

ANALYSIS 7
MUCH ADO
ABOUT GOGO!

MONEY 8
S&P CUTS INDIA GDP GROWTH
FORECAST FOR FY21 TO 5.2 PC

SPORTS 12
ONLY WAR HAS
CANCELLED OLYMPICS

HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY MARCH 25, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



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PLUS JOINS
MAHESH'S NEXT

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DELHI GOVT TO GIVE RS 5,000 TO CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: KEJRI

The Delhi government will give Rs 5,000 to construction workers as their livelihood has been affected due to coronavirus outbreak, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Tuesday. Addressing a press conference in the evening, he said no new case of coronavirus has been reported in Delhi in the past 40 hours, and the earlier number of virus-infected patients has also gone down from 30 to 23. He said that he has constituted a five-member doctors' panel to suggest a plan to deal with the situation if Delhi enters stage 3 of the coronavirus pandemic.



GOVT BANS EXPORT OF SANITISERS, ALL TYPES OF VENTILATORS

The government on Tuesday banned export of all sanitisers and ventilators with immediate effect in wake of the coronavirus outbreak. "Export of all sanitisers...is prohibited, with immediate effect," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) said in a notification. It also banned exports of all types of ventilators, including any artificial respiratory apparatus or oxygen therapy apparatus or any other breathing appliance or device. Last week, it had banned export of certain ventilators, surgical and disposable masks and textile raw material used for making masks.



HAVE GRAIN STOCK TO LAST FOR 6 MONTHS, DON'T PANIC: BHUJAL

As Maharashtra is in lockdown for tackling the coronavirus epidemic, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Chhagan Bhujbal assured on Tuesday that the state has enough foodgrain stock to last for six months. Despite restrictions on movement of vehicles, the supply of essential commodities will be unaffected, he said, asking people not to do panic-buying. "We have enough stocks to last for six months," he told reporters. Shops and outlets selling food grains, vegetables, meat, fish and medical shops have been excluded from the lockdown, the minister said, appealing people to cooperate with the government.



EC DEFERS RAJYA SABHA POLLS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 26

The Election Commission has deferred the Rajya Sabha polls scheduled for March 26 in view of the coronavirus outbreak, an official statement said on Tuesday. Election to fill up 55 seats in the Upper House of Parliament was to be held on March 26, but 37 candidates from 10 states have already been elected without a contest. The decision on holding the election for the remaining 18 seats from AP, Gujarat, Jharkhand, MP, Manipur, Meghalaya and Rajasthan will be taken based on the prevailing situation, the statement said.



21-day nationwide lockdown

‘ONLY WAY TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS’, SAYS PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced a complete lockdown across the country for 21 days from Tuesday midnight, asserting that social distancing is the only way out for the country in its decisive battle against the coronavirus. In his second address to the nation on the pandemic raging across much of the world with the number of infections rising in India, Modi made a fervent appeal to the countrymen not to cross the 'lakshman rekha' of their homes in the next three weeks.

Any negligence in these 21 days will "push the country and your families by 21 years", he said underlining the massive danger the coronavirus poses. The experience of countries, which have been able to contain the virus to some extent and experts' views have made it clear that social distancing caused by a lockdown is the only way to break the cycle of the infection, he said.



COVID-19: Suspension of Railway services to be extended till April 14

NEW DELHI: After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a 21 day lockdown across the country, the Indian Railways on Wednesday announced that its suspension of all passenger

services will continue till April 14 in the wake of coronavirus outbreak. However, freight movement will continue to carry essential commodities across the country, officials said.

PM'S KEY MESSAGES IN BRIEF

- India under complete lockdown from 12.00 AM from 25/03/2020 for 3 weeks
- Pls stay where you are
- Pls consider these weeks seriously, else we will go back 21 years in terms of economic growth
- Current advice is based on experience gathered from countries which were already severely affected by coronavirus
- Social distancing is applicable from PM to every other citizen of India
- Stay @ home & try to adopt innovative way to work from home or keep yourself engaged
- Lockdown will be more serious than Janata curfew
- All plans will be in place to ensure essential supplies are not impacted
- Rs.15,000 crores is earmarked to ensure medical/health infrastructure is improved to ensure coronavirus-infected citizens are treated well
- Health Infrastructure improvement should be priority for all state governments
- Don't fall for rumours and false news
- Pls take medicine as advised by treating doctor and do not try medicines or other processes on your own
- Have patience and follow instructions provided by government

‘No need for panic buying; essential items, medicines will be available’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Allaying apprehensions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said people need not panic about availability of essential commodities and medicines during the 21-day nationwide lockdown as the Centre and various state governments will work together to ensure this. Amid reports of panic buying at various places following his announcement of the 21-day complete lockdown across the country, Modi requested people to refrain from "panic buying."

"My fellow citizens, there is absolutely no need to panic," Modi tweeted soon after his address to the nation in which he announced the lockdown. He said by converging



around shops, people are risking the spread of COVID-19, while asserting that Centre and state governments will ensure all essentials are available.

"Essential commodities, medicines etc. would be available. Centre and various state governments will work in close coordination to ensure this," he said.

"Together, we will fight COVID-19 and create a healthier India," he said.

The Pioneer wishes its readers, advertisers, suppliers and agents a happy Ugadi. As our offices will remain closed today (25-03-2020), there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (26-03-2020).

— RESIDENT EDITOR



Postponement of polls saved many lives in AP



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Pune-based firm develops testing kit for faster results

8

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Phalguna & Krishna Paksha Panchangam
Tithi : Pratipada: 05:26 pm
Nakshatram: Revati: Full Night
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:22 pm - 01:52 pm
Yamagandam: 07:50 am - 09:20 am
Varjyam: 06:47 pm - 07:35 pm
Gulika: 10:51 am - 12:22 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 04:34 am - 06:22 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 36/22
Humidity: 58%
Sunrise: 06:16
Sunset: 06:27
Current Weather Conditions Updated March 24, 2020 5:00 PM

Anxious patients approach KTR on Twitter for help

NAVEENA KAVI ■ HYDERABAD

With the lockdown announced by the Telangana government, anxious patients seeking dialysis, chemotherapy etc. as well as pregnant women reached out to Minister K T Rama Rao for help.

Two pregnant women reached out to KTR seeking help. While one of them requested to be transported to Hyderabad, another wanted her mother, a resident of Borabanda, to be sent to Kurnool.

Minister KTR assured assis-



tance to both the pregnant women. One Prudhvidhar, a patient requiring dialysis, tweeted, "I am a peritoneal dialysis and I am from Warangal. Due to lockdown, the transport of the dialysis bags to Warangal from

Hyderabad has been totally stopped. The government is asking us not to leave our houses and travel to far-off places. But how can I get these bags from Hyderabad?"

KTR then assured the person that he would have regular dialysis and asked his office to co-ordinate. Another patient, Goutham, undergoing chemotherapy regime every week, asked KTR if he will be allowed to go to hospital. The Minister responded: "We will take care of all medical emergencies & ensure you receive medical attention."

When doctors keep family at arm's length...

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Confining people to home may be fine medically for arresting the spread of Covid-19 as long as you are not a medical professional. What if you are one? It's another nightmare. For the family life of the very doctors who are advising you to stay at

They wash hands 9 times just to remove the personal protective equipment gear

Doctors started having dermatitis dryness and scaling of skin because of repeated sterilium use

home has been disrupted amid the coronavirus scare.

