools. There is no need to worry," said Gautam.

The announcement came at a time when hundreds of migrant workers living in Burari, Sant Nagar, Shakarpur and other several places across

Delhi-UP border choked as...

the city on Saturday morning gathered at Noida and Ghaziabad borders with an aim to move to their States. At Ghazipur border (Delhi and Ghaziabad) the Delhi Police was seen sending the migrants workers in batches toward UP border, where a public transport was available to ferry them.

Similar scenes were witnessed at Ghaziabad's Loni, Raj Nagar extension, Kaushambi, Sahibabad and inter-State bus stand at Anand



Vihar.

The buses were all crowded and people jostled with each other for space, some even sat atop the buses. Hailing mostly from Bihar and UP, the labourers said they will be not able to pay their rent in coming days and they had no choice except to vacate accommodation with a little money they are left in their hand to survive and move towards their native houses.

"We labourers are paid on daily basis. With no work it was not possible for me to pay next month rent for my house in JJ cluster at Rangpuri so the only option was to leave for home. We have limited money with us now and it is better we should leave for our village," said Ramesh Kumar (37), a native of Sitapur district in Bihar.

Forced by unprecedented situation, the migrant labourers said they were feeling

trapped with no one paying heed towards their plight.

"The day lockdown was announced we (12 people including children) all packed our luggage and left for the bus stand but when we reached here, the bus services were suspended, leaving us with no other option but to spend our nights here but now we are being provided transportation so it's better we will reach our home," said Bhure Lal (43), who used to work as a labourer in city and hails from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Most of us had left towards their homes on foot due to unavailability of transport system. There is no food and even roof, so what would one do. I have two children but I can't walk towards Kanpur along with them on foot. Now bus is available I can reach my home now," said Vijay, a resident of Kanpur.

Migrants march to different tune

From Page 1

Goyal exhorted the associations to show the spirit of service and selflessness, and participate in protecting the nation and society. He said the Government is fully committed to support all the sections of society and is taking relief and confidence-building measures.

Meanwhile, four migrant workers from Rajasthan were crushed to death and three seriously injured when a tempo ran over them as they were walking along a highway in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Saturday. The victims were among hordes of migrants who were stopped at Maharashtra-Gujarat border and sent back as they were trying to return to their home States amid lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

Cases near 1K, fight stepped...

From Page 1

Incidentally, the number of coronavirus cases may have been surging with a few patients in Bihar showing no traceable source of exposure but Raman R Gangakhedkar, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable diseases at ICMR, said that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest social transmission of coronavirus has begun in India.

"There are some sporadic instances where cases have not revealed any history of exposure. But the numbers are not so exponential that we take it to mean that the virus is spreading rapidly," he said.

"It is all dependent on a person's memory and also whether they want to reveal their histo-

ry or not. Some people didn't even reveal that they tested positive while others hid their travel history. Till we see a significant number of cases to indicate community transmission, let us not overinterpret things," Gangakhedkar added.

However, he said that testing criteria has been expanded with all patients having severe acute respiratory illness are also being tested for Covid-19.

According to experts, the term community transmission means that the source of infection for the spread of an illness is unknown or a link in terms of contacts between patients and other people is missing. It refers to the difficulty in grasping the epidemiological link in the community beyond confirmed cases.

Maharashtra has reported the highest number of COVID-19 cases at 167, followed by Kerala, and Karnataka and Telangana. A 74-year-old from Hyderabad tested positive for coronavirus after his death, making him the first fatality from the virus in Telangana. Kerala also recorded its first death - a 69-year-old man who returned from Dubai and was under treatment at the Kalamassery Medical College following symptoms of pneumonia. The man's wife and the cab driver who took them from the airport to their house are also infected and undergoing treatment at the same hospital.

"The States have been asked to work for creation of separate hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients. The States are also creating isolation wards," said Aggarwal.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases crossed six lakhs on Saturday while over 28,000 people have been killed

due to the infection which has engulfed almost every country across the globe.

Replying to a query, Aggarwal said that comorbid conditions are major factor for the deaths cases while it has been found that, as per reports world over also, elderly people are at a higher risk. He also said that chronic patients with associated ailments will be delivered medicines at home.

Meanwhile, the Health Minister inaugurated 24x7 national tele-medicine facility 9115444155 at AIIMS for better COVID-19 management. Union Health Minister Dr Harshvardhan said, "We have opened a COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre today for doctors who are treating people with virus so that they can get in touch with other doctors for consultation regarding treatment of any patient. Helpline number is 9115444155."

The Ministry has also released guidelines for telemedicine. "People who cannot go to

hospitals but need advice regarding medicine they are taking or any other medical problem can take telephonic advice from doctors. It has also been given legal sanctity by our policy," he said.

On the question that why antimalarial drug Hydroxychloroquine is being recommended to the Covid-19 patients, an ICMR official said that reduction in viral load has been observed in such patients who were given the drug.

In the meantime, SRL Diagnostics on Saturday said that ICMR has allowed their two clinical reference labs, at Mumbai and Gurgaon, to conduct tests for COVID-19.

SRL Diagnostics CEO Arindam Halder said in a statement that the lab has initiated testing, but currently there is a shortage situation for approved commercial kits for testing and PPE for sample collection, and, "we are trying our level best to bring the supply situation to match possible demand."

Sea of corona queries floods Govt helplines

From Page 1

Plans are afoot to increase the lines to reach out to maximum number of people.

Aggarwal, however said that people can approach the Ministry through e-mails and letters or any medium as well. "We will try to resolve the problem," he assured.

Since the coronavirus outbreak, the Government and States have launched a number of helplines besides apps and upgraded their websites, and put up circulars and advisories to raise awareness and answer questions about the Covid-19 pandemic.

For instance, the Union Health Ministry along with the Government initiative MyGov has launched a helpline number on WhatsApp. Users across the country can reach

out to the Health Ministry on +91 9013151515 for credible information.

In the wake of COVID-19 outbreak, many digital health care companies in the country too are trying to reach out to people to promote remote diagnosis.

Ratnesh Sharma from CallHealth Services said, "During these trying times, we are witnessing a high surge in virtual services including doctor consults, special consult etc. In line with that, we have created a dedicated helpline 'CallHealth Line for Covid-19'. Anyone across the country, rather from anywhere in the world, can call the helpline @ 91 33 55 77 99 to avail a free doctor consultation if they display or have queries pertaining to Covid-19 symptoms."

Be prepared, PM tells AYUSH professionals



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that the country must be ready to use the entire healthcare workforce to meet the Covid-19 challenge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) professionals to be in all readiness so that if the need arises, help from private doctors connected with alternative medicine system may be sought by the Government.

Currently, there are 7,99,879 AYUSH professionals from various streams across the States. It has been observed that Indian rural health system is totally dependent on ayush practitioners and Government hospitals.

The National Health Policy 2017 has already advocated mainstreaming the potential of AYUSH systems within a pluralistic system of Integrative healthcare.

Interacting with AYUSH professionals, he also underlined the importance of countering and fact-checking unsubstantiated claims of AYUSH having cure for the disease. He asked AYUSH scientists, ICMR, CSIR and other research organisations to come

together for evidence-based research.

Interacting with AYUSH professionals from around the country through video conferencing, the Prime Minister said that there role has increased manifold in the ongoing efforts to tackle COVID-19.

He also observed that the network of AYUSH practitioners is spread throughout the length and breadth of the country and "it is imperative for them to utilise this network, while working according to WHO guidelines, to spread the message of good practices which need to be adopted in the efforts to control the spread of the virus."

Last week, the Union Cabinet had approved the inclusion of AYUSH Health and Wellness Centre (AYUSH HWC) component of Ayushman Bharat in the National AYUSH Mission (NAM). It aimed at establishing a holistic wellness model based on AYUSH principles and practices focusing on preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative healthcare by integration with the existing public health care system.

Modi also praised the AYUSH Ministry in promoting yoga at home to de-stress the mind and strengthen the body during this difficult phase.

Modi also suggested that AYUSH medicine producers

Modi interacts with Chhaya, frontline warrior against corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister also interacted with Chhaya, a nurse of Pune's Naidu hospital, to applaud frontline corona warriors like her and a medical student from Kashmir, Nizam, who was rescued from Wuhan, to know his experience and take feedback about the Government's assistance to him and 60 other students along with him.

could utilise their resources towards producing essential items like sanitisers which are in high demand and exhorted them to utilise the platform of telemedicine to reach out to the public and generate constant awareness to fight the pandemic. He also highlighted the importance of enforcing social distancing with full vigour to counter the spread of the pandemic.

The AYUSH practitioners also lauded the Prime Minister for leading the country's fight against COVID-19 and talked about the impact of these traditional practices towards boosting immunity.

All BJP MPs to release ₹1 cr each from their MPLAD fund: Nadda

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda on Saturday announced that all party MPs will release ₹1 crore from their annual development fund to the Central relief fund to fight coronavirus pandemic even as he, through a video-conferencing, spoke to State BJP presidents of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and reviewed party's programme to feed five crore people daily.

Nadda, who announced BJP parliamentarians' contribution of ₹1 crore through MPLADS (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) fund, also said that all party MPs and MLAs will donate their one month salary as well towards the country's fight against the pandemic.

"All MPs & MLAs of Bharatiya Janata Party will donate their one month remuneration/salary to the central relief fund to support the fight against Covid-19. All MPs of BJP will release Rs 1 crore from their MPLADS fund to the central relief fund in support to fight against Covid-19," he said in his tweet.

The party at present has 386 MPs — 303 in Lok Sabha and 83 in Rajya Sabha. An MP gets ₹ 5 crore every year as part of the MPLADS.

Nadda through videoconferencing reviewed party's cooked food distribution programme by speaking to state

presidents, General Secretaries, senior office bearers, MPs, MLAs and district presidents of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and sought them to make the food distribution a success. He said not a single person should be left hungry "in this hour of crisis".

BJP General Secretary (Organization) B L Santosh was present during the meeting.

Nadda asked BJP workers to help out administration of respective states in the conduct of transportation and enforcement of lockdown as also assist the people who are self-quarantined. BJP has an estimated 11 crore of workers and is thus also recognized as the largest party in the world. A week before the lockdown, BJP had cancelled its all programmes across the country.

BJP president appreciated union health ministry's establishment of a task force, purchase order of 40,000 new ventilator, five lakh antibody kit through ICMR and seven lakh RNA kit and described it as positive step. Modi-government has made provision of ₹15,000 crore to deal with COVID-19.

Nadda highlighted Prime Minister's "statesmanship" during the crisis and his meetings with every section of society and in this series recalled his videoconferencing with the editors of print and electronic media as also with RJs (radio jockeys).

BRO personnel working hard to replace 'Daporijo bridge'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding the threat of COVID-19, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) personnel are working relentlessly to completely replace Daporijo bridge (430 feet Multi-Span Bailey Bridge), the only lifeline of Upper Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh to restore Lines of Communication for all 451 villages and security forces located along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China.

The armed forces have also activated isolation wards near the LAC and the Line of Control (LOC) facing Pakistan to deal with any case of the pandemic. The Army may also recall retired personnel with medical expertise if a need arises to shore up resources.

Giving details of the BRO undertaking the mission to construct the bridge, officials said here on Saturday more than 100 personnel of 23 BRTF/Project Arunank, on special request from the local administration, is working in full swing in spite of the dilapidated state of the existing bridge.

They said the BRO is committed to opening this vital line of communication by planned date, with all necessary precautionary measures. This bridge will ensure uninterrupted supplies like food and ammunition to the soldiers deployed on the LAC besides catering to the needs of the local population, sources said.

The BRO is the lead construction agency to build strategically important roads all along the LOC and LAC in inhospitable terrain and inclement weather. At present, the BRO is entrusted with the responsibility of constructing 72 strategic roads mostly in states having the LAC facing China.

Given this backdrop, the BRO in the northern part of the country is presently engaged in snow clearance operations on Manali - Leh axis, day and night despite inclement weather and COVID 19 threat to provide relief to Lahaul valley and Ladakh in an earlier time frame. Presently, Rohtang Pass and Baralachala Pass are being cleared by four snow clearance teams. This is the first time, BRO personnel were inducted by air to Sarchu to carry out snow clearance of mighty Baralachala Pass from Sarchu side.

In a connected issue, Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Lt General Anup Banerji said here isolation wards at peripheral hospitals were activated at Army formations along LOC and LAC.

Moreover, "Intensive information, education and communication campaigns are going on for serving personnel. Leave extension of those on leave as well as curtailment of leave to bare minimum have been imposed. Segregation facilities have been set up to observe troops already back

from leave from various States," he said.

As regards the ongoing efforts to fight the pandemic, he said 28 Service Hospitals were earmarked as COVID hospitals for managing purely Corona virus cases. This will include Armed Forces as well as civilian patients transferred from state health authorities, in case their capacity is overwhelmed.

Banerji also said as of now, there are five hospitals across Army, Navy and Air Force which can carry out COVID test. These include Army Hospital Research and Referral, Delhi; Command Hospital Air Force, Bangalore and Armed Forces Medical College, Pune; Command Hospital (Central Command) Lucknow; Command Hospital (Northern Command) Udhampur. Six more hospitals are being equipped shortly with the resources to begin testing.

On the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the AFMS chief said it is a challenge at national as well as global level, adding that advisory for rational usage of PPE has been issued to the Services.

"The AFMS is presently geared up with adequate PPEs for use in our hospitals. Additional procurement is also being planned to tide over crisis foreseen during the coming weeks and months since the Armed Forces have been directed to augment medical resources for the civil health set up also," he added.

Min urges corporate, biz houses based along highways to help migrant workers on move



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Ravishankar Prasad on Saturday said he would advise corporate and business houses, which have their factories or premises along the highways or roadsides, to provide help to migrant workers on the move in the wake of coronavirus shutdown.

"If any India corporates have factories or premises along roads in Delhi, UP or Bihar, I would advise them to make arrangement for their food and shelter after isolating them," said Prasad even as he pointed out that the

Government was reviewing the situation on a daily basis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tasked all in the government to take a specific responsibility and spoken to all Chief Ministers and bodies of pharmacist and doctors, he said adding constant supervision is being made as to how masks, ventilators or other medical equipments are being purchased.

On why the Government did not envisage workers' exodus and make arrangements while it airlifted Indians from abroad, Prasad said if workers had stayed back provisioning for food would have been

made. "If you go out, you are inviting trouble... Long walk of 500 km is not acceptable," he said.

The Minister said he has personally spoken to 19 District magistrates and SPs in Bihar and has been told by them that all migrant workers who have come from abroad and outside Bihar have been quarantined.

Prasad said the Uttar Pradesh Government has opened community kitchens at different places to provide support to labourers on the roadsides. He said all States including Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh were cooperating and working in unison.

Online education on rise since corona outbreak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With people and students staying indoors ever since the beginning of the country wide lockdown, there has been an increase of users on the digital platforms of education.

According to the HRD Ministry, the digital education initiatives have registered an increase in users and HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said that the access to the National Online Education Platform SWAYAM and other Digital Initiatives has tripled in the last one week.

The increase in the users is also because of the provision of free access. Earlier the courses on SWAYAM were time bound and students needed to register in advance.

The SWAYAM courses can now be viewed by any learner free of cost without any registration. About 50,000 people have accessed SWAYAM since March 23, 2020. This is over and above the 25 lakh students/learners who are already enrolled in the 571 courses of the January 2020 semester of SWAYAM. SWAYAM has about 1900 courses which can be accessed by people in over 60 countries. The videos of the SWAYAM Prabha DTH TV channels are viewed by around 50,000 people every day. The National Digital Library is now being accessed by about 43,000 people daily which is more than double of the usual number of persons accessing it.

The Education portals of NCERT like Diksha, e-pathasala, NROER and NIOS and the other ICT initiatives like Robotics education (e-Yantra), Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE), Virtual experiments (Virtual Labs) and Learning programming (Spoken tutorial) are also experiencing very large access rates.

National Book Trust too has opened for free downloads of several titles in the last one week.

Human rights bodies ask police to ensure marginalised are not mistreated during lockdown

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Saturday urged police forces in the country to act with restraint while maintaining law and order during the coronavirus lockdown.

The lockdown has left millions stranded, struggling to search for food and water, Amnesty International India (AII) executive director Avinash Kumar said in a statement. "Unfortunately for these people, a state machinery has become a larger threat than the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

This is "unfortunate" and the Indian Government must ensure that "insensitivity and

brute force be replaced by people-friendly measures in battling the pandemic," he said.

Kumar said India should respect and protect the rights of those under quarantine and ensure that their basic needs are met, including adequate shelter, food, water and sanitation.

HRW South Asia director Meenakshi Ganguly too urged Indian authorities to ensure that everyone has access to food and medical care, and that the poor and marginalised are not mistreated or stigmatised.

"The Indian Government's responsibility to protect its people from the outbreak should not come at the cost of

human rights violations," she said.

Tens of thousands of out-of-work migrant workers are stranded with rail and bus services shut down in the country. "Police actions to punish those violating orders have reportedly resulted in abuses against people in need," she alleged.

Indian police should be ordered to act with restraint while enforcing the lockdown. In several states, photos and videos show police beating people who are trying to get essential supplies. In West Bengal,

police allegedly beat a 32-year-old man to death, after he stepped out of his home to get milk," she said.

Cong forms task force to mitigate people's sufferings



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday constituted a task force to intensify efforts of party-ruled States to deal with the situation due to COVID-19 and help mitigate the sufferings of people.

The task force includes former Union Ministers P Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, M Veerappa Moily and Tamradhwaj Sahu.

A statement from the AICC said that the Congress president Sonia Gandhi has constituted a task force to intensify the efforts of Congress-ruled State Governments to deal with the situation prevailing on account of COVID-19, in a coordinated manner.

The members of the task force will start work immediately with the respective Congress-ruled State Governments to ensure that the daily distress and suffering of people is mitigated, the statement said.

"P Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, Tamradhwaj Sahu and Veerappa Moily, i.e. the chairmen of respective manifesto implementation committees in the Congress-ruled States will be its members," the Congress communication added.

The Congress has been criticising the Centre for not initiating enough measures to mitigate the sufferings of the poor and marginalised, who are facing hardships in view of the countrywide lockdown declared by the Prime Minister.

UP to release 11K prisoners for 8 weeks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government ordered the release of around 11,000 convicts and undertrials housed in 72 jails of the State to ease overcrowding and thereby prevent the spread of coronavirus.

A high-level committee headed by senior judge of Allahabad High Court, Justice Pankaj Kumar Jaiswal, and two

members, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi and DG (Jails) Anand Kumar made the recommendation to the Government which was approved by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday.

Of the prisoners to be released are 8,500 under-trials and 2,500 convicts.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had ordered all states to con-

sider the release of convicts on parole, whose punishment was not of more than seven years, so that the jails could be saved from overcrowding to prevent the spread of virus among prisoners.

As per officials, undertrials would be given bail for eight weeks on personal bonds while the convicts would be given parole for eight weeks in a similar manner.

Punjab, Haryana farmers explore 'sell-from-farm' option to neutralise 'corona effect'

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Given the mass exodus of labourers due to the nationwide lockdown, farmers of Punjab and Haryana are exploring the option of 'off-market' sale or what they call it as 'sell-from-farm'. For its part, the Maharashtra Government has asked farmers to form groups to sell vegetables and other essential items directly to consumers during the lockdown and to allow farmers to ferry the produce. Presently, 1,600-1,800 wholesale mandis has started func-

tioning partially and fully despite the shortage of labourers. There are 6,900 mandis in the country.

Farmers across the country are in panic because the ripening fruits and vegetables will rot because mandi operations have almost stopped, and labour cannot reach farms due to transport bottlenecks. Marketing of produce is now becoming a challenge for the farmers. Officials of Haryana Agriculture Department said that farmers who usually sell their crops through an established supply chain that was set

up by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee's (APMCs) have adopted a method to avoid market yards and sell their produces from their doorstep. Several farmers have started to sell their products from the farm and started supplying through their tractors.

According to farmers, losses will mount because it is harvest time for grapes, watermelons, bananas, muskmelon, chana, cotton, chillies, turmeric, jeera, coriander, onion and potato. Farmers are more concerned about dispose of their veg-

etables and fruits that is perishable.

Yudhvir Singh of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, claimed that most of the APMCs are closed at all major markets. "There are restrictions regarding the movement also. So in a scenario like this, the farmers have no option but to sit at home with their produce lying on the field. Therefore, more and more farmers are now resorting to this mode of trade because they need money immediately so that by March end, they can repay their loan obligations," Singh added.

Binod Pandey of All India Kisan Mahasangh said that at a time when APMCs are closed and supply chains are disrupted, the off-market sales model may rescue many farmers, who are often found off-guard and are vulnerable in times of natural calamities or market-driven fluctuations. "Therefore, more and more farmers are now resorting to this mode of trade because they need money immediately so that by March end, they can repay their loan obligations," Pandey added.

Officials of agriculture

ministry said that in Haryana, most of the APMCs have been closed. Some of them are opened but facing uphill tasks due to shortage of labourers.

In Gujarat, There was confusion as grain APMCs has been told to open markets on Thursday, but on Friday said that they had spoken to all farmers and traders, with all of them having agreed to resume on April

2. In Mumbai, several restrictions have been imposed on mandis to avoid gatherings. However, most mandis dealing in essentials have started func-

tioning. Grain market, vegetables, onion-potato all have resumed operations with staggered timing for loading, unloading and traders.

