

**OPINION 6**  
POLITICS IN  
CORONA EXODUS

**MONEY 9**  
GLOBAL OIL PRICES  
PLUNGE TO 17-YR LOW

**SPORT 12**  
LIVERPOOL DESERVE  
TO BE CHAMPIONS

Published From  
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR  
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH  
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

\*Late City Vol. 30 Issue 89  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY MARCH 31, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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## Bids on for ample Covid gear

Govt ropes in domestic, global players for ventilators, masks, PPE

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With coronavirus cases surging by each passing day, the Government has roped in domestic and global manufacturers to manufacture ventilators, masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) among other essential medical items needed to combat the viral infection.

Bharat Electronics Ltd has been asked to manufacture 30,000 ventilators in the next two months in collaboration with local manufacturers. Automobile giants like Maruti, too, will be making ventilators which are in high demand to provide supporting aid to Covid-19 patients. Similarly, Agva Healthcare, Noida, has been given an order to manufacture 10,000 ventilators within a month, and DRDO will begin manufacturing 20,000 N-99 masks per day within the next week.

Till now PPE, which are used by medical personnel working in isolation areas and intensive care units to protect them from acquiring infections, were not being manufactured in the country. However, now focus is on Made in India as well in the wake of global shortage.

Sharing details with the reporters at a routine presser, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary in the Union Health Ministry, said that the Textile Ministry along with the Health Ministry are working in tandem to

achieve this goal. As a result, eleven domestic producers of PPE coveralls have qualified so far and orders for 21 lakh have been placed on them.

"Currently they are supplying 6-7,000 kits per day and this is expected to go up to 15,000 per day within the next week. One more manufacturer has qualified on Monday, and an order of 5 lakh coveralls has been placed with him," said Agarwal.

Similarly, he said, to ensure that sufficient medical items are available whenever required, orders for 10 lakh PPE kits have been placed through the Ministry of External Affairs with a Singapore-based platform and supplies are to commence soon. While another supplier based in Korea, which has tie-up with production companies in Vietnam and Turkey has been identified with daily production capacity of over 1 lakh PPE kits.

Also, he said, 10,000 PPE coveralls donated by Red Cross have been received and are being distributed. As of now, 3.34 lakh PPE are available in various hospitals across the country. About 60,000 PPE kits have already been procured and supplied by the Government while Indian Red Cross Society has arranged 10,000 PPE from China which have also been received and are being distributed. Another 3 lakh donated PPE coveralls are to arrive by April 4. An order for 3 lakh PPE has been

placed with ordinance factories, said the official. Regarding availability of ventilators, Agarwal said, PSU BEL has been asked to manufacture 30,000 ventilators in the next two months in collaboration with local manufacturers. Noida-based Agva Healthcare has been given an order to manufacture 10,000 ventilators within a month. Similarly, automobile manufacturers too have been asked to manufacture ventilators. Ventilators are required



A security guard wearing protective gear is seen at RML Hospital as a precaution in wake of coronavirus pandemic during the nationwide lockdown in New Delhi on Monday

for patients of COVID-19 as they tend to develop acute respiratory disease syndrome. Presently, less than 20 Covid-19 patients are on ventilator support at this moment. Over 14,000 ventilators have been identified in various hospitals across the country for treatment of Covid-19 patients while orders have been placed on international companies like Hamilton, Mindray and Draeger besides a few domestic firms and a PSU to supply ventilators, said Agarwal.

Giving details on the availability of masks, the official said that DRDO will begin manufacturing 20,000 N-99 masks per day within the next week. **Continued on Page 2**

## Nizamuddin a corona hotspot? 200 suspects

Area cordoned off after people who took part in jamaat show symptoms

SHEKHAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

An area near a mosque in South East Delhi's Nizamuddin was cordoned off on Monday after around 200 people developed coronavirus symptoms in the last two days.

Police said these people have been shifted to various hospitals by authorities. Meanwhile, teams of Union Health Ministry and World Health Organization's Delhi office reached Nizamuddin and surveyed the area. Drones have been deployed in the area to ensure strict implementation of lockdown orders.

Authorities suspect that the residents of the area might have been exposed to coronavirus as on March 10 several visitors from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia had gathered at Nizamuddin Markaz mosque located in thickly populated area at an event organised by Tableeghi Jamaat.

"Several of them were told to go back to their native places and were subsequently dropped at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport. Most of them managed to dodge police and returned



People who showed coronavirus symptoms being taken to various hospitals from Nizamuddin area in New Delhi on Monday

back to the area and now they cited the lockdown being the reason for not going back," said a source.

Devesh Srivastava, Joint Commissioner of Police, Southern Range, said, "Police is assisting the Health Department in taking out people for check-ups."

He said such religious gatherings keep happening and foreigners come here and stay.

"Around 300 to 400 people were part of the religious gathering. We were approached by the Health Department after they suspected them of having some symptoms related to coronavirus," said the Joint CP.

"In the last two days, around 200 people are taken out by the Health Department for quarantine and necessary checks up," he said. A senior police official said

police served notice to them for violating prohibitory orders and restrictions imposed owing to lockdown.

"Police teams are making announcements through public address systems, asking people to stay indoors. People have been informed regarding the orders and further told that if violated they will face legal action," he said.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health Lav Agarwal said police can initiate action as per the protocol wherever larger number of cases are reported.

"Be it in Nizamuddin or any part of the country, our teams go and take action as part of the containment strategy," he said, adding the Government is focusing on hotspots. **Continued on Page 2**

## 'No community spread, lockdown fruitful'

Govt says rise in corona cases slower than those in other countries; total over 1,300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Claiming that the lockdown is showing its result, the Government on Monday said that rise of confirmed coronavirus cases are far less in India compared to many other countries.

However, the Union Health Ministry was quick to add that it was too early to make any definite assessment about the extent of the spread of the disease. The day also saw record number of positive cases being recorded in the country, with Delhi adding as many as 25 cases to its previous total of 70.

The number of positive cases raced towards 1,318 mark by late Monday evening and casualty stood at 30, according to figure furnished by State Governments. But the Ministry of Health put the number of positive cases to 1,218 in its morning update.

With an aim to ensure that it is fully geared up to meet emergency in case the number flares up, the Government said that it is in the midst of setting up specialised Covid-19 treatment centres and mobilising resources to deal with any outcome.

Lav Agrawal, Joint Secretary, Union Health



People line up to buy grocery during lockdown as a precautionary measure against Covid-19 in Hyderabad on Monday

Ministry, at a Press briefing said here that despite the large population in India, the spread of coronavirus has been "limited".

When asked whether India had entered the third stage of the coronavirus pandemic, which is community transmission, Aggarwal said that the word "community" could be used in a Government document but in a "particular context".

"It is not like that we are in that stage. We presently have local transmissions. Maximum patients in the country have

asked to home quarantine, else they will be quarantined for 14 days."

"We took 12 days to go from 100 to 1,000 cases, in developed countries with less population, this has been 3,000, 5,000 or 8,000. This is because of early measures of isolation, lockdown," the official said.

The world so far has recorded around 30,000 deaths leaving more than six lakh infected due to novel coronavirus pandemic.

While stressing that social distancing and lockdown directives must be adhered stringently, he said that, "One person is infecting more than a 100 other people. This has been seen globally. Hence one person's carelessness can lead to this."

"To ensure we do not go back to square one, please adhere to Government guidelines 100 per cent. Even if it is 99 per cent it will put us back to square one," he added.

He also pointed out that institutes such as AIIMS and NIMHANS are organising the training of medical professionals in health with coronavirus patients while the Ministry of Skill Development is also stepping in. **Continued on Page 2**

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## Migrants' woes on! Spray gives them smarting eyes

SC seeks Govt's reply on steps taken in view of migrants exodus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plight of migrant workers remained in focus — they were given a chemical wash in the name of sanitisation in Bareilly and had one's forehead branded in Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh — the Supreme Court on Monday sought a status report from the Centre by Tuesday on the measures taken in view of the large-scale exodus of labourers.

A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justice L. Nageswara Rao, which took up two separate PILs filed by advocates Alakh Alok Srivastava and Rashmi Bansal, observed that the migration of labourers out of panic and fear was becoming a bigger problem than the coronavirus.

The court said it would not create more confusion by issuing directions on measures



A screen grab shows healthcare workers, in protective suits, spray a solution through hose pipe on migrants before allowing them to enter the town of Bareilly on Monday

that the Government is already taking to deal with the issue. The court, which took up two separate PILs filed by advocates Alakh Alok Srivastava and Rashmi Bansal on the issue of migration of labourers through video-conferencing, said before passing any direction, it would like to wait for the status report from the Centre.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the migration of labourers needs to be stopped to prevent the spread of the virus, and the Centre States concerned have taken the req-

uisite steps to deal with it. Meanwhile, in Bareilly several migrants, including women and children, complained of burning sensation in their eyes after being sprayed with the "disinfectant". These people were assembled by the roadside and were sprayed with a claimed wash.

The apex child rights body NCPCR has demanded disciplinary and penal action against officials responsible for forcefully sanitising a group of migrants with "chemicals" in Uttar Pradesh. **Continued on Page 2**

## No plan to extend lockdown, trash fake reports, says Cabinet Secretary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Monday said there is no plan to extend the lockdown period, rejecting certain media reports doing the rounds. "I am surprised to see such reports, there is no such plan of extending the lockdown," he said.

Later Press Information Bureau (PIB) too tweeted that there was no truth in extension of lockdown period. "There are rumours and media reports claiming that the Government will extend the 21 days lockdown when it expires. The Cabinet Secretary has denied these reports," said PIB in a tweet.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health Lav Agarwal refused to make any further comment on this issue when he was asked during the regular press briefing if the decision not to extend the lockdown was final or the matter could be reviewed at a later stage. "The Cabinet Secretary has already commented on it. His words are the fine view of the Government on this subject," he said. **Continued on Page 2**

### CAPSULE

**TOKYO OLYMPICS TO OPEN ON JULY 23, 2021**  
Tokyo: The Tokyo Olympics will begin on July 23 next year, organisers said on Monday, after the coronavirus forced the historic decision to postpone the Games until 2021.

**MARKETS EXTEND LOSSES AS COVID-19 CASES SPIKE**  
Mumbai: The BSE Sensex crashed over 1,375 points on Monday, pressured by heavy selling in banking, finance and auto counters, as sentiment remained grim amid a steady rise in coronavirus cases.

**PAK TROOPS ENGAGE IN FIRING, SHELLING AT LoC**  
Jammu: Pakistani troops engaged in firing and mortar shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu & Kashmir on Monday in violation of the ceasefire, officials said.

## Vijayan raises boozers' spirits

IMA criticises CM's suggestion

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has kicked off a controversy by directing the State Excise Department to provide liquor to those carrying medical prescriptions in view of suicide cases reported from various parts of Kerala after liquor sales were stopped during the ongoing "lockdown".

Taking strong exception, the Indian Medical Association said scientific treatment should be given to those who have alcohol withdrawal symptoms. "It can be treated at home or in hospitals with medicines. It is not scientifically acceptable to offer alcohol to them. Doctors have no legal obliga-



tion to provide a prescription for alcohol. Writing a liquor prescription can result in the cancellation of the right to treatment," the IMA said in a statement on Monday. Vijayan's directive to the Excise Department comes in

the wake of reports of suicides by alcoholics. Till Monday, the State has reported seven suicides by persons suffering from alcohol withdrawal symptoms. Kerala State Beverages Corporation, the State-owned wholesale and retail traders of

liquor have downed their shutters since last Wednesday following the nation-wide lockdown announced by Prime Minister against the backdrop of coronavirus. There were reports that the State was mulling plans to make liquor available through on line platforms. S Ananthakrishnan, Excise Commissioner, in a note to the Government has suggested that persons with strong withdrawal symptoms can produce a doctor's prescription at the Excise Office. "The prescription to allot liquor should be from a Government doctor. After obtaining clearance from the Excise Office, it can be produced at the Beverages Corporation Outlet to get liquor," said a senior official of the Excise Department. **Continued on Page 2**

## Yogi visits Noida, slams admin for lockdown lapses, ousts DM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/NOIDA

The District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Brijesh Narain Sgiingh, was on Monday transferred for failing to implement the lockdown clamped to stem the growth of coronavirus.

The Uttar Pradesh Government's order came after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Noida, the hotspot of the deadly infection in the State. With seven more cases on Monday, the Covid-19 positive cases reached 38 in the district.

Announcing Singh's transfer, Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary RK Tiwari said a departmental enquiry has also been initiated against him. Special Secretary, Planning,



Daily wagers and homeless try to snatch food packets from a volunteer during the nationwide lockdown amid coronavirus outbreak in Noida on Monday

Suhas LY has been posted as the new District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar, the Chief Secretary said, adding that "he has left for Noida to take over charge". Singh has been removed for his failure in carrying out work to control the spread of coronavirus, he said, adding

that he wrote a leave application and leaked it to the media, which amounts to indiscipline. Earlier, the DM had written a letter to the chief secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Government saying he does not want to continue on the post due to "personal reasons". **Continued on Page 2**

# Muslim donates ₹5 L saved for Hajj to RSS-linked body

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

A Muslim woman from Jammu and Kashmir has donated her savings of ₹5 lakh, meant for the Hajj pilgrimage, to the RSS-affiliated "Sewa Bharati" after apparently being "impressed with the welfare work" done by the outfit amid the lockdown due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Khalida Begum, 87, who saved ₹5 lakh for Hajj, was forced to defer her plans for the pilgrimage due to the lockdown.

Hajj is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the holiest city of Muslims.

"Khalida Begum ji was impressed with the welfare work done by the Sewa Bharati in Jammu and Kashmir during

the tough time the country is passing through due to sudden outbreak of COVID-19 and decided to donate ₹5 lakh to the organisation," Arun Anand, head of RSS media wing Indraprastha Vishwa Samvad Kendra (IVSK), said.

The woman wants that this money should be used by the community service organisation Sewa Bharati for the poor and the needy in Jammu and Kashmir. She had saved this amount for performing Hajj, plans for which she deferred due to the present situation, Anand said.

"Khalida Begum ji was among the first few women in Jammu and Kashmir who got educated in a convent. She is the daughter-in-law of Colonel Peer Mohd Khan, who was president of the Jana Sangh," he

said.

Jana Sangh was also an associate of RSS and later became the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Anand said despite her age, she had been very active in welfare works for the women and the downtrodden in Jammu and Kashmir. Her son, Farooq Khan, a retired IPS officer, is presently serving as an adviser to the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor.

Meanwhile, since the lockdown was announced, Sewa Bharati volunteers across the country have been providing food and other essential items to the needy. The Sangh-affiliate's volunteers were seen on Saturday managing crowd and providing food to them at the Anand Vihar bus terminal in Delhi.

# Centre extends 2% Interest Subvention to banks, 3% Prompt Repayment Incentive to all farmers

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In view of several restrictions on farmers during the nationwide lockdown to combat the spread of coronavirus outbreak, the Central Government on Monday decided to extend the benefit of 2 per cent Interest Subvention (IS) to banks and 3 per cent Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI) to all farmers up to May 31, 2020 for all crop loans up to ₹3 lakh.

The decision will allow farmers to repay such loans up to the extended period at 4 per cent annual interest without attracting any penalty.

Officials of Agriculture Ministry said that the extension of IS and PRI benefit upto May 31, 2020 on the short term crop loans upto Rs.3 lakh which are due upto May, 31 2020, will help the farmers to repay such

loans upto the extended period at 4 per cent per annum interest without attracting any penalty.

Officials said that many farmers are not able to travel to bank branches for payment of their short term crop loan dues. "Moreover, due to restrictions on movement of people and difficulty in timely sale and receipt of payment of their produce, farmers may be facing difficulties in repayment of their short term crop loans falling due during this period," officials added.

The Centre is currently providing concessional crop loans to farmers through banks. Under the scheme, an additional 2 per cent interest subvention is provided to farmers repaying loans promptly. For such farmers, the effective rate of short-term crop loans works out to be 4

per cent per annum. The objective of the scheme is to make available at ground level, agricultural credit for Short Term crop loans at an affordable rate to give a boost to agricultural productivity and production in the country.

Earlier, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, NCP president and former union minister Sharad Pawar said the condition of farmers has worsened due to untimely rains and hailstorms in some parts of the country, impairing their repayment capacity. The complete lockdown has disrupted agriculture operations due to unavailability of labourers and other resources, leaving standing crops unattended, halting harvesting, and impeding farmers' access to transportation, warehousing, marketing and export", the letter read.

# Nizamuddin a corona hotspot? 200 suspects...

**From Page 1**

He said the Centre is working in tandem with States to implement rigorous contact-tracing, community surveillance and other containment strategies to break the chain of transmission.

According to sources, earlier, two men including a religious preacher and a foreigner who were at the event had been tested positive of coronavirus and had died recently.

"The preacher died in Srinagar last week and he too had a travel history visiting to Deoband seminary in Uttar Pradesh," said sources.

Earlier this month, the Delhi Government had banned religious, social, cultural and political gatherings as well as protests comprising more than 50 people till March 31 in view of the coronavirus outbreak.

# Migrants' woes on! Spray gives them smarting eyes...

**From Page 1**

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has asked the Bareilly District Magistrate to submit a report in the matter within three days. "NCPDR has expressed serious view on this inhuman act. In view of the above incident, you are requested to get the matter inquired into urgently and issue necessary directions for immediate action thereby; ensuring adequate arrangements of basic essentials to the family members viz. provision of food, shelter and safety and wellbeing of these children of migrant workers during lockdown period," according to the letter issued by the NCPDR. The body also demanded appropriate disciplinary and penal action against the officials who carried out the sanitising exercise.

Slamming the Uttar Pradesh Government for such insensitivity, former State Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav said, "The spraying of chemicals on migrants to sanitise them has raised some questions. Has the World Health Organisation given any direction in this regard? How do you treat the burning sensation caused by the chemicals? What arrangements are there for people to change out of wet clothes? What alternatives are being provided for the food that gets wet due to the spraying?"

On Sunday, a police sub-inspector decided to "shame" a migrant labourer by scribbling on his forehead - "I have violated lockdown, stay away from me". Following public outrage, the authorities have decided to initiate action against the sub-inspector.

# Rajyogini Dadi Hriday Mohini new Chief of 'Brahma Kumaris'

**PNS ■ MT ABU**

In a decision taken by management committee of the Brahma Kumaris, Rajyogini Dadi Hriday Mohini has been declared Chief of the organisation from Monday.

Hriday Mohini succeeds its former Chief, Rajyogini Dadi Janki who expired last Friday at the age of 104 years.

Dadi Hriday Mohini (94), also known as Dadi Gulzar, who was Addl.Global Chief till date, also served Delhi Zonal Head of the organisation.

# Dead man's sample tests corona +ve; MP toll reaches 3

**PTI ■ INDORE**

Samples of a 38-year-old man who Died in Ujjain three days ago came out positive for coronavirus on Monday, an official said.

With this, the death toll due to coronavirus has gone up to three in Madhya Pradesh.

Earlier, a 65-year-old man from Indore and a woman from Ujjain died of coronavirus here.

"We got a report from a lab of Indore-based Government Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College on Monday morning that the 38-year-old man had coronavirus infection," Ujjain's Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr Anusuya Gawli told PTI.

The man died on March 27 night. He was admitted to Madhav Nagar Hospital of Ujjain in a critical condition and died after an hour of undergoing treatment.

"According to doctors, the man had high blood pressure and complained of chest pain and discomfort during admission to the hospital. At first glance, he looked like a heart patient," Gawli said.

The deceased was a resident of Amber Colony in Ujjain, the state public relations department said in a release.

His blood and swab samples were sent for testing as he had virus-like symptoms.

He visited the state's Neemuch district, located close to border adjoining Rajasthan, five days before he fell ill. He came in contact with some people of Rajasthan at a party there. After his return to Ujjain, he was down with fever, cold and cough, the release said.

A survey was underway in Amber locality to check the spread of the viral infection, it added.

Earlier in the morning, the authorities confirmed eight new coronavirus cases in the state, taking the total number to 47. So far, Indore has reported the maximum 27 cases, followed by Jabalpur - eight, Ujjain-five, Bhopal-three, and Shivpuri and Gwalior - two each.

As of now, 44 active cases are being treated in different districts.

# Dreams wait as weddings get cancelled or postponed

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

No band, no baaja and certainly no baraat. Dreams of a big fat Indian wedding have faded into the far distance for many a couple who have had to cancel, postpone or downsize their celebrations to the barest minimum.

Like for 26-year-old Delhi boy Harshad Khurana who was all set for the wedding he had always dreamed of on April 8 and now doesn't know what to do. The venue was fixed, theme decided, the cards distributed and his suit stitched too. The threat of COVID-19 started as a little blip before blowing up into a huge cloud of dread and a nationwide lockdown from March 24, ending his hopes for a grand once-in-a-lifetime celebration.

After a day's 'Janta curfew' on March 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 announced a three-week lockdown. "Who had expected this? There is very little that we can say or do now... Hope everything becomes normal soon. Our last resort will be a

truncated function with close family members only," Khurana, a PR professional, told PTI.

But that would be minus extended family, no cousins and possibly not even grandparents, and what is a wedding without them.

"You know I also joined a gym to get in shape for the special day, but it was all for nothing," he said dejectedly.

Khurana is not alone. The entire D-Day drill - with months spent on zeroing-in on the menu, haggling over the price of the venue, preparing guest lists, white-washing the whole house, picking the right jewellery and clothes has come to naught.

Vipul Verma, 38, was set to get married on April 12. The compulsion of a limited gathering and that too without his brother who can't leave Australia due to travel restrictions has led to Verma cancelling his wedding - at least for now.

Particular about 'auspicious dates', Priya Malik has eventually accepted the

inevitable and pushed her wedding from April to November-December.