Doctors treating Covid-19 patients are extremely anxious these days, with their emotions clashing with the core of their professional ethics. Consequently, there are a lot of 'what if's. Although they are staying away from kids, many of them still have apprehensions about infecting the near and

TS Covid-19 cases rise to 39, 6 more test positive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Six new cases of Covid-19 were reported on Tuesday, taking the total cases to 39 in Telangana. Patients are residents of Kokapet, Chandanagar, Begumpet who have a travel history. A 64-year-old housewife from Manikonda with no travel history contracted corona from Patient 25. Patient 25 is a 34-year-old male who returned from Sweden on 14March. 61-year-old housewife from Begumpet tested positive. She recently visited Saudi Arabia.

dear ones with the virus unwittingly. So, for them, right or wrong, it is nothing short of home isolation everyday at their residence. The Pioneer spoke to some doctors who shared how their lives have changed after they started visiting Covid-19 wards.



Chief Minister K Chandrababhanu Rao addressing media persons at Pragathi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Tuesday

Don't take it lightly, warns CM

L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

Peeved at the widespread violations of lockdown orders, with people spilling on to streets in large numbers, Chief Minister K Chandrababhanu Rao on Tuesday threatened to impose 24-hour curfew, issue shoot-at-sight orders, and deploy the Army across the state to arrest the spread of coronavirus.

Addressing a presser at Pragathi Bhavan, after a review of the Covid-19 situation in the state with Collectors and SPs of all districts as well as senior officials of all the departments, KCR talked tough against the violators. "We have made repeated requests to people to remain confined to their homes during lockdown period."

Tokyo Olympics postponed to 2021

PNS ■ TOKYO

The IOC announced a first-of-its-kind postponement of the Summer Olympics on Tuesday, bowing to the realities of a coronavirus pandemic that is shutting down daily life around the globe and making planning for a massive worldwide gathering in July a virtual impossibility.

The International Olympic Committee said the Tokyo Games must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020, but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community.

It was an announcement seen as all but a certainty as pressure mounted from nervous athletes, sports organizations and national Olympic committees all confronting the reality that training and qualifying schedules, to say nothing of international anti-doping protocols, had been ruptured beyond repair.

Details on Page 12

Savings A/c: Minimum balance charges waived

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving relief to citizens amid the coronavirus outbreak, the government on Tuesday removed charges on withdrawal of funds from other bank ATMs and also exempted account holders from maintaining minimum balance.

Announcing the initiatives, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said these concessions will continue for three months till June 30.

All banks, including private sector ones, will waive off minimum balance and ATM fees for the next three months.



"At the moment, these relaxations are for three months. As we go along, we will consider the situation and take decision accordingly," she said.

PNS ■ INDRAVELLI

Noticing that home quarantine of all those who are returning home from abroad is not being effectively implemented due to various intractable reasons, people of at least two villages in Adilabad district have hit upon a novel idea. They have started living in tents pitched on the outskirts, far away from locations harbouring foreign returnees who have given the go-by to rules.

Although the authorities in the state have directed all those who have returned from foreign countries to stay put in

their homes for 14 days even if they show no symptoms of Covid-19, not every such returnee is serious about doing his or her bit to check the spread of the disease. While some people are observing home quarantine, be it self-imposed or medically mandated, there are others who deliberately give it a slip, if the case registered against Mancheril DSP is any indication. At a time when city folks are wittingly violating rules and do not mind being labelled as 'Covidiot's' (signifying those who feel themselves as heroes and heroines by violating State-

mandated orders and protocol), people of Yemaikunta and Andu thandas here have exhibited remarkable awareness on maintaining social distance.

It all began when two persons hailing from the hamlet returned from Uganda, where they had gone for work. They landed in the state on Sunday. The medical officers tested their samples and prescribed them home quarantine for 14 days. One of them, belonging to Yemaikunta, did not care to have a special room to observe home quarantine.



People placing boulders and debris across the road leading to the thanda

PIN POINT No one could have possibly imagined the extent of damage that would have caused to Andhra Pradesh and its people had elections to the local bodies gone ahead as per the schedule announced earlier. Initially, the ruling party, especially its supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy, berated the State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar, even going to the extent of accusing him of favouring Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu because of the 'caste' factor. However, the Chief Minister has adopted a softer tone after the Coronavirus began making its presence felt in the state. If indeed the elections had gone ahead as scheduled, the number of infections could possibly have gone upto lakhs, not thousands, since people would

Postponement of polls saved many lives in AP

The SEC's decision also proved that however pure his intentions may have been, the Chief Minister, or any government functionary across the country, cannot always be right in his or her decisions

have been crammed together in polling booths, and exposed to the deadly virus. Naturally, the voters would have turned up in their thousands at the polling booths across the state, after being 'treated properly' by the two principal players on the political scene in AP, who are bent upon proving they are the dominant force. The political situation in the state is such that both these parties are willing to do whatever it takes to prove that the people are with them. In the end, the SEC's stated reason behind his decision to postpone the polling has turned out to be the correct one, as not only the people of AP, but also of the country, in fact the entire world, remain at great peril due to the outbreak of this deadly pandemic.

The SEC's decision also proved that however pure his intentions may have been, the Chief Minister, or any government functionary across the country, cannot always be right in his or her decisions. The Jaganmohan Reddy government initially did not quite grasp the danger the virus posed, if one takes into account its insistence that the polls go ahead as scheduled. To buttress his argument, Jagan pointed out that the state stood to lose the nearly Rs 5,000

crore funds assured by the 14th Finance Commissioner in the event of elections for the local bodies not being held by the end of March, 2020. Now with people gradually realising the danger posed by Covid-19, even the staunchest supporter of Jagan is thanking the Almighty for the postponement of the elections. Even the tone and tenor of the YSRCP leaders on the issue of local bodies polls appears to have changed. Initially, the governments



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

of the two Telugu states virtually ignored the dangers posed by Covid-19. Both the heads of governments of the two states said that the virus can be easily tackled by taking Paracetamol tablets. They soon realised the seriousness of the issue and took corrective measures by extending support to the Janata curfew followed by

total lockdown. However, had the two CMs been serious about the looming danger from the beginning, the attitude of the people too wouldn't have been as casual as it was. It was extremely worrying to see numerous people come out onto the streets at 5.00 pm on the day of Janata curfew to "express solidarity" with doctors, nurses and other health workers treating those affected by Coronavirus. This defeated the very purpose of the Janata curfew and the concept of social distancing that needs be strictly followed to flatten the rapidly rising curve of Coronavirus infections. The people should realise that lockdowns are for their own safety and well being and the government gains nothing from such drastic actions. The government also

gains nothing from the closure of places of worship. Whichever faith one may be, it is time to pray for the well being of the nation and the world. Being forced not to go to a temple, mosque or any place of worship is heart-wrenching for many, but unavoidable. Controlling public action strictly is quite possible in the absence of Democratic rule in countries like China where it took nearly four months to arrest the spread of the deadly virus. But is this possible for a country like India where politics rules everything? Government here has to take the opposition into confidence on matters involving such a major issue like Coronavirus. It's hard in general for ruling parties in India to get the backing of the Opposition on key

issues. The situation is such that the Government of India has to take very tough measures to arrest the spread of the virus, including strict enforcement of the law. People naturally resist strict measures, but this time, it would be for their own well-being. It can be safely assumed that both the Central and state governments will have a tough time ensuring social distancing. Citizens, irrespective of caste and creed, had been engaged in praying to the Almighty to keep the lethal Coronavirus away from their Motherland! Let us add one more small prayer to this. Let us pray that the prayers of everyone are accepted and the Blessings of the Almighty shower upon this great nation soon.