According to officials of Ministry of Agriculture, over 2,000 wholesale mandis have started functioning after the nationwide lockdown across the country. In Azadpur mandi, which is Asia's largest subzi mandi also are opened. There is no shortage of vegetables and fruits but there is no labour. Several trucks of farmers come to Azadpur on Saturday.

The agriculture ministry says there is no scarcity of vegetables and fruits in mandis. The grain mandis get activated during the time of harvest. Right now, the focus is on vegetable and fruit mandis. To normalise supply in major cities, the Centre has asked Mother Dairy's Safal vegetable outlets in Delhi, Safal Bangla retail outlets in Kolkata, Hopcoms retail outlets in Bengaluru and similar outlets in Chennai and Mumbai to monitor movement of supplies and coordinate with local administration.

Civic body stamps Haasan as 'home quarantine' by mistake

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Kamal Haasan, actor-turned-politician — was in for a shock on Saturday morning when he saw the Chennai Corporation's green sticker warning people pasted on the gates of his house in Alwarpet.

The green coloured "Home Quarantined" sticker was a warning to outsiders to stay off the premises of the palatial house of Ulaga Nayagan (Universal Hero), as the actor prefers to be addressed by all.

Local TV news channels, who are looking forward for signs of even minute 'mishaps' went to the town with Breaking News that the actor has tested positive for coronavirus and has been quarantined at his house.

Within one hour, employees work-

ing for Haasan got the sticker removed and told onlookers that it was a case of mistaken identity. The actor himself issued a clarification stating that he was no more a resident of the house at Alwarpet and it is being used as the office of the political outfit launched by him.

G Prakash, Commissioner, Chennai Corporation, told reporters that it was a case of mistaken identity. "It is a clerical error. The concerned officials in Chennai Corporation had received information that the resident of the house had returned from Dubai recently and as part of government guidelines that they have to be in isolation for the next fortnight," said Prakash.

It was found that Gautami, Tamil film industry's lead star in yesteryears who was a live-in partner of Ulaga Nayagan,

had given the address of Alwarpet in her passport.

Though the two parted ways some years ago, she did not inform the passport office about the change of address. The civic body officials who were under the impression that the duo were staying in the same house pasted in the sticker cautioning outsiders about the quarantined star.

"The sticker was based on the passport details. One or two instances may happen like this. Please don't blow it up," said Prakash.

The Saturday morning faux pas brought smiles to the faces of the actor's neighbors who are familiar with his adventure filled romantic life.

Coronavirus too has its lighter moments, one of the onlookers was heard telling.

Hyd varsity prof cracks corona code Cuts development cycle from 15 years to 10 days

Hyderabad: Amid a frightening picture being painted by coronavirus concerns across the world, there's a ray of hope emerging from the University of Hyderabad (UoH). In what could be a welcome breakthrough for the country and even the world, a faculty member of the biochemistry department has developed a possible vaccine against the dreaded coronavirus infection.

A statement issued by University of Hyderabad (UoH) states that Dr Seema Mishra, faculty of the Department of Biochemistry, School of Life Sciences, has designed potential vaccine candidates, called T cell epitopes, against all the structural and non-structural proteins of

novel coronavirus-2 (2019-nCoV) for experimental testing. These vaccine candidates are small coronaviral peptides, molecules which are used by cells to trigger an immune response to destroy cells harbouring these viral peptides.

Using powerful immunoinformatics approaches with computational softwares, Dr Seema Mishra has designed these potential epitopes in a way that can be used to vaccinate an entire population.

Usually, vaccine discovery takes 15 years, but the powerful computational tools helped in quickly enlisting these vaccine candidates in about 10 days.

A ranked list of potential can-

didate vaccines, based on how effectively they will be used by human cells to stop the virus, has been generated. With no matches present in human protein pool, these coronaviral epitopes pose no cross-reactivity to human cells and hence, the immune response will be against viral proteins and not human proteins. However, these results have to be investigated experimentally in order to provide conclusive evidence.

These results have been disseminated to the scientific community using ChemRxiv preprint platform for urgent experimental assays.

Acknowledging that currently social distancing remains

the best defence against nCoV infections, the University of Hyderabad (UoH) stated that vaccination will take some time as further work is needed on the candidate epitopes.

"We are hopeful that our computational findings will provide a cost-and-time-effective framework for rapid experimental trials towards an effective nCoV vaccine," the statement said.

The University of Hyderabad clarified that although the research has been disseminated, the scientific community, in vitro studies are required to be conducted for establishing the findings conclusively.

IANS

TATA ANNOUNCES ₹1,500 CR TO TACKLE COVID-19

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Tata Trusts and Tata Sons have collectively announced ₹1,500 towards tackling the situation arising out of the coronavirus crisis in the country.

"The current situation in India and across the world is of grave concern and needs immediate action. The Tata Trusts and Tata group of companies have in the past risen to the needs of the nation. At this

moment, the need of the hour is greater than any other time," Industrialist Ratan N Tata, chairman of Tata Trusts, and Messrs Tata Sons said in a statement issued here on Saturday.

"In this exceptionally difficult period, I believe that urgency emergency resources need to be deployed to cope with the needs of fighting the COVID-19 crisis, which is one of the toughest challenges the human race will face," Tata said.

The Tata Trusts committed ₹500 crore for: personal protective equipment for medical personnel on the frontlines, respiratory systems for treating increasing cases, testing kits to increase per capita testing, setting up modular treatment facilities for infected patients and knowledge management and training of health workers and the general public.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement, Messrs Tata Sons announced ₹1,000 Crores sup-

port towards COVID 19 and related activities.

"Tata Sons announces an additional ₹1000 Crores support towards COVID 19 and related activities. We will work together with the Tata Trusts and our Chairman Emeritus Ratan N Tata and would be fully supporting their initiatives, and work in a collaborative manner to bring the full expertise of the group," N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons said in a separate

statement issued here.

"In addition to the initiatives articulated by Tata Trusts, we are also bringing in the ventilators necessary and are gearing up to also manufacture the same soon in India. The country is facing an unprecedented situation and crisis. All of us would have to do whatever it takes to alleviate and enhance the quality of lives of the communities we serve" Chandrasekaran said.

Palaniswamy demands ₹1 lakh cr from Centre

Coronavirus cases touch 40

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The number of patients tested positive for coronavirus in Tamil Nadu touched 40 according to Dr C Vijaya Baskar, Minister of health. Both the patients were passengers who reached the State from West Indies and Britain. "Both travelled from abroad transit via Middle east, patients are in isolation and stable," the Minister said in a social media post.

Saturday saw Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy asking Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide an aggregate amount of at least ₹1 lakh crore as a special grant to the State Governments to combat the COVID-19 virus and kits aftermath. In a letter to the Prime Minister on Saturday, the extracts of which were released to the media, Palaniswamy pointed out that under the Indian Public Finance System, only the Government of India can in an eventuality, borrow freely from the monetary authority, the Reserve bank of India.

"The economic impact of the lock-down is likely to be very severe and unprecedented. Such difficult times call for unconventional measures to ensure that the economy is revived and re-in-

ated. Conventional economic doctrines and dogmas will need to be set aside temporarily. Hence, I request that the Government of India, in addition to permitting the additional borrowing by State Governments, should provide an aggregate amount of at least Rs.1 lakh crore as a special grant to the State Governments to combat the COVID 19 virus and its aftermath," the chief minister said in his letter.

The chief minister said that funds could be distributed in proportion of the size of each State's GSDP to the national GDP, since the expenditure out of this grant would also pump prime the economy and lead to its revival. "I request that Tamil Nadu may be given a grant of Rs.9000 crore under this special dispensation," he said in the letter.

It may be remembered that the chief minister in a letter to the Prime Minister on Wednesday had asked for special assistance of Rs 4,000 crore for augmentation and strengthening of the health infrastructure and for essential equipment, medicines and for preventive public health measures at this crucial juncture.

Number of patients afflicted with corona virus had reached 38 by late Friday night. Though three deaths were reported from Kanyakumari district on Saturday morning, the district administration is waiting for the causes of death.

"All three were admitted for ailments which were not connected with Corona virus symptom. We have sent samples for analysis and waiting for results. By late tonight, we hope to get the details," Prashant Wadnere, district collector, Kanyakumari, told The Pioneer over telephone.

Minister Vijaya Baskar appealed to all voluntary organizations and NGOs in the State to come forward and arrange hand washing facility at the entrance of their streets, apartments, and offices with water and liquid soap to prevent virus spread.

Interestingly, rural Tamil Nadu has taken up the fight against corona virus in a big way. Vehicles and people entering the premises of villages are forced to wash their hands and legs with water boiled with herbs and medicinal plants.

The village population is making use of the neem trees planted along the roads. In Pudukottai and Tirunelveli districts, those who got of the villages have to not only wash their hands and legs before reentering the villages but have to gargle their mouth with medicated water which has turmeric, neem leaves and tulsi. "Experiences in the past have taught us that this concoction is an ideal protector against any kind of contagious diseases," said S Muthukrishnan of Tirunelveli. Needless to say the villages where these people reside are yet to report any instance of corona.

13 fresh cases test +ve in J&K, tally reaches 30

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A middle-aged couple with a travel history to Mumbai, and four others who had come in contact with the first victim of coronavirus from Kashmir, were among 13 fresh cases tested positive in Jammu&Kashmir on Saturday.

The final tally of active cases till late evening stood at 30 with Kashmir valley alone recording 23 cases and Jammu region recording 7 cases so far. Two cases, admitted in the Government medical college hospital in Jammu have fully recovered and released from the hospital while one patient, hailing from Hyderpora area of Srinagar died on March 26.

Spokesman of the Jammu & Kashmir Government, Rohit Kansal on Saturday tweeted, "Tough to be harbinger of unpleasant news. But being

Five villages of Rajouri district have been declared as 'red-zone' after majority of contacts of three positive cases were traced to these areas

informed is being prepared. 7 more positive cases in Srinagar today, 4 cases- history of contact with already positive cases of religious congregation; other three- travel history outside J&K contacts being traced".

Meanwhile, five villages of Rajouri district have been declared as 'red-zone' after majority of contacts of three positive cases were traced to these areas. Official sources claimed, they have managed to identify maximum number of contact list and have quarantined them while three positive

cases have been isolated inside the dedicated ward for Covid-19 patients in Rajouri hospital.

In Samba district also, a big cluster of residential homes, located in the close vicinity of a religious place, was declared out of bounds after the district authorities decided to put them in home quarantine.

According to official sources, out of seven fresh cases, four of them had come in contact with a religious preacher during a congregation in the first week of March.

They are aged between 28-35 and at present receiving treatment in Soura medical institute. Another patient, a resident of Jawaharnagar in Srinagar, with a travel history to Indonesia was tested positive while a couple was admitted in the chest disease hospital after they developed symptoms on their return from Mumbai.

'Red Zone' scare in Hyderabad, GHMC steps in to clear the air

Hyderabad: With confusion and panic setting in different areas of Hyderabad over reported declaration of some areas as 'Red Zones' in the wake of the emerging COVID-19 scenario, the authorities stepped in to control the damage.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Commission (GHMC) issued a statement on Saturday that GHMC Commissioner Somesh Kumar has not announced any 'Red Zones' in the city.

Earlier, on Saturday, several media outlets and television channels had reported that "the Telangana government declared several areas of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation as 'Red Zones'. People in the red zones have been ordered to remain indoors for 14 days. Essentials

will be supplied to doorsteps in these areas. Hyderabad localities declared red zones include Chandanagar, Kokapet, Gachibowli, Turkayamjal, Kothatpet," read the statements on some of the TV channels. The news saw people emptying the streets in these localities and rushing to their homes. In the morning, many people had gone to nearby markets to purchase essentials, when the reports began doing the rounds.

Telangana has witnessed a spurt in the number of COVID-19 positive cases over the last two days. On Friday, the chief minister had said that 10 new positive cases were detected in one day.

The number of COVID-19 cases in the state stood at 59 on Friday.

IANS

Covid-19 cases reach 181 in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a disquieting development, the number of coronavirus infected people in Maharashtra jumped to 181 as 28 more persons tested positive for the pandemic, while the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) started two quarantine facilities with 285 beds at two different places in the metropolis.

"Of the newly infected Covid-19 patients, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 22 patients, while two persons were diagnosed positive for Coronavirus in Nagpur. The remaining four infected patients are from Palghar, Vasai-Virar and Navi Mumbai," a medical bulletin put out by the Public Health Department of the Maharashtra government under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) said.

"As many as 104 patients admitted to various hospitals are not showing any symptoms of Covid-19. However, the condition of four hospitalised per-

There have so far been six Covid-19 deaths in Maharashtra. The latest death was reported on Friday from the PD Hinduja Hospital, where an 85-year-old doctor died on Thursday night

sons is serious," the bulletin said.

There have so far been six Covid-19 deaths in Maharashtra. The latest death was reported on Friday from the PD Hinduja Hospital, where an 85-year-old doctor died on Thursday night.

The coronavirus had claimed first life in the state on March 17, when a 63-year-old disease-infected had died at the Kasurba Hospital.

Subsequently, another 63-year-old male patient, who had been admitted to private hospital in Mumbai died on March 21. Later on March 24, a 65-year-old COVID-19 patient died at Kasturba Hospital in

Mumbai. On the same day, 65-year-old woman died in a hospital at Navi Mumbai.

As many as 323 persons were admitted to various hospitals in the state on Saturday.

"Since January 18, 3816 people have been hospitalized in various isolation wards across the state owing to them developing symptoms such as fever, cold, cough etc. Out of the total admissions, 3391 laboratory samples were negative and 181 have been tested positive for coronavirus until today," the medical bulletin said.

Twenty six patients who have recovered completely from COVID-19 have been discharged from various hospital. "As many as 18,295 people are home quarantined in the state, while 5928 people are in institutional quarantine centres," the bulletin said.

In a related development, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) — in twin measures — started a new 250 bed Isolation centre at MCGM Centre for Municipal Capacity Building & Research (MCMCB) at Powai in north-east Mumbai and a 35-bedded Isolation Centre at Seven Hills Hospital and OPD with the support of HN Reliance Hospital. "The Isolation centre at Seven Hills Hospital for citizens," a BMC release said.

Confirming the

Coronavirus-related death of a 85-year-old male patient at a private hospital in Mumbai late on Thursday night, the BMC release said: "He was known case of diabetes mellitus and had a permanent pacemaker with no history of travel. He was in contact with close relative who had travelled to the United Kingdom. Patient positive on March 26 for Covid in a private laboratory which is being confirmed now."

In another statement relating to the death of 85-year-old doctor, BMC's Executive officer said that the son and grandson of the doctor who died at the Hinduja Hospital on Thursday had tested positive for Covid-19.

"In an effort to spread of Covid-19 following the death of the doctor who was a cardiac surgeon at Saifee Hospital, we have asked the Saifee Hospital administration to several measures including testing of all high and low risk contact swabs for Covid-19, putting to a stop to OPD work and admissions and cordoning of the Operation Theatre and ICU visited by the deceased doctor," the BMC release said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced the setting up of a "Chief Minister Relief Fund - COVID 19"

Uddhav appealed to industrialists, company heads, voluntary, religious organisations and citizens to join the Maharashtra government in fighting Corona virus on a war footing. We have set up the Chief Minister Relief Fund - COVID 19. I request you to donate money generously to this fund," the chief minister said, in an appeal made here on Saturday.

Don't throng shops to buy mangoes, fish: Goa CM

Panaji: Goans tend to "go crazy" when it comes to mangoes and fish, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Saturday, urging them not to throng vendors selling the king of fruits and fish and maintain social distancing in the wake of the nationwide lockdown that is in place to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

The plea from Sawant comes at a time when the state government appears to have failed to home deliver essential commodities to most parts of Goa and grocery stores in the state are closed due to dearth of stock.

"Goans tend to go crazy when it comes to mangoes or fish. Do not throng (parked) vehicles carrying cargo of mangoes and fish. This is not safe," Sawant told a press conference on Saturday. "We will be able to eat mangoes and fish in the years to come after the dread of coronavirus passes," Sawant also said.

Mango is the most popular seasonal fruit in summer and fish is a part of the state's staple diet. Fish markets in the state, which are classified as "wet markets", have been closed in view of the coronmavirus crisis.

IANS

Telangana Guv donates her one month salary to CM relief fund

Hyderabad: Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan has donated her one month salary to Chief Minister's Relief Fund as a token contribution towards controlling the spread of coronavirus.

Soundarajan on Saturday handed over a cheque of Rs.3.5 lakh to Principal Secretary, Disaster Management, M. Jagadeeshwar.

Earlier, she spoke Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar over phone and requested to him to extend all help to the daily-wage labourers who have migrated from other states to the Hyderabad city to eke out their livelihood. She asked the government to provide food and all other essential commodities sufficient for next 15 days. The Governor said she has

IANS

First virus death in T, six more test positive

Hyderabad: Telangana on Saturday reported first death due to coronavirus while six more persons tested positive.

A 74-year-old man, who had gone to New Delhi with family members, fell sick on his return and was admitted to a private hospital, where he died on Thursday night.

Health Minister Etefa Rajender told a news conference that the body was shifted to Gandhi Hospital and the screening showed he was Covid-19 positive.

The minister said the family members of the deceased were quarantined and four of them tested positive.

He said the deceased person with his family members had visited historic Jamia Masjid in Delhi.

IANS

Vijayan, Congress condemn cop for punishing people

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday condemned the act of Kannur Superintendent of Police Yathish Chandra, who was seen punishing three people by making them squat on the road, as they ventured out on the streets.

"This does not augur well and a report from the officials concerned has been sought. It is acts like these which play spoilsport to the general excellent work done by the police under trying times. These sort of acts won't be tolerated," he said as the video of the SP's action went viral.

Kannur is the the home district of Vijayan. However, Chandra told the media that "since we did not want to use the cane against older people, we made them to do it".

"People fail to understand the reason why they are asked to remain home. This is the only way we can keep down the spread and for some reason, people do not understand it,"

he said. In the video, he is seen telling the three, as they were engaged in squats, "Why is that you fail to understand what the media, the police, the governments are saying all the time... not to venture out."

State Congress president Mulappally Ramachandran said what they all saw is "totally unacceptable". "Such an act never even happened during colonial rule. This should have never happened and it cannot be accepted," said Ramachandran, a former Union Minister of State for Home. State police chief Loknath Behra reacted by saying personally he does not accept what happened.

"Now, we will wait for a report on what happened.. let it come," said Behra. Chandra was in the news when at the height of the Sabarimala temple protests in 2018, he was seen arguing with the then Union Minister of State Pon Radhakrishnan, when he reached the temple town.

IANS

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance
Branch office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal Tower, Plot No.-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110055

Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited hereby inform that all scheduled auctions, to be held for the period between April 1, 2020 till April 14, 2020 under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 stands postponed until further notice, due to unprecedented outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19). The list of auction that has postponed given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors	Details of the Secured asset (s) with known encumbrances, if any	Scheduled Date & Time of Auction
1.	Darshan Sachdeva (Borrower), Shelly Sachdeva (Co-Borrower)- NHNOD00000743449	Flat No. G-4, Ground Floor, HIG Flat, Plot No. 9/206, Sector-3, THA Residential Colony, Rajendra Nagar, Ghaziabad- 201005 Area of Property: 1000 Sq Feet, Types of Property: Residential Flat	April 08, 2020, From 11:00 AM onwards

Dated: 28-03-2020
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

GLOBAL DEATH TOLL OVER 28,000

While US now leads world in reported infections — with more than 1,04,000 cases — 5 countries exceed its roughly 1,700 deaths: Italy, Spain, China, Iran and France

Virus infections top 6L worldwide, long fight ahead

AP ■ BERLIN
The number of confirmed coronavirus infections worldwide topped 6,20,000 on Saturday as new cases stacked up quickly in Europe and the United States and officials dug in for a long fight against the pandemic.

The latest landmark came only two days after the world passed half a million infections, according to a tally by John Hopkins University, showing that much work remains to be done to slow the spread of the virus. It showed more than 6,07,000 cases and a total of over 28,000 deaths.

While the US now leads the world in reported infections — with more than 1,04,000 cases — five countries exceed its roughly 1,700 deaths: Italy, Spain, China, Iran and France.

"We cannot completely prevent infections at this stage, but we can and must in the immediate future achieve fewer new infections per day, a slower spread," German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is in quarantine at home after her doctor tested positive for the virus, told her compatriots in an audio message. "That will decide whether our health system can stand up to the virus."

The virus already has put health systems in Italy, Spain and France under extreme strain. Lockdowns of varying severity have been introduced across Europe, nearly emptying streets in normally bustling cities, including Paris where

drone photos showed the city's landmarks eerily deserted.

Merkel's chief of staff, Helge Braun, said that Germany — where authorities closed nonessential shops and banned gatherings of more than two in public — won't relax its restrictions before April 20.

Spain, where stay-at-home restrictions have been in place for nearly two weeks, reported 832 more deaths on Saturday, its highest daily total yet, bringing its total to 5,690. Another 8,000 confirmed infections pushed that count above 72,000.

Doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers in its worst-hit regions are falling ill at an alarming rate and working nonstop. More than 9,000 health workers in the country have been infected.

"We are completely overwhelmed," said ambulance medic Pablo Rojo at Barcelona's Dos de Maig hospital. "Seven or eight (patients transported today) and all with COVID-19. ... And the average age is decreasing. They're not 80 years old anymore, they are now 30 and 40 years old."