"All of us felt it's better to be safe than sorry, and so decided to postpone the wedding date. We have to call up all our guests and inform them about the postponement date, which is both embarrassing and exhaustive."

"We have made advance payments to so many pre-wedding planners and are not sure if the money will get refunded," said the 26-year-old IT professional.

COVID-19 alarm bells have drowned out the sound of wedding bells and also the clink of the cash registers for businesses dependent on the wedding industry -- wedding planners, banquet owners, bands, florists, photographers and salons. India's wedding market, pegged at \$50 billion by a recent KPMG report, has been badly disrupted due to the spread of the novel coronavirus, said industry insiders. In the Indian way of things, families, poor and rich, save up for a lifetime to spend on weddings

that can run into several lakhs and even crores of rupees.

"The business has taken a serious hit due to the spread of the coronavirus."

I have lost count of the calls we have received for postponing and cancelling bookings. For April, we had 20-25 bookings, almost one a day, and there is a big question mark on whether those will happen or not," said Anmol Bummi, manager at the Golden Gates banquet in west Delhi in Mayapuri.

Several wedding planners and catering units, like Cosmic Lights Entertainment and Kitchen Kraft Luxury Catering, said the business will take a long time to recover.

"March-April have always been good for the wedding business and there were a lot of bookings this year too. But everything changed after coronavirus burst into the picture."

Be it a destination wedding or routine functions here in the capital, all have been either cancelled or postponed," said Raina Kapoor,

founder of Cosmic Light Entertainment, a popular wedding planning company.

"In fact, the few functions we organised in March saw such low turnout that we had to advise people to not go ahead with their weddings," she said.

Salons and parlours, which in normal times, would have seen brides and bridesmaids making a beeline for their bridal packages - even at exorbitant price - are also bearing the brunt.

Until a few weeks ago, Neeti Chopra, owner of the Unwind salon in Saket, was busy booking appointments for April.

"From the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, our salons were following all kinds of precautions, including using gloves and hand sanitisers. We thought things would become normal soon. But then one day the advisory was issued that all parlours had to shut," she said.

The number of novel coronavirus cases in India rose to 1,071 on Monday. This includes 29 deaths.

# MP govt making all efforts to fight coronavirus: Chouhan

**PTI ■ BHOPAL**

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday said his government is taking all steps to deal with coronavirus in the state, specially in Indore where 27 COVID-19 cases have been reported so far.

In an interview to PTI, Chouhan assured that the situation in Indore, the industrial hub which has been ranking no. 1 in cleanliness since three consecutive terms, would be brought under control soon.

So far, 47 coronavirus cases have been reported from the state. Of these, the maximum 27 cases have been reported from Indore. Besides, eight cases have been reported in Jabalpur, five in Ujjain, three in Bhopal and two each in Shivpuri and Gwalior.

The state has also reported four deaths- two each from Indore and Ujjain.

"We are ensuring that people follow isolation, social distancing and remain in their houses only, and for that a 21-day lockdown was announced. We will soon control the situation in Indore, where a three-

day complete lockdown is being enforced," Chouhan said.

He urged people to follow the lockdown for their own safety.

He was speaking to PTI after interacting with a Bhopal-based girls' hostel inmates who were stranded here after the lockdown. He went there to know their well-being and assured them that he will take care of all their needs.

"The awareness level of people of Indore is very high and they have proved it by getting the cleanliness award in the country for three times in a row...I assure them that they will not face much difficulty but the three-day lockdown is necessary and therefore it is a total lockdown for three days, he said.

"I have full faith that we will fully control the situation in Indore soon. I appeal to people to follow the lockdown for themselves, their children, friends, for Indore and for the entire state. The state government and the local administration is totally with them," Chouhan said.

Chouhan said his government is ensuring that people follow isolation and social dis-

tancing strictly by staying inside their homes.

"I also urge people to follow the 'Lakshman Rekha', as advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to win the fight against coronavirus," he said.

Chouhan also said he visited the state's control and command centre where arrangements have been made for providing telemedicine facility to people.

Doctors are deployed there and they are answering people's calls, prescribing medicines and making arrangements for providing it also, he said.

"After that also if people have symptoms, then we have made arrangements for their treatment in Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur and also in Rewa, Shahdol and Sagar, the chief minister said.

Chouhan said his Government has also made arrangements for providing food to poor people and labourers, and farmers are also being told not to worry about their crops.

"I will take care of it soon, he said.

# Vijayan raises...

**From Page 1**

While Government doctors in Kerala are tight lipped over the issue because of the gag order from the State Government not to discuss anything regarding corona virus or related issues with the media, the IMA issued a release questioning the move to introduce the prescription for alcohol arrangement.

But Dr CV Krishnaswamy, former professor of clinical medicine, Stanley Medical College at Chennai told The Pioneer that there is nothing wrong in medical doctors issuing prescriptions for alcohol to patients suffering from withdrawal symptoms.

Dr Krishnaswamy is the Editor (Indian sub-continent), Journal of the Science of Healing Outcomes, an international medical journal publishing peer reviewed research paper.

"I understand there are suicides reported from Kerala because of the unavailability of alcohol. The question is whether we should leave the patients to their fate and allow them to take their lives. There is nothing wrong in a medical doctor issuing prescription for spirits. The process of making a person free from the influ-

ence of alcohol is a time consuming one. The best thing is to make him reduce the alcohol intake in stages and not at one stroke. A person addicted to alcohol is likely to end up as a medical wreck up if he is denied the stuff at one go," said Dr Krishnaswamy who heads the department of diabetology and research, Dr Prema Medical And Diabetes Research Centre, Chennai.

But a senior Government physician in Kerala, on condition of anonymity chose to disagree with Dr Krishnaswami.

"We have not studied in our medical course that a disease could be cured with alcohol. There is no mention in our treatment protocol that alcohols or drugs could be prescribed to patients," said the doctor.

Corona virus has added yet another controversy to Kerala society where social drinking is catching up like a wild fire. There were reports of school students frequenting bars for gulping a few drinks during interval hours. One of the popular folk songs in Kerala is "Kallolam Nalloru Vasthu Bhoolakathinkal illa penne", Malayalam for "there is nothing in this world better than liquor"

# Amid lockdown, cop walks 20 hours to join duty in MP

**PTI ■ BHOPAL**

Unfazed by the nationwide lockdown, a 22-year-old constable walked for nearly 20 hours during the 450-km journey from his hometown in Uttar Pradesh to Rajgarh in Madhya Pradesh to join duty.

The Rajgarh police lauded constable Digvijay Sharma's commitment towards work and advised him rest for a few days as his legs got sore muscles after travelling long hours

on foot.

Talking to PTI on Monday, Sharma said he was on leave from March 16 to 23 to appear for his BA (Bachelor of Arts) exams at Etawah in Uttar Pradesh. But, the exams got postponed due to the shut down.

"I contacted my boss - Pachor police station inspector - and told him that I want to join duty during these testing times. He advised me against it as there was no transport facil-

**The Rajgarh police lauded constable Digvijay Sharma's commitment towards work and advised him rest for a few days as his legs got sore muscles after travelling long hours on foot**

ity available," he said.

Sharma's family also advised him to stay at home, but he could not hold himself back.

"I started my journey on

foot from Etawah on March 25 morning. I walked for nearly 20 hours during my journey in which I took lifts from people on motorbikes and reached Rajgarh on Saturday night. I subsequently informed my boss about my arrival," he said.

Sharma said during the journey he did not get anything to eat for a day, but later some social organisations provided him food.

"My boss asked me to rest as I have sore legs. I will join

duty soon," said the constable, who joined the Madhya Pradesh Police force on June 1, 2018.

Rajgarh Superintendent of Police (SP) Pradeep Sharma said he gave the constable a letter lauding his commitment and dedication towards work during such challenging times.

"I am going to write to the state Director General of Police, requesting him to give the constable a letter of appreciation," the SP added.

# Bids on for ample Covid...

**From Page 1**

"Two domestic manufacturers are producing 50,000 N95 masks per day and are ramping up capacities to go up to 1 lakh per day within next week. Presently hospitals in India have 11.95 lakh N95 masks in stock while additional five lakhs were

distributed during last two days and 1.40 lakhs being distributed on Monday.

"Ten lakh masks would be part of the PPE kits being sourced from Singapore," Agarwal added.

The official also shared that all drug companies have assured that there will not be any shortage of drugs during this crisis while medical personnel are being trained for any emergencies.

# LNJP, GB Pant hospitals' docs to get 5-star accommodation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The doctors treating coronavirus patients at LNJP and GB Pant hospitals will be accommodated at a private hotel here on Delhi Government's expense, said an order from the Delhi Health Department.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the doctors are on the frontlines of the battle against coronavirus. All doctors, serving in Delhi Government's Lok Nayak Hospital and GB Pant Hospital on COVID-19 duty, will now be housed in Hotel Lalit. This arrangement has

been made to quarantine these doctors. The Delhi Government will bear all the cost of accommodations.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said every doctor would be given a separate room. This is a precautionary measure to keep these doctors away from their families so that there is no chance of spreading of the virus if anyone is infected.

The order issued by the Health Department noted, "It has been decided that doctors working on COVID-19 duty at LNJP Hospital and GB Pant Hospital would be provided

accommodation at Hotel Lalit and the payment of the same shall be borne by the Delhi Government."

The district magistrate of New Delhi would make necessary arrangements to make 100 rooms available at the hotel on Barakhamba Road. The LNJP Hospital, GB Pant Hospital and other few hospitals are among the facilities where doctors are deployed round-the-clock for attending positive or suspected cases of COVID-19.

"The doctors are working 24\*7 to treat the COVID-19 positive patient, therefore, it is

our duty to ensure a suitable and safe arrangement for them. This is a quarantine facility so that the family members do not come in contact with the doctors. Each of them will get one separate room and the doctors will work in shifts," said Jain.

The Delhi has come with a 14-day shift, 14-day quarantine plan for health workers and medical professionals who are on coronavirus duty in hospitals. The plan will keep the spread of coronavirus in check.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Government has taken several measures to fight the coronavirus.

The administration is ensuring free food to nearly 4 lakh people daily and is providing free ration to 71 lakh people in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.

More than 800 centres for food and over 1,000 shops for ration have been made operational. 234-night shelters across Delhi are open to accommodate needy people and those hit by the lockdown.

"The administration is also working toward converting schools into shelters to accommodate migrant workers and daily wage labourers," a Government official said.



## Haryana seals borders to stop migrants' entry



PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In a bid to control and stop the movement of migrant labourers and workers across the State, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to completely seal the inter and intra-State borders.

According to the directions by the CM, the migrants should be stopped at their respective places and no one should be allowed to move from the current locations.

The CM ordered the officers concerned to set up shelter or relief camps and ensure that proper food, boarding and lodging arrangements were made for the migrant labourers staying in such camps and if anyone still opposes, strict action should be taken against them.

However, the Gurugram district administration has already set up four shelter homes, that can house almost 600 people, for workers from other states stranded in the city due to the lockdown.

According to officials, one shelter home capable of accommodating 350 people has been set up near IMT Manesar on the Delhi-Jaipur national highway. Food will be provided to the occupants.

Other three are at the community centre on Gurugram-Sohna road near Bhondsi village (150 people), at Bhim Nagar (40 people), and at Kadipur village (50 people).

"Since a lot of people work in IMT Manesar, the capacity of this shelter home is bigger than the others. I appeal to people from other states who reside in Gurugram to come to the shel-

ter homes and not leave the city," said Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram Amit Khatri.

The district has so far reported 10 cases of Coronavirus out of which five patients who recovered have been discharged, said CMO Jaswant Singh Punia. These include the first person who tested positive, a 29-year-old woman who had returned from Malaysia and Indonesia on February 22, as well as a couple from Nirvana Country, where the man had recently returned from London.

The other two are a 22-year-old studying in London who had returned home on March 14, as well as her 16-year-old brother.

Also, in the last 5 days, however, no new cases have emerged, according to officials from the health department.

## Police receive 6,088 lockdown-related calls on 24x7 helpline

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has received 6,088 calls on their 24x7 helpline number, 011-23469526, to resolve issues related to lockdown. Police received 1,187 calls have been received from Sunday 2 pm to Monday 2 pm.

According to police, out of 1,187, police received 278 calls were related to outside Delhi, which have been referred to respective State helpline numbers. Total 76 calls were received related to no food/no money, which have been forwarded to NGO for direct relief at their addresses.

Meanwhile 18 calls were

received regarding medical issues and have been resolved through proper guidance to proceed in case of such emergencies, police said.

While 592 calls were related to movement passes and were advised to approach respective jurisdictional Additional DCP-I office.

The food delivery network established in all 15 districts with involvement of nearly 400 NGOs/RWAs/Good Smartians facilitated by Delhi Police has led to provision of meals and food packets at more than 250 locations which enabled feeding of nearly 1,45,000 persons and dry ration to 1385 persons.

### FOR FLOUTING LOCKDOWN:

## 145 cases registered, 3,750 people detained

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police registered 145 cases and 3,750 people were detained for violating government orders during the coronavirus lockdown. According to the data shared by the police, 145 cases were registered under section 188 (for disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code till 5pm.

A total of 3,750 people have been detained under section 65 (persons bound to comply with reasonable directions of police officers) and 557 vehicles have been impounded under section 66 of the Delhi Police Act, they stated. A total of 2143 movement passes have been issued.

## Online classes for students of Govt schools: Sisodia

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

While countrywide lockdown in the wake of deadly coronavirus has put a "stop" to all outdoor activities to mitigate chances of community transmission, the Delhi Government is going digital to educate wards of its schools.

The Delhi Government on Monday announced that students from nursery to class 8 will be promoted to the next class in the national Capital.

Secondly, online classes are being started for class XII and X students and third, interactive session with SMS, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and TV mediums up to eighth standards. The decision to this effect was announced by the Directorate of Education (DoE) after detailed consultation with stake holders in education sector announced these steps on Monday.

According to Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, it is required to engage students as schools are shut.

Taking care of education of students in continuation of lockdown span with recent riot incidents in Delhi vicinity, Sisodia said that the Government has prepared its action plans to engage students in learning activities via modern day —virtual classes with the help World Wide Web.

Addressing Delhi through

live video conference, Sisodia said his Government is promoting the students up to class VII under Government policies —no detention and Right To Education (RTE).

Elaborating further on plan A — Sisodia who is a Education and Finance Minister in Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Cabinet, he explained, the promoted students will be engaged with the help of SMS, IVR and TV medium. "Our teachers will send activity projects to students via possible medium of communication, these teachers will prepare an assessment report of these activities which might be considered in grading in near future," Sisodia said.

While class X result is yet to be announced, Sisodia said that classes will resume for XI

standard as it was earlier since there is no further announcement on lockdown extension.

For class XII, the Delhi Government is starting online classes from first week of April and for this Delhi Government has designed an online platform where wards/parents can register.

Most importantly, the Delhi Government is providing free data packages for online learning.

"Students and parents will register themselves to obtain classes, initially we will start with two subjects, details will be shared soon," Education Minister announced.

He further said that the Delhi Government will soon provide this online learning/ classes facility to Class X students.



## SDMC buys 14K nitrile gloves to ensure safety of medical workers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has procured 14,000 special Nitrile gloves to ensure the safety of its medical staff and sanitation workers who are working relentlessly to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. The

civic body has also decided to use jetting machines for sanitising public places.

A senior SDMC official said that in each zone 3500 gloves will be distributed to the staff. According to health officials, these gloves are very useful and long lasting; each glove will be last for 15 days. It has

to be washed with soap daily. The official said that disposable nitrile rubber gloves are waterproof, greaseproof, oil proof and most importantly, chemical resistant to a range of common chemicals and substances. These gloves are used by medical professionals as it has excellent chemical resis-

tance and puncture strength and dexterous strength, he said.

To further intensify the cleaning and sanitation drives, SDMC has also decided to use jetting machines for sprinkling sanitizers in public areas using sodium hypo-Chloride solutions and bleaching solutions

for disinfecting public places.

Apart from this, 15 tankers are continually operating and spraying disinfectants mainly near food distribution centers, public areas, surrounding areas of quarantined houses across four zones. All the sanitization drives are being closely monitored by the area councillor.

SDMC is also ensuring that public toilets are being sanitized with bleaching solution daily to control community spread of coronavirus.

Apart from above mentioned gloves, SDMC is also providing 2000 mask to each zone in addition to already supplied.

## Min visits juvenile homes, takes stock of situation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Women and Child Development Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam visited several juvenile observational homes across Delhi to take a stock of all the appropriate precautions being taken to tackle coronavirus. Notably, Union Government and Delhi Government issued several guidelines and precautions which must be taken to prevent the transmission of coronavirus.

Gautam ordered an immediate ban on the visiting of family members in the juvenile homes. The residents will be able to contact their families twice a week by phone, which earlier used to happen only once.

Special instructions were given to the authorities that there should be minimum visitors in the home and proper hygiene and cleanliness should be the topmost priority.

"The only way to avoid corona is to preventing its

transmission completely. Keeping this in view, I have ordered that there should be strict control on the number of people visiting the homes. Nobody should enter the homes without sanitizing their hands which is why we are making sure that sanitizer is available right at the gate. The health of all children and youth living here will be given priority. The measures have been taken in the light of their health," said Gautam.

There are currently 29 youth in the Observation Homes at Delhi Gate with a capacity of 75 people, out of which 6 were released on bail.

Similarly, the Observation Home, with a capacity of 100 youth, has 103 residents, of whom 24 are released on bail and 2 will be released by evening.

There are 65 youths in the 50-capacity Place for Safety Majnu Ka Tila, of which 9 were granted bail. SPYM located at Sewa Kutir where there are 40 youths with 10 released on bail.

## Railways uninterrupted freight services for essential commodities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

While the country is completely locked down due to the pandemic of coronavirus, Indian Railways continues to work round the clock to ensure availability of essential commodities through its uninterrupted freight services.

The Indian Railway loaded 684 rakes and 35,319 wagons on Sunday out of which 437 rakes and 24,202 wagons were full of essential commodities.

A senior railway official said that 40 rakes and 1727 wagons were loaded with food grains, five rakes and 210 wagons of sugar, one rake and 42



wagons of salt, one rake and 42 wagons of edible oil, 363 rakes and 20,904 wagons of coal, 27 rakes and 1277

wagons of petroleum products.

Similarly, on Saturday, 695 rakes and 35,942 wagons were loaded out of

which 442 rakes and 24412 wagons were loaded with essential commodities (One wagon contains 58-60 ton consignment). "This includes 54 rakes and 2,405 wagons of food grains, three rakes and 126 wagons of sugar, one rake and 42 wagons of salt, one rake and 50 wagons of edible oil, 356 rakes and 20,519 wagons of coal, 27 rakes and 1270 wagons of petroleum products," the Railways said in a statement.

It may be noted that Ministry of Home Affairs has allowed movement of goods across the country to ensure that supply chain keeps fully operational.

Ministry of Railways and MHA

officials are in constant touch with State Governments to sort out operational issues to ensure smooth handling at terminal.

In its continuous effort to fight against COVID - 19, the northern railway workshops have been geared up to manufacture 700 liters sanitizer per day, 700 face masks per day. At least 1600 face masks have already been manufactured in northern railway.

In order to ensure availability of essential items to different parts of India and to mitigate the effect of lockdown during COVID -19, Northern railway has decided to run six parcel special trains across India.

## AAP MLAs distribute food to daily wagers, migrants

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs have started distributing food to the daily wage workers and migrants in their constituency. The party MLAs has also created a WhatsApp groups in their respective Assembly consisting of social organisations and NGOs to facilitate the entire process.

The party MLAs had submitted a list of locations where new night shelters and food distribution centres can be established for the needy. Based on the input from the MLAs, the Delhi Government has now established new shelters and food distribution centres.

"The party MLAs and workers are working tirelessly on ground to ensure food distribution to poor people affected by lockdown in

their area. The lockdown has severely affected the lives of many poor people, daily-wagers and labourers. Therefore, the Delhi government has not only started free food distribution through night shelters but has also set up food distribution centres," the party said in a statement.

AAP MLA from Uttam Nagar Naresh Baliyan distributed dry food packets and almost 10,000 packets of 5 kg flour and 10,000 packets of 1 kg rice to the poor people in his constituency. He has also set up 200 WhatsApp groups in Uttam Nagar Assembly consisting of social organisations and NGOs to facilitate the entire process.

"All these organisations are working with the MLA to ensure no one stays hungry in the area. Mr Balayan had also submitted a list of locations where new night shelters can be built and new food distribu-

tion centres can be opened. The Delhi government has made necessary arrangements as per the requirements raised by the MLA," it said.

Another Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Praveen Kumar from Jungpura said that his team is feeding almost 5000 people daily. "We are distributing food in 18 police stations areas, 2000 packets two times a day. Apart from this we have identified several locations where we are distributing food through our volunteer teams. Our team is also involved in facilitating distribution of ration," he added.

Kuldeep Kumar, MLA from Kondli said, "Many people who were leaving Delhi, have returned after listening to the appeal made by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal. We have made adequate arrangements for their stay and food"

National Spokesperson and



AAP MLA Mr Raghav Chadha said, "At this tough time, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has made sure that no one goes to sleep hungry. Today, at Rajendar Nagar Legislative Assembly, I have distributed free food at eight places. We are ensuring social distancing while distributing food."

"We are working round the clock to ensure sanitizers, food and water for the poor people of the area. There is no need to worry, we are all together working for the relief," said AAP MLA from Timarpur Dilip Pandey.

"The Delhi Government is providing 1.5 times extra ration to the ration card holder residents of Delhi. Today I ensured that in my area all the ration cardholders get this benefit and the initiative was successful," said MLA from Burari Sanjeev Jha.

# PM holds video-conference with heads of Missions



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of sharing details about global efforts to fight coronavirus pandemic and India's ongoing measures, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held a video conference with the heads of all of Indian embassies worldwide — the first such event for Indian Missions worldwide.