'Take responsibility to implement lockdown'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) official spokesperson G Niranjan requested the Basthi and resident welfare associations to come forward and take responsibility of strict implementation of lockdown imposed by the State government to tackle the spread of Caronavirus. The associations should see that no resident of their locality moves out of their residences unless and until if there is any necessity. In a statement, Niranjan said that the police and administration alone cannot implement this, it is for the police, revenue and Municipal administration to move in to action to make use of welfare associations in this direction. Another senior leader V Hanumantha Rao has urged the state government to extend help to the unorganised workers. Congress MLC T Jeevan Reddy, in a statement, urged the government to shift NRIs to the quarantine instead of their own residences. He also urged the state government to extend help to autorickshaw drivers, daily wage labourers and others.

Savings A/c: Minimum balance...

Continued from Page 1

She also announced reduced bank charges for digital trade transactions for all trade finance consumers to promote digital payment. With regard to the commerce ministry, the finance minister said extension of timelines for various compliance and procedures will be given. Besides, she said all sanitary import permits (SIPs) for SPF Shrimp Broodstock and other agriculture inputs expiring between March 1 and April 14 has been extended by 3 months. She said the delay up to 1 month in arrival of consignments will be condoned.

EC defers TS MLC by-poll

● Fresh dates will be notified in due course, says poll panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the Election Commission, here on Tuesday, extended the schedule for by-election to the Telangana Legislative Council from Nizamabad under local authorities constituency by 60 days. The poll body took into a gathering of people in connection with the election is adverse due to fear of transmission of the coronavirus. "Fresh dates shall be notified in due course after reviewing the situation," said the poll panel. According to the earlier schedule, the notification was to be issued on March 12, last date for filing nominations on March 19, and last date for withdrawal of nominations on March 23. The vote was scheduled on April 7, counting on April 9, and the process was to complete by April 13. The vacancy arose due to disquali-



According to the earlier schedule, the notification was to be issued on March 12, last date for filing nominations on March 19, and last date for withdrawal of nominations on March 23

fication of R Bhoopathi Reddy on 16 January 2019. "The poll process would necessarily include gathering of polling official, support officials and members of the respective local bodies on the poll day, which may not be suitable in view of the prevailing unforeseen situation and related advisories in the country," the EC said in a notification. The EC also cited the March 22 communication from the

Centre to state governments, asking them to take all measures to break the Covid-19 chain of transmission, which included suspension of train services and closure of all activities except for essential services. The EC also took into account the lockdown declared by the Telangana government to contain coronavirus transmission. "The prevailing unforeseen situation of public health emergency indicates the need for avoidance of possibilities of gatherings of any nature, which exposes all concerned to pos-

sible health hazard," it said. On January 16, 2019 three MLCs — Bhoopathi Reddy, Yadav Reddy (under the MLA quota) and Ramulu Naik (under the Governor quota) - had defected from the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) to the Congress before the December 7 Assembly elections. They didn't resign their council posts and were disqualified. Bhoopathi Reddy challenged this in the high court. In July 2019, the court upheld the disqualification of three MLCs by the House.

Convert Secretariat into isolation centre, says BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Tuesday appreciated the steps initiated by the Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao to control the spread of Covid-19 virus and suggested that old Secretariat buildings could be used as an Isolation centre to accommodate Covid-19 patients, in case the numbers go high. Meanwhile, Bandi Sanjay announced a donation of Rs 50 lakh for the efforts to stop the spread of Coronavirus. The MP stressed the need for a nationwide concerted effort to fight the Coronavirus by rising above political differences. Bandi Sanjay also addressed a letter to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao stating that Telangana BJP is ready to extend its co-operation voluntarily. He also asked the Chief Minister to



As the president of the Telangana BJP, I assure the Chief Minister of all possible help from the party and also myself

— BANDI SANJAY KUMAR
Karimnagar MP

use the services of their workers in waging a war against the spread of Coronavirus. "As the president of the Telangana BJP, I assure the Chief Minister of all possible help from the party and also myself," he said. However, he mentioned that few selfish traders were taking the advantage of lockdown and have increased the prices exorbitantly. This is

taking a toll on the poor and middle class families, he said. He urged the Chief Minister to curb such incidents by taking stern action against those responsible. He also wanted the Chief Minister to implement Ayushman Bharat health scheme in the state to help the people. He also offered services of lakhs of BJP cadre in the state if the state government requires their help in any manner.

Villagers start living in tents...

Continued from Page 1

On top of that, his family members started mingling freely with reluctant villagers. This soon prompted the discerning ones among the families in the thanda to take steps to keep themselves aloof from the foreign returnee and his family members. There are 120 families in Yemaikunta. Of them, 25 families literally joined hands, pitched tents on the outskirts, and started living there with their kith and kin. Good things also spread. In no time, the people of the Andu thanda followed suit, just to be on the safe side. According to village sarpanch Jadav Lakhan, this is a precautionary measure taken by some families in the village. MPTC member from the region Vijay Singh said that the path had been chosen to keep coronavirus at bay. Elsewhere in Adilabad district, several villages have adopted resolutions imploring others not to visit their

According to village sarpanch Jadav Lakhan, this is a precautionary measure taken by some families in the village. MPTC member from the region Vijay Singh said that the path had been chosen to keep coronavirus at bay

villages for a period of about 70 days. They have also put up 'No entry' boards at the village entrance. Some resourceful ones have even put up thorny fences and stacked up boulders across the roads to prevent unauthorised entry. Should there be need, these villagers are ready to leave their homes for good.

Don't take it lightly, warns CM

Continued from Page 1

Despite this, people are flouting norms and coming out to the roads in large numbers, which will give scope for spread of coronavirus. If this situation continues, we will be forced to impose 24-hour curfew, issue shoot-at-sight orders and deploy the Army to bring the situation under control. I request people to not force the government to go to that extreme. They must show self-restraint, KCR remarked. KCR said the government had now decided to impose the 'real curfew' from 7 pm on Tuesday and curfew will be in force from 7 pm to 6 am every day. "What you have seen since Sunday was only lockdown. It was not curfew. We are now announcing imposition of curfew officially from 7 pm on Tuesday. The curfew will be in force from 7 pm to 6 am every day. All shops, businesses and other establishments should close down shutter by 6 pm itself. If we notice even one establishment remain open at 6.01 pm, we will book cases, seal them, and cancel their licences. Similarly, all people should reach their homes before 7 pm,

else have to face the consequences. If need be, we will also order closure of petrol pumps to stop people from using vehicles," KCR warned. KCR reiterated that Covid-19 could be contained in the state only if people cooperated cent percent with the government and remained confined to their homes. He came down heavily on vested interests who were jacking up prices of vegetables and other essential commodities and trying to exploit the situation to their advantage in these difficult times. "We received complaints of how a few traders jacked up prices of vegetables and essentials indiscriminately under the guise of lockdown. This is not tolerated. The government will invoke PD Act against them and send them to jail directly. Their trade licences will also be cancelled and will be kept under blacklist permanently. They will never get the opportunity to do trading again," KCR stated. KCR also issued a stern warning to foreign-returnee people in the state who were playing mischief by violating home quarantine rules. "We have identified 19,313 for-

eign-returnee people in the state who are under tight surveillance. They have to remain in isolation either in their homes or at quarantine centres. But some of them are playing mischief and avoiding quarantine and roaming freely. In one case, a foreign-returnee escaped quarantine thrice. We have taken this issue very seriously. We have asked officials to seize and suspend their passports," KCR said. The Chief Minister also expressed anger at elected public representatives for not being part of the implementation of shutdown orders. He asked all the 150 GHMC corporators, ministers, MLAs, MLCs, MPs and other representatives of local bodies from state to village level to ensure implementation of shutdown orders in their respective areas in coordination with the police and other departments. KCR asked people to dial 100 across the state and seek help for any emergency like health issue or death of their near and dear so that the police would arrange transportation for them since no other vehicular movement will be permitted on roads.