"Sometimes you become a bit paranoid, you don't know any more when you pick up the phone if you have cleaned your hands, if you've sanitized them or not. You touch your face with your hands," Rojo said.

Spain has struggled to get coronavirus tests and protective gear for health workers. The government has started flights



This image taken from drone video shows the empty streets of Paris around the Arc de Triomphe during lockdown

to transport the supplies directly from China to reduce waiting times.

As the epicenter has shifted westward, the situation has calmed in China, where some restrictions on people's lives have now been lifted. Six subway lines restored limited service in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in December, after the city had its official

coronavirus risk evaluation downgraded from high to medium on Friday. Five districts of the city of 11 million people had other restrictions on travel loosened after their risk factor was downgraded to low.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. But for others,

especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and lead to death.

More than 130,000 people have recovered, according to Johns Hopkins tally.

In one way or another, the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have been felt by two powerful and the poor alike.

On Friday, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson became the first leader of a major country to test positive for the virus.

He said he would continue to work from self-quarantine. Countries are still scrambling bring home some citizens stranded abroad by border closures and a near-shutdown of flights. On Saturday, 174 for-

eign tourists and four Nepali nationals on the foothills of Mount Everest were flown out days after being stranded on the only airstrip serving the world's highest mountain.

In neighboring India, authorities sent a fleet of buses to the outskirts of the capital to meet an exodus of migrant workers desperately trying to reach their home villages during the world's largest lockdown.

Thousands of people had fled their New Delhi homes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day lockdown that began on Wednesday and effectively put millions of Indians who live off daily earnings out of work.

In parts of Africa, virus prevention measures have taken a violent turn as countries impose lockdowns and curfews or seal off major cities, with police in Kenya firing tear gas and officers elsewhere captured in mobile phone footage whacking people with batons.

In the United States, New York remained the worst-hit city, but Americans braced for worsening conditions elsewhere, with worrisome infection numbers being reported in New Orleans, Chicago and Detroit.

New Orleans' sprawling Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, along the Mississippi River, was being converted into a massive hospital as officials prepared for thousands more patients than they could

accommodate.

In New York, where there are more than 44,000 cases statewide, the number of people hospitalised with COVID-19 passed 6,000 on Friday, double what it had been three days earlier.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo called for 4,000 more temporary beds across New York City, where the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center has already been converted into a hospital.

The struggle to defeat the virus will take "weeks and weeks," Cuomo told members of the National Guard working at the Javits Center.

President Donald Trump invoked the Defense Production Act on Friday, ordering General Motors to begin manufacturing ventilators.

Trump signed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package, after the House approved the sweeping measure by voice vote. Lawmakers in both parties lined up behind the law to send checks to millions of Americans, boost unemployment benefits, help businesses and toss a life preserver to an overwhelmed health care system.

Dr. John Brooks of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention warned Americans remained "in the acceleration phase" of the pandemic and that all corners of the country were at risk.

"There is no geographic part of the United States that is spared from this," he said.

Around the Globe

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack has developed symptoms of COVID-19, as the number of people with the coronavirus to die in the UK Passed the 1,000 mark on Saturday

The streets of Moscow were eerily quiet on Saturday with shops and restaurants shuttered after new measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus came into force. Officials in the Russian capital this week stopped short of imposing a full lockdown, but ordered elderly residents on Thursday to stay and home and closed all non-essential services for one week from Saturday

Four passengers have died aboard cruise ship carrying scores of people with flu-like symptoms that has been stranded off Pacific coast of South America for several days, liner company said. The Zaandam, with 1,800 passengers on board, is currently in Panama's territorial waters, having been prevented from docking in several countries due to virus fears

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Friday said "the tide is still coming in" as the city-state reported 49 new confirmed coronavirus cases, taking the number of COVID-19 patients in the country to 732. Lee said the tide has not turned here. "The tide is still coming in and we have to keep a very vigilant eye as the virus is still getting into Singapore," he said

With families across Europe confined to their homes to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, fears are rising of a surge in domestic violence. From Berlin to Paris, Madrid, Rome and Bratislava, associations that help victims of domestic violence have sounded the alarm after Europe overtook China to become the epicentre of the pandemic. "For many people, their home is already not a safe place," says the German federal association of women's counselling centres and helplines (BFF)

Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau: No Canadians with symptoms can board planes, trains

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has announced the donation of 2,50,000 protective face masks, which had just been located in United Nations storage facilities, to the United States for use in hard-hit New York City

US Navy hospital ship heading to NYC for coronavirus aid

Washington: President Donald Trump will send off a naval hospital ship on Saturday before it heads to New York City, as he aims to highlight the federal response to the coronavirus pandemic. The USNS Comfort, a 1,000-bed hospital ship, had been undergoing planned maintenance, but was rushed back into service to aid the city which is now the epicentre of the nation's outbreak. It is scheduled to arrive

Monday at a Manhattan pier a week after its sister ship, the USNS Mercy arrived in Los Angeles to perform similar duty on the West Coast. The president acknowledged that making the 140-mile trip to Naval Station Norfolk wasn't necessary, but said he was doing it to recognize the work of sailors and medical professionals who worked to get the ship out of maintenance more than a week ahead of schedule. **AP**

Spain counts 832 deaths in 24 hours, pushing toll to 5,690

Madrid: The death toll from coronavirus in Spain surged over 5,600 on Saturday after a record 832 people died in 24 hours, and the number of infections soared over 72,000, the government said.

Spain has the world's second-highest coronavirus death toll after Italy with 5,690 fatalities. The number of confirmed cases have jumped

to 72,248 as the country moves to significantly increase testing.

Although Spain's latest figures showed a daily increase of more than 8,000 cases, the rate of new infections appears to be slowing, with officials saying the epidemic appeared to be nearing its peak.

Madrid remains the worst-

hit region, with 2,757 deaths and 21,520 infections, leaving hospitals and mortuaries overwhelmed, and the regional authorities working to open a second temporary morgue in an unused public building near the airport to house the dead. An initial site was opened last week at the ice skating rink at the Palacio de Hielo (Ice Palace) shopping centre. **AFP**

Abe says country at critical stage

Tokyo: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says the country is at a critical stage in dealing with coronavirus infections but not at a point to declare a state of emergency.

Abe says Japan has managed to keep clusters under control by carefully following infection routes. But the initial strategy is now having a difficulty, with a rise of infections that are no longer traceable -- an early sign of infection explosion.

He says once there is infection overshoot, "our strategy of slowing down the peak of the infections will instantly fall apart." He adds "under the current situation, we are just barely holding up. But I understand we are standing on the edge." Abe convened a taskforce Thursday, the day after Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike made a



stay-at-home request to its 14 million residents after seeing a spike in the number of new cases of the COVID-19 to 41.

Japan has 2,180 confirmed cases, including 712 from a cruise ship, with 59 deaths, according to the Health Ministry. **AP**



A Lebanese activist tries to set himself on fire in protest after security forces ask protesters who have been holding a sit-in in Martyrs Square to dismantle their tents and go home in line with a nighttime curfew imposed by the Government to help stem the spread of the coronavirus in Beirut, Lebanon on Friday **AP**

UK VIRUS DEATHS PASS 1,000: OFFICIAL

London: The number of coronavirus deaths in Britain jumped by 260 in one day to pass 1,000, official data showed on Saturday, the day after Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself tested positive. At 5:00pm (1700 GMT) on Friday, the death toll was 1,019, up from 759 at the same time on Thursday, the health ministry figures showed.

As of 9:00am on Saturday, a total of 120,776 people in Britain had been tested, of whom 17,089 were confirmed positive.

Johnson and his health minister, Matt Hancock, were confirmed on Friday to be among those infected, although both said they had only mild

symptoms.

Their cabinet colleague, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack, revealed on Saturday that he too had developed mild symptoms and was self-isolating, but had not been tested.

In a video message on Friday from Downing Street, where he lives and works, Johnson said he would continue to lead the government's response to the outbreak.

Media reports suggest his pregnant partner, Carrie Symonds, who normally lives with him in Downing Street, moved several days ago to the couple's south London home to self-isolate there. **AFP**

Brazil's Bolsonaro makes life-or-death gamble

Rio De Janeiro: Even as coronavirus cases mount in Latin America's largest nation, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has staked out the most deliberately dismissive position of any major world leader, calling the pandemic a momentary, minor problem and saying strong measures to contain it are unnecessary.

Bolsonaro says his response to the disease matches that of President Donald Trump in the U.S., but the Brazilian leader has gone further, labeling the virus as "a little flu" and saying state governors' aggressive measures to halt the disease were crimes.

On Thursday, Bolsonaro told reporters in the capital, Brasilia, that he feels Brazilians' natural immunity will protect the nation. "The Brazilian needs to be studied. He doesn't catch anything. You see a guy jumping into sewage, diving in, right? Nothing happens to him. I think a lot of people were already infected in Brazil, weeks or months ago, and they already have the antibodies that help it not proliferate," Bolsonaro said. "I'm hopeful that's really a reality."

A video titled "Brazil Cannot Stop"

that circulated on social media drew a rebuke from Monica de Bolle, a Brazilian senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"Do you know what will happen, Bolsonaro? Brazil WILL stop. Your irresponsibility will bring thousands to avoidable deaths," she tweeted Friday.

"The destroyed lungs of these people, as well as the organs of those who won't be able to have medical care, will fall on your lap. And Brazil will not spare you," Bolsonaro, 65, shows no sign of wavering even as the nation's tally of confirmed COVID-19 cases surpasses 3,400, deaths top 90 and Brazilians overwhelmingly demand tough anti-virus measures. Pollster Datafolha this month found 73% of people supported total isolation, and 54% approved of governors' management of the crisis. Bolsonaro's backing was just 33%.

Does Bolsonaro actually believe, as he says, that the virus will be vanquished by a cocktail of drugs and Brazil's tropical climate? It's possible, but analysts say a more calculated political gamble may underlie his increasingly defiant position. **PTI**

Vatican official tests positive

Vatican City: The Vatican says neither Pope Francis nor any of his closest aides are involved with six cases among Vatican residents or employees who tested positive for COVID-19.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni has confirmed news reports earlier in the week that an official of the Holy See's secretariat of state office tested positive for the coronavirus. Bruni also has confirmed that the official lives at the Santa Marta hotel where Pope Francis lodges, too.

The health condition of the official "doesn't at the moment present any particular critical" aspects, according to Bruni. But as a precaution, the official has been admitted to a Rome hospital for observation.



Bruni says more than 170 COVID-19 tests have been conducted on Vatican employees and residents of the hotel. The Vatican hasn't specified if Francis was tested.

But Bruni added: "I can confirm that neither the Holy Father nor his closest collaborators are involved" with infected cases. **AP**

UJVN LIMITED (An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O. "UJJAWAL" Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone- 0135-2763508, 2763808, Fax-0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com

Time Extension Notice-II

In reference to e-Tender No. 13/E.E.(Gen)/RPS/Kig/2019-20 invited by this office it is to inform that time extension notice has been uploaded on e-procurement portal. Please quote your bids accordingly. For further details kindly log on to <http://uktenders.gov.in>. All other terms & conditions of tender shall remain unchanged.

1. Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal : 20-04-2020 up to 16:00 Hrs.
2. Last date of submission of original documents : 21-04-2020 up to 17:00 Hrs.
3. Date of opening of bid on the website : 24-04-2020 at 11.00 Hrs.

No. 176/ Date: 27.03.2020 Executive Engineer (Generation)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

UJVN LTD.
H.O. "UJJAWAL" Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones : 0135-2763508, 2763808 & Fax: 0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvnl.com

Date Extension Notice -1

Due to unavoidable reasons, the dates of tender invited for "Finishing Work of Hathiyari Power House of Vyasi HEP (120 mw) in District Dehradun (Uttarakhand)." against NIT No: 10/UJVN/03/EE(Civil-I)/VP/2019-20 are hereby extended as follows:

1. Last Date/Time for submission of bid on the portal : 20.04.2020 up to 17:00 Hrs.
2. Last date & Address for Submission of original documents : 21.04.2020 up to 17:00 Hrs in Office of the Executive Engineer (Civil-I), Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar (Distt-Dehradun).
3. Date and time of opening of bid on the website : 22.04.2020 at 15:30 Hrs.

All other terms & conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<http://uktenders.gov.in>"

Letter No. 180 Executive Engineer (Civil-I)
Dated : 27.03.2020 Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

UJVN LIMITED
H.O. "UJJAWAL" MAHARANI BAGH, GMS ROAD, DEHRADUN-248006
(Tele.: 0135-2763508, 2763808, Fax: 0135-2763507)
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, website: www.uttarakhandjalvidyut.com

Date Extension Notice - 2

Due to unavoidable reasons, the dates of tender invited for "Procurement of TMT bar of grade Fe-500 conforming to IS:1786 for Vyasi HEP" in District-Dehradun (Uttarakhand)." against NIT No: 08/UJVN/03/EE(Civil-I)/VP/2019-20 are hereby extended as follows:

1. Last Date/Time for submission of bid on the portal: 20.04.2020 up to 17:00 Hrs.
2. Last date & Address for Submission of original documents: 21.04.2020 up to 17:00 Hrs in Office of the Executive Engineer (Civil-I), Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar (Distt-Dehradun).
3. Date and time of opening of bid on the website: 22.04.2020 at 15:30 Hrs.

All other terms & conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the website. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<http://uktenders.gov.in>"

Executive Engineer (Civil-I)
Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar
पत्रांक सं 179 / दिनांक 27 / 03 / 2020
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

ITALY'S MEDICAL HEROES



A combo of portraits of Italian doctors and nurses taken during a break or at the end of their shifts in Rome, Bergamo and Brescia, Italy. The intensive care doctors and nurses on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy are often almost unrecognizable behind their masks, scrubs, gloves and hairnets their only barrier to contagion. Associated Press photographers fanned out to photograph them during rare breaks from hospital intensive care units in the Lombardy region cities of Bergamo and Brescia, and in Rome. In each case, doctors, nurses and paramedics posed in front of forest green surgical drapes, the bland backdrop of their sterile wards

Tech volunteers use 3D printers to make crucial virus masks

Edinburgh: 3D printer owners across Britain have answered the call of health leaders by teaming up to produce thousands of face visors to protect medical workers from being infected with coronavirus. The project, known as 3DCrowdUK, launched on Monday after medical institutions raised the alarm about potential equipment shortages due to the closure of supply factories affected by the virus. "We are basically getting all the people around the country who have 3D printers and we're enlisting them in our project to create face shields for the NHS," digital artist and 3D printer owner Seb Lee-Delisle told AFP. "We literally set it up on Monday and by now we have got hundreds and hundreds of people involved." The shortage of masks arose after factories in China closed due to the spread of the coronavirus in January and February. The masks are easy to assemble. Once the 3D printers have created the headband, a plastic film is placed on the front and elastic attached the back to hold it in place. AFP

Clashes erupt as people try to enter virus-hit Hubei

Beijing: In a rare display of public anger in China, dozens of people in central Hubei province, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak till recently, attacked official vehicles after they were stopped from crossing a bridge and travel to neighbouring Jiangxi after the lifting of the lockdown. Hubei province with over 56 million people was kept under lockdown from January 23 as part of aggressive measures to bring down COVID-19 cases which rapidly spread in the area. Videos on Chinese social media on Friday showed unprecedented scenes of police from Hubei and Jiangxi clashing on the bridge connecting the two provinces over barricades erected from stopping Hubei people from moving out over fears of coronavirus spreading. Policemen from both sides argued over how to verify if people were allowed to enter Jiangxi, according to local media reports. It was a major relief for millions of people in Hubei province, when the Chinese Government which kept it under lockdown lifted the restrictions on travel. The Government will permitted people from the province to travel if they hold a green health code, meaning no contact with any infected or suspected COVID-19 cases. PTI

Virus prevention measures turn violent in parts of Africa

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG
Police fired tear gas at a crowd of Kenyan ferry commuters as the country's first day of a coronavirus curfew slid into chaos. Elsewhere, officers were captured in mobile phone footage whacking people with batons. Virus prevention measures have taken a violent turn in parts of Africa as countries impose lockdowns and curfews or seal off major cities. Health experts say the virus' spread, though still at an early stage on the continent, resembles that of Europe, adding to widespread anxiety. Cases across Africa were set to jump above 4,000 on Saturday. Abuses of the new measures by authorities are an immediate concern. PTI

Wall Street tumbles after US tops world in virus cases

FIANS ■ NEW YORK
US stocks ended significantly lower amid the fast-growing spread of coronavirus in the country. On Friday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average slumped 915.39 points, or 4.06 per cent, to 21,636.78. The S&P 500 decreased 88.60 points, or 3.37 per cent, to 2,541.47. The Nasdaq Composite Index shed 295.16 points, or 3.79 per cent, to 7,502.38. Xinhua news agency reported. 10 of the 11 primary S&P 500 sectors traded lower, with energy down 6.93 per cent, becoming the worst-performing group. Utilities climbed 0.53 per cent, the only gainer among the sectors. The US became the country with the most COVID-19 cases worldwide on Thursday, according to Johns Hopkins University. As of 2 pm Eastern Time on Friday (1800 GMT), there were 94,238 confirmed cases in the United States, with 1,438 deaths, data from the university's Centre for Systems Science and Engineering showed. A shocking number of Americans applied for jobless benefits last week due to the coronavirus outbreak. US initial jobless claims, a rough way to measure layoffs, were registered at 3,283,000 in the week ending March 21, an increase of 3,001,000 from the previous week's revised level, the Department of Labor reported Thursday. The reading easily crushed the previous record rise of 695,000 in October 1982. Following a Senate approval earlier this week, the US House of Representatives on Friday passed a US \$2 trillion COVID-19 stimulus package by voice vote, sending it to President Donald Trump for signature. PTI

Pak anti-graft body summons Sharif in 34-year-old case

Lahore: Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who is set to undergo a heart procedure next week in London, has been summoned by 34-yr-old anti-graft body to appear before it on March 31 for allegedly misusing his power in a land case when he was chief minister of Punjab province in 1986. PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE
ICICI Bank
Branch office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal tower Plot no 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bag, New Delhi -110055
Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank hereby inform that all scheduled auctions, to be held for the period between April 1, 2020 till April 14, 2020 under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 stands postponed until further notice, due to unprecedented outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19). The list of auction that has postponed given hereunder:

Sr. No	Name of Borrower(s)/Co Borrowers/ Guarantors	Details of the Secured asset (s) with known encumbrances, if any	Scheduled Date & Time of Auction
1.	Satyaveer Singh (Borrower), Suman (Co-Borrower), LBDEL00001386142	Flat No. 1, 1st Floor, Plot No. S-2, Block-A, Shalimaar Garden Extension-2, Ghaziabad (UP)- 201002 Area of Property- 600 Sq Feet, Types of Property: Residential Flat	April 09, 2020, From 12:00 PM onwards

Dated: 28-03-2020
Place : Delhi/NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

UJVN LIMITED
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise)
H.O.: UJVN/1, Mahatma Bhagat Singh Road, Dehradun - 248006. CIN No. U41101UR2001SCC028586
Tel.: 0135-2763508 Fax: 0135-2763507 Website: www.uttarakhandujvnyut.com

Date Extension Notice-2
Due to unavoidable reasons, the dates of tender invited for "Hiring the services of Ambulances, fitted with all standard accessories, medical facilities and fittings as required for round-the-clock duty (i.e. 24X7), on rental basis for 12 months for nearby village affected people of Vyasi project" against NIT No. 09/UJVN/03/EE(Civil-I)/VP/2019-20 are hereby extended as follows:
1. Last Date/Time for receipt of bid : 20.04.2020 up to 17.00 Hrs.
2. Date of opening of bid: 21.04.2020 at 15.30 Hrs.
All other terms & conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged. Details of Tender & subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the Nigam's website www.uttarakhandujvnyut.com.
Executive Engineer (Civil-I)
Vyasi Project, Lakhwar Bhawan, Dakpathar
Ref. No.: 178/Dated : 27.03.2020
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

Himalaya Food International Ltd
(Formerly, Himalaya International Limited)
Regd. Office: 118, 1st Floor, 12 Gagandeep Building, Rajendra Place, New Delhi-110008
Tel. +91 11 45108609, Fax: +91 1704 225178
E-mail id: cs@himalayainternational.com
website: www.himalayafoodcompany.com

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the Extra ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Company had scheduled at Head office of Company at Village ShubhKhera, Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pardesh-173025 on Monday, 30th March, 2020 at 3.00 P.M. to transact the business as set out in the notice convening the said Extra ordinary General Meeting.
However in the light of recent decision of 21 days lockdown in Whole Country by Govt. of India on account of the spared of the COVID-19 pandemic, the said EGM has been postponed till the situation normalised. The details of the same will be shared with shareholders in due course. Company will intimate Rescheduled date with shareholders when situation normalised.
For Himalaya Food International Ltd.
Sd/-
Place: Delhi
Date: 28.03.2020
Surabhi Maheshwari
(Company Secretary)

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Kanchan D/o Chandra Bahadur**, R/o H.No. 22, Gali No. 6, Sainik Enclave-2, Mohan Garden, Delhi, Age : 25 yrs., Height : 5 ft., Complexion : Fair, Face : Round, Wearing : White Colour T-Shirt, Black Colour Pant and Black-Red Colour Chappal in Feet, has been missing / kidnapped since 11.03.2020 from the area of PS. Ranhola. In this regard a case DD No. 33-A dated 12.03.2020 has been lodged at PS. Ranhola, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local Police to trace out the missing / kidnapped girl but no clue has come to light so far.
if anyone have any information about this missing / kidnapped girl please inform undersigned
Website: http://cbi.nic.in, Email: cbc@cbi.gov.in, Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641, Fax: 011-24368639
SHO
PS. Ranhola, Delhi
DP/97/OD/2020. Ph.: 011-28363001, 28363002, 28363003

Will speak to banks to facilitate cash flow, ensure timely access: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Lauding efforts of bankers in this difficult time, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that she will speak to all banks to facilitate cash flow and enable timely access to all. She also assured that she will talk to states and ensure that there are no restrictions in the movement of cash, bankers, vendors or bank mitra. "Appreciate the service Bank Mitra/Banking Correspondents are undertaking across the country. Will talk to states — request no restrictions in their movements. Will speak to all banks to facilitate cash flow. Let's ensure timely access to all," the Finance Minister said in a series of tweets. It is to be noted that the Government earlier this week announced a slew of measures, including direct benefit transfer of cash assistance to poor, old age people and disabled, for mitigating hardship posed by outbreak of coronavirus. "The entire banking fra-

Tata Trusts announces ₹500 cr to fight COVID-19

FIANS ■ MUMBAI
In one of the biggest gestures of corporate benevolence, the Tata Trusts on Saturday announced an amount of Rs 500 crore to fight the COVID-19 pandemic raging around the world. Tata Trusts Chairman Ratan N Tata said the current situation in India and across the world is of grave concern and needs immediate action. "In this exceptionally difficult period, I believe that urgent emergency resources need to be deployed to cope with the needs of fighting the COVID-19 crisis, which is one of the toughest challenges the human race will face," Tata said. He made a pledge to protect and empower all affected communities with a commitment of Rs 500 crore for waging the "war against virus". The amount would be used

Tata Sons announces ₹1K cr

Mumbai: Tata Sons announced an additional Rs 1,000 crore support towards fighting COVID 19. This is in addition to the Rs 500 crore announced by the Tata Trusts. N Chandrasekharan, Chairman Tata Sons said, "The current situation in India and other parts of the world owing to the impact of COVID 19 is very worrisome and requires our very best action." and knowledge management and training of health workers plus the general public. He said Tata Trusts, Tata Sons and Tata Group companies are joined by committed local and global partners and the government to fight this crisis on a united public health collaboration platform which will strive to reach sections that are underprivileged and deprived. "We are deeply grateful and have immense respect for every person of member organisations who have risked their lives and safety to fight this pandemic," Tata said in a statement.