The Prime Minister said extraordinary times require extraordinary solutions and therefore most of the world had quarantined itself even in this globalised era. Incidentally, this conference was like making assertion about taking unprecedented decisions including lockdown. Modi further said this was an unavoidable step taken to fight this pandemic, but it was also hugely consequential, as the closure of the globalised system has had an extensive and far-reaching impact upon the international transport system, financial markets and the global economy.

Outlining the measures taken by India, he said the country had taken unprecedented and early steps in response to this pandemic from mid-January this year, to reduce the risk of importing the infection, and thereafter to prevent a large outbreak. This included the world's largest quarantine and lockdown, implemented by India.

Modi complimented Heads of Missions for their efforts to

evacuate Indians stranded abroad in some of the epicentres of the crisis. He also exhorted them to take steps on five specific counts.

The steps included enduring their own health and safety, and that of their teams and families besides attending to Indians who remain in various foreign countries, given the uncertainty of continuing international travel restrictions. He called on Heads of Indian Missions to help boost the morale of such compatriots abroad, address issues arising from their unplanned stay abroad, with their host governments, and other problems Indians might face abroad, including arranging shelter, where necessary and feasible.

He asked them to stay alert and identify in their countries of accreditation best practices, innovations, scientific breakthroughs and sources to procure medical equipment, for India's fight against COVID-19. He also advised Heads of Mission to suitably publicise the newly-established PM-CARES Fund to mobilise donations from abroad.

Since this crisis also impacts upon the economy, Modi further advised the envoys to also focus on ensuring that commerce in essential supplies, logistics chains, remittances and so on are unaffected, through their coordination with foreign partners. Lastly, he urged the heads of missions to continue

## Modi lauds social organisations' roles in fighting coronavirus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing his interactions with various key representatives of the society for a unified fight against the coronavirus spread in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said social organisations have a big role to play in countering superstitions, wrong beliefs and misinformation even as he maintained that the entire nation is displaying immense resilience, grit and patience in facing the challenge.

The Prime Minister was interacting with representatives of organisations working for social welfare via video conference.

He appealed to them to spread awareness about the COVID-19 outbreak. Modi said that people were seen gathered in places and flouting social distancing norms in the name of belief. He said, it is necessary to highlight the importance of maintaining social distancing during this time.

Those with whom Modi interacted included RSS leader Bhaiyyaji Joshi, Dawoodi Bohra head Qaq Djoher Syedna, Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev, spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and Raj Yogni Brahm Kumaris sister Jayanti.

He recalled Father of the

Nation Mahatma Gandhi's words that serving the poor and downtrodden is the best way to serve the nation. The Prime Minister praised the dedication and commitment of organisations participating in the video conference, towards serving humanity.

He observed that these organisations have three distinct specialties: a humane approach, massive reach and connect with people and a service mindset. He said, due to these distinctions, such organisations are trusted implicitly.

Modi said that the nation is facing an unprecedented crisis and needs the service of these bodies and their resources like never before. He suggested that they could play a huge role in arranging for basic necessities for the poor. They could also dedicate their medical facilities and volunteers to serving patients and the needy. Modi said, the nation needs both short-term measures and a long-term vision to overcome the challenge.

The representatives of the social welfare organisations praised the leadership of the Prime Minister in guiding the country during the major crisis.

They praised the proactive measures of the government which, they said,

have been effective in controlling the spread of the virus. They pledged support to the PM-CARES fund and said their workforce will be dedicated completely to the cause of serving the nation in this time of crisis. The organisations spoke about their work to meet the COVID-19 challenge through awareness campaigns digital means, distribution of essentials, food packets, sanitisers, medicines and provision of medical help to those in need.

The Prime Minister reiterated the importance of spreading awareness, helping the poor and needy through arranging for basic necessities, provision of medical facilities and dedicating the volunteers to the cause of serving those impacted by COVID-19. He stressed on the importance of giving medical and scientific advice and countering misinformation. Prime Minister also underlined the need to keep working together to face the challenge of the pandemic.

Over the last few days, Modi has been conducting a series of interactions via video conferencing with representatives of different sectors including electronic and print media and medical fraternity besides Chief Ministers of all the States and heads of States of SAARC nations.

## PM shares his 'fitness mantra' through 3D animated videos



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday shared 3D animated videos of him performing yoga on Twitter to show how he remains fit.

"During yesterday's #MannKiBaat, someone asked me about my fitness routine during this time. Hence, thought of sharing these Yoga videos," he tweeted.

"I hope you also begin practising Yoga regularly," he wrote.

The video shows Modi doing some simple Yoga exercises involving stretching of

legs, hands and back for relaxing the body. The exercises Prime Minister suggested would keep people physically and mentally fit while remaining indoors during the three-week lockdown period.

The release of video was meant to all those who are feeling tense while feeling inactive and stranded during the period of "social distancing".

Responding to a question in his monthly radio address "Mann ki Baat" on Sunday on how he is keeping fit during the lockdown, the Prime Minister had said he would

post the "Yoga with Modi" videos.

"But do remember, that I am not a fitness expert, I am also not a yoga teacher. I am merely a practitioner," he had said.

"...some yoga asanas have greatly benefited me. It is possible that some of these tips might help you too during the lockdown," Modi said on Sunday.

In the run-up to International Yoga Day in June last year, the Prime Minister had shared similar videos to encourage people to practise yoga

## Cong video-conferencing to assess corona situation



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leaders have convened a high-level meeting on Thursday through video conferencing to discuss the implications due to the 21-day countrywide lockdown to check the coronavirus menace.

The party which has simultaneously been criticising certain measures of the Modi Government and also extending its support to the Centre in its effort to combat COVID 19 on Monday constituted a control room at party headquarters. A couple of days ago, party chief Sonia Gandhi had also constituted a task force to tackle the spread of Corona menace.

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal said the CWC will discuss the future strategy.

"A meeting of the Congress Working Committee will be held on Thursday, April, 2. The meeting will be conducted through video-conferencing," Venugopal said.

The Congress has been critical of the Government's handling of the situation arising out of the COVID-19 lockdown, saying it has halted all economic activity and is causing problems to the

## Donate at least ₹100 each to PM CARES Fund, BJP president urges party workers



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Saying this is the need of the hour, BJP chief JP Nadda on Monday appealed to party workers to donate at least ₹100 each to the PM CARES Fund and inspire 10 others to contribute as well. The BJP, which claims to be the largest political party in the world, is said to have close

**A meeting of the Congress Working Committee will be held on Thursday, April, 2**

labourers, the poor and the marginalised.

The party has also accused the Government of not taking adequate steps to mitigate the plight of the migrant labour force.

Sonia Gandhi and former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi have suggested a nuanced approach to tackle the coronavirus outbreak rather than the total lock-

down.

Congress also set up a 24-hour central control room to coordinate with States on steps being taken to extend help to people in distress due to the lockdown imposed to check the spread of coronavirus.

The central control room at AICC will be monitored by Venugopal comprising Rajiv Satav, Devendra Yadav (ex-MLA), Manish Chattrath (Secretary, AICC) as members for the purpose of coordinating all COVID-2019 related matters.

It also said that state party units will update the central

Fund as part of his Government's efforts to combat the coronavirus and asked people to contribute generously to it.

Earlier, the BJP decided that one crore of its affluent workers would arrange food for at least five poor persons under the 'Mahabhojan' programme. While the party has directed all its 386 MPs from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to release ₹1 crore each from their respective MPLADS fund for tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, it has also asked all its MPs to donate a month's salary to the PM's fund.

control room on a daily basis on the actual ground situation with regards to the spread of the virus, medical preparedness of respective governments as also the relief work being undertaken by the party and state agencies.

The party two days ago had 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.

## Cong MP Rajmohan Unnithan moves SC, seeks opening of K'taka border with Kerala

New Delhi: The Congress MP from Kerala's Kasaragod, Rajmohan Unnithan, has moved the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Karnataka Government to open its border with his State for smooth movement of ambulances and other emergency vehicles during the lockdown.

In his plea, Unnithan said that such a blockade is a clear violation of Articles 21 and 19(d) of the Constitution at a time when supply of commodities is itself hit hard and the entire country is fighting a medical emergency. "This blockade has also resulted in cutting off the essential lifeline of National Highways and State Highways and major district roads leading to the State of Kerala, which has resulted in the shortage of supply of essential and non-essential items to

the State of Kerala leading to shortage supply of food and medical supplies," his plea said. Unnithan said the "ill-planned and dangerous blockade" has claimed the life of a 70 year old woman who was denied entry into Karnataka for urgent medical treatment only available at Mangalore. "This is a clear case of violation of the right to life with dignity by the state as citizens are made to die on the roads because of the action of the State which is in total disregard to Article 21," he said.

The Congress MP said that his home constituency Kasaragod is the northern most district of Kerala, which shares most of its boundary with Karnataka and the Panvel-Kochi-Kanyakumari National Highway (NH-66) is passing through the district, connecting it with Mangalore,

Karnataka. "The people of Kasaragod in Kerala rely entirely upon the medical facilities of Mangalore District in the State of Karnataka and its adjacent areas. As a result of this blockade two persons have already died as they were denied entry into Karnataka even for urgent medical treatment at a hospital in Mangalore," his plea said.

He added that Kerala being a consumer state, grocery items and vegetables come from Karnataka through roads and Highways connecting the Kasaragod and the Mangalore. "Now all the roads including the National Highways leading to the Karnataka state side are closed by the officials of the Karnataka State in the wake of the nation-wide lockdown against the Covid 19 pandemic which has resulted in stoppage of supply of goods and other essential items from

the State of Karnataka to the State of Kerala," he said in his PIL. His plea sought directions to the Karnataka Government to open the borders with Kerala and in particular Kasaragod-Mangalore border at Talappadi and allowing the movement of Ambulances and other emergency vehicles through the borders.

The petition also sought direction to Karnataka to allow the movement of trucks and other vehicles carrying essential and non-essential items to the state of Kerala.

The plea sought a direction to Karnataka to register an FIR and constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the supervision of the court to enquire against the authorities concerned including the police officials whose action led to the death of two citizens.

Agencies

## SC to hear migrant workers' issues today

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday slated for tomorrow the hearing on a petition seeking directions to provide amenities like food and shelter to migrant workers amid the lockdown imposed in the wake of coronavirus. A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad Arvind Bobde and also comprising Justice L Nageshwar

Rao today heard the petition, filed by advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, through video conferencing and slated the matter for Tuesday. Srivastava, during the hearing today, cited many news stories about migrant labourers walking out of urban centres. Seeing thousands of people on the road every day, it is a very sad situation, he told the apex court. The top court

said that it will deal with everything, but not with what the Central Government is already doing and added that it will first go through the Centre's affidavit. Solicitor General, Tushar Mehta, told the court that the Union of India and all State Governments are taking all kinds of necessary steps to mitigate the situation and submitted that he wanted to file an affi-

dativ while replying to the petition. The CJI said that we are not going to add to the confusion by issuing any kind of direction, which is already being taken care of by the Government. The petition sought directions to provide food, water, shelter and urgent indulgences to the migrant workers and their families.

Agencies

## Covid-19 may create fatal cardiovascular or respiratory problems

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 can have fatal consequences for people even without underlying cardiovascular disease or respiratory problems, according to a study published on Monday.

"It is likely that even in the absence of previous heart disease, the heart muscle can be affected by coronavirus disease," said Mohammad Madjid, MD, MS, the study's lead author and an assistant professor of cardiology at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.



muscle can happen in any patient with or without heart disease, but the risk is higher in those who already have heart disease," said the authors cautioning that understanding the

effects of COVID-19 on the cardiovascular system is essential for providing comprehensive medical care for cardiac patients.

The authors in the study,

published in JAMA Cardiology explained that research from previous coronavirus and influenza epidemics suggest that viral infections can cause acute

coronary syndromes, arrhythmias, and the development of, or exacerbation of, heart failure.

In a clinical bulletin issued by the American College of Cardiology, it was revealed that the case fatality rate of COVID-19 for patients with cardiovascular disease was 10.5%. Data also points to a greater likelihood that individuals over the age of 65 with coronary heart disease or hypertension can contract the illness, as well experience more severe symptoms that will require critical care.

According to the study authors, critical cases are

those that reported respiratory failure, septic shock, and/or multiple organ dysfunction or failure that resulted in death.

The authors also analysed another small retrospective study of 150 patients with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 that evaluated the factors associated with mortality. It was found that cardiovascular disease was more prevalent in patients who died (13 of 68) than patients who survived (0 of 82).

"Among the 68 fatal cases, 36 died of respiratory failure, 5 died of myocardial damage and circulatory failure, 22

died of both causes, and 5 died from undetermined causes. 64 Patients who died had higher levels of troponin, myoglobin, C-reactive protein, serum ferritin, and interleukin-6. This study is further suggestive of a high inflammatory burden in COVID-19 and a possible rise in myocarditis-related cardiac events."

The novel virus that causes COVID-19 originated in Wuhan, China, and by March 11, 2020, the WHO had declared it a global pandemic.

The three most common symptoms of COVID-19

include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Other less common symptoms are muscle pain, sore throat, nasal congestion, and headache. Symptoms can appear as soon as two days after exposure to the virus to up to 14 days after.

The co-authors of the study "Potential Effects of Coronaviruses on the Cardiovascular System" include Payam Safavi-Naeini, MD, of the Texas Heart Institute and Scott Solomon, MD, of Harvard Medical School; and Orly Vardeny, PharmD, of the University of Minnesota.

# Returning migrants a challenge for Bihar

**IAN S ■ PATNA**  
The migrant labourers returning to Bihar has posed a big challenge to the State Government to keep them in 14-day isolation to contain coronavirus spread. Over 45,000 people had reached the UP towns bordering Bihar and more than 100,000 were expected by evening, said a Bihar Disaster Management Department official, here on Monday. Pratyam Amrit, Principal Secretary of the Disaster Management Department, said, "Six camps have been set

up along the Bihar-UP border. By Monday, we are expecting 1.30 lakh people to reach the borders. We are looking to provide them food and make arrangements for their stay during the quarantine period." The state government, he said was taking all precautionary measures even before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the 21-day lockdown on March 24. After emergence of Covid-19 cases in the state, the government had made arrangements even in the rural areas to provide food and shelter and screen villagers for infection, he added.



But the influx of workers from Delhi has created serious problem the state government Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has expressed displeasure at the migrant workers being sent back to Bihar. "People from other states

are being registered at the disaster border relief camps. Their health is being checked. After food and rest, they are being provided buses by the Transport Department in the district headquarters. Arrangements have been made to send them," said another official. The process could continue for two-three days, he added. Principal Secretary Deepak Kumar said arrangements were being made to send Biharis coming from outside to their villages. "All the Block Development Officers, Head of

panchayats and sarpanches have been asked to monitor the situation and follow quarantine and social distancing norms," Kumar said. Those who had returned from abroad after March 10 were being investigated. The government has a list of 1,790 such people. The Chief Minister after high-level meetings have ordered one-month's ration free to 1.68 crore cardholders and payment of three months' pension to all pensioners. A control room has also been set up at Bihar Bhawan in Delhi to help people.

# J&K Govt notifies helpline numbers for stranded migrants

**IAN S ■ JAMMU**  
The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Monday notified the helpline numbers for migrant labourers from the Union Territory who are stranded in various parts of the country due to the 21-day nationwide lockdown. The migrants were asked to

contact for help the following: Zameer Ahmad, Assistant Labour Commissioner, 9797172356 (for Kashmir Division) and Sanjay Kumar, Labour Officer, 9419424281 (for Jammu Division). These officials have been asked to liaise authorities concerned to assist/help stranded migrant labourers

# 2nd Covid-19 death in Bengal, 22 positive cases

**Migrants 'quarantine' selves on tree tops**  
**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**  
A bunch of semi-literate, half-clad people from tribal boondocks of Bengal have displayed the kind of grasp of corona consciousness that hundreds of their well-heeled fellow citizens have failed to exhibit. About 10 migrant workers from Bhamri village in interior part of the tribal Purulia district have been living on tree tops as a measure of isolating themselves from the rest of the villagers, sources said. The workers had returned from Chennai and unlike in many villages were not immediately pushed outside by the locals for the fear of infection. "We came straight to our village by hiring a vehicle, saw local medic who advised home quarantine. But as our houses are small with no chance of isolation without coming in close physical contact of others we decided to stay on tree top," said Bijoy Singh Loya. They made their own abode up on mango trees using bamboo sticks to fabricate planks some three feet by six feet each. "We have spread out bed sheets and using mosquito curtains too," said another fellow migrant," adding the villagers are kind enough to provide them with rice and vegetables. "They bring both steaming and puffed rice beneath the tree and we pull the utensils with rope. This is

# UP BJP MLAs help in relief work, some in isolation

**Lucknow:** BJP legislators are now involving themselves in providing relief to the common people during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and the ensuing nationwide lockdown. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and BJP General Secretary Sunil Bansal have asked all party legislators and workers to extend all possible help to the people during the lockdown. UP Minister Brijesh Pathak has turned his residential phone number into a helpline and has asked people to contact him if they require any help for food. He claims that his control room works round the clock for people who are in need. Banda BJP MLA Prakash Dwiwedi said that he has provided food to at least 5,000 workers, labourers and homeless people. He has also set up a control room to facilitate relief work, which includes home delivery of food packets. Dwiwedi claimed in a press release that he is also providing food to monkeys.

# People going hungry in Panaji, says Parrikar's son

**Panaji:** With Panaji reeling under severe food and groceries shortage amid the ongoing lockdown like other parts of Goa, former Chief Minister late Manohar Parrikar's son Utpal on Monday, participated in a drive to deliver essential groceries to 500 people living in the late Defence Minister's home constituency. "Many people who live day to day cannot afford to buy large amounts of grocery at a time. They have to survive. It is easy to say 'stay at home', but many people are facing hunger. Ground reality is it is difficult to get supplies. I do not know if it is hoarded by people," Utpal Parrikar told IANS on Monday. The outreach by Utpal, who is a member of the state executive committee of the Goa Bharatiya Janata Party, comes at a time when the Chief Minister Pramod Sawant-led administration is facing accusations of inefficiency vis a vis ensuring availability of food supplies and basic essentials to hundreds of thousands of Goans across the state who are in a state of panic due to grocery stores running out of stock. The home delivery system initiated by the government, with the help of volunteers from political parties, has also been

# Lockdown will end only if people follow rules: BSY

**IAN S ■ BENGALURU**  
In a stern warning to violators, Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Monday put the onus of lockdown ending on the people following the Government's guidelines strictly and staying at home. "Ending of the 3-week lockdown depends on strictness with which the people follow the curfew and maintain social distance. In this hour of crisis, it is not good to come out of house and violate the curfew," Yediyurappa said in a statement here. He appealed to the people to help the state government in preventing the spread of the virus. "People of Karnataka are known for tolerance and patience. They are law-abiding citizens. The lockdown is a testing time for them. It has come to test the patience of our people," Yediyurappa said. Citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's apology for the lockdown amid the pandemic, the Chief Minister said everyone should realise the predicament of Modi who cares for the well-being of the country and its people. "Modi's precautionary measures are yielding results when the performance of the developed countries is miserable in handling Covid outbreak," he said.

# Southern Railways begins work on isolation wards

**Chennai:** Three production units belonging to Southern Railways have been assigned the task of converting one train coach as an isolation ward for coronavirus patients, said an official. According to the official, Perambur Loco Works, Perambur Carriage Works both located here and the Golden Rock Workshop in Trichy will be converting one coach each as prototype for Coronavirus ward. Further plans for converting coaches as medical ward will be taken based on the instructions from the Indian Railway Board, an official not wanting to be quoted told IANS. According to the official, the work has begun and is expected to be completed by Thursday. The modifications include converting the

Indian style toilets into a bathing room with hand shower, bucket, mug, soap and liquid dispenser. All the middle berths in the coaches and the ladders to climb on to middle and upper berths would be removed for easier movement. The official said there will be extra bottle holder and there will be 230V sockets in each cabin. There will be plastic curtain for each cabin as a measure of isolation. The partition on the end side next to main doorway will be removed on each end. According to an official, Indian Railways have already coaches with fully equipped operation theatre which are used to treat the injured in train accidents. IANS

# Kerala +ve cases cross 200 amid migrant workers' unrest

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI**  
As the number of corona virus affected persons crossed the 200 mark by Monday morning, making it the State with the second highest number of afflicted patients, Kerala is faced with a major issue which has been brewing up for days. It is feared that migrant workers across the State may take to the streets demanding better living conditions or for transportation back to their villages. An aggressive posture by thousands of migrant laborers in Paipattu Grama Panchayat in Kottayam district on Sunday took the State administration by surprise. The migrants, mainly from Bengal and Assam (though the local officials term them as workers from Bangladesh) took to the streets demanding immediate

arrangements to travel back to their native places in the backdrop of the 21-day shut down. "The workers, mostly from Bangladesh masquerading as they are from Bengal and Assam are upset that they are out of work. Being daily wage earners, they are not in a position to find ways to get two square meals a day," said Siby Abraham, member, Paipattu Panchayath in Kottayam district. He said there are more than 10,000 migrant workers in Paipattu Panchayath and most of them are in possession of at least a dozen identity cards. This is not a problem faced by Kottayam district alone. Neighbouring district of Ernakulam, the El Dorado of migrant workers, is like a volcano which may burst anytime. Perumbavoor, a small town with nearly 500 registered plywood companies faced tense

**The migrants, mainly from Bengal and Assam took to the streets demanding immediate arrangements to travel back to their native places**

# Total positive cases mount to 48 in J&K

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU**  
A doctor working in the microbiology laboratory of Government Medical College (GMC) hospital in Jammu Monday tested positive for Covid-19 along with nine others in Jammu & Kashmir. The total number of positive cases stood at 48, with seven new cases reported from Kashmir and three from Jammu region till last reports came in. As a safety measure, samples of other staff members/technicians and consultants working in the GMC laboratory were taken and all of them were immediately quarantined. Senior doctors in the GMC were frequently raising the issue of inadequate safety kits for doctors and other staff members working round the



number of 10 news cases tested positive in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. He said, 11644 persons are under observation and 722 samples tested so far, 659 tested negative and reports of 15 samples were awaited. He said, seven more cases detected positive in Kashmir, two from Shopian and three from Srinagar, one each from Bandipore and Budgam. He added, all positive cases were contacts of previous positive cases. In Jammu division, he said three new positive cases were reported. Out of these three, one case was detected in Udhampur, while two others from Janipur and Gujjar Basti area of Jammu. In another important

development, the district authorities in Jammu Monday intensified lockdown in certain pockets of Jammu and blocked all the entry and exit routes to contain movement of local residents. The decision was taken by the local authorities after reports claimed some of these positive cases may have come in contact with large number of people in the area and needed strict measures to isolate them. Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Sushma Chauhan issued a statement which said, "in order to strengthen COVID containment in some areas of PS Trikuta nagar (from where recent +ve cases traced), we have intensified lockdown in Bhatindi and neighbouring areas. Further included today are Bhawani Nagar of Janipur PS as well. This is in interest of public at large."