'Stay united in fight against Covid-19'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Agriculture Singireddy Niranjan Reddy on Tuesday called upon the people of the State to stay united in the fight against Covid-19. In a statement, the Minister, urging the people to behave responsibly during such testing times, wanted those who had returned from foreign travel to disclose their details to the authorities voluntarily. "I request them not to push others into danger by keeping the travel history undisclosed. Please follow the directions given by the State government and venture out only if there is an emergency," he said. He said that there are enough stocks of daily needs and not to panic and come out in large numbers to the grocery stores. "Display the same type of spirit that people have showed at the time of Telangana agitation, while dealing with the dreaded virus," Niranjan Reddy said. He said that the government has taken steps to curb black marketing and hoarding by setting up a Task Force and committee with higher officials. He warned stern action against anyone who tries to break the law. Calling upon farmers to bring their produce to the procurement centres without any hesitation and the Chief Minister has directed the authorities to open up procurement centres close to farmers. He appreciated farmers in several villages where they have



I request them not to push others into danger by keeping the travel history undisclosed. Please follow the directions given by the State government and venture out only if there is an emergency

declared isolation on their own and said that Chief Minister anticipating the impact of lockdown has announced supply of 12 kilos of rice and Rs 1500 cash for the white card holders through ration shops.

When doctors keep family at arm's length...

Continued from Page 1

A doctor said, on condition of anonymity, "I have purchased two pairs of clothes to wear at hospital. When I enter the hospital, I quickly change into my clothes, go to the ward, wear the PPE gear, and check on patients. We have to wash our hands 9 times before removing the PPE. When we remove one pair - gown, we have to use hand rub; we then remove mask, again wash hands, remove boots, and again wash hands. Once I am back to my

general ward, we get into normal clothes." Keeping extra pair of clothes has become a norm for all the doctors treating Covid-19 patients. Another senior doctor said, "I am decreasing the instances of touching my kid and wife even though we are still in the same house. Once I enter home, I just go to a separate room, bathe, and wash the clothes separately. I am sleeping in a separate room. We don't know how many days this will last and I don't want to send them to in-laws as thought of separation in dif-

ficult times is harder. I am worried, because of me, they might get infected." Most of the doctors say that if they could distance their families, people could maintain social distance, stop coming out, and follow the precautions. Washing hands repeatedly has become a problem for doctors as it is leading to dryness. Another doctor said, "I have sent my son to my mother's place. I clean the main door knob before going to hospital. I open the door, first wash hands, and go to the bathroom take a bath, clean up

clothes and again clean the door knob and handle and my phone with sterilium. Of course, again wash hands. In fact, everyone started having dermatitis, dryness and scaling of skin because of repeated sterilium use." Apprehensions over being evicted from rented homes continue for doctors, even though they are following precautions. Confirming this, a doctor shared: "There is always a concern that these (IPC) Infection prevention and control won't give us full protection and may infect family. I

have high-risk patients at home who are elderly and kids as well. My parents are managing my kids, but I am more concerned about getting evicted out of my rental house. May be if government could provide doctors, sisters and class 4 employees with some hand sanitizer for home, it would be helpful".

In-laws and outlaws

The woes of female doctors are much more when it comes to travelling and staying at home. A doctor said, "Once I reach home, I go to the wash-

room in the terrace, take hot water bath, wash off all the clothes and then enter the home. Our apartment folks have issues with me using the wash room on terrace. I have people at risk at my home, my son, my grandmother and my father and cannot enter home directly. After doing Covid-19 duties, it's really not easy to go near my son as I feel may be I am asymptomatic carrier. One of my friend is not allowed to come home (in-laws place) and is being asked to stay at her parents' home if she has to do Covid-19 duties."

CAPSULE

Medical professionals to get special passes

HYDERABAD: With instances of several medical professionals being heckled surfacing a day after the government announced lock-down, government decided to issue special passes for medical professionals. While driving to duty several medical personnel were stopped, so the government instructed superintendents of hospitals to issue passes. The pass reads, "Emergency staff during Covid-19" and has details like name, designation and department. The pass has name of the hospital to which the doctor belongs to. However, medical professionals have raised concern about their transportation facility. A doctor said, "Doctors and sisters on duty without vehicle take the help of family member to drop them. On their way back home, they are beaten up by police." There is no public transport and people who came from other states and don't have public transport are facing problem. People don't want to drop as they are being beaten up, alleged a doctor. A medico said, "One of our senior is dropping 4 of us home, as we don't have transport facility. More than a pass we need a bus facility. It is minimum that we are asking, when IT companies are able to co-ordinate cabs, why not for us?"



Telangana mulls to compensate students over mid-day meals

HYDERABAD: On the orders of the Centre to deliver mid-day meals to students at their homes, education department has sent proposals to the state government on supply of essential commodities to the students at their door-step or in cash in lieu of providing commodities to them. The state government is likely to take a decision on the proposals in a day or two. The decision will benefit over 11,37,547 primary school students, 6,58,409 students of Class VI to VIII and 4,77,087 students of Class IX and X. According to the proposals, the government is keen to supply essential commodities like rice, vegetables, edible oils and eggs to students through gram panchayats. If that is not feasible, it is toying with the idea of paying money towards the cost of mid-day meals for the number of days the school has remained closed. The daily rice allotment for primary school students is 100 grams of rice, while high school students get 150 grams. The wages being paid to the mid-day meals workers at the rate of Rs 4.48 per head for primary school students and Rs 6.71 per head for high schools students would be returned to the students.

WORK FROM HOME TAKES A TOLL ON INTERNET TRAFFIC

NAVEEN KUMAR
■ HYDERABAD

The call for 'work from home' has spiked the data consumption, posing unique challenges for internet service providers and telecom operators as many seem to rely on mobile networks than broadband. India has over 630 million mobile users compared with around 19 million fixed broadband users, indicating that a large part of the work from home pressure will be on mobile networks, as per reports.

The businesses whose employees are forced to work from home are in discussions with internet service providers (ISPs) to check if some internet capacity can be reallocated from business centres to residential areas, an employee from an IT firm in Hitec City shared on the basis of anonymity.

"This is why my company could not send its entire workforce home, as they handle critical services like banking and healthcare, which cannot be run on residential internet connections," he said.

Many users who so far used their basic phone internet connection for content streaming have begun using it for work as well. In fact, many companies are incentivizing their employees, who would normally not have work from home authorization, to arrange for fixed line residential internet connections.