Infosys terminates services of employee making inappropriate post on social media

New Delhi: Infosys on Friday said it has terminated the services of the employee who had made an "inappropriate post" on social media related to the coronavirus outbreak. Infosys, in a tweet from its official handle, said social media post by the employee is against its code of conduct and its commitment to responsible social sharing. "Infosys has completed its investigation on the social media post by one of its employees, and we believe that this is not a case of mistaken identity," it noted. The individual, whose post triggered an outrage on Twitter on Thursday, had said "Let's join hands, go out and sneeze with open in public. Spread the virus". IANS

GEM creates separate page for medical equipment to help Govt fight Covid-19

New Delhi: Public procurement portal GEM has created a dedicated page on its platform for medical and protective equipment like thermal scanners, biohazard bags and disinfectants to help the Government fight Covid-19 pandemic, an official said. It has created several categories for medical supplies such as COVID-19 sample collection kit, reusable vinyl/rubber gloves (cleaning), eye protection (visor/goggles), disposable thermometers, single use towels, thermal scanner, cardiac monitors, ICU beds, ambulance, stretcher, wheel chair, portable x-ray machines and surgical isolation face shield, among others. PTI

Hyundai Motor's CSR arm ordering advanced testing kits for coronavirus from Korea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the CSR arm of Hyundai Motor India, on Saturday said it is ordering advanced diagnostic testing kits for coronavirus infection from South Korea as part of its measures to combat the pandemic. These advanced kits have a very high level of accuracy and can help serve over 25,000 people, Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) said in a statement. "Post receiving the shipment, the kits will be distributed in consultation with the Centre, and state governments to the hospitals in affected areas," it added. PTI

Mother Dairy doubles supply of fruits, vegetables to over 300 tonne/day in Delhi-NCR

New Delhi: Mother Dairy has doubled its supply of fruits and vegetables in Delhi-NCR at over 300 tonne per day to meet the rising demand amid the nationwide lockdown even as it faces some logistics challenges, a senior company official said. "Before the lockdown, we used to supply 160-180 tonne of fruits and vegetables per day in Delhi-NCR through our Safal retail stores. Now, we are supplying more than 300 tonne every day," said Pradipta Sahoo, business head of Safal. On Friday, Mother Dairy supplied 320 tonne, he said adding the company could increase it to up to 400 tonne per day. He pointed that there are logistics challenges like shortage of labourers and transportation issues but the company is managing. PTI

Telcos to opt for EMI moratorium; tariff to remain stable: COAI

New Delhi: Debt-ridden telecom operators are likely to opt for three-month moratorium to avoid cash crunch during the lockdown, industry body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said on Saturday. The telecom operators have spoken in favour of raising mobile call and internet rates at the earliest, however, they will keep the prices stable during the lockdown period, COAI DG Rajan S Mathews told PTI. "There is debt of around Rs 1.6-2 lakh crore that telecom operators owe to Indian banks. They will opt three-month moratorium in loan repayment to help them maintain cash flow. It is a relief for them," Mathews said. COAI also allied fear of hike in tariff by the telecom operators. PTI

Cyber security risk increases amid 'work from home' trend

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI
With companies across the globe turning to work from home, via the online medium amid the COVID-19 outbreak, threats to cyber security have increased. Deepak Bhawani, CEO at Alea Consulting said: "Companies, large and small, will be impacted due to ramifications of work from home, as this will lead to cyber security risk concerns. Proprietary corporate data is being accessed from laptops and home PCs that may not have the same level of firewall and security as in-office setups. Management and IT managers will subsequently need to reassess the risk to their data, and proactively evaluate their data loss prevention processes, as this can impact their reputation going forward, he added. Further, cybercriminals has also started to exploit fears around the COVID-19 outbreak to conduct email scams, phishing and ransomware attacks. Palo Alto Networks' Regional Vice President for India & SAARC Anil Bhasin said: "Cyber-criminals have been exploiting fears around the COVID-19 outbreak to conduct email scams, phishing and ransomware attacks. These emails and messages entice users to open malicious attachments by offering more information related to the COVID-19 situation but contain malicious files masked under the guise of links, pdf, mp4 or docx files. With employees taking to work-from-home, cyber security threat multiplies, says Debasis Mukherjee, VP, Regional Sales APAC at SonicWall. "These are exactly the times when hackers get creative with their malicious intent of hacking into devices and stealing data," Mukherjee said. From creating malicious links to developing otherwise unsuspecting apps, the hackers of the digital age are getting creative in executing their attacks. PTI

BRIEFS

NHPC AIRLIFTS MEDICAL MATERIALS TO IMPHAL
New Delhi: Keeping in view COVID-19 pandemic and 21 days countrywide lockdown to fight the crisis, in a major humanitarian gesture, NHPC Limited, India's premier hydropower company has arranged airlifting 2.6 metric tonnes of medical materials for Government of Manipur from New Delhi to Imphal on March 28. AK Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, NHPC said, "NHPC is fully committed to stand with the nation in this moment of crisis and has already earmarked Rs 4.5 crore to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The timely supply of medical material is most crucial and therefore we have aided the airlifting of medical material to Imphal which is remotely located and difficult to reach by road."
NTPC WITH NATION TO FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS
New Delhi: NTPC Ltd, India's largest power producer, has stepped up its vigil against global pandemic of COVID-19 by converting its hospitals into dedicated Covid-19 units. NTPC has already utilised its 45 hospitals/health units to make isolation facilities and procured requisite number of equipment for the medical staff to handle such cases effectively. As many as 121 beds, with all facilities, have been turned into isolation wards in these hospitals.

CLASS OF 2020

The deadly Coronavirus has pushed millions of students worldwide to the brink of a lost session. SHALINI SAKSENA explores how online education is being seen as a saviour in these lockdown times



According to a UNESCO report 130 countries have implemented nationwide closure of educational institutes, impacting over 80 per cent of world's student population. In India, it has impacted 250 million school-going students and millions of college-goers. Though it is of paramount importance that they remain safe and at home, it is just as important that their education is not interrupted.

To ensure students don't lag behind academically, many educational institutes across the country have shifted from physical classroom learning to online mode for several programmes. The JK Business School (JKBS) has partnered with Google to conduct all its classes and official work online. This means that institute can host meetings with up to 250 participants, live stream to up to one lakh viewers within a single domain and record and save meetings and classroom sessions to Google Drive.

Professor (Dr) Sanjiv Marwah, director JKBS tells you that this global health crisis will not hamper their belief of delivering intellectual excellence to their students. "While students, faculty and staff were told to leave campus after the Holi break to ensure social distancing, they all are today, completely networked and connected through online mode of teaching and learning. We are a socially righteous and technologically advanced institute and believe that digital and virtual space should be effectively used to ensure everyone's physical safety at the same time, the school stands committed to deliver quality education to its students and we are doing so," Marwah says.

Like, JKBS, there are several educational institutes that are looking at alternatives. Over the years, many edtech have come up to offer online learning. While there was a lot of lip service that it was a good option, there weren't many takers since students continued to throng physical campuses. Today, things are different. The campuses are empty. Parents and students don't lose out academically given the uncertainty for how long the lockdown will continue. The online mode of education is no longer an option but a necessity. The advancement in technology has made it possible for institutes to offer a real live classroom experience sitting at home even though there may be hiccups to begin with.

Nitish Jain, president of SP Jain School of Global Management, which has campuses in Dubai, Singapore, Sydney and Mumbai, tells you that given the present pandemic of coronavirus and social distancing everything has moved online. "It reminds me of the turn-of-the-century times that gave huge boost to the IT industry. This is one such time for online education. People have been looking at the online education for a long time. But it never picked as since students went to a physical campus. We also have a mindset that online classes are boring and going to a physical campus is the only way to learn. To an extent this is true. One would rather see a physical Professor teaching and engage with him. But schools like us have developed online education with high level of technology which is engaging. We call it Engaged Learning Online (ELO). There are two other universities that I know of that uses this technology — Harvard and Oxford," Jain says.

The technology is such that one can feel the physical presence of a Professor in the classroom. To begin with, there weren't many takers for this interactive technology. "We needed people to try it but there weren't any takers since there was no compelling need. Now in the last six weeks we have had 2,000 students who are on to this. While this was not the way we had wanted a breakthrough, but the industry has got the boost it needed," Jain tells you. While, it is expensive to develop the technology, an expense for the educational institute to invest in, for students there is available at no extra financial burden.

"The ELO allows students sitting anywhere in the world have access to a live classroom and hence a huge benefit. They can be in the comfort and safety of their homes and gain knowledge with no compromises," Jain says.

Jain tells you that it is important to understand the difference between synchronous and asynchronous learning when it comes to online learning. Asynchronous learning

means that there are pre-recorded lectures. While MOOCs became popular because one had an Ivy League Professor teaching at no cost, there was a fated flaw and hence only five per cent completed it. When given a choice of when to learn, a student is not going to do so. In synchronous learning, live Professor is teaching. But there are roadblocks here as well since the teaching happened over Google hangout with a headset. Again, not in tune with being in a physical classroom. The ELO puts one in a situation of a live class where one can see one's peers and the Professor, attendance is taken and students can ask questions. All we need a top-notch Professor, say from Sydney campus, teaching executives sitting in Nagpur. Technology is changing everything including education," Jain opines.

Does that mean that the country's education system is in for a revolution? Does this mean that we are looking at a situation where physical classrooms will disappear? Are we looking at a new method of teaching? One is told that that there is no one scenario to fit all. There will be some programmes that will totally be taught online and the rest may have a combination of online-offline classes — hybrid classes. "This is because technology has the benefit to reduce tuition fee. Those students who can't afford to study programmes due to financial constraints now have access to it. Online learning will also ensure a wider reach for the institutes. Also, certain classes, executive programmes and adult education, will go online," Jain says.

It is not just higher education where subtle changes are taking place. Platforms like Geneo, an interactive digital space by Schoolnet India Limited, have announced free live classes for students of Classes VI to X on its learning platform. It is offering live classes for Math, Science and English based on the first term syllabus of the new academic year of CBSE schools and those schools fol-

lowing the NCERT textbooks. The mentors will conduct topic-wise classes based on the school curriculum. Sessions will include access to learning videos and explorations on the platform to achieve concept clarity.

Shourie Chatterji, head, Digital Initiatives, Schoolnet India Ltd explains: "With COVID-19 outbreak, the learning lifestyle of millions of students has been affected across the world. Access to quality learning is imperative for holistic learning of the students. We ensure learning never stops and that students continue to receive quality education." To access the live classes, students can visit www.geneo.in and create a free sign up. Once logged in they should select the appropriate standard and click on join live classes. Students will get access to the classes schedule and all the learning material upon accessing it on mobile phones, PCs, laptops, chrome books and tablets.

Minal Anand, CEO, GuruQ, an online tutoring platform, tells you that their intention is not to replace home tutors but to act as a complement to the existing system. "Parents have always preferred home tutors. But now, they have had to shift to online since there is no option. This has given edtech a shot in the arm in these sad and tumultuous times. It has helped parents change their mindset that online education is not a waste of time and is good. The online platform offers 24x7 knowledge and students can choose a suitable time and study accordingly. Parents too can monitor what their ward has learnt for that day," Anand says.

It goes without saying that online learning comes with its share of distractions and disruptions since students are not time-bound to study and there is no regimen which can be a cause of worry. However, there are some online classes where the teacher can cut those students out who are not paying attention or mute them as

a sigh of punishment just in a live classroom scenario. Though it all sounds like a scene from a sci-fi movie, the fact is that the shift to hybrid learning has years to go before it can a permanent feature in a country like ours as there are several hindrances to overcome.

First, the parents who have had offline education. "They feel that if a system was good for them, it is god for their child. Second, the infrastructure. Online learning needs a good Internet connectivity. Parents still don't understand the benefit of high-speed connectivity. One can't have ₹400-₹500 data package for the entire house and expect good connectivity. Third, broadband companies need to lower their cost to make it accessible to middle class families so that it is conducive for their children to study online," Anand tells you.

Saiju Aravind, founder of EduBrisk tells you with certainty that physical classrooms are not going to disappear as they offer something beyond knowledge and rote learning. "Schools teach so much more than academics. It teaches life skills and communication skills, how to share things, it is about character building and regimented discipline. So physical classrooms will not disappear and therefore, learning environment will not change — Saiju Aravind Founder of EduBrisk

information. Then there are the connectivity issues at tutors' homes now. ■ Will online education be a permanent feature or is this a temporary phase? This will leave some impact on physical classroom teaching. Kids would like to come to centres for lesser number of days for physical classes. They would prefer to learn from home and come to centres for deeper learning.

Schools teach so much more than academics. They teach life and communication skills, how to share things, character building and regimented discipline. So physical classrooms will not disappear and therefore, learning environment will not change — Saiju Aravind Founder of EduBrisk

Physical and digital combination will emerge to redefine how kids will be taught. ■ What will it mean for the students and coaching institute? Students choose a coaching institute on the bases of access, proximity and finances. Online mode is cheaper and kids who earlier didn't have access to quality education will now have that. For the coaching institutes as well, it will mean one can increase more

deeper understanding of the subject with the Professor and peers discussing could be the way forward. Dr Akhil Shahani, MD, The Shahani Group that provides careers to lakhs of students via its academic initiatives says that due to COVID-19, there is a shift to online mode. "There are many platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom that any educationist can use. Now, people who were giving lip service will have to adapt to these changes and this will lead to major change in the edtech industry, Shahani says.

Even though online education has been there for some time, what needs to be done is to take it to the next level. "Students have now realised that learning is 24x7, just like in the corporate world where there is constant exchange of ideas and emails. Students are now stepping out of physical classrooms and believe that learning can be anywhere and anytime. There will be distractions. A student will want to get up to have coffee or take a bathroom break. He may even have the lecture running and not pay attention. But there are ways to monitor that students actually study. One is to give them assignments and projects to do. Second, go for online doctoring. While this may appear to be intrusive, it is an effective way to ensure students study even while at home," Shahani tells you.

He doesn't see this change as a phase. Once the mindset and behavioural change takes place, people will adapt. Once they realise that online learning is just as good and they actually enjoy it, even if they have an option of going offline, they still stick to online. However, Shahani doesn't see one module that will fit all. What he sees is smaller classrooms with collaborative exchange with 10-15 students. "This is when educationists might realise in the long run that they need smaller building and classrooms with facilitated interaction versus pure classroom learning," Shahani says.

Therefore, platforms like Webinar can step in to offer a solution where it is not just Professor to student interaction but also among peers. The future she sees is one where the student may have to go through a pre-recorded lecture first before there is a physical lecture on

information. Then there are the connectivity issues at tutors' homes now. ■ Will online education be a permanent feature or is this a temporary phase? This will leave some impact on physical classroom teaching. Kids would like to come to centres for lesser number of days for physical classes. They would prefer to learn from home and come to centres for deeper learning.

Physical and digital combination will emerge to redefine how kids will be taught. ■ What will it mean for the students and coaching institute? Students choose a coaching institute on the bases of access, proximity and finances. Online mode is cheaper and kids who earlier didn't have access to quality education will now have that. For the coaching institutes as well, it will mean one can increase more

batches and reach out to a lot more students with the online-offline combination. People will not be now just looking at one kind of education mode. ■ How well-placed and prepared are you? We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

Physical and digital combination will emerge to redefine how kids will be taught. ■ What will it mean for the students and coaching institute? Students choose a coaching institute on the bases of access, proximity and finances. Online mode is cheaper and kids who earlier didn't have access to quality education will now have that. For the coaching institutes as well, it will mean one can increase more

batches and reach out to a lot more students with the online-offline combination. People will not be now just looking at one kind of education mode. ■ How well-placed and prepared are you? We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

batches and reach out to a lot more students with the online-offline combination. People will not be now just looking at one kind of education mode. ■ How well-placed and prepared are you? We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

'Online study an excellent option in present situation'

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with AAKASH CHAUDHRY, director Aakash Educational Services Limited about the revolution taking place in education in times of COVID-19

■ Are we looking at a revolution in how we are going to teach?

There is an absolute change in the mindset of the parents and students. We had kids who had enrolled for our offline courses to begin on March 18 and March 24. We offered to shift them to online mode and all of them agreed.

We started our batches from March 18. Earlier, while the student stayed home, the

teachers were coming to the centres. But now, we have shifted the systems to the mentor's homes who are teaching from morning to late night.

People are experimenting and while this is not 100 per cent replacement to physical education, it is an excellent option in the given situation.

At least e-learning is helping students to gain knowledge and not sit idle.

■ What are the challenges when you take education to the digital platform?

We have been offering online live classes for the last five years and made ample changes. The platform we are using is fully interactive where a student can interrupt the ongoing class and ask questions.

The challenge comes in the form of the Internet connection and the device the student is using. We try and give free

information. Then there are the connectivity issues at tutors' homes now.

■ Will online education be a permanent feature or is this a temporary phase?

This will leave some impact on physical classroom teaching. Kids would like to come to centres for lesser number of days for physical classes.

They would prefer to learn from home and come to centres for deeper learning.

Physical and digital combination will emerge to redefine how kids will be taught.

■ What will it mean for the students and coaching institute?

Students choose a coaching institute on the bases of access, proximity and finances. Online mode is cheaper and kids who earlier didn't have access to quality education will now have that. For the coaching institutes as well, it will mean one can increase more

batches and reach out to a lot more students with the online-offline combination. People will not be now just looking at one kind of education mode.

■ How well-placed and prepared are you? We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

We have been working in the digital space since 2012. We are fully geared and prepared to teach students in hundreds of thousands from their homes where they are safe.

Virat 'boss' of Indian cricket

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Head coach Ravi Shastri has called Virat Kohli the "boss" of Indian cricket and said the support staff is there to "take the burden off" the skipper.

Batting maestro Kohli has been at the heart of India's world-record 12 Test victories in a row on home soil.

"The captain is the boss, I always believe that. The job of the coaching staff, as far as I'm concerned, is to prepare the guys in the best possible way to be able to go out there and play brave, positive, fearless cricket," Shastri said.

Shastri was speaking to former England captains Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton and Rob Key during a *Sky Cricket Podcast*.

"The captain leads from the front. Yes, we are there to take off the burden but you leave him to do his job in the middle. The captain sets the tone and is encouraged to set the tone. In the middle, he controls the show."

Shastri, who took over as the head coach in 2017, largely attributed India's march to top of the ICC Test rankings to Kohli.

He also spoke about how Kohli's relentless focus on fitness rubbed on to his teammates.

"When you talk about fitness, the leadership came from the top and that is Virat. He is not a guy to mess around."

"He woke up one morning and said if I want to play this game I want to be the fittest player in the world and compete against the best in all conditions and he let his body go through one hell of a lot."

In recent years, Kohli is one of the very few regulars of the team to have played almost non-stop, across formats.

"It was not just the training but the sacrifices he made with his diet. I could see that change happening all the time. He got up one day and said 'Ravi, I'm vegetarian!'"