# 10 new cases take Raj tally to 69

**Jaipur:** The Rajasthan Government, here on Monday, reported 10 new coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 69. While two cases are from Jaipur and one from Bhillwara, seven are Iran evacuees, shifted to Jodhpur recently, according to officials. Of the three Covid-19 new cases, first is a 70-year-old female and second a 21-year-old male. They are mother and son of a Covid-19 patient from the Ramganj area of the city, said Additional Chief Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh. The youth, who had returned from Oman a few days back, was asked to quarantine himself by medical and health personnel. But he kept meeting relatives and friends. One of his friends also tested Covid-19 positive. After the new cases, curfew has been clamped in seven

police station areas of the walled city. The third patient, 40-year-old male from Bhillwara -- was the OPD patient of the Bangar Hospital, Bhillwara, said Singh. At AIIMS Jodhpur, 43 samples of Iran evacuees have been tested. Of this, six tested positive and 37 negative. SN Medical College, Jodhpur, tested two samples of the evacuees. Of this, only one tested positive, confirmed Singh. Out of the 69 positive cases, 62 are residents of Rajasthan. 14 of them had turned negative from positive and four been discharged, said Singh. IANS

# Maha: 2 more deaths, positive cases may cross 250

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**  
The Coronavirus situation continued to be grim in Maharashtra on Monday, as two more died of the pandemic and 17 more persons tested positive for Covid-19 taking the total number of infected cases in the State to 220. While an 80 year-old man died at a private hospital in Mumbai, a 52-year-old man died at a private hospital in Mumbai. With the latest deaths, the total number of Covid-19 deaths in the state climbed to ten in Maharashtra. The person with acute respiratory distress, who had been admitted to a private hospital on March 27, died the following day. "He was a known case of hypertension and Ischemic heart disease. He was tested positive for Covid-19," a medical bulletin released by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said. The total number of positive cases (220) reported by the State Health Department could be much higher as the BMC recorded as many as 47 cases on Monday as against eight

cases that figured in the state health department's list. In effect, the total number of cases in the might go up to 259 cases if the BMC's figures are included. Apart from testing positive for Covid-19, the man -- who died at a Pune Hospital -- was suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. With another 17 persons testing positive for Coronavirus in various parts of Maharashtra, the total number of infected cases rose further to 220. Of the fresh infected cases, Mumbai accounted for eight cases, while five positive cases were reported from Pune. Nagour reported two infected cases, while there was one case each in Nashik and Kolhapur. State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said that as many as 39 persons, who had earlier tested positive for Covid-19 but recovered later, had been discharged from various hospitals till Monday. "As many as 328 persons have newly been admitted to various hospitals in the state. Since January 18, 4538 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, 3876 laboratory samples were negative and 220 have been tested positive for coronavirus until today," the minister said. "As many as 19,161 people are home quarantined in the state, while 1224 people are in institutional quarantine centres," the bulletin said. Meanwhile, in a medical bulletin released by it, the BMC said that the private laboratories had diagnosed 18 patients between March 24 and 28. "As these 18 cases included in today, there appears to be a rise in cases. The rise is mainly due to vigorous contact tracing by health teams and enhanced testing in public and private labs, thereby ensuring proper preventive steps to control the spread of the disease," the bulletin said. "As a containment measure, areas surrounding the positive cases including one lakh houses and 3.87 lakh people have been surveyed. Apart from tracing the positive cases, the teams are also ensuring the home quarantining measures," the medical

bulletin added. Meanwhile, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said that the state government had set up 262 camps for migrants across the state as COVID-19 deaths touched 9 with another 215 positive cases. "In these camps, we are currently housing 70,399 migrant labour/the homeless people and providing them food," the chief minister said. In a related development, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Monday decided to compulsorily cremate all victims of COVID-19 irrespective of their religions, to prevent risk infections even after death. In an order issued today, Mumbai Commissioner Praveen Pardeshi lamented that the dead bodies of all COVID-19 victims must be cremated at the nearest crematorium irrespective of the religion to which they belong. Justifying the mandatory cremation move, Pardeshi said that a religious community leader had brought to his notice that burial grounds for Muslim or Christians were located in

densely populated localities of Mumbai, which posed a high risk of contamination to their surrounding community or residential areas. Pardeshi also said that any rituals involving the touching of the body were barred and not more than five persons shall be permitted to attend any such funeral. Among other things, the BMC banned the procedure of packaging the victim's body in a plastic bag and burying it in a cemetery on the grounds that it would prevent early decomposition and the risk of the future spread of the Coronavirus would continue. However, Pardeshi said that for those who insisted on holding the burial practice would be allowed provided they take the body out of Mumbai limits for the funeral rituals. "For this, the family members of the deceased would have to make all arrangements including transportation and follow the relevant guidelines/precautions for the disposal of COVID-19 victims," the Municipal Commissioner said.

PAPER WITH PASSION  
**Indian solutions**

Home grown test-kits and geo-fencing of COVID-19 suspects show why we need to prioritise the sciences, R&D



If indeed, as Plato famously said, "Necessity is the mother of invention," then the Coronavirus pandemic has certainly brought out Indian innovation at its best. To begin with, a team at IIT-Bombay and professional and experienced members among the alumni recently developed an app for mobiles called 'Corontine,' which would help the authorities keep track of potential or suspected asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 if they were to leave their quarantine zone. This has been done by creating what the techies are calling a "geo-fence" to keep tabs on people who had travelled abroad since February-end and had been advised home quarantine for a minimum of 14 days to see if they develop symptoms. The self-quarantine was not just for those who travelled abroad, but also for the people they came in contact with after returning, including friends and relatives. Asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 have been a cause of concern for the medical community globally and in India, too. Particularly as there have been several cases in the country where people escaped quarantine and mingled with the masses, irresponsibly increasing the potential risk of community transmission of the contagion. Then there was Minal Bhosale, a virologist from Pune, who with the help of her team created the first Indian testing kit for the virus, just a day before she gave birth to a baby girl. The test was delivered in a record time of just six weeks and the first batch has now hit the markets, making for a quick and affordable option. The engineering teams based at the automaker Mahindra and Mahindra's Mumbai and Nashik manufacturing plants developed an Ambu bag ventilator in 48 hours that will cost just ₹7,500. This indigenously-developed bag valve mask is a self-inflating device that is typically used to help patients with breathing problems and will be an answer to India's worry over the shortage of ventilators for Coronavirus patients. Now, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is trying to develop "multi-patient ventilators", wherein several patients can be supported by a single ventilator to meet the huge demand if the Covid-19 outbreak goes out of control as India has only 40,000 ventilators as of now.

This goes to show that when push comes to a shove, in times of crisis, the Indian spirit and mind kick into overdrive to find answers to questions which puzzle the world even today. All around the world, Indian minds are revered and are often even found at high-ranking positions in the fields of science and discovery at the most prestigious institutions. This also points out to the lack of research and innovation facilities and incentives at home. The most brilliant of Indian minds usually flourish the most once they have been recognised by foreign institutions, which value their ideas more than the Indian ones. It is no mystery that the Indian education system does not leave much breathing room for innovation and critical thinking. The education system needs to be overhauled to promote critical thinking and innovation in various fields instead of the basic level of education and knowledge, which is forced upon students. In the absence of a higher education system that is application-based and which encourages breakthrough ventures, we will always remain plagued by mediocrity. The onset of the Coronavirus is something which brought out the best in our scientists and innovators at home. With one of the youngest populations of the world, if nurtured correctly and effectively, we understandably have the potential to become a superpower but the need of the hour is innovation in the field of science. The Government needs to back the sciences to encourage critical thinking and promote research as very few of our premier educational institutions take part or are quoted in global studies. In the recent crisis has shown, what we consign as social sectors in national budgets, namely health and education, need to be accorded a much higher priority. At the same time, amid all talk of immunity, our Ayurvedic sciences can be revived to inculcate a holistic health culture. India has overcome problems before and it surely will do so again when everyone works together and puts human life above everything else. In the end, the battle is ours to fight; nobody else will do it for us.

**Looking for positives**

Maybe India should look at this period as an enforced de-addiction time



While Kerala might have the most number of confirmed cases of the SARS-CoV-2 virus strain that has put the entire nation under a lockdown mode, there has only been one confirmed death due to respiratory illness associated with the virus at the time of writing. However, according to a news story, ever since the lockdown came into effect, seven people have reportedly committed suicide due to the non-availability of alcohol in this State. This led to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan allowing the sale of

limited alcohol to those people having withdrawal syndrome though they must provide a doctor's prescription. One wonders how those, who want liquor in the State, will find the doctors to issue them prescriptions when the medical fraternity itself is overwhelmed treating Coronavirus patients. Moreover, it is questionable if a medical practitioner is allowed to prescribe alcohol as a medicine to treat de-addiction. It is not just Kerala, alcohol shops are shut down across the country with only some people lucky enough to have stocked up before the nation went into complete lockdown. The situation is similar elsewhere, too, with *paan* and cigarette shops shut in most places. Once a flourishing trade for recreational purposes, the sale of addictive drugs is also in lockdown with other vice trades equally badly hit. But not getting your daily dose of whatever your vice is should not be an opportunity to mope or moan. Whether it is not having your daily pack of smokes or two pogs of whisky, maybe people with an addiction should use the coming couple of weeks constructively and try and wean themselves off them. One would not make an argument to quit but attempts must be made to reduce consumption. It should not become the case that the day the lockdown ends, everybody rushes to the liquor store to get themselves some beer.

This newspaper understands that some individuals would have built up a physical addiction to drugs or alcohol. Such people must be helped in such times but the system, just like that for being out in public, must not be abused. And that is for the addictive substances available legally; the illegal drugs must be flushed out of India. Now with the borders closed and flights effectively banned, the inflow of such harmful substances has come to an end. Of course, this will not stay the case forever. The moment things open up, people will go back to their old ways. But even then, consuming a bit less may not be a bad thing for all involved. If people can take this time to quit, all the better.

**Politics in Corona exodus**

The reverse migration of daily wagers has made a mockery of the Prime Minister's call for a 21-day lockdown. What prompted this humanitarian crisis?



SANDHYA JAIN

There is a strange coincidence, if not synergy, between some Twitter handles calling for the national Government to deal with the Coronavirus health crisis, even though the Union Government enjoys a staggering majority, and the sudden exodus of thousands of casual labour from *jhuggi* clusters across Delhi on Saturday, March 28. This made a mockery of the 21-day national lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 24 and potentially exposed these fleeing families and those they would meet at the end of their journey to the virus, should any among them be silent carriers of the deadly disease.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal could have used the Disaster Management Act, 2005 to rein in migrants from the beginning. The Lt Governor and collectors of the capital's 11 districts are also culpable for not realising the developments brewing under their watch and total inaction when exodus began from their respective areas. A new Lt Governor will revive confidence in the city's shaken populace.

The Prime Minister, however, took control of the situation with Sunday morning's *Mann ki Baat*, where he warned that those violating the lockdown are "playing with their own lives" and that a complete lockdown was the only solution in the global pandemic. He regretted the discrimination against medical personnel, who are risking their lives to save others at this critical time and applauded all those providing essential services.

Simultaneously, the National Executive Committee of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, under Section 10(2)(1) directed all State and Union Territory Governments to keep migrants, who left their current domiciles to return to their home towns, in mandatory quarantine at the nearest shelter for 14 days as per standard health protocol. It asked landlords not to press for rents for a month. It was later that Kejriwal appealed to all migrant labourers to remain in their current domiciles and not risk catching the infection or spreading it further. He promised to ensure rations and began thermal temperature checks at the bus stand but Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Kapil Mishra said the buses must stop plying and people must be given rations at home.

Such mass movement of people from all parts of the city requires meticulous planning and execution. The Centre must fix responsibility for the DTC ferrying people all over the city when the service is restricted to staff of essential services at fixed hours in the morning and evening. By the time thousands of people had collected at the Anand Vihar bus stand, it was too late to send them back to their clusters. Many had already been dumped at the Uttar Pradesh border, catching Chief



Minister Yogi Adityanath by surprise.

However, he had to order 1,000 buses to pick up the homeward-bound and ordered a 14-day quarantine of about one lakh people who had entered the State in the last three days. This means some began coming from Thursday.

All district magistrates were given details (names, addresses and phone numbers) of the new arrivals and 60,000 panchayats were asked to share responsibility for the quarantine. Uttar Pradesh has also sent nodal officers to 12 States to help people from Uttar Pradesh, who have business or employment there.

In Delhi, the national and international media had a field day; usual suspects interviewed poor and hungry people walking home in the absence of transport, taking care not to ask why they were moving around during a nationwide lockdown. *Al Jazeera* spoke with painter Ram Bhajan Nisar, who set off on foot with his wife, two children and 11 others from Delhi to Gorakhpur village on the Nepal border, 650 km away. He admitted that an overnight bus took the family from the border overpass area on Saturday up to Shahjahanpur district,

“FAILURE TO RESUME ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND GET FACTORIES, SHOPS, OFFICES AND CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES GOING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WILL GIVE THE ECONOMY A JOLT FROM WHICH IT WOULD STRUGGLE TO RECOVER. IT IS PERTINENT THAT THE CENTRE HAD ANNOUNCED INCENTIVES FOR THE SMALL AND MEDIUM SECTORS”

Uttar Pradesh. From there, they got a ride on a tractor trolley, ate at a gurdwara and hoped to get Government transport to reach their village. Hundreds more have been spotted walking towards Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar, adjoining Delhi.

The Chief Ministers of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have expressed anger at the Delhi Government for facilitating this huge movement of people across the country in defiance of the nationwide lockdown and without any warning to the respective States. Clearly, at this time, there is no need for competitive activism or politics but a coordination between States to save lives.

The first objective would be to disrupt the Bihar administration with an abrupt invasion of thousands of families, who would immediately need food, shelter and Coronavirus screening, even quarantine. Lack of preparedness on this score would embarrass the Nitish Kumar Government in an election year.

If we destroy the efficacy of the 21-day lockdown, the Prime Minister would have no choice but to extend it further. Failure to resume economic activity and get factories, shops,

offices and construction activities going as soon as possible will give the economy a jolt from which it would struggle to recover. It is pertinent that the Centre had announced a slew of incentives for the small and medium manufacturing sector, just prior to the lockdown. This sector is a large source of employment and needs to get on its feet fast.

Can there be any other reason for nudging labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to quit the capital? It is difficult to say but some have observed that in all the turmoil, the alleged illegal migrants from Bangladesh — both Bangladeshis and Rohingyas — stayed put. They did not express anxiety about jobs or food and shelter during the crisis; nor did they have an urge to go home. Some kind Samaritans were taking care of them.

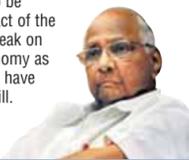
Whatever the reasons for the reverse migration, it has increased the urgency for the National Population Register (NPR) in order to track migration and job opportunities across the country, which is vital for future economic planning.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views expressed are personal.)

**SOUNDBITE**

Everyone needs to be ready for the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on the country's economy as business activities have come to a standstill.

NCP chief —Sharad Pawar



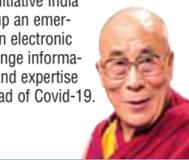
My life was so messed up. I was with certain type of people from whom only death could have saved me. All of this happened at the time when I was only a teenager.

Actor —Kangana Ranaut



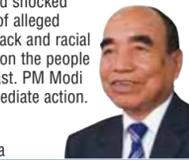
I appreciate the initiative India has taken to set up an emergency fund and an electronic platform to exchange information, knowledge and expertise to tackle the spread of Covid-19.

Spiritual leader —Dalai Lama



I am pained and shocked seeing videos of alleged incidents of attack and racial discrimination on the people of the North-east. PM Modi must take immediate action.

Mizoram CM —Zoramthanga



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Deploy the military**

Sir — The Government has made it clear that it has no plans to extend the 21-day lockdown to slow the spread of Coronavirus. But the fact remains that in spite of the national lockdown, the number of COVID-19 cases in the country is going up on a daily basis. The numbers may yet be tiny compared with those in the US, Italy and Spain but health experts have warned that India, the world's second most populous nation, faces a tidal wave of infections if tough steps are not taken. In the light of this, it is essential that the lockdown be enforced with military precision to prevent the pandemic from entering Stage-III.

In a bid to stop the community transmission of the virus, the Government has ordered the sealing of all State and district borders in an attempt to prevent the exodus of migrant workers from the cities to the villages. This is welcome but this move should have come immediately after the declaration of the lockdown. Now that the State Governments have started acting by reaching out to the workers with food, aid

**Can India make a difference?**

Far-right Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest for this year's Republic Day function. Soon after, an excited President of America, Donald Trump, visited India to greet the cheering crowds in the company of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Meanwhile, Right-wingers in India clapped for the electoral victory of Boris Johnson in Britain and celebrated the fall of the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. It was clear that rich nations were in the firm grip of the Right-wing. When the Novel Coronavirus was spreading rapidly in Wuhan and Hubei provinces in China, the dreaded pandemic was dismissed as that country's problem and viewed as its nemesis. Bolsonaro dismissed it as media "hysteria" and called the illness "a little flu." Even when COVID-19 cases appeared to be surging, he brazenly remarked, "I'm sorry, some people will die, they will die, that's life" and "you can't stop a car factory because of traffic deaths." Exhibiting crass insensitivity and lack of "basic human empathy," Trump responded wryly, "Take the lives of the old and the weak: I want the money." COVID-19 has become a nightmare in the US with more than one lakh infected and thousands dead. The UK Government made an incredible announcement that it would not encourage social distancing and would not impose lockdown. We can only pray for the



people living in these nations.

With the insentient apostles of cow urine as the therapy to fight the dreaded virus, India, too, was in the danger of embracing the calamity. It is to the credit of Prime Minister Modi that he chose to walk away from stupid talks and announced a national lockdown. The financial package that followed was timely and needed. Modi has now shown willingness to work with other States as well. However, little is known about the preparedness in the cow belt. The war against Corona is still not won but the country and its 1.3 billion population can ill-afford to lose it.

Haridasan Rajan Kozhikode

and shelter, the task ahead for them is not easy. Lakhs and lakhs of workers will have to be quarantined. The paramilitary forces and the Army must be deployed.

MC Joshi Lucknow

**Flight of labour**

Sir — The migration of workers from big cities to the villages was unexpected. The tragic failure of the administration, both at the

Central and State levels, cannot be ignored. If the relief measures announced now were on display at the time of the lockdown, labourers may have stayed put. That a humanitarian crisis could unfold isn't a distant possibility.

Many of these labourers may turn out to be "super spreaders" of the virus much like South Korea's "Patient 31," who unknowingly caused the rapid rise in cases.

There's a possibility that these workers may have taken the infection to rural India. Chain reaction may trigger the spread of the virus to the community stage, which will be perilous for India. To ensure its prevention, the migrants should be thoroughly screened at the places of arrival and put to quarantine in public hospitals at their native place by the State Governments.

Umang Srivastava Agra

**Help the workers**

Sir — Despite the Prime Minister's appeal to the business community to not retrench employees, many labourers have been left in the lurch. Their plight calls for urgent comprehensive action. It's the Government's duty to mitigate their sufferings.

Juhi Singh Via email

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## FIRST COLUMN

## Good to bury the hatchet

A new beginning seems to have been made with the conditional release of Begum Zia by the Bangladeshi Govt due to the COVID-19 outbreak



JOYEETA BHATTACHARJEE

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought nearly the whole world to a standstill and its impact on geopolitics has grabbed worldwide attention. However, very little consideration has been given to the impact of the pandemic on a country's internal politics. Amid all the gloom and doom, Bangladesh is the first country in South Asia or perhaps the world, where the spread of the pandemic has had a positive impact on the nation's politics.

The rivalry between the two major political parties of Bangladesh is legendary and the fact that the ruling Awami League (AL) and the Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have no love lost for each other, or even a common meeting ground, is no secret. However, a few days ago, keeping aside political rivalry, the ruling AL Government released the ailing Begum Khaleda Zia, chairperson of the BNP and two-time former Prime Minister from prison on humanitarian grounds. The leader was freed for six months to allow her to undergo urgent medical treatment.

Zia was serving a five-year prison term following her conviction in a case of financial misappropriation related to a charitable organisation named after her husband and former military dictator General Ziaur Rahman. The release of Begum Zia was welcomed by the people of the country and raised new hopes for a transformation of the country's bickering politics from one that is more issue-based. Begum Zia is 74-years-old and is suffering from multiple chronic ailments like diabetes and arthritis. The BNP had been claiming that her health was deteriorating and had been stressing on the urgency for her release for treatment. Earlier, her bail petition was denied and the BNP's plea to the Government for her release was also overlooked. Now, presumably, the spread of the Coronavirus has significantly changed the AL Government's approach on the issue and Begum Zia was released after completing half of her sentence, i.e. two-and-a-half-years.