"My company provided me with an option to work from home and has agreed to provide for PC or laptop with funds to pay for a broadband



Many companies are incentivizing their employees, who would normally not have work from home authorization, to arrange internet connection. Many users who so far used their phone internet for streaming have begun using it for work as well

Internet providers told to increase network capacity

With increasing number of IT professionals working from home, the Telangana ITE&C department asked ISPs to raise network capacity to meet surge in demand. Minister K T Rama Rao on Tuesday in a tweet said that IT department, "Increased sanitation effort in Industrial & IT Parks, Ensure that contract labor& daily wage workers are paid , Asked ISPs to raise network capacity to meet surge in demand with WFH and Utilise CSR for anti-Corona efforts". Likewise, he tweeted that MA&UD department were given directions to handle this crisis including, "Increased sanitation efforts in all towns, Expeditious road repairs/maintenance, Instructed to ensure all 75 meal centres are kept open, Picking up homeless & shifting to Night shelters, Tracking all home quarantined folks". He also urged Home Minister, Mahmood Ali and Telangana DGP, M Mahender Reddy to allow personnel involved in providing essential services, during the lockdown. "Have received several complaints about police not allowing personnel involved in essential services to move about. I have requested both, Home Minister, Mahmood Ali and Telangana DGP to issue clear instructions in this regard. These are testing times guys, please cooperate", he tweeted.

connection if there is a requirement. Not everyone has a connection subscribed to these days as mobile service providers hand out upto 3GB of 4G data per day," said AbhishekBharti, a techie working for Cognizant Hyderabad. Telecom body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has reached out to OTT (over-the-top) content providers, including YouTube, Hotstar, among others, to cooperate with telecom firms to manage traffic distribution patterns in a way that does not

strain network infrastructure. "We have already written to the streaming platforms to undertake technical measures to ease the pressure on infrastructure. We believe this will be more effective if a similar communication is sent from DoT to these firms offering streaming video services," COAI said in a note on 21 March. Meanwhile, video streaming major Netflix on Tuesday said it will reduce traffic on telecommunications networks by 25 per cent while maintaining the quality of service for

users in India, as part of its efforts to help mitigate network congestion amid the coronavirus pandemic. Companies like Amazon Prime Video are also temporarily lowering bit rates - a measure of how much data is being transferred - to ease pressure on telecom network infrastructure.

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



Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali on Tuesday reviews the bandobast arrangements by Rachakonda Police in LB Nagar and preventive measures taken in view of the coronavirus pandemic

Home Minister reviews lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali said stringent action would be taken against traders and shopkeepers selling essential commodities at higher rates. The police were vigilant and would crack the whip on black marketeers, he said.

The Home Minister was addressing the media here on Tuesday after reviewing the

bandobast arrangements by Rachakonda Police in LB Nagar and preventive measures taken in view of the coronavirus pandemic

"The cooperation of citizens is utmost important at this juncture. Free ration and an amount of Rs 1,500 is being distributed to all white ration card holders," he said.

The Rachakonda Police Commissionerate is among the largest across the

country with a population of 42 lakh.

"Grocery stores and vegetable vendors should not be stopped. We have already permitted trucks carrying essentials to move in the city. Those buying groceries too should follow social distancing," he added.

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat and other senior officials were present.



Gandhi closes OP services

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The out-patient department in Gandhi Hospital was closed from Tuesday to prevent other patients from contracting the coronavirus and the hospital became a nodal center for the coronavirus patients.

The hospital is taking care of only emergency surgeries and put off all ordinary surgeries. The hospital authorities will take a call on March 31 and take a decision on whether to reopen the OP department or not.

However, the out-patient department in Osmania, Fever Hospitals will continue as usual.

The suspects of coronavirus patients will be sent to Gandhi Hospital where diagnostic tests will be run on them.

According to Osmania Hospital superintendent Dr Nagendra, the attendance of patients at out-patient department of all hospitals has come down drastically as people are not bothering to visit hospitals unless it is extremely necessary.

21-day nationwide lockdown

Continued from Page 1

This is the only ray of light, he asserted. "To save India, to save every Indian, there will be a complete ban on people from stepping outside their houses from 12 midnight today," he said.

"Lockdown is being imposed on every state, union territory, district, village, mohalla and street," he added.

The lockdown will be like "curfew" and more stringent than the Janata curfew, which the country had observed on Sunday, he said, adding it will have an economic cost but saving people's lives is of the paramount interest to his government.

A lockdown in most of the

country was already in place till March 31, and Modi's announcement extended it everywhere and for two more weeks after this month.

Modi folded his hands a few times to emphasise his request to citizens to adhere to his call, saying it is applicable to everyone from the prime minister to a citizen in a village.

Even countries like Italy, France and the US with world class infrastructure have been left helpless due to the spread of the disease despite their relentless efforts, he said, emphasising the gravity of the situation.

Some people suffer from this wrong mindset that only infected persons need to follow social distancing, he said, warning that such a view can endanger lives of others and their families.



Lock down affects homeless in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The total lock down on the state has affected the homeless and also those who arrived to the city on some business from other states and got stranded here for want of food and shelter.

With state government completely suspending the public transport from Sunday, the normal life has been paralysed and the travellers have to confine themselves to railway stations.

The state government implemented Janata Curfew for one day on Sunday, but later extended it to March 31. People, unmindful of the curfew, undertook travel but stranded in railway stations with family and children.

Those who run the Annapurna Canteens say that they have no orders from MCH authorities to run the canteens. They point out that home orders and take away parcels are being allowed to continue. The canteens cater to the food needs of at least four lakh in the city.

With the help of the civil society organisations, youth distributed food packets among the homeless on Sunday night.

The homeless have to go without food on Monday night since there was no food distribution undertaken by youth or civil society organisations.

SCR KEEPS THE WHEELS MOVING

Railways to transport essential commodities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Express, passenger and suburban train services all over India have been stopped till March 31, 2020.

While the fact is, all passenger carrying trains have been brought to a halt in the wake of the fight against spread of Covid-19 Corona Virus,

Freight train services are being run to transport essential commodities for meeting the needs of the Nation, 24 X 7 by Indian Railways.

SCR has been in the forefront of this endeavor and in the last 3-day period of stoppage of passenger carrying train services, the zone has run over 200 freight carrying trains

everydaybetween 22nd to 24th March, 2020 and the operations will continue. Commodities principally being transported by the Zone include coal to various thermal plants to ensure uninterrupted power supply in the region; petroleum products to meet the needs of the industry and other users; food grains, milk to meet the

basic needs of the people during this emergent period.

This has been possible on account of the commitment and duty mindedness of the workforce of the SCR deployed at various goods sheds, stations and control offices besides on field duties. The staff reinvolved in planning and handling rail operations.

Nizamia advises Muslims to offer prayers at home

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jamia Nizamia, the largest Islamic seminary in South India, on Tuesday said that while it does not recommend locking up of masjids, it strongly advises Muslims to offer prayers at home, in view of the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Addressing reporters after a high-level meeting at the seminary that was attended by scholars of various schools of thought, the rector of the Islamic University, Mufti Khaleel Ahmed, said that all management committees of masjids were advised to remove all prayer mats and

Addressing reporters after a high-level meeting at the seminary that was attended by scholars of various schools of thought, the rector of the Islamic University, Mufti Khaleel Ahmed, said that all management committees of masjids were advised to remove all prayer mats and carpets so that the worshippers offer prayers on the floor. They were also told to sanitise the floor after every

prayers and lock the mosques as soon as the farz (obligatory) prayers end.

The Imams (persons leading the prayers) were advised to shorten the prayers while the mullahs (worshippers) were asked to offer all supplementary prayers at home, if indeed they ignore the advice and reach the masjids.

The Jamia Nizamia also "strongly advised" all the elderly and children to offer prayers at home.

Making it clear that precautions were necessary, Mufti Khaleel Ahmed said that all worshippers should also perform the ablution at home and maintain social distancing.

Police keep curfew alive in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City Police has gone all out to keep the curfew alive in the city by using force and even lathis to make sure the public stays home during the announced lockdown period.

As many as 73 check posts are stationed across the city by the police here for bandobast and vigilance. Rachakonda police alone has seized 247 vehicles on Tuesday.

Hyderabad traffic police have requested the citizens to stay home and not venture out unless there is an emergency.

Emergency services and essential services will only be allowed during the morning hours.

Those who do not adhere to the lockdown rules will be



booked under Section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and their vehicles will be

seized, authorities said.