"When he sets those standards, it rubs off on others. Test cricket for



us is the biggest form. It's the benchmark. We want to set standards," Shastri said.

'WELCOME REST'

Sport coming to a standstill owing to the COVID-19 pandemic is a "welcome rest" for India cricketers, feels Ravi Shastri, who has spent barely 10-11 days at home since leaving for the World Cup last May.

"(This rest) cannot be a bad thing because towards the end of the New Zealand tour, you could see some cracks coming up when it came to mental fatigue, physical fitness and injuries," Shastri said.

According to him, the players may use the time to re-energise themselves, especially after a gruelling New Zealand tour where India played five T20Is, three ODIs and two Tests.

"The amount of cricket we have played over the last ten months, that was beginning to take its toll. Guys like me, and some other guys from the support staff, we left India on May 23 for the World Cup in England. Since then we have been at home for 10 or 11 days."

"There are certain players who played all three formats, so you can imagine the toll it has taken on them, especially being on the field, adjusting from T20s to Test match cricket and all the travel that goes with that because we travelled quite a lot," Shastri said.

After the World Cup, the Indian team travelled to the West Indies, then played a long home series against South Africa that was followed by a full tour of New Zealand.

"So it has been tough but a welcome rest for players," the coach said.

India is currently in a 21-day lockdown and according to Shastri, his players knew something like this was imminent when the series against South Africa, right after the New Zealand tour, was called off.

"It came as a shock but to be honest, having been on the road during the South Africa series, we guys anticipated it," he said.

"We knew something was on the cards as the disease had just started spreading. When the second ODI was called off, we knew something was gonna happen and a lockdown was imminent."

"I think the players knew it was coming, they sensed it in New Zealand. There were apprehensions towards the end of that tour, when flights were coming through Singapore, out of Singapore."

"By the time we landed (in India), I thought we got out at just the right time. There were only two cases in New Zealand at that time, that has rocketed now to 300."

"The day we landed, that was the first day they were screening and testing people at the airport. So (we came back) just in the nick of time."



Kohli wasn't only one to struggle in NZ: Hesson

IANS ■ BENGALURU

Former New Zealand coach Mike Hesson feels that India were probably the best equipped team to have played a Test series in New Zealand in recent years even though they ended up losing 2-0. India were completely outplayed by the Kiwis, losing the first Test by 10 wickets and the second by seven. But the former Kiwi coach begs to differ and feels that the conditions were tough.

"I thought India are probably be the best equipped to have travelled to New Zealand, but the conditions were challenging," Hesson told the *Mumbai Mirror*. "They weren't ridiculous in any means, and they were challenging in both games (in the two Tests which India lost)."

India had batted first in both Tests and Hesson said that was an important factor as conditions got better as the matches wore on.

"The New Zealand conditions were challenging for everybody, especially in the first innings. Things certainly got easy later on. The first innings was challenging for anyone coming from overseas," he said.

Hardly any Indian batsman made a mark in the series, including captain and second ranked Test batsman in the world Virat Kohli. Hesson feels that Kohli and the others simply didn't get any time to adjust to the conditions.

"When the ball seams, there is very little time to adjust. You need time to adjust your technique. He certainly was not the only one (to have struggled). Also, New Zealand's plans for Virat were exceptional. New Zealand have had the best of attacks for a long time and they challenged the Indians," he said.



Dhoni's India ambitions might be over: Bhogle

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

With uncertainty looming over the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League, celebrated cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle feels it might be the end of the road for MS Dhoni as far as his ambitions of playing for India are concerned.

"My gut feel is that his (Dhoni's) India ambitions might be over. I don't think Dhoni would have been looking to September-October for the T20 World Cup. Maybe if he just had a great IPL but my gut feel is that was beyond him," Bhogle said while speaking on *Cricbuzz*.

The IPL, which had already been postponed to April 15, could be cancelled after India went into a 21-day lockdown from March 25 to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Dhoni, 38, last played for India at the 2019 World Cup in England where the Men in Blue were knocked out in the semi-finals. Since then, he has been on a sabbatical and is due to appear on the cricket field in the upcoming IPL edition.

The former India captain who will turn 39 in July was practicing with his team Chennai Super Kings (CSK) but had to cut short his stay in Chennai after the IPL was pushed back.

Bhogle further said that even though Dhoni might not make it to the Indian team for the T20 World Cup, he still may want to contribute for CSK.

"Last year towards the end of the IPL, towards the end of the league stage I got an opportunity of doing a couple of post-match presentations and there was Dhoni and he wasn't holding back at the presentations which were normally three four minutes but this one seven to nine minutes almost and when Dhoni is in that talkative mode we don't stop him," he said.

However, Dhoni's childhood coach Keshav Banerjee said the wicketkeeper-batsman should be a part of India's squad for the T20 World Cup.

"In a World Cup, you need experience. Rishabh Pant is still learning an KL Rahul as a keeper for a World Cup, I don't think that's the best idea when Dhoni is available for selection," Banerjee had said.

"This Indian team still needs him in a World Cup. Behind the wicket, he is an asset and in the middle, he still binds the innings together," Banerjee added, backing his ward who led India to 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 50-over World Cup titles besides winning the 2013 ICC Champions Trophy as captain.

BCCI donate ₹51 crore to PM Relief Fund

NEW DELHI: India's richest sports body BCCI on Saturday pledged a donation of ₹51 crore to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund in country's fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

BCCI's affiliated units have also contributed in this donation.

"Sourav Ganguly, President, Jay Shah, Honorary Secretary and Office Bearers of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) along with the affiliated state associations announced to donate ₹51 crores to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) to contribute towards strengthening the nation's disaster management capacities and encourage research to combat COVID-19 and protect Indian citizens," the BCCI release stated.

The BCCI's biggest flagship tournament Indian Premier League has been postponed till April 15 but in prevailing circumstances,

chances are that it may be cancelled.

"The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is first and foremost a public health emergency and the BCCI has a firm resolve that the nation gets all possible help to cope with the testing times," the release further stated.

With Pondicherry and Hyderabad already offering their stadiums for creating isolation wards, the BCCI has assured its support to the state machinery.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly had said that if West Bengal govt wants, they could provide Eden Gardens facility.

"The Board along with its state associations will continue to monitor and work closely with the Government of India, state governments and other state regulatory bodies and are committed to providing support to the state machinery in the face of adversity," the release stated.

Among cricketers, Suresh Raina's 52 lakh is the biggest individual contribution so far.

Also, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju donated his one month salary over and above Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directive to all BJP MPs to contribute ₹ one crore from MPLAD funds.

"PM Narendra Modi ji announced #PMcares Fund to strengthen disaster management capacities and to encourage research on protecting citizens. It accepts micro-donations too. Let us contribute to make India healthier and more prosperous for our future generations. I've donated my one month salary," Rijiju wrote on his Facebook page.

"Also keeping in touch with District Administration and authorized my nodal DC to use my MPLAD funds to purchase emergency medical kits to fight #COVID-19." PTI

Piedt eyes cricket career in USA

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

In an unusual move, South Africa off-spinner Dane Piedt is giving up his career in the ICC elite member nation and will move to the USA, with dreams of guiding the associate into a World Cup one day.

Piedt, who has played nine times for South Africa, will leave for the United States in the next few months to be part of the new Minor League T20 tournament, which is due to launch this summer.

"The USA were given ODI status last year so it's not completely out of the question," Piedt told *ESPNCricinfo*.

"I just signed the deal this morning but no one really knows when I will be able to travel. It was an opportunity I just couldn't pass up, financially and for lifestyle reasons, but it was still a tough

decision to make."

While he doesn't see himself being picked in the South African team in the near future after losing ground to other spinners, Piedt fancies his chances in America, where there is a dearth of cricketers with experience of playing in the top-flight.

"Shamro (Tabraiz Shamsi) has really made a mark in white-ball cricket and Keshav (Maharaj) has done exceptionally well for the Test side, he has done exactly what the team needs," Piedt said.

"And if you look at the sched-

ule, South Africa are not due to tour the subcontinent again soon and that's the only place where I might get a game."

The spinner has never travelled to the USA and doesn't even know where he will be based in the long term.

Piedt said he has been taking tips from former South Africa seamer Rusty Theron, who helped him secure the deal.

Theron has been living in the USA for several years and made his ODI debut for the country last year.

"He has given me some information, especially about the cricket scene there. It's a decent set-up and I know they have some good cricketers like Xavier Marshall and a few Australians and Indians who played in national Under-19 teams and then moved."



I've been thinking about how to articulate my thoughts on this for a couple of days now, so here goes. Everyone knows how much the Olympics means to me and how proud I will be to participate in my home country. Of course I am disappointed that it won't happen this year, but we'll all be ready to go stronger than ever in 2021! I support Prime Minister Abe's brave decision and the IOC 100%. Sport will eventually unite us again and be there for us always, but that time is not now. This is the time for people from all countries, backgrounds and races to rally together to save as many lives as we can. To me, that is the Olympic spirit. To the people of Japan: stay strong, hang in there, and let's show the world our beautiful country when the time is right in 2021. Stay safe everyone, take care of each other, be kind and we will make it through. Love, Naomi

Naomi Osaka on Saturday said Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and IOC took a brave decision of postponing 2020 Tokyo Games due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a post on her Twitter, Osaka said that although she was disappointed that Olympics will not take place this year, she is sure that "we all be ready to go stronger in 2021"

Gopi praises SAI's online workshop for athletes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The frustration to remain in the confines of their homes amid COVID-19 lockdown is palpable and no wonder SAI's various training modules of online workshop kept athletes and coaches glued on the opening day, earning praise from none other than Pullula Gopichand.

The sessions on opening day was attended by athletes and para athletes from all sport, including Olympic probables shooters Divyash Panwar, Apurvi Chandela, Abhishek Verma, Anish Bhanwala, boxers Lovlina Borgohain and Nikhat Zarin along with swimmer Srihari Nataraj.

Praising the initiative, national badminton coach Gopichand said: "In these testing times with the Coronavirus, it is important to keep oneself physically and men-

tally active and find ways to use our time better. These online sessions will certainly help in achieving that."

"Sport is not only about being competitive, challenges will be thrown up and it is how we face them with the best of our ability and keep moving forward," the chief national coach said.

The first session of the 24-series workshop started on Friday with physiotherapist Dr Nikhil Lately speaking about how to train at home during the time of Corona, getting over 8K views.

This was followed by a session on nutritional requirements during Corona by Ryan Fernando, which had more than 15K viewership from athletes, coaches and fitness enthusiasts.

Gopichand and former Indian hockey captain Viren Rasquinha were among many others.

Speaking about the sessions, Olympian wrestler Pooja Dhanda said: "The sessions are very informative. It helped me think differently about training while at home and helped me focus on the key areas. I look forward to the other sessions as well."

Lately on his part said: "For a lot of us, the moment the lockdown is lifted, we can get back to doing what we do, but it's not same for athletes."

"They are unsure if they will be at the same level as they used to be in the absence of regular training and competition."

"This is why we need to come forward and help our athletes and make them utilise their time and these online sessions initiated by SAI are so useful. With the nationwide reach that SAI has, it will definitely have a positive impact."



New Tokyo date 'won't satisfy everybody': Coe

PARIS: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe admitted on Friday that settling on a new date for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 will not satisfy everybody.

"All sports have made it pretty clear they have particular challenges at particular times of the year," said Coe.

"We are probably not going to reach a solution that meets with the approval of every sport."

"But there does have to be an element of flexibility and there is going to be flexibility for the next two years."

The 2021 World Athletics Championships, for example, are scheduled to be staged in August next year in Eugene, Oregon.

The 2020 Olympics, which were set for July 24-August 9 this year, were postponed until 2021 by the International Olympic Committee this week.

However, there is no definite date yet for the rescheduled Games with IOC chief Thomas Bach saying on Tuesday the Olympics "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021".

There have been suggestions even that the rebooted Olympics could be held in the spring and so allow athletes to avoid competing in the brutal heat and humidity of Japan's summer.

"There are clearly demands for this decision to be taken as quickly as possible — the athletes and the federations need clarity," added Coe.

"Once the decision is made, we can build (the calendars) around it." AFP

IOA ask NSF's their tentative roadmap for postponed Olympics

NEW DELHI: IOA President Narinder Batra on Saturday said the Tokyo Olympics qualification events, postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic, will be held once the health crisis is resolved and asked the National Sports Federations (NSFs) to prepare a list of such tournaments in their respective sports.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President also asked the top brass of all the NSFs to share calendar of their athletes' preparations for the Tokyo Games.

"The qualification events which were postponed will happen again at revised dates once this virus issue is resolved. Draft tentative planning for

that. Please share details of all the qualification events yet to happen in your sport," Batra wrote in a letter to the presidents of all the NSFs.

Batra also said the IOA and NSFs need to plan on the extension of contracts of the coaches whose tenures were to end this year.

The contracts of many coaches, including those from abroad, were to end by August when the Tokyo Games were to end before they were postponed to next year.

"As you are already aware that 2020 Olympics is postponed to 2021. We now need to plan for: Extension of Contracts for HPD (High Performance Director), coaches, support staff etc till end of 2021 as many such contracts are ending in



2020, the process needs to start as soon as possible," the IOA chief said.

"Draft training calendar for Athlete's preparation for 2021 Olympics. Please update on the present location of the athletes and their health," he said in the letter with copies marked for Sports Ministry and Sports Authority of India.

He said under the present circumstances, it will be very difficult to give any confirmations "but this is just to get everyone on same page".

Nearly 80 Indian athletes have so far qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in seven sports — athletics, archery, boxing, equestrian, hockey, shooting and wrestling. The IOA was expecting to rise the number to more than 120. PTI

Europe mull finishing football season at end of year

Europe's football bosses have not given up hope of finishing this pandemic-hit season — even if it might have to be done at the start of the next one.

The novel coronavirus has created an existential challenge to the world's most widely played and watched sport.

Europe's football leagues are the planet's richest and can afford to pay the most money to the biggest stars.

But that system could come crumbling down quickly if there is nothing to show on TV.

Cristian Ronaldo has not had a chance to celebrate goals for Juventus for nearly three weeks because Italy's Serie A had to shut down.

He and other Italian league stars are thinking of giving up millions of euros in salary to help their teams stay solvent.

UEFA boss Aleksander Ceferin told Italy's *La Repubblica* daily that he was holding urgent talks with the continent's biggest leagues to figure out what can be done.

The Slovenian said all options were under consideration in an effort to salvage the season and preserve the sancti-



ty of the beautiful game.

"We could start again in mid-May, in June or even late June," Ceferin said.

Any time after that and "the season will probably be lost."

The idea of the entire season simply being cancelled stirs panic in fans of clubs such as Liverpool — on the cusp of lifting their first title in 30 years.

Ronaldo's Juventus would probably not be terribly happy either. The men in the famous black-and-white stripes are edging Lazio by a point in their race

for a ninth successive title and are still in the Champions League, which they have not won since 1996.

Ceferin said he opposed the idea of playing games in empty stadiums and would prefer to wait out the pandemic.

He also hinted that some big teams appeared ready to delay the start of next season in order to finish out this one.

"There is also a proposal to end this season at the beginning of the next one and then start the next one a little later,"

Ceferin said. Serie A and most other European leagues were originally supposed to have finished in May.

Belarus remain the only European nation still playing football in the face of a pandemic that by Saturday had officially claimed nearly 30,000 lives.

THINK POSITIVELY

But the scheduling is growing tricky and time appears to be running out.

Most European leagues are

supposed to start their 2019-20 seasons at the end of August.

Italy still has more than two regular months of matches of the 2018-19 season to play out.

A resumption of the current season at the end of June would probably require a delay to the start of the next one until at least September or October.

It would also mean that players get very little rest and would also create problems for those whose contracts are expiring in June.

Italian Football Federation (FIGC) president Gabriele Gravina sounded fine with that.

"We would all be happy to finish the season on the pitch," said Gravina told Sky television.

"We are in contact with FIFA for contract extensions if we need to go beyond June 30."

Gravina did not explain why he was talking to the world football governing body and not the European one headed by Ceferin.

But he did concede that his earlier hope of restarting Italian matches in early May was now almost certainly dashed.

"I am aware that it is still too early," said Gravina. "But we must think positively."

Defoe backs Gerrard to become top manager

AFP ■ GLASGOW

Rangers striker Jermain Defoe believes his boss Steven Gerrard has the personal qualities that will take him all the way to the top in his management career.

At 37 Defoe is nearing the end of a career that has seen the forward work with the likes of managers Harry Redknapp and Sam Allardyce during spells at several clubs, including West Ham, Tottenham, Portsmouth and Sunderland.

Defoe compared Gerrard, in only his second season as a manager, to both Redknapp and Allardyce, adding the former Liverpool and England captain had a similarly acute understanding of players.

"I think he is going to be a top, top, top manager," Defoe told *TalkSport* radio.

"He is brilliant, he is a natural. In terms of management he is still fresh and new but you can see that naturally he has got everything."

"He always says to the players that if they want to go



Rangers boss Steven Gerrard AP

and talk to him his door is open. He is approachable which is really important as a manager.

"Sometimes there is things you want to talk about, you

might have personal problems but you feel uncomfortable going to the manager but with Steven you can go and talk to him about anything. He is chilled.

"He reminds me of Harry (Redknapp) and Sam Allardyce where you can approach them and speak about anything. It is important."

Gerrard's career, in common with much football around the world, is currently on hold with the Scottish Premiership one of several leagues that have been suspended in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

But Defoe, capped 57 times by England, had no complaints about the move given the spread of COVID-19.

"To be honest, there are more important things happening in the world than football," he told *TalkSport*.

"People are dying every day which is such a sad thing, it puts things into perspective and you think, you know what, football is not important at all at this moment in time."

Virus crisis hasn't ruined Rashford's recovery

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United striker Marcus Rashford says his recovery from the back injury that has sidelined him since January has not been affected by the coronavirus crisis.

Rashford sustained a double stress fracture in an FA Cup tie against Wolves that initially looked set to rule him out of the rest of the campaign.

But, with the pandemic postponing the Premier League season until at least April 30, Rashford has an opportunity to get back in action if the campaign can resume.

"I feel much better. I have a scan in another couple of days so it'll solidify it then but I feel, comparing it to two or three weeks ago, 10 times better and for me now it's just about getting ready to build it back up to training and playing games with the team," Rashford told *Sky Sports News* on Saturday.

"I'm in a much better place, I'm much happier than I was about a month ago so things are looking positive."

Despite government advice to stay at home during the pandemic, Rashford said the situation has had little impact on his fitness recovery work.

"Everyone is just dealing with the circumstances as well as they can," he said.

"I've just been in my house, doing my gym and recovery work, reading books, watching *Netflix*, just whatever you can do to make the time pass really."

"I'm fortunate enough to have a bike in the gym downstairs so not much in that sense has actually changed for me because I can still do my daily routine that I was doing."



"We are separated, but we are together. Forza Italia." The arch of Wembley Stadium in London is lit up in the colours of the Italian flag as a gesture of solidarity from the England Football Team on Friday. The arch remained lit for 90 minutes to coincide with what would have been the Heads Up International between England and Italy on March 27, that has been canceled because of the COVID-19 coronavirus. AP

'I struggled to breathe:' Dybala reveals coronavirus nightmare

AFP ■ TURIN

Juventus star Paulo Dybala revealed on Friday how he "struggled to breathe" after contracting coronavirus which has killed over 9,000 people in Italy.

The Argentine international announced last Saturday he was one of three Juventus players to catch the virus along with Daniele Rugani and Blaise Matuidi, who both had no symptoms.

"I feel better now after some strong symptoms," the 26-year-old Dybala told *JTV* channel.

"A couple of days ago I was not well, I felt heavy and after five minutes of movement I had to stop because I was struggling to breathe."

"Now I can move and walk to start trying to train, because when I tried in the past few days I started to shake too much."

"I gasped for air and as a result I couldn't do anything, after five minutes I was already very tired, I felt the body heavy and my muscles hurt."

"Now I'm fine. My fiancée Oriana (Sabatini) has also over-



Paulo Dybala in action for Juventus AP

come the symptoms."

Dybala has scored 13 goals in all competitions this season, including in league leader's Juventus's last game against Inter Milan before Serie A and all sport in Italy was suspended.

"The goal against Inter was the greatest emotion, (Aaron) Ramsey provided the perfect assist — it's a pity that there was no public," added Dybala.

'Difficult decisions' to come: English football chiefs

LONDON: England's Premier League, Professional Footballers' Association and Football League are steady themselves for some "difficult decisions" amid the coronavirus outbreak as they try to see if there is a way of restarting the season.

The three organisations all met on Friday to examine the financial

impact of suspending the season, with Britain as a whole in a state of lockdown.

"The Premier League, EFL and PFA met and discussed the growing seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic," they said in a joint statement.

"It was stressed that the thoughts of all three organisations continue to

be with everyone affected by the virus."

"The Premier League, EFL and PFA agreed that difficult decisions will have to be taken in order to mitigate the economic impact of the current suspension of professional football in England and agreed to work together to arrive at shared solutions."

Some clubs have asked players to defer up to half their wages, while players at Championship leaders Leeds, pushing for promotion to the lucrative Premier League, have volunteered for a wage deferral.

The governing bodies are set for more talks next week as they try to draw up a unified plan. AFP

L AFC vetoed Vela's potential loan to Barca

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

Reigning MLS Most Valuable Player Carlos Vela says he had a chance to join FC Barcelona earlier this year but his current side Los Angeles FC vetoed the deal.