Analysing the Government's motive behind the decision to free the incarcerated leader, political observers of the country opine that considering her advanced age, Begum Zia belonged to the most vulnerable group of people who could be affected by the Coronavirus and the Government wanted to avoid any unpleasant situation concerning her. Like other countries, the Coronavirus has spread in Bangladesh, too. There have been 49 confirmed cases and five people have already died. The huge influx of expatriates from various nations has increased the risk factor for the country, hence, the Government's concern. However, there are conditions attached to Begum Zia's release and restriction has been put on her travel abroad. Given the strict border controls put in place by most nations after the outbreak of the pandemic and banning of foreigners' entry in a desperate bid to limit the spread of the Coronavirus, such restrictions by Dhaka hardly make any major difference.

Begum Zia will be confined to her residence in Dhaka and will be treated by Bangladeshi doctors. Given that social distancing is being considered as the most optimal preventive measure against the spread of the contagion, her presence in the country is no cause for worry for the AL Government as her party and supporters cannot derive any mileage out of it in these times of lockdowns.

The release of Begum Zia, however, raised some scepticism about her party's astuteness in leveraging the situation to rise again politically. Most Bangladeshis are hoping that amid the current situation and its criticality globally and nationally, the political parties of the country will not precipitate any political crisis or unrest and act responsibly. Any effort by the BNP to capitalise on the situation will be closely watched by the common man as well as the Government to prevent any untoward situation in these critical times.

Apart from helping in the Government's concerted fight against the pandemic, political stability will also contribute in strengthening the country's relationship with its neighbours, especially India, with which it shares two-thirds of its border. More often than not, the bilateral relations between New Delhi and Dhaka have been a victim of the rivalry between the two political parties. It has been used by the two political parties to criticise each other. Normally, Indo-Bangla ties are perceived to be at their best during the AL's rule, nevertheless, India has always maintained a cordial working relationship with the BNP regime, too. But it is always a tightrope walk for the mandarins in the Ministry of External Affairs. Political stability in Bangladesh is also a cherished dream of India as it enhances the well-being of the people of the country as this adds to the regional prosperity and security.

Humanity is passing through the biggest challenge of the century and the fight against COVID-19 demands cooperation of all. Hope, the political parties in Bangladesh will join hands in fighting this crisis and create a new history that will contribute in enhancing the safety and prosperity of their nation. This will also enhance Bangladesh's global image as the world has started taking notice of it due to its improved and growing economy.

(The writer is Senior Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation. Views expressed are personal)

I REQUEST CELEBRITIES TO STOP BOMBARDING US WITH WORKOUT VIDEOS. YOU ARE PRIVILEGED. BUT WE HAVE MAJOR CONCERNS DURING THIS PANDEMIC.

—CHOREOGRAPHER  
FARAH KHAN

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT



EXERCISING, NOT PUTTING UP VIDEOS, IS MORE ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL. IT REALLY KEEPS RANVEER AND ME GOING AT THIS TIME. IT GETS US THROUGH THE DAY.

—ACTOR  
DEEPIKA PADUKONE

## Desperation and deprivation

Amid the prevailing lockdown, the afflictions of migrant labourers are being compounded during their long trek home and some are being beaten up and tortured by police



SIMI MEHTA

BALWANT MEHTA

ARJUN KUMAR

If the pitiful sight of a father walking with his ten-month-old infant on his shoulders, for over 100 km in this heat to reach his hometown, does not shake us, then it raises serious doubts about humanity and its future. If the death of a 38-year-old worker after walking for 200 km and the predicament of tens of thousands of jobless, shelterless, hungry, thirsty and helpless migrant workers yearning to return to their villages amid the rapidly proliferating Coronavirus outbreak and the resultant countrywide lockdown, does not receive our empathy, then humanity's opportunism is well-established.

Amid the prevailing threat of the contagion, the afflictions of the voiceless poor are being compounded and some are being beaten up, tortured, made to do sit-ups, locked up in overcrowded makeshift prisons, while others are being punished through other "innovative" ideas of violence, by those who are supposed to protect the people, the police.

If the authorities have become thankless to the extent that they have forgotten the contribution of informal workers towards the growth of the economy, here are some insights: India's labour market is dominated by informal employment and constitutes 90 per cent of the total workers involved. Out of the total 47.1 crore workers in 2017-18, the number of informal workers stood at 42.4 crore. They contributed almost 50 per cent to the national income as per a Confederation of Indian Industries' report.

The rise in urbanisation is a consequence of demographic explosion and poverty-induced rural-urban migration. As per the estimates of the Economic Survey, 2017, the magnitude of inter-State migration in India was 90 lakh annually between 2011 to 2016, while total internal migration was about 13.9 core. If this trend continues, the total number of migrants would be around 21.1 crore by 2020-end. Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar are the two biggest source States, closely followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. On the other hand, the main destination States are Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Most workers had migrated in search of livelihood and were involved in low-paying informal work in urban destinations in sectors such as construction, hospitality, textiles, manufacturing, transportation, services and domestic work. Lacking any social or income security, they are not only exploited, ignored and disrespected by their employers but also by the political class, as they hardly translate into votes. With their livelihood threatened by the lockdown and future uncertainties, no wonder they are forced to tread the long road to their hometowns and villages on foot.

At this moment of crisis, coupled with their enforced alienation from the cities, they might not even know if they are also Coronavirus vectors. It can only be hoped that amid the thousands walking alone or with families, children or lining up at shelters and bus stations, with no practical scope for social distancing, there is no one in the crowd who is infected. If it is otherwise, India would become the new epicentre of the outbreak in no time at all, thanks to our inept healthcare system and infrastructure.

Add to this forced exodus the fact that the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY-NULM), which could come to the rescue of these workers, suffers from several inherent challenges. For instance, for the last 18 months the Government has been mulling over the idea of outsourcing the upkeep of the livelihood mission to corporates and philanthropic institutions. This implicit failure of the Government

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IN LIGHT OF THE WORSENING SITUATION DUE TO COVID-19, INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYTICS MUST BE HARNESSED. IT MUST BE MADE TO WORK IN TANDEM WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON A WAR FOOTING TO ENSURE COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS BEING UNDERTAKEN TO TEST, TRACE, TREAT AND COMBAT THE PANDEMIC REACH ALL SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY, INCLUDING THE VULNERABLE AND POOR MIGRANT WORKERS



that led to the generation of such an idea is further amplified by hiring big private consultants as project monitoring units, having a "corporate-style target achievement attitude." Further, the inconsiderate approach of the authorities during times of economic slowdown, when the migrant workers are the hardest hit, is evident from the meagre increase in the budgetary allocation for DAY-NULM vis-à-vis the flagship schemes of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). It was ₹750 crore (in 2019-20) and was raised by only six per cent to ₹795 crore in 2020-21. The deep-seated contentions in DAY-NULM do not stop here. Several private players and NGOs have been roped in to carry out different implementation functions for which they have tendered huge sums of money. The irony is that these agencies are bearing the brunt of corruption in the bureaucratic system leading to deferred payments for months and years even after fulfilling their work assignments punctually. The complacency in the approach of the various projects sanctioned under DDU-NULM has remained without any independent third-party monitoring and evaluation.

Given that the Government did its best to arrange special flights across the globe to bring back well-heeled citizens, it is unfortunate that it has turned a blind eye to the plight of the migrant workers. This only represents the deep-rooted systemic contempt and neglect of the vulnerable and the poor.

Though a delayed announcement, there is no denying that the nationwide lockdown is the need of the hour. However, the decision should have been accompanied with a well-crafted draft strategy for each and every section of this diverse country. Unfortunately, as time unfolded, there was no such strategy. However, while ordering everyone to stay at home during the lockdown period, the homeless and those who would be rendered homeless by

the shutting down of their sources of employment, seem to have been forgotten.

As the country is bracing for an economic bloodbath with loss of millions of jobs and scramble for food and water for survival and the impending scorching summer, these migrant workers would be the hardest hit once the infection starts to spread among them. The poverty and suffering of all those dependent upon them will increase due to the lack of a source of income. Plus, home isolation will be difficult to attain as large families live in small, closely-packed houses in areas of high population density. This will add to the burden of the already inept public healthcare system and ultimately impact the private and the public sector and hit their bottom-lines and profits.

Some of the immediate steps for containing the spread of Coronavirus and saving the lives of informal workers are as follows. The administration must work with various State Governments to arrange district-wise special sanitised trains and buses to send the workers to their respective homes. These means of transport must be equipped with non-perishable food items and water for the passengers.

A pre-boarding health check-up must be done and those showing any COVID-19 symptoms must be prohibited from travelling and referred to the nearest Government hospital.

If the transport cannot be organised, decent accommodation with food, water and sanitation must be arranged. The hotels, guest houses, stadiums, expo centres and so on must be made available. At present, nobody is using them anyway.

Devise and implement an immediate monetary compensation plan through cash and direct incentives for the circular and seasonal migrant workers who have lost their jobs. This must be done on an urgent basis by at least tripling the budgetary allocation of DDU-NULM and immediate transfers. Expand the DDU-NULM com-

ponent of Shelter for Urban Homeless (SUH) to meet the decent space and shelter requirements along with catering to the shelter needs of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities; community kitchens; medical help; in-kind assistance through public distribution systems, water and toilets. This must be developed with service-level benchmarking standards to combat pandemics like COVID-19. This is not a daunting task and only requires passion and keenness of the authorities.

In light of the worsening situation due to COVID-19, information and communication technology (ICT) and research and data analytics must be harnessed and made to work in tandem with the Government on a war footing to ensure that comprehensive efforts being undertaken to test, trace, treat and combat the pandemic reach all sections of society, including the vulnerable and poor migrant workers. This approach will go a long way in ushering in BR Ambedkar's egalitarian ethos in the country, upon which the Constitution of India rests.

To conclude, as the predictability of life is increasingly being compromised, the virtuous unity of a decisive leadership, mass cooperation and mutual trust will win the fight against the Coronavirus and flatten the curve in India. It is high time that educated Indians, those at the helm of the Government, the private sector and civil society organisations show some sensitivity and generosity and arrange for a safe transit and compulsory 14-day quarantine of migrant labourers in their respective States. Testing times like these and the brewing humanitarian crisis will either solidify the trust of the people in the Government or establish the narrative that the latter exists not for them but just to use them.

(Simi Mehta is CEO and Editorial Director, Balwant Mehta is Co-Founder and Visiting Senior Fellow and Arjun Kumar is Director, IMPRI)

## Employ high-tech for climate change adaptation

To combat the impact of global warming, it is vital to improve innovation in providing support for new technologies in the water sector, in devising innovative instruments for enhancing groundwater storage and ensuring active participation of various stakeholders, including the private sector



SYAMAL SARKAR

SHRESTH TAYAL

The disastrous effects of human-induced climate change are now a reality. Across the world, there is an effort to maintain global warming below 2°C over the century relative to pre-industrial level. The impacts of climate change on water are predicted to be many: Extended summer season causing less rainy days, late onset of the monsoon season, intense precipitation, the recurring occurrence of drought and flash floods, glacier melts and heavy

snowfall during winters. Each of these phenomena influences the water resources on Earth.

Glaciers form an integral part of India's water resource system. Over 9,000 glaciers are the sources of major Indian rivers like the Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra and thousands of their tributaries. Meltwater from glaciers sustains river flows during the summer and ensures year-round water availability in these river basins. With increasing temperature, enhanced melting of glaciers has been recorded and over the last four decades they have been reduced by 0.2-0.7 per cent annually.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the normal rainfall pattern in the country has changed from 1951-2010. There is an increase in total rainfall in western and eastern India while it has decreased in States in central and northern India. Major

States showing a decrease in annual rainfall are Uttar Pradesh (UP), Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, while West Bengal, Gujarat and Bihar are showing an increasing trend in annual rainfall. UP, the most populous State of India, is now receiving reduced rainfall in all seasons while Bihar and West Bengal, two of the most densely-populated States of the country are receiving increased rainfall in almost all the seasons.

Although India has 1.91 km<sup>3</sup>/year of total freshwater resources, it ranks 132 in per capita water availability in the world. The per capita annual availability at 1,545 cubic metres is touching the water-stressed benchmark in India.

The spatial and temporal distribution of water resources is highly uneven with per capita water resource availability varying from basin to basin. In the Brahmaputra river basin, it is 17,000 m<sup>3</sup>, while it

is 240 m<sup>3</sup> in the Sabarmati basin in western India.

The impact of climate change on India's water resources presents a major challenge for the success of Government schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission and achievement of the United Nations' (UN's) Sustainable Development Goals of ensuring universal access to safe drinking water. Changes in precipitation will have a significant influence on the design of hydrological structures, flood and drought management and urban planning and development. India's agrarian economy, which relies heavily on the monsoon and available water for production, is particularly vulnerable to the projected climate changes.

For mitigating the impact of climate change on water vulnerability, the storage of water in many forms is highly desirable. India's per capita water storage capacity is one of the lowest in the world. It is also not

always a sustainable option. In that case, enhancing the groundwater storage should be a viable option.

Interestingly, technologies play a significant role in minimising water variability to climate change impacts. The UN recognises that technologies for adaptation could be either in the "hard" form, involving materials or equipment, or in the "soft" form, like diverse forms of knowledge, new insurance schemes or crop rotation patterns.

Also, for efficient adaptation to climate change, a combination of technologies is required — "traditional", like conventional methods of water conservation; "modern", like drip and sprinkler irrigation systems; as well as "high" technologies like remote sensing and Geographical Information System.

The "three Rs" — reduce, reuse and recycle — concept still holds tremendous opportunities not just for ensuring water security but also

for the adaptation to climate change impacts. The entire spectrum of adaptation technologies in the water sector in India needs to focus on these "three Rs". To reduce the wastage of water, the efficiency of water usage needs to be improved — especially in the agriculture sector (water use efficiency in this sector is about 38 per cent), which is the biggest consumer of water. Changes in cropping patterns, crop rotation as well as efficient drip and sprinkler technologies, need to be adopted on a much wider scale than the present. Rather than trying to transfer water from distant sources, the focus should be to exploit local resources by harvesting rain or stormwater and treat wastewater locally, using "green infrastructure" such as sand filters and wetlands.

Similarly, technologies like "Air to Water", condensing atmospheric moisture to provide drinking quality water, need to be provided the

strong impetus, which has the potential to provide sustainable water sources at the local level. This technology also saves groundwater resources. Also, for the success of programmes like Jal Jeevan Mission, the focus should be on conservation and utilisation of "green water", which is the precipitation that is absorbed by soil and plants and subsequently returned to the atmosphere through plant transpiration.

For climate change adaptations, it is essential to improve innovation in providing support for new technologies in the water sector, in devising new instruments for enhancing groundwater storage, financing water sector projects and ensuring active participation of various stakeholders including the private sector.

(Sarkar is distinguished fellow, Water Resources and Tayal is senior fellow, Water Resources Division, TERI)

# GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS DEATH TOLL 35K

## SPAIN'S HOSPITALS AT BREAKING POINT, US CITIES BRACE

**ITALY** — 10,779 deaths and 97,689 cases  
**SPAIN** — 7,340 deaths out of 85,195 cases  
**CHINA** — 3,304 deaths and 81,470 cases  
**US** — 2,616 deaths and 1,45,531  
**IRAN** — 2,757 deaths and 41,495 cases  
**FRANCE** — 2,606 deaths and 40,174 cases

**AFP/AP ■ PARIS/MADRID**  
 More than 7,27,080 cases of infection and 35,000 deaths have been recorded in 183 countries and territories since the coronavirus epidemic started in China in December, according to an AFP tally compiled on Monday based on official sources.  
 As bells tolled in Madrid's deserted central square and

flags were lowered in a day of mourning Monday as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of coronavirus patients.  
 In the US, the Government's top infectious-disease expert warned that smaller cities are about to see cases "take off" the way they have in New York City.  
 A US Navy hospital ship with 1,000 beds arrived in New York to help relieve the crisis gripping the city. The USNS Comfort — also sent to New York City after 9/11 — will be used to treat non-coronavirus patients while packed hospitals deal with those with COVID-19.

In Japan, officials announced a new date for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics — the summer of 2021 — as a spike in reported infections fueled suspicions that the Government was understating the extent of the country's outbreak in recent weeks while it was still hoping to salvage the Summer Games.  
 Moscow locked down its 12 million people as Russia braced for sweeping nationwide restrictions.

And in Britain, Prince Charles, the heir to the throne who tested positive for the virus, ended his period of isolation and is in good health, his office said.  
 Three-quarters of a million

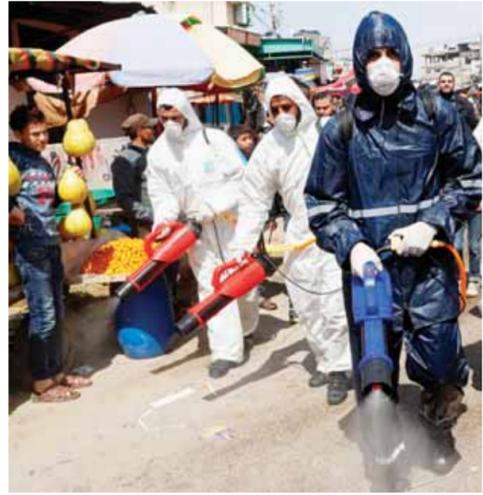
people around the world have become infected and over 35,000 have died, according to a running count kept by Johns Hopkins University. The US reported over 1,40,000 infections and more than 2,500 deaths, with New York City the worst hot spot.  
 Spain overtook China in reported coronavirus infections as the outbreak stretched scores of Spanish hospitals to their breaking point. With a population of 47 million people to China's 1.4 billion, Spain saw its official tally of infections climb past 85,000. It also reported over 800 new deaths, for an overall toll of more than 7,300.

Experts say those figures — and those in every other country — are much lower than the true numbers, because of limited testing, counting irregularities and mild cases that have been missed. Many coronavirus deaths in Spain and Italy that happen at home or at nursing homes are not even counted.  
 Spain and Italy make up more than half the world's death toll from the virus that has upended the lives of billions and devastated world economies. Their hospitals have been buckling under the weight of caring for so many desperately ill patients at once.  
 Italy has by far the most reported deaths, at nearly

11,000. In a situation unimaginable only a month ago, Italian officials were cheered when they reported only 756 deaths in one day. The country said the number of deaths has dropped about 10 per cent a day since Friday. "We are saving lives by staying at home, by maintaining social distance, by traveling less and by closing schools," said Dr Luca Richeldi, a lung specialist.  
 At least six of Spain's 17 regions were at their limit of intensive care unit beds, and three more were close to it, authorities said. Crews of workers were frantically building more field hospitals.

Nearly 15 per cent of all those infected in Spain, almost 13,000 people, are healthcare workers, hurting hospitals' efforts to help the tsunami of people gasping for breath.  
 In hard-hit Madrid, flags were lowered to half-staff for an official mourning period. During a minute of silence for the dead, Madrid's Puerta del Sol square was empty as bells tolled.

In the US on Sunday, as deaths in New York state surpassed 1,000, the majority of them in New York City, President Donald Trump extended stay-at-home recommendations for a month in an abrupt turnaround from his previous stance.  
 The move came after Dr



Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said up to 2,00,000 Americans could die and millions become infected if lockdowns and social distancing did not continue.  
 On Monday, Fauci said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that cities like New Orleans and Detroit are ripe for the kind of acceleration that has occurred in New York City. But he said he is also concerned about other, smaller cities across the country that are merely

"sort of percolating" now.  
 "What we've learned from painful experience with this outbreak is that it goes along almost on a straight line, then a little acceleration, acceleration, then it goes way up," he said, adding: "We're going to have all of these little mini-outbreaks throughout various cities in our country."  
 Lockdown Moscow accounted for more than 1,200 of the country's 1,800 or so coronavirus cases.  
 For most people, the coro-

navirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia. More than 1,50,000 people have recovered, according to Johns Hopkins.  
 In Italy, coronavirus patient Andrea Napoli, 33, said he didn't remotely expect that he would be hospitalized, struggling for his life, since he was young and fit. But what he saw shocked him. While he was being treated in Rome, three patients died in his ward. He saw doctors stressed and exhausted from the long hours, out of breath from pushing equipment around, dressed in protective masks, suits and gloves.  
 "What I saw was a lot, a lot of pain. It was very hard," Napoli said. "I heard screams from the other rooms, constant coughing from the other rooms."

China on Monday reported 31 new COVID-19 cases, among them just one domestic infection. At the peak of China's restrictions, some 700 million people were ordered to stay home, but those rules are being eased.  
 Japanese automaker Toyota halted production at its auto plants in Europe, but all of its factories in China resumed work on Monday.



### Italy sees slowdown in rate of new virus cases

**AP ■ ROME**  
 Italy is seeing a continued slowdown in the rate of its new confirmed coronavirus cases while registering a record number of people cured as it enters its third week into a nationwide lockdown.  
 Another 812 people died in

the last day, bringing Italy's toll to 11,591 and maintaining its position as the country with the most dead.  
 Overall, Italy added 4,050 new infections Monday, bringing its official total to 101,739 and keeping its place as the European epicentre of the pandemic and second only to the US. Epidemiologists say the

real number of Italy's caseload, however, is as much as five to 10 times more than the official number, but that those cases aren't being counted because Italy is only testing people with severe symptoms.  
 Of those infected, 14,620 have been declared cured, including a record 1,590 in the past day.

# Global lockdown widens

**AFP ■ PARIS**  
 Harsh lockdowns aimed at halting the march of coronavirus around the world widened on Monday to include Moscow's capital as the death toll mounted and fears grew for the fate of the global economy.  
 The planet is bracing for a long battle against the disease that has so far killed at least 35,000 people, infected more than 700,000 and left two-fifths of the world's population confined to their homes.