"During the checking, officers caught hold of motorists moving on the roads in spite of the lockdown declaration.

Doctors treating Covid-19 patients are filled with anxiety, and a lot of what ifs? While some are staying away from families, a lot of them have apprehensions of one of them being infected by the coronavirus

Citizens are requested to restrain themselves in their homes and not come out unless there is an emergency," the police said.

Additional Commissioner of Police, Traffic Anil Kumar requested the citizens to follow the guidelines issued by the Telangana government and cooperate with authorities in order to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. "No movement of the vehicle will be allowed from 7 pm up to 6 am",

he said. Meanwhile, Cyberabad police commissioner VC Sajjanar had announced earlier that employees of banks and software companies will be allowed to move about, adding that 3,671 people travelled to Hyderabad from overseas destinations. Hyderabad Traffic Control Room (040-27852482) and Helpline number (9010203626) will be available 24*7 for the people who need help during exigencies.

Twenty-five years ago, late P Kamala Manohar Rao, in his report to the government of undivided AP on streamlining Tribal Development, strongly recommended for a "Single-Line Administration". Though a number of schemes for the welfare of tribals has been drawn up and scores implemented, most of the key suggestions made by Rao are as pertinent today.

Telangana-born Manohar Rao was the first Director of Tribal Welfare when it was created in 1966 and continued in the post till he retired in 1975. He was entrusted with the task of Tribal Development as part of Administrative Reforms Committee of Rustomjee and Associates in 1985.

In his report titled "Streamlining of Tribal Development Administration" Rao recommended a single-window approach and a decentralised multi-functional organ-

Multi-functional approach to tribal welfare

isation for tribal development. His report was a comprehensive document and for all those who wish to look at problems of Tribals in perspective, it is very interesting reading.

The Telangana government gives priority to the welfare of Tribals by implementing number of schemes. These include among others; Micro Irrigation, residential schools and colleges, study circles, overseas scholarships, Kalyana Lakshmi, subsidies under Economic support, Aasara pensions, ST special development fund through ST Sub Plan, making Thandas as Gram Panchayats etc.

ASCI former principal Dharani P Sinha, commending the report wrote: "If one wants to get results in tribal areas there is no alternative other than creat-

The TS govt gives priority to the welfare of tribals by implementing number of schemes. These include among others; Micro Irrigation, residential schools and colleges, study circles, overseas scholarships, Kalyana Lakshmi, subsidies under Economic support, Aasara pensions and others

ing a decentralised administration with integrated multi-functional approach." Late Prof C Von Fuel Haimendorf, in his December 1985 letter to Rao, praised his efforts. Congratulating Rao for his brilliant analysis, Haimendorf agreed that there was an urgent need for a thorough revision of the administrative machinery in the tribal areas. Prof. Haimendorf expressed the hope that Rao's

realistic proposals would be accepted by the State Government, the implementation of which would greatly benefit the tribal population of the State.

Rao recommended that the Girijan Cooperative Corporation to be combined in itself credit, commercial and welfare functions as a central bank as well as to function as a marketing organisation. He wanted it to have a



VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO
CPRO to Chief Minister

project review and control mechanism and an independent status as Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute. Another suggestion refers to changes in the administrative structure at the secretariat level which includ-

ed constitution of a State level high power committee to advise the Chief Minister on tribal affairs. At the directorate level and district level also, Rao made many outstanding suggestions.

Rao, born on December 20, 1919 as a postgraduate student in 1947 was identified by Haimendorf to work among the Tribals. He joined service in the Social Welfare Department of Nizam's Government. Rao evolved an integrated programme of development for weaning away Tribals from the extremist movement launched by the Communists in the Telangana tribal belt, in collaboration with Haimendorf, who was then adviser to the government to Hyderabad on Tribals in 1949. They were successful in restoring peace in that area.

Haimendorf was responsible for starting the social service department for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and at that time Rao was appointed as trainee organiser. Rao was instrumental in implementing the Hyderabad Tribal Areas Regulation Act, 1949 in Warangal district. It was Rao, who worked out a strategy for bifurcation of the tribal welfare and social welfare departments. The original tribals used to live on hill-tops, forests, caves and under trees. They were scared on seeing the civilized people and used to literally run to their hideouts.

The report by Rao, whose long association with tribes and tribal development administration for about four decades could have been an answer to several problems. Rao was motivated by

Haimendorf in the tradition of applying anthropological knowledge to field situations. As observed by Rao in his report, it requires a constant effort for creation of delivery system attuned to the ideals and objectives set forth in the constitution and the plans. Traditional administrative systems cannot adequately handle the new development tasks. It requires application of skills and technology in various fields and calls for rigorous coordination and integration of skills and technologies in various sectors. The report, which contains several original proposals based on the study of various commission reports, is as pertinent today if the government designs a policy to enable Tribals reap benefits. Rao remains to this day what Verrier Elwyn called one of the greatest field-oriented philanthropists of this century, the "rara avis" (Exceptional Person) of sociologist-administrators, who are, indeed a vanishing tribe.

COVID-19 OUTBRAK

Need to tackle spread of pessimism and negativity, PM tells journalists

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said it is imperative to keep the fighting spirit of the people up as the country tackles the spread of coronavirus, and emphasised the need to tackle the spread of pessimism, negativity and rumour-mongering.

Interacting with senior journalists from the print media via video links, he also said the citizens need to be assured that the government is committed to countering the impact of COVID-19.

He said it is critical to improve social cohesion to safeguard national security.

During the interaction, Modi asked the media to act as a link between the government and people and provide continuous feedback at both national and regional levels.

"He underlined the importance of social distancing, asking media to generate awareness about its importance, inform people about the lockdown decision by states, and also highlight the impact of spread of the virus through inclusion of international data



and case studies about other countries in the papers," a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said.

According to the statement, Modi underlined that "it is imperative to keep the fighting spirit of the people up".

The prime minister also "emphasised that it was important to tackle the spread of pessimism, negativity and rumour mongering. Citizens need to be assured that the government is committed to countering the

impact of COVID-19," the statement said. The prime minister thanked the participants for the feedback and reminded them of the social responsibility towards the less privileged. Modi said the media has played a praise-worthy role in disseminating information to every nook and corner of the country. He said that the network of media is pan-India and spread across cities and villages.

This makes the media all the more significant in fighting this

challenge and spreading correct information about it at micro level, he said.

He said that newspapers carry tremendous credibility and the local page of a region is widely read by people.

It is, therefore, imperative that awareness about coronavirus is spread through articles published on this page. It is essential to inform people about where the testing centres are, who should get tested, whom to contact to get tested

Newspapers carry tremendous credibility and the local page of a region is widely read by people. It is, therefore, imperative that awareness about coronavirus is spread through articles published on this page, said Prime Minister Modi

and follow home isolation protocols. This information should be shared in newspapers and web portals of the paper, the prime minister said. He also suggested that information like location of availability of essential items during lockdown can also be shared in regional pages.

The journalists and stakeholders from print media appreciated the role played by the prime minister in communicating effectively and leading the country from the front.

2002 B'DESH MOSQUE BLASTS

Bangladesh national held in Maharashtra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A 42-year-old Bangladeshi national wanted in connection with three blasts at a mosque in Bangladesh in 2002 has been arrested from Navi Mumbai in Maharashtra, police said on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the crime branch of neighbouring Thane Police arrested Mophajjal Hussain alias Mopha Ali Gazi alias Maphizul Mandal, hailing from Satkhira in Khulna state of Bangladesh, from Cidco bus stop on Thursday while he was trying to go to Turbhe in Navi Mumbai, an official said.