Mexico's Vela said while it would have been a great opportunity for him in January he doesn't hold a grudge against his MLS employer.

"LAFc did not give me facilities to leave, although it is understandable. In the end, they seek the best for



themselves and each for himself.

"I tried and it did not happen, and nothing happens because I am more than happy here," the forward told *GQ Mexico* magazine.

Vela, 31, said Barcelona offered him a four-month contract.

Vela has emerged as an MLS superstar with LAFc since arriving on a transfer from Spain's Real Sociedad in 2018.

Last year, Vela scored a MLS-record 34 goals in 31 games, with 15 assists.

Indian players at physical disadvantage due to space constraint: Gloucester

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian players could be at a "physical disadvantage" due to lack of enough training space during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, feels team's former physiotherapist John Gloucester.

As athletes all over are self-isolating themselves, several cricketers, including England's Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler, have shared videos of their home workouts.

"The physical constraints that the Indian players are now having seems to be a lot greater than that of the guys in say, South Africa, Australia or the UK," Gloucester told *ESPNcricinfo*.

"Because space is an incredible constraint here. I've seen some fantastic footage coming out of the players in the UK where they're in their own gyms and they've got lots of space, and I think the Indian boys are going to be perhaps at a physical disadvantage there," he added.

However, Gloucester, who worked with the Indian team from 2005-08, feels post the lockdown every player will begin at a level playing field, without any match practice.

"Every single cricketer, probably for the first



Ben Stokes in action for England AP

time since the second world war, will be starting from exactly the same place in terms of match fitness," he said.

"This is really interesting, because normally when we enter an environment like the IPL, we have to manage guys who are overloaded, and factor that into their training, as well as guys who are under-loaded and need to match the necessary levels."

"Whereas on this occasion, everyone will be entering the tournament without any match fitness, which will bring with it a large injury risk because the expectation for all professional sportsmen is that you've always got to go at 100 percent."

The Indian Premier League (IPL) which was origina

Dovale dons white coat to take on coronavirus

AFP ■ CORUNNA

Journeyman footballer Toni Dovale put his football boots to one side and slipped into a pharmacist's white coat in the front line struggle against coronavirus in Spain.

The 29-year-old pharmacy graduate and former top-level sportsman had been playing football for a Thai club, but was visiting his family in Spain when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

So he decided to pitch in his 'grain of sand' against the virus using the studies which he had yet to put into practice due to his passion for football.

"I really was packing my bags to go back when things got complicated," Dovale said.

Travel restrictions trapped Dovale in his native La Coruna in the Atlantic coast region of Galicia, where he started his football career with nearby Celta Vigo. Although Dovale also completed his university studies in



pharmacy four years ago, he had never actually worked in the field.

Now with the world of sport in limbo the footballer realised the time was ripe to use his studies to help his homeland.

"I was playing in Asia then;

pharmacy is different there and I was never in Spain long enough to work," he says,

"With football stopped and travel banned I said to myself 'get some practical experience and do your bit'."

'FEAR'

The coronavirus is ravaging Spain with a death toll of over 4,800 and some 64,000 registered cases of infection.

There is hope of course with around 10,000 people already cured of the virus in Spains for multimedia clients

"We're in a really frightening situation. Those of us working with the public are afraid, and the people who come to us for advice are afraid too," says Dovale, who is working in a pharmacy run by his family.

He has gloves but no mask, and does not appear ready to lose his smile any time soon.

"We all know we are exposed, that this is a pandemic and a complicated situation," he says.

"But we all know too that our behaviour in complicated situations defines who we are, and for me I need to put fears for my own safety to one side and help in

any way that I can.

"There are shortages of many things and we are struggling to get enough of the simple things like thermometers, paracetamol, gloves and hand gels."

Dovale has played football for Spanish top flight clubs Leganes and Rayo Vallecano, Sporting Kansas City in the United States and also Bengaluru in the Indian Super League before moving to Thailand.

"Right now I'm the same as everyone else in that I train at home jumping over the furniture," he jokes.

"I start at 7am and I use whatever I can including bottles of water and stuff like that. Then I go downstairs to the pharmacy."

"I hope this is over as soon as possible and that I can go back to playing football again."

"Right now though everything is up in the air and I have no idea when sports will get going again over there (in Asia) or when we Europeans will be allowed to even travel again. I have no idea how this is going to pan out. Let's just hope it's all over soon and I can get back to my normal life playing football."



'I began acting at 8'



Talktime
VARDHAN PURI
The actor, grandson of Amrish Puri, who debuted with Yeh Saali Aashiqui, speaks with Shalini Saksena about his journey that started with being an assistant director to screenplay writer to an actor

■ **From an assistant director to an actor, how did acting happen?**
I had been with theatre since I was five. I used to be an understudy to actors and handle back stage before I got my first minor role when I was eight and a major role at 14. I did a lot of theatre. I then became an assistant director with Yash Raj Films, I became an assistant writer and was part of three films from start to finish. I realised that I didn't know much about acting in front of the camera despite theatre experience. I went to study that and got my first film — *Yeh Saali Aashiqui*.

■ **What attracted you to theatre at five?**
I was always obsessed with films so much so that I could be glued to the TV for 18 hours. My parents were scared that it would turn my head for the worse because my grandfather (Amrish

Puri) was an actor. It was his mentor, Satyadev Dubey, who suggested that I be put into theatre so that I could actually break my ego and learn the art instead of becoming just a filmi *bachcha*.

■ **How did you come onboard Yeh Saali Aashiqui?**
There is a story there. I am the writer in the project. The director, Cherag Ruparel, kept saying why we were looking for the lead when here I was a trained actor wanting to a break in Bollywood. I was not convinced that I could do justice to the character since it has many layers but agreed only after the makers agreed that I give an audition. I auditioned for a week and gave 10 scenes and once I saw the results I was convinced.

■ **Was it easy to do these tough scenes since you wrote the story?**
This is a very individualistic approach but yes it helped since I knew the character inside out.

■ **Was it the right project to debut with?**
It was something that I was waiting for. I never knew that I would be given the opportunity to act in a film where the lead has such complexities and layers.

■ **Bollywood is quick to typecast.**

PEOPLE GIVE YOU WORK BASED ON YOUR POTENTIAL, CAPABILITY AND TALENT. IF THIS WAS NOT THE CASE, I WOULD NOT HAVE HAD TO START MY CAREER AS AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND DEBUT AS AN ACTOR 10 YEARS BACK. ONE IS JUDGED FOR WHO HE IS

■ **Were there apprehensions in taking up the project?**
To begin with yes. But the kind of films that I was being offered are varied, I am signing up for genres like comedy, romance and action-drama. The industry has grown up and so much thought now goes into casting today.

■ **Do people judge because who your grandfather (Amrish Puri) was?**
People give you work based on your potential, capability and talent. If this was not the case, I would not have had to start my career as an assistant director and debut as an actor 10 years back. I had to train and prove my worth. One is judged for who you are.

■ **What was the atmosphere like at home while growing up?**
My mother is doctor, my sister is a doctor, my father is businessman and a trained navigator who was in the Merchant Navy, my nani and nana were lawyers. My grandmother was a Government employee, my grandfather was an actor. I am the least educated even though I am a graduate. I spoke about fitness and current affairs. Yes, filmi talk was a large part of the conversation but it was all about dissecting the kind of films that were being made and theatre.

■ **What has been the fondest memory of your grandfather?**
I was around 11 and it was my birthday. We used to always celebrate my birthday with my grandparents but they were away because dadu was shooting in London and he told me that it would be difficult for them to be there on that day. But he came even if was for a day. They got me the cutest gift, he played all kind of games with my friends and me — antakshari and dumb charades. We had so much fun that day. It is one of the most memorable days of my life.

■ **Did he advise you?**
Oh yes. He told me that acting is always about reaction. He asked me to never forget my roots — theatre. Preparation is key. Be disciplined and your family comes first. Treat your director like God and do your work with honesty.

■ **Your movie released last year and now on TV within six months & pictures. Is this beneficial?**
Things are changing today. Today, films run for five-six weeks maximum. The trend has changed. There are many people who can't see the film and we want to project the movie to them. The sooner it comes to the satellite platform the better.

BEAT COVID-19 BLUES

India is under lockdown for 21 days. This could lead to fear and anxiety in people. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with wellness and mental gurus who tell you how to cope with this and stay calm

While some of us are enjoying this 21 days lockdown and taking it as an opportunity to spend time with our families others are already tired of staying at home. Not only that, anxiety, stress and panic are here to add to all our coronavirus blues.

The fast increasing cases and the 17 deaths that have been reported in India till now are in itself disturbing and alarming. However, all possible measures are taken by the Government to atleast slow down the spread of the virus if not control it completely.

Rishikesh Kumar, fitness expert & founder, Xtraliving says that it is important to stay calm and compose in these hard times and not worry about physical distancing.

"Over the last few days there have been a lot of stress and anxiety among people about the lockdown. People don't know what to do in such a situation and that is what making them fret a lot. First thing that should be done is such testing times is to abide the rules made by the Government. There are no ifs and buts. The priority should be keeping yourself and your family safe at all times. Proper hygiene should be maintained and handwashing goes without saying. Second, extra care should be shown to people who are more vulnerable to the infection — children and the elderly. Third, boost your immunity. Now, while all of us are locked down, we have to make use of the resources available to us. Nutrition, exercise and proper sleep is the key here," he tells you. Basic 15 minutes of home workout, he says, is good enough to maintain your fitness.

"Add a lot of dark leafy vegetables along with citrus fruits in your diet. Drink plenty of liquids. This combination helps a lot in keeping one healthy. Good sleep is just as important. For this one have to eliminate stress. We have to just let go things that are happening around us and learn to compromise with the situa-



tion because there is nothing much we can do about it. Taking unnecessary stress and angsting about things that are not in your hands is the worst one can do to his body and mind," he says.

Self-isolation is also adding to the already existing anxiety and fear in people. "Humans are social animals. We need people around us most of the time. Therefore, social distancing is not the right thing to do but physical distancing is. There's a difference between the two. We should focus on improving our social relationship by reaching out to old friends and family even if you have somehow lost touch with them. Call them up. Connect with everyone you can via internet and mobile phones. The need is for physical isolation not social," Kumar says.

We should focus on improving our social relationship by reaching out to old friends and family. Connect with everyone you can via internet and mobile phones. The need is for physical isolation not social — Rishikesh Kumar

There are no two ways about it that couples are getting some extra 'me time'. However, staying together for 24 hours a day is not what most people are used to. "Most couples have never stayed together for this long. It could definitely result in banter. To avoid that, couples can engage themselves in activities that they have always wanted to do. One can pursue their hobby of painting or cooking. This is the right time for giving wings to all your dreams, but by staying at home," Ritika Jayaswal, mental wellness advocate and founder of Nourish Mantra tells you.

She adds that in order to eliminate fear about the coronavirus, people have limit reading about it. "Continuously reading about the virus and deaths related to it could

result in increased fear. However, completely ignoring things is also not a solution. The best way here is to limit your reading or for that matter watching news related to it to just 45 minutes a day. Don't keep on thinking about the same thing the whole day," she says.

The other thing that is equally distressing for most people is their child's extreme exposure to mobiles and technology.

"It is nothing short of a vacation for children. No school, no tuitions and only fun. This could lead to a complete disturbance in their schedule. Children are used to following timetables. Therefore, it is important for parents to make a proper timetable for their children and make them follow that by all means. Limit their screen time. Instead sit with them and play indoor games. Make a schedule for everything, from sleeping to eating to watching TV, everything should be done according to the timetable," Jayaswal says.

Working on your mental wellness is just as important. "What is working for me during this time is yoga and meditation. It is important to keep yourself busy throughout the day to stop overthinking but that doesn't mean you cannot relax. Do meditation and yoga or just improve your concentration levels by focusing on anything for few minutes. One can also focus on their breathing pattern. The simple science behind this is when your brain is in a panic mode, you tend to become short of breath. But when you focus on breathing, you force your body to sit down and take a deep breath. This on the other hand helps your brain to relax. There are a lot of people who say that they can't even sit for 10 minutes and focus on anything. In such a case, they can take help of various apps. These apps have guided meditation, one can just sit and listen to it and that would work. They key here is to not panic and let your brain relax. This time too shall pass soon," she tells you.

'We shouldn't force artists to always give a social message'



MUSBA HASHMI speaks with JATIN and MASSQLINE, about their rap song *Bhartiya Rail*, that personifies Indian unity and diversity through railways and how the creative idea hit them to give the song a hip-hop vibe

■ **How did the idea of *Bhartiya Rail* come up?**
Jatin: One of our friends was traveling by train. He wanted to travel in the first AC but he was not able to get a ticket and had to travel in third AC. He was telling me anecdotes about his journey. That's when the idea hit me to write a song about the Indian railways. This is how Massqline and I came up with the song *Bhartiya Rail*.

■ **How did the collaboration with Massqline happen?**
Massqline: We had known each other since our college days. Two years ago we made a web series. It was about college romance where we made music together for the first time. It worked well. We received positive response from the public. That's when we knew that we had something, some creative synergy that we both share, so we went on to explore it further.

■ **Do you think there is a need for more such songs that give out a social message?**
Jatin: I don't think there's a need, but yes if an artist wants to make something that has a social message and it's that is coming from the heart of the artist, then it's good. But we shouldn't force artists to make stuff with a message. It's their choice and after all it comes from the heart and soul, no one can force you to do it.

■ **You both are popular for fusing hip hop and rap and rock in music. Where did you get your inspiration?**
Jatin: Massqline comes from a hip-hop background. I've been in rock and metal so we fused it together. What makes us so unique is that we don't try to copy anyone's style, no matter how popular it is we like to create what we have in our own minds and thoughts. It's completely original whatever we create. If you see the lyrics, they are very balanced. The amalgamation of hip hop and rock and metal comes out beautifully together which is seen in our music.

■ **What does music mean to you?**
Massqline: Music is something that I can connect with. It's more of an easing force for me and I think for the rest of the world as well. I am actually a doctor by profession and now I am a musician too and music is my way of healing the world.

■ **What kind of songs do you listen to?**
Massqline: I like good music from all genres. The kind of music which holds me, which is always on my loop is the one that has an element of poetry in it — rap songs that have content of poetry in it. There is an artist from New York called Immortal Technique, he happens to be my favourite rapper. Eminem, KRS-One, Bohemia. All the artists who have used poetry in their lyrics, I like listening to them.

■ **What are your upcoming projects?**
Jatin: There are some Bollywood projects coming up but we have to figure out if we want to do it or not. We would want to focus on independent music. And there are four more songs coming up, every month a new song. We can't talk about anything in detail at the moment. But one thing is sure, our upcoming tracks will be fresh and exciting.

NAVRATRI SPECIAL

KHATTA MEETHA PUMPKIN

INGREDIENTS

- 400 gms pumpkin
- 1 tsp cumin
- ¼ tsp roasted cumin powder
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp dry mango powder
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 to 2 tsp sugar
- rock salt or sendha namak as required

HOW TO MAKE

1. Peel and chop the pumpkin.
2. Heat oil in a pan.
3. Crackle the cumin seeds.
4. Add pumpkin, sugar and salt.
5. Stir and cover the pan and simmer the pumpkin pieces until they are softened.
6. No need to add water.
7. In case the water dries up, then add about 2-3 tbsp water and cook the pumpkin.
8. Keep on checking at intervals and if the water continues to dry, then add a few tbsps of water again.
9. Ensure that the pumpkin should not get mushy.
10. Add mango powder and simmer for a minute.
11. Lastly season with roasted cumin powder and black pepper powder.
12. Garnish with coriander leaves.

Courtesy: Taj City Centre, Gurugram



THE TOY STORY

In light of the COVID-19 shutdown, all of us are facing the same question right now. How to engage children who are bubbling with energy but cannot go out and play? Here's a solution that ensures good screen time along with essential skills.

Augmented Reality (AR) has taken the entire world by storm. New-age toymakers have taken to AR and developed toys that are interactive, educational, and of course, entertaining. But what does it mean for us as parents?

Here's a quick guide on AR toys and how they are revolutionising education, one game at a time.

The link between the real (or physical) and the digital (or virtual) world, augmented reality is an interactive experience that blends both worlds.

In gaming, AR bridges the gap between the physical toy and the smartphone or tablet.

For instance, some games need you to use your smartphone to scan a real-world object to move ahead in the story. If the real-world object is a flashcard of a tiger, the smartphone presents interactive image, video or a



3D figure of the animal on the screen. In some games, the goal might be to find hidden objects by scanning your actual surroundings with your smartphone.

The reasons for the rise of AR toys are multifold. For starters, Gen Alpha kids are techsavvy and have access to smartphones, unlike previous generations. The prospect of bringing an object to life is fascinating and exciting.

If the topic at hand is how animals live in their natural habitat, AR can teach it through 3D models. Younger

children can listen to the sounds the animal makes and understand its eating habits, all through stories and simple games. Meanwhile, older children can learn about the food chain and complex ecosystems, through interactive and informative games.

AR makes it possible to explore multiple avenues of learning and present various pieces of information in a visual, easy-to-understand manner. Where a regular map tells you about countries and capitals, an AR-powered globe takes learning to a whole new level. It not only teaches geography, but also introduces you to various cultures, cuisines, monuments, and animals — all at the touch of a button.

The AR technology also helps the child interact with the world around them and creates two-way interactivity, where the child feels like they have control over what they're learning.

Moreover, AR creates a system of instant feedback that motivates the child to learn more and be more accurate.

With the increasing number of kids, parents, and educators alike who use AR-toys regularly, one thing's clear. AR-powered learning toys are the next big thing in education, and by the looks of it, they're here to stay.

The writer is Vivek Goyal, Co-founder of Playshifu

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

Beyond political ideologies
Spiritually conscious people respect all others on a spiritual plane, irrespective of their material position

2



4

Revive age-old traditions
It is time to remember our collective obligations, remain alert, and revive our tradition of maintaining cleanliness

There's no bad consequence to loving fully, with all your heart. You always gain by giving love
— Reese Witherspoon



STOP, LOOK & GO

RULES OF COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In times when social media is proving to be an important tool of information and expression, it is best to use this medium effectively to build relationships with people in your areas of interest and engage with them. Treat people with the same respect as you would expect from them, writes HORY SANKAR MUKERJEE

Social media is new opium of our masses. A two-way gate, where you listen to people and connect with people, instantaneously. Almost everyone uses it, in some form or the other, consciously or unconsciously guilty of making mistakes. With its rising popularity comes the challenges of bullying, trolling, circulating fake news, misinformation, violence, FOMO (Fear of missing out) and manipulations of facts. In such volatile environments, the onus cannot be put on 'no one', but 'everyone'. It becomes essential that we act 'now' to communicate with a sense of responsibility, empathy, care and compassion. The 'traffic light' approach-stop, look and go, is the first check point for you.

Stop: Stop before you read, write and post. Pause for a minute. You probably may want to revisit if you want to read, write or post.

When I started investing, I had an ocean of information floating around, later to realise that I do not have enough bandwidth to read, much of it being repetitive and things I never need to know. I pruned it down to two, saving time. Social media is loaded with information. Everything that you read; you forget some, retain some and use some of this information later. What goes in, eventually, comes out in some form. Ensure that you are reading or writing about things which is worthy of your attention and not garbage for your mind, heart and soul. Would you be more interested to read about a celebrity and his Mauritius vacation or a scientific invention that has the potential to change the world? While both are okay depending on 'who you are, what you want to read and where your interests lie', thumb rule is to 'downplay what you do not want to read'. Keep asking, 'am I enriching myself by reading this piece of information?' If yes, move ahead, if no, shun it down or block it. Limit yourself to an hour or two that interests you. It could be your hobby, research, work or a social group.

The post that you just read is a wonderful piece and it agrees/disagrees to your established thought processes. Your hand itches to put down some comments, give a 'piece' of your mind to the author or laud him. Do you want to spend your precious minutes and is it worth doing it? If you are still not convinced, think about the dog who barks when your car passes by. It really does not matter for both. Irrespective of what role you play (dog or the driver), remember that the dog will forget after your car has passed and the driver will not have a second glance on you. When you are hurt, angry, rejected, dejected, in pain, avoid writing. When you want to vent out your frustration, correct someone who is grossly incorrect, bully someone or troll, rethink your decision. Applauding, appreciating, sharing

your thoughts can be done without being a miser or sarcastic.

Stop being a virtual source of junk or a JIJO — Junk In, Junk Out. We have this precarious habit of sending out the information to everyone we know, or 'think' we know. Stop being the middleman for junk. People probably may be thoroughly offended with the piece of information shared, and you risk losing your personal brand and reputation. Be careful with your action. First, avoid spreading information unless it comes from an authentic source and second, avoid passing it on to others. If at all you need to, ensure that the information you spread around, is not negatively impacting any person, organisation or group adversely.

Look: Look, if your words or actions would demean someone, socially, physically or mentally. Are you being sarcastic, rude or just posting to have fun at the cost of the other? Is your intention good and acceptable?

If you have now decided to write it down, forward or post, ensure that you have a sanity check in place. Avoid the usage of 'biased' words. Ascertain your company's policies on social networking. Avoid posting or writing on topics related to acts that are defamatory, political, or religious in nature. Ensure that the nature of your post is not damaging you or your organisation's reputation. Are you oversharing, things which are untrue or unverifiable? Are you reacting to events or incidents, especially when things are flaring up? Are you lying or speaking half the truth? If yes, hold your message back. Remember that your image will be associated with 'your' content. Would you like to risk your reputation?