From field hospitals and a US military hospital ship in New York, to the empty streets of European capitals and fears of a new wave of COVID-19 in Africa, the virus has changed the face of the world in a few short weeks.  
 The march of the coronavirus has also transformed the sporting and cultural calendar, with the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games announcing that it will open on July 23 next year.  
 In Russia, President Vladimir Putin on Monday urged residents of Moscow to respect the lockdown that has seen the closure of all non-essential shops, including restaurants and cafes, in Europe's largest city.  
 "I ask you to take these forced but absolutely necessary



A view of empty parking lots in front of a mall in Moscow on Monday. AP

measures... Very seriously and completely responsibly," Putin said after regional authorities clamped down because many Muscovites were failing to heed warnings to self-isolate.  
 Red Square in the heart of Moscow was eerily empty, while the streets were quiet even though traffic could still be seen on the roads.  
 Coronavirus continues to tighten its grip in Europe, which remains the epicentre of the disease with the death toll

there passing 25,000 on Monday, according to an AFP tally. Spain, which has the world's second biggest death toll from the disease after Italy, announced another 812 virus deaths in 24 hours, although it was the first decline since on Thursday.  
 Spain has also joined the United States and Italy in surpassing the number of cases in China, where the disease first emerged in December in the city of Wuhan.

"While the isolation measures have reduced the pressure on intensive care units, in the coming weeks it will be significant," said Maria Jose Sierra of the Spanish health ministry's emergencies centre.  
 The lockdowns are causing hardship across the world, but particularly in cities in Africa and Asia where poverty leaves many people scrambling to survive on a day-by-day basis.  
 Africa's biggest city, Lagos, was due to join the global stay-at-home from Monday, with Nigerian President Muhammad Buhari ordering a two-week lockdown for its 20 million people. The measures, in force from 2200 GMT, also apply to the capital Abuja.  
 Zimbabwe on Monday also began enforcing a three-week lockdown in the impoverished southern African country.  
 Experts in Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, said the virus would shrink output there this year by up to 5.4 percent.  
 The crisis is also testing the balance between civil liberties and the need for restrictions to curb the disease.  
 Hungary's parliament on Monday endorsed a controversial bill giving nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban sweeping new powers he says he needs to fight coronavirus.

### Around the Globe

- The number of declared coronavirus infections in Iran topped 40,000 on Monday, as the Government warned the outbreak could run for several more months and cost over 10,000 lives. With the tally climbing, President Hassan Rouhani stood accused of failing to take prompt action by some of his political opponents.
- Over 20 million Nigerians on Monday scrambled to prepare for lockdown in sub-Saharan Africa's biggest city Lagos and the capital Abuja, as the continent struggled to curb the spread of coronavirus.
- Georgia will impose a general quarantine and a nighttime curfew to fight the coronavirus pandemic, the Black Sea nation's prime minister announced on Monday. "The dynamics of the growth in new cases (of the COVID-19 disease) is alarming," Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia told a news conference. "We are declaring a general quarantine as of 8 am (0400 GMT)" on Tuesday, during which people will only be permitted to leave homes for essential shopping, he said.
- Popular Japanese comedian Ken Shimura, who drew inspiration from the American comic icon Jerry Lewis, has died from the coronavirus, becoming Japan's first known celebrity victim of the disease. He was 70. Shimura, who attracted fans of all generations with his slapstick comedy and funny faces, had been treated at a Tokyo hospital and died on Sunday, according to his agency, Izawa Office.
- A 14-year-old boy, who allegedly coughed on groceries as a prank at a store in the US state of Texas amidst the coronavirus scare, has been charged with tampering with consumer products, officials said. The grocer in northwest Harris county called 911 and reported a disturbance, following which the deputies arrived the store, they said.
- South Korea's online food sale almost doubled last month as consumers refrained from moving outside their homes due to the coronavirus pandemic, a government report revealed on Monday. Revenue by major online retailers jumped 34.3 per cent in February from a year earlier, Xinhua news agency quoted the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy report as said.

### City at centre of China's virus outbreak gradually revives

**AP ■ WUHAN**  
 Shopkeepers in the city at the centre of the virus outbreak in China were reopening Monday but customers were scarce after authorities lifted more of the anti-virus controls that kept tens of millions of people at home for two months.  
 "I'm so excited, I want to cry," said a woman on the Chube Hanjie pedestrian mall who would give only the English name Kat. She said she was a teacher in the eastern city of Nanjing visiting her family in Wuhan when the government locked down the city in late January to stem the spread of the coronavirus.  
 Some 70 per cent to 80 per cent of shops were open Monday but many imposed limits on how many people could enter. Shopkeepers set up dispensers for hand sanitizer and checked customers for signs of fever.  
 Wuhan's bus and subway service has resumed, easing curbs that cut most access to the city of 11 million people on Jan. 23 as China fought the coronavirus.  
 The train station reopened Saturday, bringing thousands of people to what is the manufacturing and transportation hub of central China.  
 Travel controls on most of Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, were lifted on March 23.

### Israeli PM enters quarantine after aide tested +ve for Covid-19

**PTI ■ JERUSALEM**  
 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his close advisers have been placed under quarantine after an aide on Parliament affairs tested positive for coronavirus, his office said on Monday.  
 The step was a precaution and is being taken even before the epidemiological investigation has been concluded, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.  
 "Even before the epidemiological investigation is over and to remove all doubt, the Prime Minister has decided that he and his close staff will remain in isolation until the epidemiological investigation is completed," the statement said.  
 "In accordance with the findings, the Health Ministry and the personal physician of the Prime Minister will set a day to end the isolation," it added. Earlier, his office said "the move was unnecessary" as the Premier had not been in the same room as the concerned adviser, Rivka Paluch, during the last two weeks.  
 "The initial assessment is that there is no need for the Prime Minister to be in quarantine since he was not in close contact with the patient and did not meet with her," the PMO earlier said.  
 "Likewise, from an initial check, the two were not together in the same room for the past



fortnight. The epidemiological investigation is ongoing," it stressed.  
 The statement had also emphasised that the prime minister and those around him have been strictly adhering to the Health Ministry guidelines during the past few weeks, under the watch of his personal physician, and that most discussions Netanyahu holds are via video-link from his residence.  
 Hebrew language media, however, contradicted these claims, saying Netanyahu had in fact met with Paluch, along with a reported confirmation from his office.  
 Paluch, Netanyahu's adviser on ultra-Orthodox affairs, tested positive hours after her husband was hospitalised with COVID-19.  
 She met with several lawmakers on Thursday amid negotiations with Blue and White leader, Benny Gantz, over the formation of a coalition Government, according to Channel 12.

### Vietnam Govt uses TikTok for COVID-19 information

**IANS ■ HANOI**  
 Vietnam's Ministry of Health has launched a TikTok account in a bid to raise public awareness about preventive measures against the coronavirus pandemic, it was reported on Monday.  
 The move also aims to call people to follow health recommendations and regularly update related information for TikTok users, Xinhua news agency reported citing local media as saying.



A woman wears a face mask to protect against coronavirus, passes in front of graffiti painted on the shutter of a closed restaurant during a lockdown order by the Greek Government to control the spread of the virus, in Athens, on Monday. AP

### Japan urges head of WHO to help speed vaccines

**AP ■ TOKYO**  
 Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe urged the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) to help accelerate development of medicine and vaccines for the coronavirus by promoting information sharing and cooperation among countries.  
 Abe told Director-General Tedros Adhanom in a phone call that Japan is pursuing clinical research on flu drug

Favipiravir with several other countries.  
 Japan's Foreign Ministry says Tedros pledged WHO's leadership in the development of medicine, vaccines and diagnostics.  
 Abe asked Tedros to make use of Japan's USD 46 million contribution to the WHO to effectively provide technical assistance for health workers in developing countries where COVID-19 cases are sharply on the rise.

### UNESCO wants nations to share virus information

**Paris:** The United Nations scientific agency UNESCO held a virtual meeting with science ministers from 73 countries to discuss international cooperation around COVID-19.  
 Open science is an issue UNESCO has been pushing for months. The agency's leadership believes the global pandemic has highlighted the need to better share information to save lives. UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay says "the COVID-19 pandemic has

made us aware of the importance of science for both research and international cooperation. This crisis also shows us the urgency of better knowledge sharing."  
 The meeting, which included representatives from the United States and Israel, addressed reducing the "knowledge deficit" between countries, strengthening the link between science and political decisions and allowing free access to scientific data. AP

### Islamabad orders opening of all highways for goods supply

**Islamabad:** Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered opening of all national highways to ensure smooth and adequate supply of food items from farms/factories to markets amid "panic buying" due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was reported on Monday.  
 While presiding over a meeting of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) core

committee at the Prime Minister House on Sunday, Khan reiterated his commitment to providing ration at the doorsteps of the poor and daily wage earners through a force of young volunteers he is going to formally form on Monday, reports Dawn news.  
 The meeting was informed that the government had started providing personal protection equipment (PPE) to all

medical practitioners, including doctors and paramedical staff currently performing their duty in different hospitals, and intensive care units (ICUs) and quarantines had been established across the country for coronavirus patients. In case of death of any of the medical practitioners during duty, he/she would be given a 'Shuhada' (martyr) package. IANS



# Putin to 'probably ask' for sanctions lifting: Trump

AFP ■ WASHINGTON  
President Donald Trump said on Monday he expects his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to request the lifting of US sanctions during an upcoming phone call.

he had put sanctions on Russia but adding, "They don't like that. Frankly we should be able to get along." The two were due to talk "shortly," he said. Last Thursday, Putin told G20 leaders during a conference call that he wanted a moratorium on sanctions as a "matter of life and death" during the global coronavirus outbreak. In the comments he did

not specify which countries he was talking about but Russia is being hit hard by the economic fallout from coronavirus and a parallel price war with Saudi Arabia on the oil market. Trump said he would be discussing the collapse in oil prices, which he said is "really hurting" the US energy industry. Another point of contention could be Venezuela,

where Washington, supported by dozens of other countries, has been trying unsuccessfully to promote the toppling of leftist strongman Nicholas Maduro. Russia is one of the few countries propping up his government. "We may discuss that too," Trump said. Russian state oil company Rosneft said Saturday it is pulling out of Venezuela

and argued that US sanctions on a Rosneft subsidiary — imposed as part of Washington's attempt to cripple the Maduro Government's revenue sources — should now be lifted. However, Russia remains a key partner to Caracas. The bulk of US sanctions against Russia were imposed over Moscow's annexation of

Crimea in Ukraine and what US investigators say was a concerted attempt to interfere in the 2016 presidential election won by Trump. Trump has resisted punishing Moscow, which denies meddling in US politics, but his hand was forced by his own Republican party in Congress, which sees the Putin government as hostile.



In this photo posted on Facebook, Wednesday, March 25, 2020, by Alyssa Burks, her husband, a resident physician — Dr Jared Burks — sees his 1-year-old son Zeke for the first time, as he touches a glass door from the outside while their son Zeke touches it from the inside of their Jonesboro, Ark. Home. Jared Burks is keeping away from his wife and son because of potential exposure to the coronavirus. Three days after the photo was posted, the family's house was destroyed by a tornado

# Saudi-led coalition air strikes hit rebel-held Yemen capital

Riyadh: The Saudi-led military coalition on Monday said it carried out multiple air strikes on Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa in retaliation for missile strikes on Riyadh.

Press Agency. Residents in Sanaa reported multiple explosions after the coalition's bombing campaign began. The Huthi-run Al-Masirah television reported at least 19 air strikes on a number of targets in Sanaa, including military bases and a military academy. The operation comes after Saudi air defences intercepted Huthi ballistic missiles over Riyadh and the border city of

Jizan late on Saturday. The attacks left two civilians wounded in Riyadh, which is under a 15-hour curfew to limit the spread of coronavirus, according to Saudi state media. It was the first major assault on Saudi Arabia since the Huthi rebels offered last September to halt attacks on the kingdom after devastating twin strikes on Saudi oil installations.

# US clearly doesn't want N talks: N Korea

AP ■ SEOUL  
North Korea said Monday that "reckless remarks" by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made it clear that Washington has no intention of resuming nuclear talks, and warned that it is now compelled to pay back "the pains the US has imposed on our people."

reporters the international community must remain united in urging North Korea to return to nuclear talks and in continuing to apply pressure on its nuclear and missile programmes. Pompeo's remarks showed the US has no strategy to stop "a countdown of confrontation," North Korea said in a statement attributed to its new Foreign Ministry department director general in charge of negotiations with Washington.

The statement said Pompeo's comments "seriously impaired the signboard of dialogue put up by the US president as a decoy to buy time and create the environment favorable for himself." It referred to a recent personal letter that President Donald Trump sent to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which North Korea said was aimed at maintaining good relations and offering cooperation in fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

# Markets extend losses as virus cases spike

BANKING, FINANCE STOCKS LEAD FALL

PTI ■ MUMBAI  
The BSE Sensex crashed over 1,375 points on Monday, pressured by heavy selling in banking, finance and auto counters, as sentiment remained grim amid a steady rise in coronavirus cases. The number of Covid-19 cases in India shot past the 1,000-mark on Monday, with the death toll rising to 29. Investors dumped risky assets after multiple ratings agencies cut India's growth outlook, traders said. After plunging over 1,500 points during the day, the 30-share BSE barometer ended 1,375.27 points or 4.61 per cent lower at 28,440.32. Similarly, the NSE Nifty fell 379.15 points, or 4.38 per cent, to close at 8,281.10. Bajaj Finance was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, tanking nearly 12 per cent, followed by HDFC, Tata Steel, HDFC Bank, ICICI bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Maruti, which shed up to 10.92 per cent. Only six Sensex constituents ended in the green, led by Tech Mahindra (4.94 per

cent), Nestle (4.49 per cent), Axis Bank (2.50 per cent) and HUL (2.19 per cent). "Indian markets started the week on a negative note tracking volatile global cues in Asian markets as coronavirus-fuelled volatility gripped global equities and other financial markets, with oil prices seen plunging," said Narendra Solanki, Head-Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi. Fitch Solutions slashed its estimate for India's GDP growth in the fiscal starting April 1 to 4.6 per cent due to weaker private consumption and contraction in investment amid the coronavirus outbreak, costing economies around the globe. India Ratings and Research too revised its FY21 GDP growth forecast down to 3.6 per cent from 5.5 per cent. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had on Friday said the world has entered a recession as bad or worse than in

2009. "As expected, the markets have set aside the stimulus measures announced by the RBI and the government, and focused on the rising virus infections and its impact on the Indian economy. "With a global recession already declared by the IMF, the recessionary forces and the general uncertainty are forcing investors, especially the FIIs, to redeem their investments. CPI for Industrial workers is due tomorrow, although it is unlikely to have an effect in the current market scenario," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. BSE Realty, finance, bank, auto and telecom indices tumbled up to 7.01 per cent, while healthcare and FMCG ended with gains. Broader BSE mid-cap and smallcap indices fell up to 2.13 per cent. Global equities notched up losses as investors assessed the economic damage from the virus pandemic. Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended in the red. Benchmarks in Europe were also trading on a negative note.

**₹ settles 70 p lower at 75.59 against \$**

Mumbai: The rupee settled 70 paise lower at 75.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid rise in coronavirus cases in the country and weak domestic equities. Forex traders said heavy selling in domestic equities dragged the local unit amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown. Moreover, strengthening of the American currency in the international market also weighed on the domestic currency.

# Sebi eases processing of documents for FPI

New Delhi: Relaxing compliance requirement for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), markets regulator Sebi on Monday allowed scanned copies of documents for renewing registration in the wake of coronavirus pandemic. The relaxation has been given till June 30, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular. "In

# Global oil prices plunge to 17-yr low BUT PETROL, DIESEL RATES UNCHANGED IN INDIA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

International oil prices on Monday plunged to a 17-year low but retail petrol and diesel prices in India remained on freeze as oil companies continued to set off gains against the excise duty hike by the Government. Brent crude futures dropped to around USD 23 per barrel — the lowest since November 2002, while US crude briefly dipped below USD 20 as coronavirus lockdowns dried up demand while the crude surplus ballooned. Petrol and diesel prices in India, however, remained on freeze for the 14th day in a row. Rates were last revised on March 16 and since then oil prices continue to adjust the fall against the ₹3 per litre hike in excise duty on two fuels done by the Government. In Delhi, petrol is priced at ₹69.59 per litre while in Mumbai it comes for ₹75.30. Diesel is priced at ₹62.29 per litre in Delhi and ₹65.21 in Mumbai. The excise duty hike, which would give the government ₹39,000 crore additional revenue, could have led to an increase in retail prices by ₹3 per litre each, but the oil companies did not pass on the

# Saudi to raise oil exports to record levels as price war rages

AFP ■ RIYADH  
Saudi Arabia on Monday said it will raise its oil exports to a record 10.6 million barrels per day starting from May, escalating a price war with Russia. Oil prices are languishing at 17-year lows as the coronavirus pandemic threatens a global recession that will send demand plummeting. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, which already announced a sharp production

increase for April, said it will add additional supplies to the global market, deepening a glut. "The kingdom plans to raise its petroleum exports by 600,000 bpd from May, so total exports will increase to 10.6 million bpd," said an official at the energy ministry, cited by the state-run SPA agency. Saudi Arabia had been exporting around 7.0 million bpd under an output reduction agreement among a 24-member producers' alliance known

as OPEC+ which included Russia. Its Gulf neighbour UAE has also pledged to pump at least one million bpd more from next month. Riyadh said earlier this month it was raising exports to 10 million bpd in April after a production cut agreement among top producers flopped in early March. OPEC+ failed to reach an agreement on further production cuts to shore up sagging prices as the coronavirus hit

the global economy hard. In an effort to grab market share, Saudi Arabia immediately announced a substantial increase in its production to 12.3 million bpd and exports to 10 million bpd at the beginning of April. The energy ministry said it will secure the increase from two sources, by using natural gas in the domestic market to free up oil for export and also as domestic consumption drops because of the coronavirus.

increase. Instead, they kept adjusting it against the fall in international crude prices. Soon after the excise duty hike, the Government took authorisation from Parliament to raise excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹8 per litre each in future. After the March 14 increase in taxes, the total incidence of excise duty on petrol has risen to ₹22.98 per litre and that on diesel to ₹18.83. The tax on petrol was ₹9.48 per litre when the Modi Government took office in 2014 and that on diesel was ₹3.56 a

₹2 per litre in July 2019. The Saudi-Russia oil price war, combined with the destruction of demand by the coronavirus pandemic, has led to the slump in international rates. Globally, 100 million barrels of oil is normally consumed daily, but forecasters predict as much as a quarter of that has disappeared in just a few weeks.

# Trump says to talk with Putin on low oil prices

Washington: President Donald Trump on Monday said he will shortly be talking with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin about plunging oil prices and the impact on US producers. "One of the subjects we're going to be talking about is energy," Trump told Fox News in an interview. He said the phone call would be "very soon." The global market is experiencing a crude glut as a result of the ongoing price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. In the US, "people in the oil and gas business are really hurting," Trump said.

# FinMin asks banks to ensure adequate cash to meet cash demand post salary transfers

New Delhi: With salary day drawing near, the finance ministry has asked public sector banks to ensure enough cash to meet the heightened demand across the country amid the 21-day lockdown triggered by the coronavirus outbreak. Bank branches have been asked to remain open for facilitating withdrawal of money to be credited through direct benefit transfer to accounts of farmers, old-age person, widow and disabled under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. Banks are expecting a huge number of footfalls due to expected disbursement in Jan

Dhan accounts, women beneficiaries, pension accounts and PM Kisan beneficiaries, among others, in the days to come, said a senior bank official. Besides, there will be heavy rush for cash withdrawal starting April 1 as salaries will hit bank accounts, official said, adding salary starts hitting account from last working day of the month till 10th working day of new month. Keeping rush in mind, sources said Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, has instructed banks to keep adequate cash as well as ATMs functional to meet demand of people.

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II DELHI 4TH FLOOR JEEVAN TARA BUILDING PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001 O.A. NO. 235/19 DATED 06.02.2020 (ICI BANK LTD. - Applicant Vs DSH FASHION AND ORS. - Respondent To: DEPENDENT 2. Hamang Dhir S/o. Sh. Harsh Vardhan Dhir (Co-Borrower & Partner) 3. Sanjay Dhir S/o. Sh. Harsh Dhir both at: R/o House No. 14, Navjeevan Vihar Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-17 Whereas the above named applicant (s) has/ have instituted a case of recovery of Rs. 20,85,803/- (Rupee Twenty Lakh Eighty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Three Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in this Tribunal 01/04/2020 at 10.30 A.M. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By Order of this Tribunal Section Officer, DRT-II, Delhi

**SUPERIOR FINLEASE LIMITED**  
CIN: L74899DL1994PLC061995  
Regd. Off: NS-92, Khasra No-33/21, Ranaji Enclave, Najafgarh, Near Arjun Park Bus Stand New Delhi -110043  
Email id: superiorfinlease@gmail.com; Website: http://www.superiorfinlease.com; Phone No.: +91-9953798335

**NOTICE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULT OF POSTAL BALLOT**

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended from time to time and Regulation 44 of SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015, approval of members of the Company was sought consent of the Shareholders of the Company by means of Postal Ballot/E-voting for special business proposed in Postal Ballot Notice dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Mr. Nilesh Ranjan, Practicing Company Secretary, Scrutinizer for the Postal Ballot submitted his Report on March 30, 2020. Based on the Scrutinizer Report the result of the Postal Ballot/E-voting are as under.