He was staying in Turbhe since the last few months and was doing odd jobs there.

He was involved in the crude bomb blasts, one inside and two outside the mosque in

Bangladesh, Thane crime branch police inspector Nitin Thakre said.

One person was killed and many others injured in the triple blast, which took place at Ilisur in the jurisdiction of Colarua police station, he said.

Hussain had lost his right hand when the crude bomb exploded while he was placing it outside the mosque, he said.

He was subsequently arrested and awarded life imprisonment by a court. However, he was later granted bail on medical grounds and released in 2004 following which he absconded and sneaked into India from the border along West Bengal where he did some petty jobs. He later came to Mumbai and was working at some construction sites in the metropolis and Navi Mumbai, he said.



Centre asks states to release funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As coronavirus cases surge, the Centre on Tuesday asked all state governments to release funds for setting up of additional medical facilities like hospitals, clinical laboratories and isolation wards to combat the pandemic. The move came as the number of coronavirus cases in the country crossed 500. "The centre has asked all the state governments to deploy fiscal resources for establishing additional medical facilities such as hospitals, clinical labs, isolation wards, expanding and upgrading existing facilities to combat the challenge posed by COVID-19," an official statement said.

Woman tests positive for Covid-19 in Noida

PNS ■ NOIDA (UP)

A 47-year-old woman with no recent history of foreign travel has tested positive for COVID-19 here, taking the number of coronavirus cases in Gautam Buddh Nagar district to nine, officials said on Tuesday.

The husband and the daughter of the woman have been quarantined, while their housing society has been completely sealed -- no entry or exit allowed except in emergency cases, the administration said.

"A new positive case for coronavirus has been detected.... The society has been temporarily sealed from 2 pm of March 24 till 10 am of



March 26. Entry into or exit from the society will not be allowed during the period," District Magistrate B N Singh said.

According to officials, the woman has no history of foreign travel but her husband is an auditor and one of his London-based clients had recently visited him.

Centre should have taken coronavirus threat more seriously, says Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that the government is criminally culpable of not defining specifications of personal protection equipment for doctors and health workers till March 2, with party leader Rahul Gandhi saying the country should have taken the coronavirus threat more seriously.

Gandhi had said on February 12 that the government should take the coronavirus threat seriously and must address the issue immediately, failing which the country and its people may suffer.

"I am feeling sad, because this was completely avoidable. We had time to prepare. We



should have taken this threat much more seriously and have been much better prepared," he said on Twitter.

Gandhi also retweeted a post of a doctor Kamna

Kakkar, who said she is frustrated in view of shortage of N95 masks and took a swipe at the beating of 'thalis' and applause on the call given by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the government is criminally culpable of not defining specifications of personal protection equipment for doctors and health workers till March 2 and demanded answers from the prime minister.

"Dear PM, the government is criminally culpable of not defining 'Specifications' of Personal Protection Equipment for Doctors-Health Workers between 1st Feb-2nd March, 2020; Permitting export of PPE material, Masks, Ventilators upto 19th March. Nation needs to know," he said on Twitter.

Parents want schools to remain closed, curtail summer vacation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the number of coronavirus cases rising in the country, several parents want schools to not reopen soon and have suggested that academic loss if any can be reduced by curtailing the summer vacation. Several schools, which are already offering classes through digital modes of learning, say a decision in this regard will be taken only after March 31 once a review of the situation is done and also if the lockdown is curtailed. According to a survey by online platform Localcircles.com, 81 per cent parents are in favour of schools being shut through May and reopening on June 1. Over 10,000 parents were interviewed for the survey.

"The way cases are rising, I believe even if the lockdowns



are eased, schools should not reopen for at least a month. Kids are very sensitive and their safety should be of utmost concern," Ritvik Ahuja, an architect by profession said.

Another parent PK Shukla, said, "Schools are already con-

ducting online sessions, assignments are being done online. I am sure with technology at hand, lot can be managed so there is not going to be much academic loss".

Echoing similar concern, Shweta Babber, an IT profes-

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country have already announced advanced summer break and will reopen on May 22

sional said, "The loss of the number of days in the academic calendar can be made up by not giving any summer vacation this year". The classes and examination have been suspended in all schools till March 31.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country have already announced advanced summer break and will reopen on May 22.

Covid-19: TN CM announces special payout for govt doctors

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Doctors, nurses, paramedics and sanitary workers involved in treating COVID-19 patients in isolation at government hospitals in Tamil Nadu will get a special payout of a month's salary to honour them, Chief Minister K Palaniswami told the Assembly on Tuesday.

Lauding their work while legislators stood up and applauded after his appeal, the Chief Minister said doctors, nurses, paramedics and cleanliness workers are working with a sense of dedication, even risking their lives.

"We are duty bound to appreciate them," he said adding they would get a special payout of one month salary.

Days ago, Palaniswami had



Lauding their work while legislators stood up and applauded after his appeal, CM said doctors, nurses, paramedics and cleanliness workers are working with a sense of dedication, even risking their lives

rechristened Tamil Nadu's sanitary workers as 'cleanliness workers.' The Chief Minister said air ambulance service would be started at a cost of Rs 10 crore to transport critical patients to hospitals. To further develop four State-run hospitals, including the Government Hospital for Thoracic Medicine at Tambaram Sanatorium here

and upgrade King's Institute of Preventive Medicine and Research's lab to Bio safety Level-III, a total amount of Rs 110 crore will be spent in the current fiscal, he said.

Palaniswami said a robotic surgery centre will be set up at a cost of Rs 34.60 crore at the state run multispecialty hospital here at the government estate.

Govt cautions people about fraudsters in name of COVID-19

NEW DELHI: The government on Tuesday cautioned people about attempts being made by fraudsters to steal confidential data of phones and computers by circulating malware in the name of coronavirus. A home ministry spokesperson advised people not to fall in the trap of such fraudsters. "Beware of fraudsters circulating malwares in the name of coronavirus. Such apps/links, if opened, may steal confidential data from your phone/computer," the spokesperson tweeted. The cyber fraudsters are circulating the malware link about a so-called coronavirus app like Spymax, Corona Live 1.1. Sometimes cyber criminals are also taking advantage of rising coronavirus concern for collecting charity, the spokesperson said.



Fourth death in Maharashtra, 107 +ve cases

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Mumbai Police confiscates 2.5 mn masks worth ₹15 cr

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

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

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

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

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

While four persons have been arrested, the police are on the lookout for two absconders, said Deshmukh. **Deputy Commissioner of Police**

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

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

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

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

IAN S ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

Goa Opp raises doubts about zero virus case

IAN S ■ PANAJI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Four more positive cases in Gujarat, total now 33

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

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

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

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

"Out of total 33 positive

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

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

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

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ready it by Wednesday evening.

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

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

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

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

Manipur woman tests positive, first in N-E

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Astrologers say corona result of Jupiter's asymmetric movement

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Railways to produce hospital beds, stretchers, IV stands

New Delhi: To meet the growing requirement of essential medical items in the wake of coronavirus epidemic, the Indian Railways has decided to manufacture at its production units hospital beds, stretchers, IV stands, ventilators, etc.

"In the wake of pandemic Covid-19, the railway, in consultation with production units and zonal railway workshops, has decided to use its facilities, like Chittaranjan Loco Works, Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala, Diesel Loco Works, Varanasi, and Rail Wheel Factory, Yelahanka, to manufacture these essential items" to help combat the pandemic, the Indian Railways said in a statement, here on Tuesday.