Go: Go, only if you are clear of your conscience that this is now ready for sharing, reading and adds substantial value to your readers. Posting to the social media means exposing yourself to everyone. Remember that some organisations as well as governments take keen interest in what you post. Their decisions as well as your future employment opportunities and your image can be severely affected based on what you post or what your interests are.

Communicating in the world of social media is different and complex. The audience is diverse and can reach out to everyone. You also need to keep doing the right things to keep your audience engaged. Here are some tips that are likely to help you:

Get your facts: Have you done your research for what you want to write. If you want people to read, you will need to engage them in a few words. The relevance of your content would matter the most to your audience. Understand your audience before you write and post. Get the right demographics



IN THIS CHAOS OF ENGAGING IN MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND DELIVERING ENGAGING CONTENT TO YOUR AUDIENCE YOU NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WITH WHAT YOU DO. IF YOU ARE THE ONE, WHO ENGAGES MOSTLY INTO READING AND NOT GENERATING CONTENT, YOU SHOULD SPEND TIME CHOOSING ON WHAT YOU INTEND TO READ OR NOT TO READ/COMMENT



and their level of understanding. Write content that is original or things that people would not have read anywhere. Your audience will check the 'freshness' of your post before it is read till the last.

Choose the right social platform: Choose the right platform. While posting on all platforms seems beneficial, it may not actually have the desired results. Find out what works for you. Do not spend money on a medium (if you are running a business) and forcing it to work for you. What works in Twitter, does not work with Facebook or vice versa.

Talk in a language, they understand: If you are a technology consultant writing a blog, you will need to use terminologies that your audience understand. Ensure that you know for whom you are writing and what you are writing. Keep it simple, precise and clear. Remember the KISS principle — Keep it simple, silly. Keep your language simple, easy to comprehend. Use headings, bullets and images. Avoid writing dragging paragraphs with one or two central ideas.

Use the 'right' images and videos: Never under play or over play with this powerful tool. It helps you tell a story and a picture is worth thousand words. But when the content is lousy and boring and refuses to engage the audience, it creates negativity. It can make or break your post, therefore use with clarity and be clear about how it helps you achieve your objective.

Call to action: Do you want only likes or upvotes or do you want to hear from your audience, or do you want them to share the content? Prompt your audience with what action you would want them to take. If you have not, then probably they would not.

Cross promote your profile or other content: If you are using multiple platforms or writing on different topics that interests you, ensure that you are cross promoting yourself. Ensure that you link to other articles, posts and write ups that interest you or encourage people to click on other things that you would have written.

In this chaos of engaging in multiple social media platforms and delivering engaging content to your audience you need to be effective and efficient with what you do. If you are the one, who engages mostly into reading and not generating content, you should spend time choosing on what you intend to read or not to read/comment. Follow the traffic light approach and spend a part of your day engaging with social media content.

If you are the one doing both, you may find yourself hard pressed against time. Your effectiveness will be guaranteed when you make the best use of the platforms. Here are things that would help you become effective:
First, give it some quite time of your day. It

should not be the first thing in the morning, while driving or on the dining table but some time to respond to the social media activities. Ensure that you are not at the habit of responding immediately nor delaying your responses. You must have something original to offer or a pressing need. If you are talking something which people already know, you will not be able to garner their interest.

Second, cut down on peer pressure to 'be in'. 'Are you on Instagram?' and you immediately start off with an account. You are a member of many such platforms, which you rarely visit or maintain. Can you find out a way to rationalise your social platform requirements? Can it be limited to only three? Ask these questions: First, are my contacts available in the platform I am using? Second, does the connections really justify a new platform? Third, how much of my leftover time will it take to manage this new platform.

Third, if you are managing your business and needs to connect to your customer or stakeholders, you cannot be doing it, alone. Take professional help. Agencies that will help you get your word ahead. In case you cannot, fix up a person from your organisation who would be doing that.

Fourth, remember that managing social media for businesses are different from that of individuals. The approach, methodology, purpose, usage, time required would be different. Responding to the messages, creating engaging content and writing is different. Use the most suitable platform. Don't force it to work. Consider your limitations.

Fifth, acknowledge that social media is a two-way communication method. Just as you write, it is important to listen. When you listen, you tend to understand the likes and dislikes, of your audience, sharpening yourself. This needs a balance with your interests and skills sets. People will read you or follow you only when you are consistent. If you are irregular or spending too little time, posting or writing, your audience will not be incentivised to come back to read. A teaser on 'what follows next' can also motivate people to come back.

Use social media effectively to build relationships with people in your areas of interest. Share your expertise, offer help and engage with them. Treat them with the same degree of respect you would give, when you meet them in person. There is no denying that social media is effective in connecting with people and an excellent way to collaborate. But be aware that it is making us indolent and disrupting our need for a great conversation.

The author is Principal — Education, Training and Assessment at Infosys Ltd; Author of The Gift of the Gab: The Subtle Art of Communicating, published by SAGE Publications India

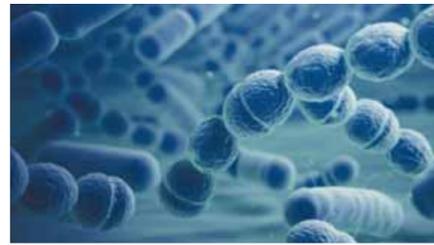


THE PRACTICE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IS ONE OF THE MOST VITAL AND ARTISTIC OF HUMAN ACTIONS
— THICH NHAT HANH



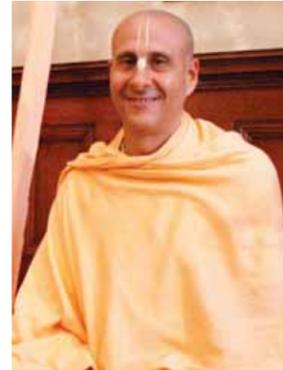
HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK

Lessons to learn



These are difficult times. More importantly, these are times to learn some most basic lessons which humanity forgot in its ambitious march to conquer everything. As the threat of Covid-19 spreads, mankind realises how vulnerable it is in the face of a crisis that emanates from the nature. The difficulties have their own lessons to offer. They are testing human resilience in times of adversity. That mankind will emerge from this is also certain. History has proved this time and again. Of course, a price was paid each time, but what mattered was the indomitable will to survive from the crises. However, the essential point was that with time the same mistakes that led to those crises were forgotten and the same pursuits went on. Human beings have hardly learnt from their past mistakes and their memories are woefully short. But the micro-organisms keep on learning from their past and continuously adapt to regain their strike power. The multidrug resistant micro-organisms that give rise to the same old diseases that struck humanity ages ago keep on bouncing back. The coronavirus that has struck this time with a vengeance is a grim reminder of this basic fact. The adaptability of the virus is something that must give humanity a lesson or two. There are other lessons, too, that the present crises offers. First and foremost, that despite those geographical boundaries, racial and cultural differences, the uniformity in reaction to this corona threat proves emphatically that humanity has a common thread. And the collective unconscious hypothesis of Carl Jung holds goods. Rightly did Napoleon opine that two things unite humanity — fear and self-interest. Look the way people are reacting globally. Same 'me first' mind set where it comes to survival interest, and same 'me-not' mind set when it comes to threat. Though it is rather a tall order, yet can we not think of others, for a change? Rather than thinking of buying provisions to last till eternity can we not think of leaving something for the others to buy? An extreme example is that of the people of the United States of America who as per newspaper reports are going for panic buying of guns and cartridges. And the reason is quite strange. It is based on a chain of assumptions. First that the virus threat will last long. Second, if it lasts long there will be scarcity of basic necessities. Third, the deprived will be forced to think of snatching and looting those who have it. So the conclusion is that the guns will have to be used for defense. The point is how much can be stored and how many can be kept at bay by fire power. Sanity is giving way to vanity. To quote former President of the US, John F Kennedy — "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich". We need to learn to share our resources in these trying times. In times of crises that threaten collectively, we need to stand collectively. Not just for me and myself but for us. These adversities are times that test not just our wit and grit, but also our character. There is little justification of people running from isolation wards and risking others. Behaving responsibly is what these times call for. Time to be human and act human.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com



doesn't fit in traditional cultural ideas.

Leftists see such a place as a police state where people are controlled with the help of security establishment. Spirituality achieves aim of protection of one's culture and heritage, religious tenets not through enforcing beliefs upon people by coercive means but by educating them about its importance, benefits and relevance. Such educated people willingly adhere to traditions if they find reasonable logic behind them.

There is no wonder that western world is getting more and more enamoured by the oriental wisdom over the decades, since there has been consistent efforts by various eastern philosophers to logically introduce them with their philosophy and practices, it has resulted in mushrooming of Yoga studios, *kirtan* clubs and Ayurvedic treatment centers all over the West especially USA. There are 300 million yoga practitioners all over the world including 36 million people in USA itself, it is an indication that people are increasingly adopting an age old practice when results are proven with the help of education and practical demonstration.

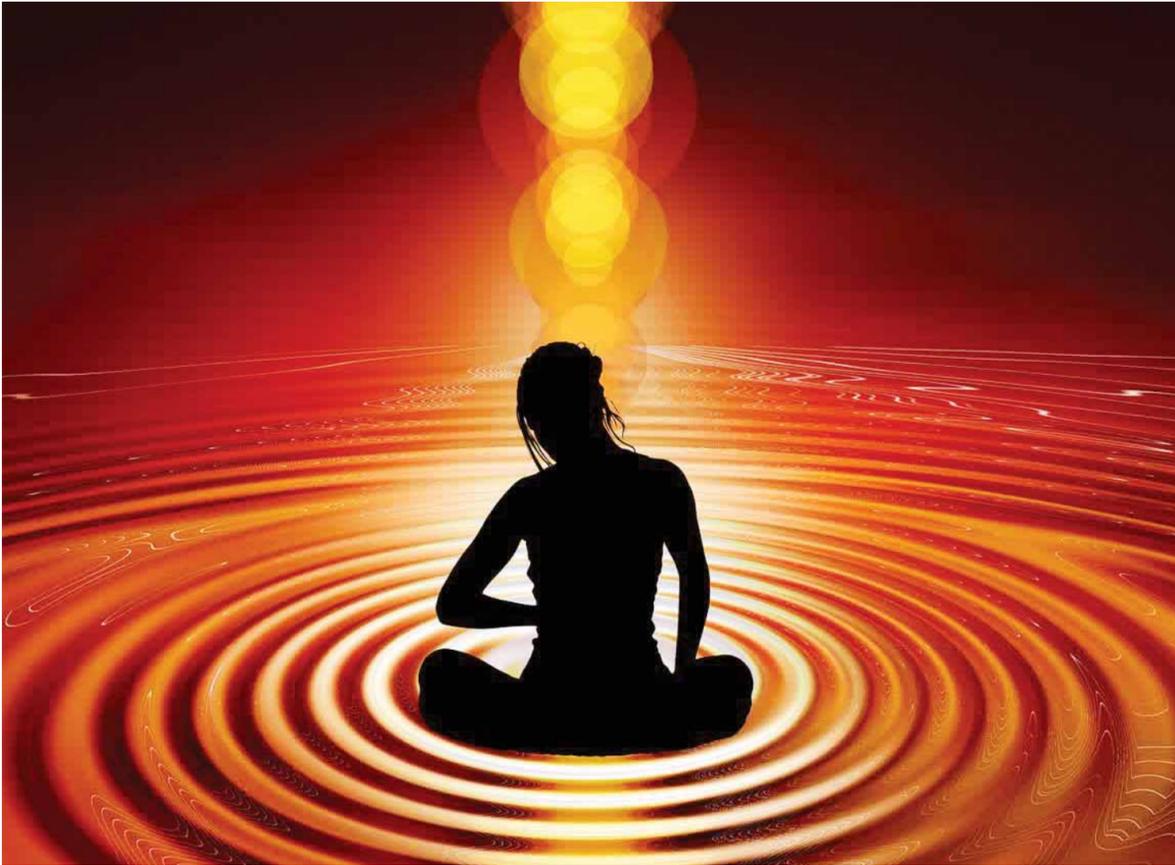
Spiritually advanced people know the art of changing the forms of traditions but maintaining the substance to have the same effect. The spiritual education which would happen at Guru's *ashram* in forests, now happens in an air-conditioned classrooms of our temples, with the help of various types of media, although the gist of the content remains same. In this way the external aspects may be modified as per the time, place and situations to accommodate more quantity of people, but the core principles remain same to maintain the quality of them.

In this way, spirituality can play a major role in filling the gaps between these ideologies to have a peaceful society.

The writer is a spiritual guru at International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

BEYOND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Despite their leanings, spiritually conscious people respect all others on a spiritual plane, irrespective of one's material position, writes RADHANATH SWAMI



In modern political world there has been a constant conflict between values of conservatism and liberalism, fascism or socialism. The values of right wing are to acknowledge social orders and hierarchies, protectionism of individual's, capital and property, security. The values of the left wing are egalitarianism — social equality among all strata of society, fairness, etc. Values of either of the wings are important but the question arises, how to make decisions which satisfy interests of the both of the parties.

Spirituality synthesises ideologies of both that is, the left and right wing. Spirituality acknowledges that on physical platforms there has to be hierarchy based on the natural order and individual preferences based on the psychophysical inclinations but on the spiritual platform, everyone is similar in nature beyond the physical boundaries of creed, caste, race, nationality or color. So, while dealing in this

world, one may acknowledge differences, and act as per assigned roles and responsibilities, and yet respect the others, understanding their spiritual nature.

Spiritually conscious people respect others on a deep spiritual plane which is irrespective of one's material position. The spiritual concept of Karma helps one to understand the reason for inequality seen in this world, still encouraging one to live a life with good karmas to have better opportunities for present and future and be not callous for the sufferings of other.

To give another example, left ideologists recommend higher taxes on the high net worth individuals for redistribution of wealth. But it risks of making people dependent on government and lazy. Spirituality aims to achieve same goal of equality by compassion and education. When individuals are educated about the equality of the living beings on the spiritual plat-

WHILE DEALING IN THIS WORLD, ONE MAY ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHER'S DIFFERENCES, AND ACT AS PER ASSIGNED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND YET, RESPECT THEM FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL NATURE

form, they can see oneness among all other differences.

For those who learn spiritual path, practicing compassion becomes necessary to go ahead on the chosen path. Sharing of ones gifts with others becomes a source of pleasure and way of furthering ones prospects in the spiritual line. In this way, spiritually conscious people willingly share what they possess to those who need through the medium of God, although, such charity is not meant for lazy ones who want to avoid their duties but for those who are weak links of society or those who are contributing to the world without personal financial gains.

Right wing ideology focuses on preservation of one's culture and heritage, specifically religiosity through government support, such conservative attitude sometimes results in violence or coercion against those who transgress the traditional norms and customs. Freedom of expression is seen as transgression by rightists when it

The formula of happiness

Breathe-Observe-Smartphone fasting — Just add these three principles to life and see the difference it makes to your inner world, says VENUGOPAL ACHARYA



There are some things that we have known since we were kids, and then there are others that we realise intuitively that guide us to what is good for us and what is not. Yet we never give it a serious try. And that could very well be the cause of our distress. Here are three known but least-tolerated life-changing principles to achieve happiness and contentment

B: BREATHE. JUST PAUSE

We all breathe but are we conscious of it? In my seminars, I often ask participants to place their hands on their stomach and feel it as they inhale and exhale. When you breathe in, does your stomach come out or go in? What happens when you exhale? The class is often divided with half the students claiming that their stomach goes in during a deep inhale and the other half is unsure. The point driven home is emphatic: we don't even know how to breathe, something which even animals do so naturally. Our disconnect with our self and nature is acute; we

could therefore first learn to breathe normally and consciously.

A simple technique is to inhale deeply to the count of four, hold the breath to the count of eight and then exhale slowly to the count of eight. Focus on the sound of your breath; listen carefully as you inhale and exhale. In no time, you'll catch your mind wandering. Gently bring the mind back to breathing and in 10 minutes you'll be recharged with fresh energy. A five-minute break a few times during the day or even a ten-minute breathing break could make your day more productive.

O: OBSERVE MORE, JUDGE LESS

Secondly, you could try simple 'observations' where you gently pull the mind back to the present and remove judgements. Once I was on a flight and saw a passenger stand up from his seat. He looked around, his face even twitching, and then with a sudden grin, he hurriedly sat down again. A few seconds later, he rose again and paced up and down

the aisle, murmuring to himself. He's definitely angry with his wife, I thought to myself. Then I instantly realised I'd made a judgement. After all, how could I say he was 'angry' or she, his 'wife'? Then I admonished myself for 'judging' the man and that again was a judgement! This time I gently said to my mind, "Please come back dear mind and observe without judgement."

When you observe without attaching labels, you release yourself from your disarrayed mind and enter a higher dimension of reality. This is a platform beyond your own prejudices. Often we err because we observe little and analyse a lot. Instead, if we observe more and judge less, it's likely we'll see the real picture and paradoxically, improve our judgement! Observation practices are like bright sunshine; they help us remove the fog of confusion and bring clarity.

S: SMARTPHONE FASTING

The overdose of social media and the virtual world could potentially throttle their individuality. An inordinate time on the electronic world tends to disconnect one from his or her feelings and needs.

A modern variant of traditional fasting is giving up your gadgets for some time in a week. In many monasteries, monks occasionally fast from cooked grains and rice. Besides the spiritual benefits, this gives rest to our digestive system. The body releases toxins and you feel an overall sense of wellness. Likewise in our internal world, a lot of clutter gets flushed out when we 'fast' from social/electronic media. We could for a change experience 'real' exchanges.

More than ever before, we need to now pause, disengage from the loudness of it all, and look at the vast expanse of the sky above our heads, rather than on our gadgets. Let's connect deeper to our own inner selves and catch the grace around us.

The writer is a motivational speaker and author of the book *Mind Your Mind: Three Principles for Happy Living*

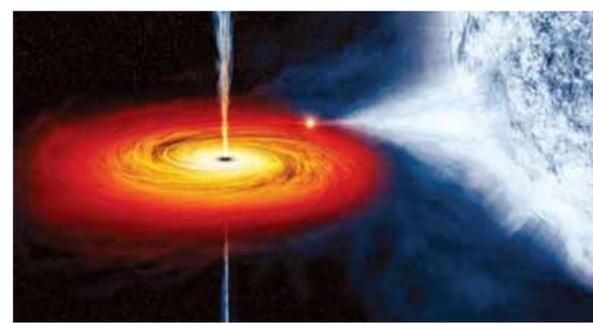
Tamoguna is lurking...

Born of ignorance, *tamoguna* (or darkness inducing properties) causes delusion to all living entities, says AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

The *Bhagavad Gita* explains *tamoguna*: "The mode of darkness, that is *tamoguna* is born of ignorance. It causes delusion to all living entities. It binds with carelessness, laziness and sleep. (14.8) Darkness signifies anger (intolerance), greed, idle talk, violence, being a parasite, hypocrisy, excessive physical efforts, quarrel, lamentation, illusion, depression, being pathetic, excessive sleep, false expectations, fear and laziness. (*Bhagavad Gita* 11.25-4)

When this mode is predominant, absence of illumination, lack of motivation towards duty, carelessness, delusion and foolishness all these arise. (14.13) Consciousness gets covered with foolishness and dullness. Given to lamentation and getting deluded, one sleeps excessively; indulges in false hopes; and displays violence towards others. Awareness gets limited and one is unable to concentrate. The mind gets affected and there is preponderance of ignorance and depression. One, who dies predominantly in this mode is hell-bound, and, ultimately, is born in lower species. Work is impelled by violence and envy, and the strength of wicked people increases.

How do we identify if someone is essentially in *tamoguna*? One will get angry readily; worships God seeking His help for causing harm to one's enemies; considers oneself a material body, not the soul that one is; takes shelter of a gambling den; performs acts without considering their consequences; is unable to tell right from wrong; eats food, which is unclean and which causes distress; is hardly conscious during sleep and has faith in irreligious activities. One's happiness is in delusion and being pathetic; knowledge is at the material level and spiritual knowledge



is alien to such a person.

We all have a percentage of this in us besides the mode of passion (*rajoguna*) and the mode of goodness (*sattoguna*). Together they constitute us, and they always try to overpower one another. (14.10)

Have you ever wondered as to why some people commit suicide? Because the *tamoguna* in them overpowers them. This *tamoguna*, when it is at its peak, completely possesses and make one do what goes entirely against even our basic instinct of survival. How does it become so powerful inside of us? Because we associate with it its various forms. Beginning with the mind, we harbour sexual thoughts, angry feelings, greedy plans and hateful ideas, etc. One may feel that these are harmless. They are not; they reinforce *tamoguna* in us. And the punishment is from inside; one implodes. They cause fear, anxiety depression, etc. When such feelings peak, one harms the self helplessly, even to the extent of killing one's own self.

How should one deal with this vicious internal enemy? Try to avoid associating with it. The mind should be

controlled and no illicit or harmful thoughts should be encouraged. Nothing is harmless. Thoughts are also karmas and they cause *karmaphalas*. Similarly, we have to be careful in what we eat, see, hear, speak, etc. They all count. Eating meat and drinking alcohol reinforces *tamoguna*. Lust also enhances *tamoguna* in oneself. The same goes for hearing and speaking. Then the enhanced *tamoguna* acts from within. It causes fear, anxiety, depression, etc. Once it becomes highly potent, it can kill or force one to commit suicide.