Sr. No.	Particulars	Type of Resolution	Total Votes Cast in Favour		Total Votes Cast Against	
			No. of Shares	% of Vote Cast	No. of Shares	% of Vote Cast
1	To borrow money in excess of the aggregate of paid up capital and free Reserves of the Company, pursuant to the provisions of Section 180 (1) (c) of the Companies Act, 2013.	Ordinary	15,65,621	100	0	0
2	To give loan or guarantee or provide security or making investment as per the provisions of Section 185 and 186 of the Companies Act, 2013 to Indian Finance Guaranty Ltd.	Special	15,65,621	100	0	0
3	To increase the remuneration of Mr. Rajneesh Kumar, Director of the Company as per the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.	Special	15,65,621	100	0	0

As per the result of the Postal Ballot (including E-Voting) all the aforementioned resolutions have been passed with the requisite majority. The Result of the Postal Ballot along with Scrutinizer Report is displayed on the website of the Company at www.http://www.superiorfinlease.com and communicated to the Stock Exchanges.

By Order of the Board of Directors For SUPERIOR FINLEASE LIMITED  
Sd/-  
Ravi Kant Sharma  
Director

Place : Delhi  
Date : March 30, 2020

# World shares extend losses as toll from pandemic surges

Bangkok: World markets started the week with fresh losses as countries reported surging numbers of infections from the coronavirus that are forcing shutdowns of travel and business in many regions. Shares fell in London, Paris and Tokyo but surged 7 per cent in Australia after the government promised more recession-fighting stimulus. "We want to keep the engine of our economy running through this crisis," Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters in Canberra. His unprecedented \$130 billion package includes wage subsidies of up to USD 1,500 per two weeks to businesses to keep workers on the job. US futures yo-yo'd throughout Asia's day but turned lower. The future for the S&P 500 fell 0.6 per cent while that for the Dow industrials lost 0.8 per cent. Oil prices were lower. Hopes that a USD 2 trillion US relief bill would ease the economic havoc brought by the pandemic did little to alleviate the gloom prevailing in many markets. On Monday, Germany's DAX was flat at 9,634.00 while the CAC 40 in Paris lost 1.1 per cent to 4,304.63. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 1.7 per cent to 5,415.26.

# BRIEFS

## METRO RPF WORKING TO PREVENT ANY INCIDENT



Kolkata: Metro RPF has been working tirelessly to prevent any untoward incident during the nationwide lockdown. RPF personnel are on high alert to deal with any emergency and also to extend helping hands to any citizen due to this COVID-19 pandemic. Medical Department has been organising Awareness Campaigns for RPF personnel to teach them what they should do while discharging their duties at Metro stations, Hospital, Metro Colonies as well as Carsheds and other offices regularly.

# PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

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

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Satendar Kumar, S/o: Sh. Ram Kumar, R/o: H. No. 604, Pura Shekhar, Village Nahri, Distt. Sonapat, Haryana** has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 01/16 U/s 279/338 IPC has been registered at P.S. Narela, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Satendar Kumar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Satendar Kumar** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Satendar Kumar** accused of **FIR No. 01/16 U/s 279/338 IPC** has been registered at **P.S. Narela, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **01.05.2020**

By Order  
Ms. Divya Malhotra,  
Metropolitan Magistrate,  
DP/147/ON/2020 Room No. 116, 1st floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi

# PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82/83 Cr. PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Sonu S/o Md. Maswari R/o Rohtash ka makaan Vill.- Rajapur Sec.-9 Rohini, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 801/2017, u/s 160 IPC PS S.B.Dairy, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrants of arrest there upon issued that the said accused **Sonu** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Sonu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Sonu of FIR No. 801/2017, u/s 160 IPC PS S.B.Dairy, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **20.06.2020**.

By order  
Sh Vaibhav Mehta  
Metropolitan Magistrate,  
Room No.: 114,  
Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/125/ON/2020

Trend Slazer

Diljit to donate ₹20 lakh to PM-CARES

Singer-actor **DILJIT DOSANJH** has pledged to donate ₹20 lakh to lend support to the ongoing battle against the Coronavirus pandemic.

Diljit took to Twitter to mention that his priority is to help the country.

"I'm committed to donating ₹20 lakh to the PM-CARES Fund. Our priority now should be to help our country get through this tough time. #TogetherWeCan," he tweeted.

"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 create a healthier India," PM Modi tweeted on Saturday.



**'It's a matter of great pride for any actor when his/her work strikes a chord with the fans. It reassures that I am headed down the right path. I will continue to choose characters and do roles that are daunting and push me out of my comfort zone. In this year itself, I have some great films which have been great learning experiences for me.'**  
—Richa Chadha

Actor **SANJAY DUTT** has come out in support of the nationwide lockdown, urging his fans not to venture out during this period, through a video on Instagram.



"Our country is going through a very difficult situation. That's why we all have to be united to deal with this. We have to eradicate Coronavirus forever. I am requesting you all with folded hands that please follow the instructions of the government and don't step out of your homes. Please step out only if it is very urgent. Please stay at home and spend quality time with your family. Once again I am telling you, please listen to the government. Stay safe," he said in the video.

Angelina maintains distance with Brad

Actor **ANGELINA JOLIE** is self-isolating along with her children and maintaining distance from everyone including her former husband and actor **Brad Pitt**.

According to a source, Jolie, "keeping the children with her" rather than letting them be with Pitt amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The *Maleficent* star has decided that during the COVID-19 health crisis the children — Pax, 16, Zahara, 15, Shiloh, 13, and 11-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne — should be with her.

Their eldest child, 18-year-old Maddox, also flew down from South Korea, where he is studying at Yonsei University in Seoul.



NOT THE OTHER

Each episode of *De Taali — Life of a Transgender*, hosted by FIDA KHAN, curated and produced by SHAMEER TANDON, unravels and educates the listeners about different facets of the lives of transgenders. This is done through conversations with guests from varied backgrounds, including medicine, literature, the transgender community, and more. By **AYUSHI SHARMA**



We breathe the same air, eat the same food and feel the same way. You might say we are all equal, right? Unfortunately, that's far from the truth. There are many communities that are treated differently, unequally, and at times even harshly. One such community is that of transgenders, the world's third gender. While some progress has been made to improve their social situation, there are many real-world truths and stories we are unaware of. Stories of what the community faces every day and realities that many of us can't relate to.

To increase awareness around the community of transgenders, Spotify has launched a new original podcast for India that highlights the unexplored lives of the country's third gender. Each episode of *De Taali — Life of a Transgender*, hosted by Fida Khan, curated and produced by Shameer Tandon, unravels and educates the listeners about different aspects of the lives of transgenders through conversations with guests from varied backgrounds, including medicine, literature, the transgender community, and more.

Excerpts of the interview:

**How was the podcast first conceptualised?**

**Shameer Tandon:** After the success of *Pioneer Six Pack*, a musical band, which we created a couple of years ago, we realised that the natural extension would be to do a lot of live events across the world. Then we thought that we should do something on mainstream media to reach out to a larger audience. We had to stay ahead of the curve, so we thought that a podcast would be a great

idea as it is a medium where one can put out one's thoughts without worrying about what one wants to actually say because it's more of a conversational format. That's how it was conceived. The first season is already out with five episodes. Another five are on their way.

**Do you think the decriminalisation of homosexuality has opened the doors for several changes to be introduced like marriage, medical, adoption and inheritance laws for the LGBTQ+ community?**

**Fida Khan:** Decriminalisation happened on September 6, 2018 and it is only on papers till now. *Zameeni haqiqat se inka koi vaasta nahi hai* (It has nothing to do with the on-ground reality). I know this because I belong to that community. I can still recall the fight we started five years ago. Like there are *ashrams* for women, old age groups and orphans, we asked the government for the same for transgenders like me. They suffer more than anybody in the world. Being disowned by their own families and harsh treatment from the society leads to their so-called 'bad' behaviour. Lack of access to basic rights often forces them to beg and engage in paid sex work. It takes a lot of courage for trans people to come to terms with who they are.

In our country, people usually mock and harass them which makes their life hell. It happens because of a deep rooted patriarchal mindset of people. There is a stigma attached to it. All this explains the level of discrimination prevailing in this society. All that they lack are some basic human rights. They desire nothing

**'Childhood is a great time to develop their values, which can define them for the rest of their lives. More stories surrounding transgenders can be added in their books. Won't they learn better and keep it in their minds forever? It would eventually lead to a better world that would live and grow with us, knowing that we are also a part of humankind'**

that the society can't provide them. I feel, asking for a shelter is not a very major thing to do. It's been five years and still we have got nothing. If decriminalisation would have made a difference, we would have been successful in getting something as basic as an *ashram*.

**The podcast seems to talk about various aspects of the life of trans people. One being that there are not enough opportunities for them when it comes to healthcare, education or other skill-based tasks. Lack of accurate representation in Indian pop culture and stereotypical portrayal exist even today. What do you think is the way forward?**

**Fida:** We don't have to do much. Gradually, the government is actually catering to things that we as a community require. However, everything exists only on papers and not in reality. I believe that even if they start working today on the ground level, everything can just be fine. The change might actually come only if the things on paper are also done in reality. Gender-sensitisation should work in parallel with legal reform. Also, people still believe in stereotypes and refuse to give jobs to trans people. A well-educated transgender Indian is as capable and deserving to take up significant jobs as any other cisgender Indian. You have to fight for your rights because nobody else is going to do it for you.

When I was hosting this podcast, an idea popped up in my mind. You know how a child learns ABCD... as he grows and he remembers that until he dies... so why don't teach them about trans people just like they are taught

about the other two genders? Childhood is a great time, without doubt to develop their values and habits, which can define them for the rest of their lives. If proper values are taught to children, they will surely be able to apply them when they grow up. More stories surrounding transgenders can be added in their books. Won't they learn better and keep it in their minds forever? We would certainly face lesser questions. It would eventually lead to a better world that would live and grow with us, knowing that we are also a part of humankind.

**Judicial reform is one thing but social realities don't shift in an instant. How do you think people are ready to take this change ahead?**

**Fida:** While many people treat transgenders as lesser than humans, there are some people who are brave enough to fight for their rights day and night. There are some trans people too, who have made their way into the mainstream, achieved their goals and proved that we are as capable and deserving as any other Indian. Fighting for issues like lack of legal protection, poverty, harassment and stigma, anti-transgender violence, identity documents (a barrier to healthcare for people belonging to trans-community) is my fearless grandmother, Salma Khan. She is the first transwoman in the three-member panel of Mumbai's District Suburban Legal Services Authority. Ours is a backward society which is devoid of its basic rights. But I am glad that people like Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Joyita Mondal, Gauri Sawant, are constantly trying to break the

social stigma and making it big by uplifting the community.

**How do you think podcasts, films, books around such sensitive topic would help people to understand the community better?**

**Fida:** Until and unless you know the truth, how will you react to it? Through this podcast, we want to convey who transgenders actually are. There are too many misconceptions and myths in people's mind. The initiative is to show them the right thing and remove those myths.

Recently, I was on *The Kapil Sharma Show*, its video went viral on YouTube. I saw somebody's comment there — "Here she is talking so nicely. You should see the way they behave on a train." This is the exact mindset that we want to change through the podcast so that people know about the challenges we face just because we have a different gender. We are born the same, we feel the same pain, we are humans too!

**Shameer:** This podcast deals with the details of life of transgender, especially in the Indian cultural context. We are hoping that there might be a paradigm shift in the mindset of people, who will listen to it as they will understand their way of life. When they get disowned by their own families, their basic thought process says, "if my family didn't accept me, how will the society?" In the initial years, we faced a lot of difficulty in gaining their trust. Fida very well pointed that — *inko cheezein maangne se hi milti hai*. But our idea was to give them legitimacy through a platform for singing, speaking and doing all of that. So it took time but now we are absolutely aligned and in sync.

When anybody asks me what was the biggest challenge in bringing this piece together? It was definitely winning their faith! When a community has faced centuries of oppression and suppression, then things don't change within a click or get better overnight. It takes time. We met approximately 200 trans people about five years ago. Out of them, we picked up beautiful stories of six of them.

**In the time of global crisis like this, how do you think podcast will work the best for the audience?**

**Shameer:** When people are homebound, they resort to digital options. With the announcement of lockdown amid the pandemic of Covid-19, I think it's a great option for people to just listen to such positive stories, which normally they wouldn't have time for.

**Can you share some anecdotes?**

**Fida:** I just want people to know that we have seen and done a lot in our lives. But it never really made a difference to my life. I want to point out to the jobs we have and that we shouldn't be neglected as we are transgenders. We shouldn't be judged on the basis of our gender but rather, on our capability.

Respect all jeevas

Humans need to pay heed to ancient Indian philosophy to emerge out of the present world crisis, says **BENOY BEHL**



ry painting, Gautama Buddha is seen in his previous birth as a buffalo. The pesky monkey troubles him but the kindly Bodhi Sattva does not

mind. In fact, one can see a smile on the face of the Mahisha. It is such a composite creature. The depiction displays the oneness of all life forms.

It is such a delightful and joyous creature with the qualities of an elephant, cow, deer and even a horse.

Then comes the Stupa II, Sanchi from 100 BCE. In today's time, the message from Indian art and philosophy about oneness of all beings is that it is time to stop being cruel to bats, chicken and all kinds of animals, trees and eventually, nature, which we use to fulfill our necessities.

This is one of the most difficult times the world is going through. However, we do have a choice by looking at it through a different prism. We can use it to look at ourselves, rethink our lives, take care of all that is around us and reshape a better future for this planet. We would have achieved something positive and learnt a very important lesson even in the midst of such a crisis. We are very fortunate to have a rich heritage of philosophy, which has always taught us universal love and the interconnection of all creation, including us, animals, the trees and rivers and even the sun, the moon and the stars. The early *Upanishads*, which were penned in the eighth-ninth centuries BCE, presented a marvellous vision of the interconnectedness of all that is around us.

Foreign visitors to ancient India constantly wrote about vegetarianism which they found here. They found it remarkable and said it was based upon the Indian belief in *ahimsa*, or non-violence to all living creatures. In any case, cruelty to animals is wholly unnecessary and the world should take a leaf out of the *Upanishads*, to shape a vision for a better tomorrow.

(The writer is a culture historian, filmmaker and photographer.)

From the archives

NGMA celebrates its 66 years with a virtual tour that showcases the hidden treasures of its repositories. By **TEAM VIVA**

The National Gallery of Modern Art celebrates 66 years amid the COVID-19 lockdown with a virtual tour that reflects its archives as dynamic and progressive. The tour has plenty to explore and ponder over.

Director General Adwaita Gadanayak, who completed three years and got a three-year extension of his tenure at the gallery, feels that it is important to have exhibitions that showcase the strength of the gallery.

If we go by the exhibitions in these three years, these are indeed an insight into a vision that wants to keep an eye on the past as well as bring forward the importance of India's sculptural sensibilities.

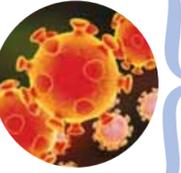
Gadanayak, who recently designed the National Police Memorial, has a significant place in sculptural traditions and contemporary movements.

"The sculptures, paintings and prints in the virtual tour showcase the hidden treasures of the collection. It all began with the exhibition titled, *Ithihaas*, which was NGMA's celebration of 63 years. It's the first exhibition that was held after I took charge as the DG. This creative and wonderful journey of representing the treasures has continued with several such exhibitions. And this virtual tour is one such exhibition which I believe will take this journey to greater heights. I present it as a tribute to our modern masters and firmly believe that this would generate greater interest among people towards the legacy of sculptures, paintings and prints as a creative medium," says Gadanayak.



## PositiveCase

Asymptomatic COVID-19 patients are as virulent and infective as symptomatic ones and those having no clinical symptoms but tested positive for new coronavirus can infect several healthy people, according to new studies. The infectivity of asymptomatic patients could be nearly the same as confirmed cases



## DOCYARD

DR RAKESH CHAWLA



Senior Consultant,  
Respiratory Medicine  
SAROJ SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL,  
NEW DELHI



## Keep sugar levels in check

One of the major complications in accurately detecting the novel coronavirus is the long and uncertain period of incubation which is around 14 days. This gives ample time for the infections to spread rapidly. Widespread availability of diagnostic facility being the need of the hour, it is also advised to the treating doctors and other medical assistance for protection as they are highly vulnerable even during a potential case look up.

While certain symptoms of coronavirus are similar to that of a common cold or viral infection, it is necessary to distinguish between the two. Though symptoms in most patients may vary from being asymptomatic to even being seriously ill and need immediate medical attention, the usual symptoms include — fever, cough and running nose accompanied by shortness of breath.

People need not panic in case of any of the symptoms. They should get tested for flu initially, and only in case of negative results, must undergo PCR throat swab culture, which is used to diagnose n-corona virus.

While the geriatric population may have other co-morbidities like asthma, wheezing or any other respiratory ailments, diabetes and hypertension along with a diminished immunity, makes them more vulnerable to infections. But this doesn't make them the only victims to the virus, but people of all age and gender are equally vulnerable.

As we age, our immune system also depletes gradually and likely for this reason any elderly catching coronavirus is more vulnerable to sail through the ill-effects of the virus. While the body's fighting capacity would have reduced by this age, in addition to the existing co-morbidities, old people are more likely to die of corona virus. People with diabetes should be extra careful about their health. They should maintain good glycaemic control (blood sugar level which helps in reducing the risk of infection and also the severity of complications).

In case a person with Diabetes gets Covid-19, the advisory suggests authorities should be notified immediately. Patients who have Diabetes can have an increased risk of taking more time to heal and get a secondary infection. In such a case people if people have any of the symptoms such as cough, high temperature and feeling short of breath, they need to monitor their blood sugar closely.

Here are a few tips how diabetics can prevent Covid-19.

- Maintain good glycaemic control, which may help in reducing risk of infection and severity. It may also lessen chances of secondary bacterial pneumonia.
- Pay attention to nutrition and have adequate protein. Any deficiency of minerals and vitamins should be addressed immediately.

If a Diabetic has Covid-19

- Most can be treated at home. Water level should be maintained along with symptomatic treatment.
- Patient with type-1 Diabetes should measure blood glucose and urinary ketone frequently in case of fever.
- Hospitalised patients with severe infection should be given insulin to control hyperglycaemia in them.

## SUMMERCoolERS

**RED BELL PEPPER:** Red bell peppers are very high in Vitamin C, with a single one providing up to 169% of the reference daily intake. This makes it a must to add in diet in the recent times when one have to have a strong immunity. Other vitamins and minerals in bell peppers include Vitamin K1, Vitamin E, Vitamin A, folate, and potassium. They also contain antioxidants, including capsaicin, violaxanthin, lutein, quercetin, and luteolin. These plant compounds are associated with many health benefits.

The several antioxidants present in them promote eye health and reduce the risk of anemia.

It also help generate red blood cells, which carry oxygen to the tissues to keep you feeling energised throughout the day.

# Hantavirus truth

When the world is still fighting with coronavirus pandemic, a new virus in China has claimed a life. DR NAVNEET SOOD tells you more



The world is already in the grip of Corona pandemic; more than 170 countries are affected, even powerful countries are witnessing tough time with best healthcare systems as death toll is still at rise due to COVID-19. Time when even our entire country is locked down as safety measure, news reports about the outbreak of Hanta virus, which fuelled more fear among the people. Even it was on trend on social media including twitter and facebook and other platforms, hash tags of Hantavirus started running, people from around the world had different opinions and fears associated with this new Hanta virus term, which only made people more furious and tensed. It all started few days back when *Global Times* reported about a man travelling in Yunnan province in China, who died while travelling in a bus, he was found to be infecting Hantavirus, and the fellow passengers were also tested for the same. Here before we get into details about this news report and Hantavirus we all must observe it as our social responsibility to not spread panic. Considering this sensitive time entire world facing, it is highly

## KEEP DISTANCE

The sigh of relief is Hantavirus is rare and can only infect people who have close contact with rodent's urine, saliva or excretion where this virus comes from, at the same time it rarely transmits from one human being to another. Although it has caused one life according to news reports still as the time suggests COVID-19 is the bigger problem world is facing and Hantavirus is not as dangerous as it is, yes precautions can be taken, basic cleanliness and not coming in the contact of such rats can prevent even this risk as well.

required to be well informed rather than getting flown away with a mere news report. Keep yourselves well informed with the authentic sources as rumours are also rife about COVID-19. The sudden outbreak of Hanta Virus may have made scared people but it is not as dangerous as COVID-19 which is already world is fighting with. According to CDC (Centre for Disease Control) the origin of Hanta virus is in urine and excretion of rodents like rats, squirrels which cause Hanta virus diseases and HPS (Hanta Virus Pulmonary Syndrome). Now it may have scared the people but it's not a new virus in the list of viruses. Even Chinese media has reported that it is not a new virus and has been infecting human race already since many years.

(1951-1953). In year 1978 in South Korean Hemerologic fever was isolated from small infected field rodent near Hantan River, and the virus was named after Hantan river. Later in 1981 it was termed as hantavirus.

**Symptoms:** First of all infected mouse can cause this infection to anybody around. A person may start feeling ill after getting for one to five weeks around an infected rat or any other rodent, and this chance is also rare. Initial symptoms may include:-

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Serious muscle ache

### TYPES:

■ New World Hanta Virus: It is basically found in US which causes Pulmonary Syndrome, it can cause severe cough and shortness in breathing and severe pulmonary problems.

■ Old World Hanta Virus: It is found in Asia and Europe which causes Haemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS), it causes vascular leakage, low blood pressure and kidney failure.

The writer is pulmonology consultant at Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital

## WHAT YOUR FEVER MEANS?

Many believe that most fevers cannot be differentiated clinically. However, it is not true. Here are few tips to identify different types of fevers and their causes.

- ◆ Fever with cough and cold: think of **flu**
- ◆ Fever with retroorbital eye pain: think of **dengue**
- ◆ Fever with joints pain which improves on bending: think of **Chikungunya**
- ◆ Fever with lymphocytosis: think of **viral fever**
- ◆ Fever with lymphopenia: think of **Covid 19, acute hepatitis, HIV**
- ◆ Fever with jaundice: rules out **viral hepatitis**
- ◆ Fever subsides capillary leakage appears in dengue
- ◆ Low grade evening rise fever: think of **TB**
- ◆ Fever with chills and rigors: think of **malaria, filaria, UTI, sepsis**
- ◆ Fever with cough and breathlessness: think of **COVID like illness**
- ◆ Fever with ESR > 100: **painful thyroiditis, sepsis**
- ◆ Fever with SGOT > SGPT: **dengue**
- ◆ Fever with angry looking throat with no cough think of streptococcal sore throat
- ◆ Fever with red eyes: **Zika illness**
- ◆ Fever with eschar: **scrub typhus**
- ◆ Fever with single chills: **pneumonia**
- ◆ Fever with involvement of skin, joint and or kidney rule out **auto immune disease**
- ◆ Fever with TLC > 15000 is sepsis
- ◆ Fever with positive thump sign on liver rule out **liver abscess**

The writer is Dr KK Aggarwal, President CMAAO, HCFI and Former National President CMAAO

## BUSTING MYTHS

**Lopinavir-ritonavir is the drug of choice**  
This combined protease inhibitor, which has primarily been used for HIV infection, has in vitro activity against the SARS-CoV and appears to have some activity against MERS-CoV in animal studies.

Although the use of this agent for treatment of COVID-19 has been described in case reports, there was no difference in time to clinical improvement or mortality at 28 days in a randomised trial of 199 patients with severe COVID-19 given lopinavir-ritonavir (400/100 mg) twice daily for 14 days in addition to standard care versus those who received standard of care alone.

**Virus can be transmitted through breast milk**

The only report of testing found no virus in the maternal milk of six patients. However, droplet transmission could occur through close contact during breastfeeding. Thus, mothers with confirmed COVID-19 or symptomatic mothers with suspected COVID-19 should take precautions to prevent transmission to the infant during breastfeeding (including assiduous hand hygiene and use of a facemask).

Alternatively, to minimise direct contact, the infant can be fed expressed breastmilk by another caregiver until the mother has recovered, provided that the other caregiver is healthy and follows hygiene precautions.

Women who choose not to breastfeed must take similar precautions to prevent transmission through close contact when formula is used.

**Two tests are required to declare recovery**  
Ideally four. Factors include resolution of clinical signs and symptoms and negative results of reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) on two sequential paired nasopharyngeal and throat specimens (four specimens total, each handled separately), with each pair collected 24 hours apart.

**COVID-19 can't be diagnosed without tests**

In some cases, testing for COVID-19 may not be accessible, particularly for individuals who have a compatible but mild illness that does not warrant hospitalisation.

## DadiKaKehna

Doctors say it is important to boost one's immunity so that the body has the capacity to fight COVID-19. There are ingredients in our kitchen that can help ensure one is healthy, says ROSHNI DEVI



There are several messages doing rounds on social media about how one to prevent getting infected with Coronavirus. While doing yoga and meditation are good as one can't go out to a gym, remember the only way to fight this virus is to ensure that the body is healthy. There are several ways one can do so.

Drink herbal tea three-four times a day. Take 200 ml of water and bring to a boil. Add a couple of pinches of cinnamon powder, black pepper, ginger root, four-five tulsi leaves and crush them together in a mortar and pestle. Add a pinch of turmeric. Add your favourite tea leaves and boil like you would a regular tea. For flavour, add half a juice of lemon. This

decoction has all the goodness of antiseptic, anti-bacterial and antiviral properties.

Sleep is just as important to keep one's body healthy. Given that Indians are sleep deprived take this time to sleep at least seven to eight hours a day.

Now that one is home, one can get an opportunity to sit in the sun. Vitamin D plays a role in helping our immune systems produce antibodies that help fight the diseases. Include red bell pepper in your diet. It contains twice as much Vitamin C as citrus fruits. Garlic may be pungent and leaves a bad breath but raw garlic contains antimicrobial and cancer-fighting agents. However, one can add this in vegetables and even as a *tadka* in daal.

# HERBS TO RESCUE

DR PARTAP CHAUHAN tells you how to take the Ayurveda route and keep healthy during the spread of COVID-19

Strong immunity is necessary to fight any kind of foreign body or disease. Coronavirus primarily affects the lungs and the respiratory system. Eating a tablespoonful of *chywanprash* daily enhances the immunity, specifically that of lungs and respiratory system. *Amalaki* or *amala*, *guduchi*/*glioy*, *neem*, *kutki*, *tulsi* are some of the ayurvedic herbs that are helpful in building the immunity and preventing the infection.

In ayurveda, a good digestion or strong digestive fire plays an important role in fighting diseases. Eating a piece of fresh ginger, drinking ginger tea, mint tea, cinnamon tea and fennel tea are also good.

One can make this drink at home. Take one litre water and add to it one teaspoonful of each — fennel, cumin, coriander powder and fresh grated ginger. Boil everything together for a few minutes, filter and fill in a thermos. Keep sipping this water throughout the day.

Citrus fruits like orange, grapefruit, lemon are rich source of vitamin C and are good to consume. Add juice of half lemon to a cup of lukewarm water and drink two-three times a day. Drinking warm water and keeping hydrated is beneficial.

In ayurveda, *nasya* is a therapeutic treatment for the nose, throat, sinuses and



head. Putting two-three drops of sesame oil in each nostril and sniffing it in will not only lubricate the nasal passage and throat but also strengthen the inner mucus membrane to keep away foreign bodies. Apart from this, performing *agniho-*

*tra/yagya* or burning *havan samagri* (a mixture of herbs) keeps home and environment free from germs and help keep you healthy.

The writer is Founder, Jiva Ayurveda

# Tokyo Olympics from July 23, 2021

AFP ■ TOKYO

The Tokyo Olympics will begin on July 23 next year, organisers said on Monday, after the coronavirus forced the historic decision to postpone the Games until 2021.

The announcement comes less than a week after the organisers were forced to delay the Games under heavy pressure from athletes and sports federations as the global outbreak worsened.

"The Olympics will be held from July 23 to August 8, 2021. The Paralympics will be held from August 24 to September 5," Tokyo 2020 chief Yoshiro Mori told reporters.

Only hours earlier, Mori had said he expected a decision from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during the course of the week.

But on Monday evening, he said an emergency teleconference had been held with the IOC and the date finalised.

"We agreed that the timing of the event will be in summer as originally planned, considering the coronavirus... and a certain amount of time needed for



Tokyo Olympic President Yoshiro Mori, right, talks with Honorary President Fujiio Mitarai upon his arrival at Tokyo 2020 Executive Board Meeting on Monday

preparations, selection and qualification of athletes," he added.

In a statement, the IOC said the new dates would give health authorities and organisers "the maximum time to deal with the constantly changing landscape and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

The decision would also cause "minimum" disruption

## IOA ask NSF's to start planning

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Monday asked all the national sports federations to chalk out training programmes to prepare their athletes for the 2021 Tokyo Games.

"All Olympic sports NSF's (National Sports Federations) are requested to please start their draft planning structure for preparation for Tokyo 2021 and for Paris 2024," IOA president Narinder Batra said in a release.

Soon after the new dates were announced, IOA secretary general Rajeev Mehta said, "Indian Olympic Association along with the NSF's welcome and support the new dates for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, which will be held from 23 July to 8 August, 2021." **PTI**

marathon has been moved to Sapporo, a city some 800 kilometres to the north of Tokyo where the weather is cooler even at the height of summer.

## World athletics c'ship moving to 2022

AFP ■ LONDON

The 2021 world athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon will be shifted to 2022 to accommodate the re-arranged Tokyo Olympics, World Athletics said on Monday.

The announcement came immediately after Olympics organisers said the 2020 Tokyo Games will now take place on July 23-August 8, 2021.

That means the world athletics championships that were scheduled to take place in Eugene on August 6-15, 2021, can no longer be held on those dates.

"We support the new 2021 dates for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games announced today by the Japanese organisers and the IOC," World Athletics said in a statement.

"This gives our athletes the time they need to get back into training and competition."

"Everyone needs to be flexible and compromise and

to that end we are now working with the organisers of the World Athletics Championships in Oregon on new dates in 2022 for our World Athletics Championships."

World Athletics said they were also "in discussions" with the Commonwealth Games Federation, the organisers of the Commonwealth Games that are currently scheduled to be held in the English city of Birmingham on July 27-August 7, 2022.

The athletics federation said it was also talking to the organisers of the 2022 European Athletics Championships, which are due to take place in Munich on August 11-21.

There has been no decision yet whether to postpone this year's European championships, slated for Paris between August 26-30.

Track and field is the traditional centrepiece of the Olympic Games and the Commonwealth Games.



## Olympics postponement rekindles Dipa's hopes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The postponement of Tokyo Olympics has come as a ray of hope for injury-ravaged Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who is preparing for another shot at qualification after a nagging knee problem hampered her earlier bid to make the cut.

Karmakar, who finished fourth at the 2016 Rio Olympics, has been struggling with injuries ever since she underwent a surgery to treat an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injury in 2017. ACL is a key ligament that stabilises the knee joints.

Her comeback in 2018 was short-lived as the knee troubled her again at the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup in Baku last year. She was forced to withdraw from the Doha World Cup as well and failed to recover in time for the World Artistic Gymnastics Championship in October, 2019.

"There were eight World cups but now there are only two left, which were supposed to happen in March but got postponed to June due to coronavirus outbreak," Karmakar said. "Given the situation they perhaps will happen next year.

So it gives me more time to recover and prepare for the two events," she added.

Karmakar hoped the extra time to get back to form will come in handy for her.

"I will give my best to return to form and hopefully I can do well and qualify," said the 26-year-old, the first Indian female gymnast to compete in the Olympics.

Karmakar's long-time coach Bishweshwar Nandi also said this postponement has renewed Karmakar's hopes.

"She is fit now. She has completely recovered from the injury but in gymnastics, you have to slowly start the process of training and Dipa had started her basic practice late last month when this coronavirus outbreak happened," the Dronacharya awardee said. "She will be back to her best in 3-4 months and since there are still two events left, we can take another shot at the Olympics. See, in gymnastics, injuries happen a lot but I'm hopeful that she will take it as a challenge."

"She will need two Silver or one Gold and a Silver in the two tournaments. We will not leave any stone unturned and I hope she will be able to perform."

## Decision on Wimbledon this week

**LONDON:** The vice-president of the German tennis federation has predicted that Wimbledon will be cancelled on Wednesday and slammed the French Tennis Federation for moving the French Open to the autumn.

Dirk Hordorff told French sports daily *L'Equipe* that he expects Wimbledon, scheduled for June 29-July 12, to be scrapped due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"This is not a rumour, they will announce that they are cancelling Wimbledon," he said.

In a move that surprised the tennis world, French Open



organisers have already postponed their tournament and moved it to start on September 20, instead of May 24.

"You could reorganise Roland Garros for September or October, but not Wimbledon, the grass would be too damp," Hordorff said.

Hordorff hit out at FFT

president Bernard Giudicelli for his handling of the rescheduling of Roland Garros, the claycourt Grand Slam.

"What president Bernard Giudicelli did is a disgrace, for tennis and for France," Hordorff said. The controversial switch leaves the French Open starting a week after the US Open finishes, if that event retains its original slot in New York.

"The way they did it, tennis would be dead if we all behaved like that. I'm sure it was a political move with elections coming up (in December). He's panicked." **AFP**

## ASIA CUP T20 RULED OUT

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus outbreak has not only brought the world to a standstill, it has also created a scenario where the fate of sporting activities in the next six months hangs in balance. While the 2020 Olympic has already been postponed and the start of IPL-13 suspended, the 2020 Asia Cup is also likely to be given a skip this year.

Speaking to IANS, a BCCI official said that gauging from how things stand at present, it is almost safe to say that this edition of the Asia Cup might not see the light of day. In fact, the tournament had greater significance this year as it would be the perfect training ground for the Asian team going into the World T20 which is still scheduled to be played as per plan at the end

of the year in Australia.

"Though it doesn't seem right to be talking about cricket schedules as of now, we can safely assume that Asia Cup isn't a possibility."

"The sports organisation are hit deeply and there will be some tough measures once some semblance of normalcy returns. There are liabilities and difficulties that the Board faces and it will be a new kind of a challenge to deal with them," the official said.

Host association Pakistan Cricket Board also confirmed that there isn't much information to be given with regards to the status of the tournament which was to be played in September.

"We cannot throw light on when the next Asian Cricket Council meeting will take place and on decisions around the Asia Cup and its fate," the PCB official said.

## Shafali needs to up the game, say experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With her big-hitting prowess, a rarity in women's cricket, 16-year-old Shafali Verma was bound to succeed at the highest level.

However, a lot of improvement is needed for her to sustain the sensational six-month run she has enjoyed since making her India debut, feel her coach Ashwani Kumar and former India wicketkeeper Ajay Ratna, people who have tracked her nascent career closely.

Verma was 15 when she received her maiden national call-up last September and thereafter, the attention she got as a teenage sensation was expected.

In her, India got a much-needed power-hitter at the top and less than six months later, she was in Australia, playing a pivotal role in ensuring the team's maiden entry into the final of the T20 World Cup.

"The women's team probables had a camp at NCA in June-July and I was part of it as the wicket-keeping and fielding coach. After seeing Shafali comfortably bat against Jhulan Goswami (senior India pacer) in the nets, I was convinced that she would be playing for India soon. And that is what happened," Ratna, who played six Tests and 12 ODIs said.

Besides Ratna, Verma's stroke-play in the practice session also impressed India coach V V Raman. "Even he was of the opinion that she could go on to become a very important player for India," recalled Ratna.

It is only fair to say that if it was not for Verma's flying starts, India would have struggled to reach the final of the T20 World Cup as the big stars of the team failed to make an impression. Her only failure came in the final, leaving her in tears.

The Rohtak-born, who loves to play in the V, gained a plethora of fans around the world with her six-hitting ability in the tournament, especially the one that flies over the bowler's head. There were also constant but pre-mature comparisons with the legendary Virender Sehwag.

Seeing Verma take the best of the bowlers to the cleaners in Australia was hardly a surprise for her coach Ashwani Kumar, who runs the *Shri Ram Narain Cricket Club* in Rohtak.

"When she came to me first as a little kid (11), I taught her the basic stance and after few days, she was comfortable hitting the big strokes. Then she started train-

ing with the girls four years elder to her and in six months' times, she was practising with the U-14 boys. She never felt out of place," recollected Ashwani, a former-first class cricketer from Haryana.

"Fast forward it to now, she trains with the fellow academy cricketers (like Ashish Hooda) who have played Ranji Trophy," he said.

Verma idolises the great Sachin Tendulkar and Ashwani feels that is one reason why she developed a penchant for playing with a straight bat.

Asked if he anticipated Verma becoming a household name at such a young age, the coach said: "I will be honest here. I did not have an idea about women's cricket. I had just seen her play for Haryana and I got an idea that she was meant for bigger things."

"Before she left for the World Cup, I was not sure how she would handle the pressure of a big event but she exceeded my expectations and did well throughout. Having said that, it is just a start for her and she knows that."

Former India captain Shantha Rangaswamy too is mightily impressed by Verma's showing in Australia but also picked out the areas of improvement in her game, mainly her fitness.

Both Ashwani and Ratna also feel that Verma needs to improve her agility, which would make her a better runner between the wickets and a much improved fielder.

"She only got back a couple of weeks ago and the lockdown happened. When things are back to normal, I would be talking to her about the importance of rotating the strike frequently and not just hitting the big shots. She also needs to work on reducing the number of dot balls," said Ashwani.



## Tendulkar was an all condition batsman: Warne

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Spin great Shane Warne on Monday picked his fierce rival Sachin Tendulkar as the batsman to bat in any conditions and called his former skipper Steve Waugh a match saver rather than a match-winner.

One of the greatest spinners to have played the game, Warne was engaged in an *Instagram live* session with his fans.

When the discussion turned to the best batsman in his time, the 50-year-old Warne said, "If I have to choose any batsman to bat in any

conditions, it is a real toss-up between Tendulkar and Lara, but I would just choose Tendulkar."

"If we have to chase 400 runs on the last day, I would definitely pick Lara," added the leg-spinner who ended his illustrious career with 708 Test wickets.

"There were these two guys, then there was daylight and after that, the rest of the batsmen came."

Tendulkar played a world record 200 Tests and amassed 15,921 runs with an average 53.78 while in 463 ODIs, he tallied 18,426 runs at 44.83.

While Lara played 131 Tests and scored 11,953 runs with an average of 52.88. In 299 ODIs he accumulated 10,405 runs.

When asked about his former captain Waugh, who is known for his solid temperament and dogged approach to batting, Warne said he was someone who could bail the team out of a precarious situation.

"Steve was more of a match saver than a match-winner," Warner said about Waugh whom he included in his all-time Australian Test XI to be led by Allan Border.

Waugh played 168 Tests for

Australia scoring 10927 runs, including 32 centuries & 50 fifties.

About his team, Warne said: "I am only picking players that I played with, that is why David Warner is not going to be a part of the side, he is one of the greatest Aussie openers."

Warne's team comprised Matthew Hayden and Michael Slater as openers, followed by Ricky Ponting, Mark Waugh, Border and Steve. He chose Adam Gilchrist as the wicketkeeper with Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Bruce Reid as the fast bowlers and Tim May as the spinner.

## Dhoni was focused on getting ready for IPL: Balaji

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The outbreak of the coronavirus saw the Chennai Super Kings training camp being called off and skipper MS Dhoni returning home from Chennai. But CSK bowling coach Lakshminath Balaji said that the former India skipper looked very intense during his training sessions even though he was making a return to competitive cricket post a sabbatical.

"Dhoni was looking good, fit. He focused on training just like he always does and was as normal as he has always been. He trained like the way he did last year or 2 years ago. There is nothing that changes when it comes to his preparation. His routine, his mind set, everything is the same," Balaji told *indiatoday.in*.

"Dhoni was focused on getting ready for the IPL. He is that kind of a person who always takes it one moment at a time."

## Afridi, not Sehwag, redefined opening in Test cricket: Akram

**LAHORE:** Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram believes it was Shahid Afridi and not Virender Sehwag who redefined the concept of opening the batting in Test cricket.

"In Test cricket, Sehwag came later but in 1999-2000 Shahid Afridi changed the mindset of opening in Test cricket. Even if I was the bowler, I would know that I can get him out but also know that he can hit me for boundaries. He used to hit those deliveries for sixes at will," said Akram while chatting with Afridi on *YouTube*.

Many in the cricket fraternity, including the likes of David Warner, believe that it was Sehwag who started for bowlers having a difficult time at start of a Test match. Akram revealed that Afridi, who made his debut as an opener in Test cricket against Australia in 1998, was not supposed to be a part of that Pakistan side which



Shahid Afridi on tour but a few selectors were against it. He told me 'You should definitely take him, he will win a one-two Test matches and make him open the batting,' said the former left-arm pacer.

"I generally discussed a lot with Imran and his suggestions always came in handy," he added.

"What a knock it was on that Chennai track. Afridi used to dance down the track and hit (Anil) Kumble and (Suni) Joshi for sixes," Akram said recalling the 141-run knock played by Afridi in the Chennai Test.

Afridi, however, could not establish himself as a regular Test player as he managed to play just 27 Tests for Pakistan and scored just five hundreds.

Sehwag, on the other hand, represented India in 104 Test matches and scored 23 centuries, including 2 triple hundreds. **IANS**

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Olivier Giroud kisses FIFA World Cup trophy

## Benzema deepens France rift by ridiculing go-kart' Giroud

AFP ■ PARIS

Real Madrid's Karim Benzema has mocked France striker Olivier Giroud by likening himself to a Formula One car and Giroud a go-kart.

Benzema has not played for France since 2015 and watched from afar as Giroud spearheaded the team's World Cup triumph in Russia two years ago. With over 500 appearances for Real Madrid and in his 11th season with the Spanish giants, no questions remain over Benzema's playing skills.

Asked about the Chelsea forward during a question and answer session on *Instagram* on Sunday night, Benzema said: "You can't confuse a Formula One car with a go-kart, and I'm being kind. I know I'm a Formula One car..."

"It works because he's there, that's it. It's not going to be spectacular. (Antoine) Griezmann and (Kylian) Mbappe get seen more while he rolls his sleeves up and does the dirty work."

"But does everyone like his game? I don't know."

During the 2016 and 2017 seasons ahead of up Russia 2018, Giroud scored 16 goals for France in 24 games.

He also played every match at the World Cup and although he failed to find the target in Russia, his team came home with the trophy. France coach Didier Deschamps has sidelined Benzema since a legal case in 2015. Benzema has scored 19 goals in 32 appearances for Real Madrid this season while Giroud has largely been a back-up player for Chelsea, despite a decent run of form in February. **AFP**

## Liverpool deserve to be champions: Gundogan

**MANCHESTER:** Liverpool should be awarded the Premier League title if the season cannot be completed due to the coronavirus pandemic, says Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan.

Jurgen Klopp's men were a tantalising two wins away from their first league crown since 1990 when the season was suspended earlier this month.

The shutdown is currently due to last until April 30. Premier League chiefs are due to meet on Friday, with no indications of when football will resume.

Gundogan, whose side trail Liverpool by 25 points, told German broadcaster ZDF that if the season could not be finished,



Klopp's side deserved the title. "It would be OK for me," he said. "As a sportsman you have to be fair."

The 29-year-old German international, who has won the Premier League title with City for the past two seasons, said it was unlikely that he and his teammates

end of June.

Gundogan conceded that Premier League chiefs were faced with a difficult choice.

"There are different opinions," he said. "For clubs who have had a very good season, it obviously wouldn't be nice if it was cancelled now."

"On the other hand, for clubs who aren't doing as well and are maybe in the relegation places, an abandonment would obviously suit them."

Cancellation would have a knock-on effect on the second-tier English Championship, with both Leeds United and West Brom occupying the two automatic promotion places. **AFP**