I have realised the dangers associated with *tamoguna*, and have taken shelter of God. I pray regularly seeking God's help in controlling my mind and senses. Whenever my mind strays, I chant. Similarly, when I have to make choices in what I eat, see or hear, I seek God's guidance, and He obliges with the right intelligence. I am determined not to allow *tamoguna* inside me to cause havoc; I fully intend to tame it with my Lord's help.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

Lessons to learn from deferral of Olympics

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) at last postponed the Tokyo Olympic 2020 for a year. Echoing the sentiments of the sporting community world over, its president Thomas Bach said, "These postponed Olympic Games will need compromises by all of the stakeholders." It's not only Japan, particularly the city of Tokyo, but also thousands of sportspersons and allied agencies who were supposed to be an integral part of this landmark event have all been hit by the deadly Covid-19.

The historic flame of the Olympic was handed over by Hellenic Olympic Committee president Spyros Capralos to Naoko Imoto (former Olympian swimmer), who represented the Tokyo Organizing Committee, on March 19. And the flame reached Japan through a special aircraft named "Tokyo 2020 Go". As a significant part of the Olympic Movement, the flame is quite often linked to the messages of hope and peace. The Tokyo 2020 torch relay concept known as "Hope Lights Our Way" was designed to unite the entire Japanese people with emotion. But then unfortunately, before the flame was to be started from Fukushima to the rest of Japan on March 26, the IOC took the historic decision to push the Games to the next year. Though it was nearly sure for an immediate cancellation of the Tokyo Games, yet the Japanese Government was hoping against all odds to organise it.

The opening ceremony for the Olympic Games was supposed to start on July 24 and the Paralympics were scheduled from August 25. Interestingly, Tokyo, one of the most populous cities in the world, was going to host the largest sporting event of the globe. By the end of the 2019, the organisers calculated the total cost of the Games around 1.33 trillion yen i.e. 1.12 billion Euros.

And this entire cost was incurred by three parties --- the City of Tokyo, the Japanese Olympic Organizing Committee and the Central Government of the country. But the experts say the real cost of organising this mega event would be ten times higher



A banner for the Olympic torch relay is removed at J Village where torch relay was scheduled to start, in Hirono, Fukushima Prefecture, on March 26

and of course timely supply of drugs at an affordable price.

Taking hard decisions and then delivering better is a daunting task. What Bach looks forward is simply this only. Even he is eyeing on all options, and one of them could be planning the games just before the start of the Japanese summer season.

At this gloomy scenario, mixed feelings are being aired by sportspersons all around the world. This deferring may lead to an end of the active careers of our time. Because some of the greats, like Michel Phelps, who have been named as the most decorated athlete in Olympic history, is now talking about the "mental health" of the players across the world. To him the postponement is nothing but a "total bamboozle" so to say. Yes it's true. Many of them would be suffering from high levels of depression.

Certainly apart from ones who are purely garrulous, we must understand the depth and impact of the Covid-19. Postponing at this moment is not a gaffe; it is absolutely a wise decision.

Fighting this pandemic is like a countering a "Third World War", but without arms and ammunition. The last two World Wars had witnessed the pouring of large sums of money, muscle power and sophisticated weapons, including the most deadly atomic bombs. But then still we are all looking for an opportunity to fight, though not a real war, but of course a virtual one. Days of sabre-rattling have gone. A real and extremely poisonous threat in the form of Covid-19 has taken a toll on humanity for now.

Keeping the global preparedness in mind, we all must realise the fact that we need a robust strategy, particularly public health emergency to handle such epidemics. Life certainly comes first; thus creating kerfuffle around such crisis would only lead to more panic among the commoners. The global sports community must be really hopeful that this pandemic will teach all of us a strong lesson to usher into a Tokyo 2021 with renewed vigour and conviction.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)

Keeping the global preparedness in mind, we all must realise the fact that we need a robust strategy, particularly public health emergency to handle pandemics like Covid-19. Life certainly comes first; therefore creating kerfuffle around such crisis is a folly. Rather, we must gather courage to fight the menace out and look forward to Tokyo 2021 with renewed vigour and conviction



MAKHAN SAIKIA

than what has been revealed in public so far.

The mascot of the Tokyo 2020 "Miraitowa" has a personality inspired by the Japanese proverb, "learn from the past and develop new ideas". It is taken from Japanese words, "mirai" meaning "future" and "towa" meaning "eternity". Thus this mascot represents the idea that this game will lead to a future of everlasting hope in the hearts of everyone around the world.

If we look at the history we observe that it was only the historical World Wars that led to the cancellation of the Olympics in the past. But the current trend is that other phenomena such as politics, terrorism and pandemics with global underpinnings have forced all of us to call of such sports extravaganzas. Since the opening of the

Modern Olympic Games in Athens (Greece) in 1896, the game has only been cancelled three times --- first during the World War I in 1916, second and third time during the World War II in 1940 and 1944. It must be noted here that until the advent of coronavirus pandemic, that has forced the IOC to postpone the Olympic, the game has weathered all other crises in the past. In 1916, the German Empire was to host the Olympic but with the outbreak of the First World War, it was simply cancelled.

Many of the nations who were to send participants to the games had eventually indulged into the war. In 1940, the Summer and Winter Olympics were to be held in Japan, but it forfeited its rights as it got involved in a war with China. Else Japan would have been the

first non-Western country to host the games. Again London was to host the Games in 1944 and because of the Second World War, it was summarily cancelled.

Though opinions vary, economic analysts simply come to one single point: As the Games has been postponed, the toughest task for the Japanese economy would be to wading through the prolonged pandemic in the days to come. Now, the rechristened Olympic 2021 will have to be planned entirely on the basis of a new global sports calendar.

And also Bach clarified that rescheduling is not restricted just to the summer months. All the options are on the table, before and including the summer of 2021. The IOC has given the responsibility to a task force called "Here We

Go" to find out all possibilities for organise this historic event held once in four years. The team's job is to interact with probably 33 sports federations and to look into the world sports calendar so as to plan the grand Olympic 2021.

But what now seems is that the IOC is working with the other sports organisations to arrange a July-August window to fix the dates for Tokyo Olympics 2021. This time could be better as the Tennis Grand Slams of Wimbledon and the US Open slated to end respectively in mid-July and in late August. John Coates, the chief of the Coordination Commission of the IOC is hopeful that within a month the final dates for Olympic 2021 may be locked.

It is also agreed that more or less the same arrangements

would be there for the Games in 2021 such as the planning the marathon in northern city of Sapporo instead of Tokyo to escape the heat. This would be finally boosting the lost morale of many investors and sponsors of various events as now they all could focus on channelising their resources.

Hope lies ahead for sure. The health experts, researchers and pharmaceutical enterprises all together are working hard to bring out an effective drug to stop the deadly Covid-19. At this juncture, the world community badly demands leadership and unity among the nations. Accusing one another for spreading the virus and movement of the migrants would not definitely provide us any solution. It's just a virus and a lethal one. Countering the same requires precaution first

PERSPECTIVE

Misinformation militates against Covid-19 management

While there is a minor issue like a slight mismatch between the figures of Covid-19 cases in India reported by the Government of India and those by global bodies like Worldometer, the more serious and exigent matter is the coronavirus misinformation that is flooding social media.

We are dealing with an unprecedented pandemic and in such a catastrophic situation, we should rely only on authentic sources of information. All data and measures taken or suggested are regularly updated at WHO and the Government of India websites. Accordingly, on issues related to symptoms, treatment and other Covid-19 related management practices, public should pay heed to only that information available on the official resources i.e., Ministry of Health at the Central and State Governments or their appointed spokespersons.

Misinformation which is being spread in the public sphere through various social media channels, intentionally or inadvertently, about Covid-19 is going to hinder the management and treatment of the pandemic.

There have been reports on the social media about some people associated with the Government machinery endorsing unscientific treatments to deal with Covid-19.

We need to learn from the experience of other countries so as to not repeat the same

mistakes. Nigeria had faced tremendous problems in managing the Ebola crisis due to misinformation campaign in 2014. Even now despite only 39 cases, the Nigerian Government has found it difficult to control misinformation related to Covid-19.

As per a Global Development Community Media (a well-known media platform associated with reputed world development agencies) report written by William Worley and Vidya Krishnan, the level of misinformation being spread about Covid-19 is the highest in India. It has highlighted a number of incidents of conflicting information coming out of official and non-official sources, besides the social media.

Some samples from their report are: 1) While, the Health Ministry, including the Public Health Foundation of India, is working closely with the World Health Organization to launch a coordinated response, another arm of the Government --- AYUSH Ministry --- has been at the centre of a large-scale misinformation campaign that undermines the Health Ministry's response. This needs to be corrected. 2) Second incident is that of a politician who was proposing raw cow urine (*gaumutra*) as a treatment of Covid-19, even while the scientists, including those in India, are battling to find a solution.

Similarly if we scan the



In this photo taken March 24, 2020, a sign posted at The Reef Capitol Hill, a marijuana store in Seattle, outlines social distancing separation requirements intended to slow the spread of the new coronavirus

social media, especially YouTube, one can find solution being suggested by all and sundry, ranging from outright astrology to homemade remedies, without any scientific backing.

Information of some myths prevailing in the social media domain such as "longevity of coronavirus", "non-survivability of the virus in hot climate", "totkas", "possible alternate medicines to cure Covid-19", "holding the breath, to check if someone is affected by corona" and so on will only cause com-

plications and problems in management of affected cases. Towards this end, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strong message of not taking any medicines without proper consultation with a qualified doctor hopefully will go a long way in curbing the misinformation campaign.

However, the PM's call has to be backed by a focused mechanism to eradicate the menace of misinformation campaign. How can we do it? Some of the measures suggested are as follows. 1)

Ministry of Health can set up a task force in consultation with Ministry of Information to scan the social media and put out the truth on regular basis in the form of press briefs or press bulletins using all available media networks for countering or clarifying such messages and information. It is not that the task force should respond to every fake and silly news. However, it must put out clarification on any incorrect and fake news item that is likely to cause harm to human lives and national economy. If we do

not curb the misinformation campaign in time, the 21-day lockdown may not be fully successful and as PM Modi had warned nation will have to pay a heavy price in terms of unprecedented loss of human lives and economic cost.

2) Second measure could be co-opting the technical giants like Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter and other technical firms to direct all searches related to Covid-19 lead either to Ministry of Health or Ministry Information or WHO sites only, so that peo-

ple are given correct information. As per the report mentioned above, some of the big technological companies are already helping the WHO in this regard. There is a need for Indian Government to also see the feasibility of doing the same in our context.

3) While the Government has launched an awareness campaign about Covid-19 through caller tunes and advertisements, there is need for a focused nationwide programme on important aspects dealing with the pandemic at a fixed time in the day with repeat broadcast by all TV and radio channels. This slot must capture the highlights of the day and important procedures to be followed in managing Covid-19.

The importance of curbing misinformation can be best understood by the statement made by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. He had said recently that "Misinformation about Covid-19 is not limited to India. We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic." Therefore, in this period of infodemic, the safest advice is to stay indoors, wash hands regularly, maintain social distancing, and if in doubt seek early medical assistance and help Government help you in remaining safe.

(The writer is retired Lt General and former Chief of Staff Eastern Command)

The Government should rope in social media giants to plan a mechanism that all searches about the pandemic reach the Government/WHO websites in order to stem the flow of canards



DUSHYANT SINGH



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

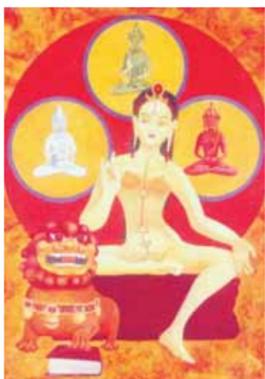
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Your emotional well-being will decide the state of your health. Channelise your energy in the right direction and you will find yourself in the pink of health. In your professional life, you are fairly clear about your goals and what you have to do to achieve those goals. A stimulating time with heaps of opportunities puts your determination and ambition at a higher notch. Business dealings and negotiations are favoured, especially for long-term investments and real estate. This is the right time to make long term strategies and plan ahead. The card indicates a sharp focus on your intimate relationship. Be sensitive and passionate towards your partner. You may meet a new admirer, who shares the same mind-set.

Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You need to be careful while exercising this week, as you are prone to mild injury or sprain. At work, you will be very professional and follow the company policy to the letter. You are likely to make new friends and admirers. You will have a lot of work on your plate that you must take up. Dedication towards task is important, but oversteering yourself may prove counter-productive. Do not hesitate to seek help, if needed. It will ease pressure off your back. On the personal front, the week indicates love, harmony and friendship. This is a good time to relax and have fun with the loved ones. Your loving and friendly mood will make you popular. This is an excellent time for dating because your charm and beauty will attract genuine, honest love.

Lucky number 31
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Health is good this week. Continue with your daily exercise or yoga routine. If you have not yet started, then this is a good time. You will feel driven to succeed at something with a strong sense of purpose and initiative. You will face all challenges with great courage and fighting spirit. This week, you would be able to finish a lot of work in a short amount of time. It is a favourable time for business matters and negotiations. Financial situation is not good, avoid lavish spends. You will be more emotional and sensitive than usual. This is a great time to talk about relationship issues because you will be in touch with your true feelings. You will generally know how people are feeling and will be more sympathetic and nurturing than normal.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Even though you enjoy good health this week, you need to be vigilant. Those with existing health problems are likely to find a way to recovery. Maintain a positive mind-set and things will surely come easily to you. In professional life, your talent will help you distance yourself from difficulties and you will feel optimistic about future. Work wise, you will gain the confidence that you have always dreamt of. New opportunities, in terms of a new venture or projects, are indicated. A few of you may decide to leave a job that no longer works for your betterment. It is a great time to interact with others. You are likely to have an open and honest communication with your partner. The discussions that you engage in now are likely to be of a serious nature.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Camel brown
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Health is satisfactory this week. Those going through health problems, must fix the root cause. Seek proper consultation to find solution to your problems. Cards indicate a positive, new beginning at work. If you have had a difficult time in the recent past, then know that things are likely to get better very soon. New possibilities in this week will escalate your chances of making new discoveries and fetching new admirers. Some of you may expect a good news, possibly a promotion. In personal space, you will probably want to nurture and protect your partner. Most of all, you will want to cuddle and kiss them, to give them kindness, love and affection. Someone will call you out of the blue, or you will plan a reunion with a lover or an admirer.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Friday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

Your health is in good state. This week you are in a greater psychic/intuitive phase. It is important that you trust your instincts and pay heed to signs. At work, your mind is likely to be very active. Make sure to communicate your thoughts to others. Fine tune your goals and make clear plans and strategy to reach your objectives. This is a good time to discuss these plans with others because you will get good feedback and support. There will times when you may become a victim of confusion that will lead to insecurity. But, the bad time shall pass. Expect a slight delay in your travel plans. Romance is blossoming this week. You are likely to take your relationship to the next level. Those who are single may have to wait for some more time.

Lucky number 30
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Health is excellent this week. Despite your busy schedule, you will take time out to relax and rejuvenate. Those with pre-existing health issues, will find a way to their recovery. The card indicates that people around you will appreciate your efforts, and notice the quality of your work. Keep doing what you are doing, as you are on the right track. You will have a lot of luck in investments. Property dealings are likely to be resolved. This week will bring peace and harmony to your life. This is a great time to relax with the loved ones. Your loving mood will make you sexually attractive to your partner. Studies and exams should go well, especially in technical areas like the sciences, computers and mathematics.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

After a bad phase, this week brings you a big relief in terms of positive health. You will be able to revive the inner child like energy and be active the entire week. Things are looking good on professional front. You will be able to fulfill your long term ambition. Whatever you put your mind to should lead to lasting results and achievements. People around will look up to you for a sound advice. You must have a profound vision and a vigilant analysis of all the plans and strategies which will enable you to move towards success. Socialising and love life will benefit from extra charisma and intellectual attractiveness. You may find yourself taking care of family matters such as insurances and wills. You can be confident about making commitments.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Monday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Health looks good. Those dealing with existing health issues are likely to recover. This week brings quick thinking, decisiveness and influential communication style. This makes it an apt time for debating, asking for favours and public speaking. You can expect positive reactions and valuable assistance. The forceful nature of your communication makes it a perfect time to defend yourself and your loved ones. Those in academics, this is a good time for studying and sitting for exams. This is also a good time for making important decisions, negotiations and business dealings. Your romance seems to be a little disturbed this week. Try to keep a two-way communication with your partner to avoid any misunderstandings.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You are likely to face health issues this week. Therefore, you need to be careful. Those facing ailments may breathe easy as things will get a lot better. On the work front, your innovative spirit will help you expand your horizons and reach new goals. Later this week, you can expect an exciting news and stimulating conversations which will lead to a wise business deal. Some of you may face competition at work. Stay alert as someone may try to frame you for something serious. This is a good time to be with your partner, friends and family. You may forge new friendships or a significant new romance may begin. Your improved charm will fetch you popularity, so your dating should be successful.

Lucky number 22
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week your health will be good. Try not to get into ego conflicts and retreat to a safe place where you can develop your creative, spiritual and generous nature. You will be smart and optimistic at work and will accomplish all your incomplete tasks. You can expect some exciting opportunities coming later this week. Waiting task for some news on domestic front will make you feel frustrated. Love life looks satisfying. You will maintain a better harmony in your relationships and will have a greater ability to express your love and affection towards your partner. Travelling to far off destination to meet someone is on the cards. Those thinking for investments, think and discuss with your close people before taking any actions.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You will enjoy good health this week. Continue with your meditation and yoga routine, as it will keep your mind fresh and connected to your inner soul. Those who are dealing with health issues, need to take things seriously and go for proper treatment. Your ability of quick thinking and determination will make this week an apt time to prepare long term plan on work front. Networking with some promising contacts will allow you to make a change. You will have a better mental energy and concentration, and this will help you to succeed in studies or researches. Do not worry about taking risks as this week luck will be in your favour. You can expect some exciting news in your love life. You are likely postpone your travel plans to another day.

Lucky number 28
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Tuesday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Revive age-old hygiene traditions

The whole world is faced with a panic situation because of coronavirus scare. With over 175 countries in its grip, and the number of casualties heavily mounting, the pandemic is taking a toll on the physical and mental health of people and the state. The entire world is in a lockdown state and all of this is certainly going to take a toll on our economy, which was already hit hard. Such situations serve as a reminder about the harsh realities of life, which most of us, caught up in the mundanities and routine, often forget. Ancient Indian learned masters, through allegories and similes, tried to raise our consciousness and make us aware that the world is a unified organism. One, that is set into an interdependent framework, where no individual has a reality independent of the entirety. The obvious implication is that resonance of the echoes at one end of the globe shall have far reaching consequences. That makes it imperative that aberration of even a few, knowingly or inadvertently, could threaten our very existence. So, no wonder, what began in China, has spread its wings all across the globe.

That calls for remaining conscious about our collective obligation even while pursuing one's individualistic aspirational urges. The above concept seems to have gone out of the reckoning of most of the leaders of leading nations, not to say anything on individual beings. Otherwise, they would not be passionately trying to excite emotional chord of people to build up their vote bank, as has been evident in the recent years. The present crisis is a wake-up call for them. If, however, they join hands, quality of human life may improve substantially, not simply in terms of health but economy as well. Statistics available suggest that whenever world trade goes strong, each country's economy grows. But whenever world trade took a downturn in the past, world war happened. The universe being a unified organism, would also mean that there remains connect and correspondence between the cosmic line up, continuously changing, and the live world on the earth. That offers us with the opportunity to foresee things expected to happen through prognosis of the changing dynamics of the planetary line up in the



cosmos. Most important markers in this respect, in so far as mundane matters are concerned, are major eclipses happening every year. During eclipse, the Sun, which is supposed to be health manager of the Universe comes under cloud together with Moon which signifies masses. Whenever the Ascendant at time when the Sun and Moon are in exact conjunction, has close linkage with the death indicating 8th house denominator, points to the possibility of heavy mortality. Major eclipses during the years, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1957, 1968, and 2009 bear testimony to the above fact. No wonder pandemic overtook almost the whole world during those years when more than hundred thousand people died because of one form of virus or the other. Another common factor noticed, except in 1920 was cluster of more than four planets on eclipse axis. But then, in 1920's chart, death indicating 8th lord Saturn was placed adverse to Rahu. The Sun and Moon were ill-disposed off to mischievous Neptune and Uranus, meaning massive death unusual way. Kindly recall my discussion on eclipse chart of December 26, 2019 in the opening issue of the year. There was a

cluster of seven planets — the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, Ketu, Saturn, and Pluto on the eclipse axis. Out of them, Saturn and Pluto are death indicating planets, the latter being more lethal. If that would not be enough, even the 8th lord Mercury happened to occupy lunar constellation owned by another death indicating planet Ketu. What further worsened the situation was placement of Rahu in Mercury owned sign Gemini. Even otherwise, Gemini relates to lungs. Bear in mind: the world is premised on the concept of 'Unity in Diversity'. Accordingly, it's time now that we resolve to remember our collective obligations, remain alert, and revive our age-old tradition of maintaining cleanliness. Till recent past, in our villages, whenever somebody came from outside, they washed their hands and feet before entering the house. Even as on date, Muslims wash their hands, feet and face before they enter the Mosque to offer their prayer. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110 025. Tel: 91-11-49848475/9818037273. Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com