The Railway Board has issued necessary instructions to the General Managers of these production units to explore the feasibility to manufacture items, like simple hospital beds (without mattress), medical trolleys for hospitals



and quarantine facilities, IV stands, stretchers, hospital footstools, hospital bedside lockers, washbasins with stands, ventilators, PPEs like masks, sanitizers, and water tanks.

The Ministry said the Railway Board had asked the General Managers to explore the feasibility in consultation with the Chief Medical Officers (CMO) and manufacture these items in large quantities.

On Tuesday, the Covid-19 toll in India rose to 10, and the number of affected persons was 500. **IAN S**

WB extends lockdown to whole State till March 31

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

mon people."

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

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

Economic pandemic

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



Truly speaking, the press conference held by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman offered no relief package when much was desired considering the stressed times due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. All that it offered were announcements of deferments for tax compliance issues. Undoubtedly, this was much-needed. Such concessions, coupled with reductions in interest penalties and extension of some schemes and the fact that there will be no minimum balance or debit card charges over the next three months in banks, is welcome. However, the country

and its citizens were expecting something more: They wanted a relief package. From large corporations to daily-wage labourers, everyone was expecting some measures on the part of the Government to mitigate the economic impact of COVID, some sort of a relief package, some numbers or a liquidity measure. This was a fine-print press conference, an obvious one after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) extended the financial year to June 30. Sure, there were some positives pertaining to the bankruptcy and insolvency code as account departments across firms are not functional. While the Government managed to pat itself on the back for the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), it was necessary to implore the public to not go to the banks. It is becoming increasingly clear that March 31 is not an expiry date to the Wuhan contagion's spread in India. This will only show just how successful the lockdown, the biggest across the world, has been in controlling the spread of the disease. Fighting the outbreak is crucial but the economic policies of the Government have received much criticism, too. As it is even before the pandemic struck, the Indian economy was already in the grip of a slowdown. Post the spread of the disease, forecasts have reached a new low. Oxford Economics slashed the country's January-April growth forecast to three per cent, a number not seen even during the worst of the global financial crisis. The main equity gauge slumped by a record 13.2 per cent and the rupee weakened past 76 a dollar for the first time ever. Foreign investors have already started selling Indian assets at an unprecedented pace. It is also very likely that the lockdown, at least in some form or the other, will carry on till mid-April. And even when India reopens for business, trains and planes will take weeks to get back to their normal schedules. As far as foreign travel is concerned, it appears that a few commercial flights will operate to international destinations till the middle of the year until the disease subsides in Western Europe and the US. This will hurt both Indian immigrants abroad and their families back home. Meanwhile, there will be a lot of tragic stories, of children being unable to attend their parents' funeral, for example.

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

Back to the people

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



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

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

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

Foreign policy put to test

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



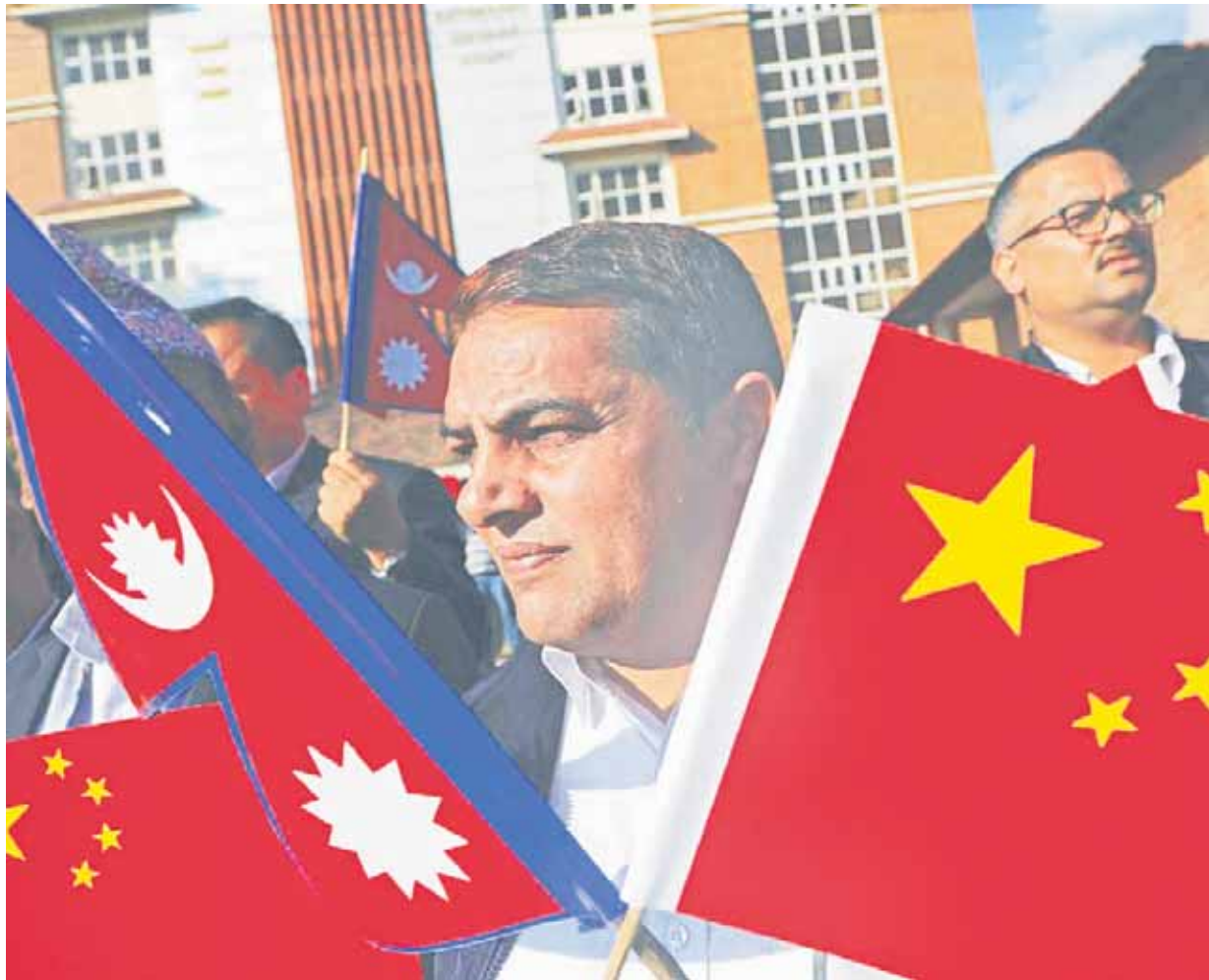
ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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



Congress leader
—P Chidambaram

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



Actor
—Anupam Kher

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



Chinese spokesperson
—Geng Shuang

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



Congress leader
—Priyanka Gandhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice prevails

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

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

Shahin Ahmed
Mumbai

Grease the wheels

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

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

of closure to the family of the woman.

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

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

NR Ramachandran
Chennai



Pachu Menon
Margao

As a responsible citizen, stay at home

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

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

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

No more umpire abuse

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

Dennis Fitzgerald
Melbourne

Break the chain

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

Shaily Chakraborty
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

India's lost opportunity

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



CB SHARMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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



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

Much ado about Gogoi

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



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

has written.

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

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

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

(The writer is Special Correspondent, The Pioneer)

Together we can beat the Coronavirus

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

the world against the Coronavirus outbreak.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a senior journalist)

CAPSULE



P-notes investment rises to Rs 68,862 cr till Feb-end

New Delhi: Investments through participatory notes (P-notes) in the domestic capital market rose to Rs 68,862 crore at the end of February, making it the second consecutive monthly increase. The investment comes at a time when broader market witnessed significant downturn amid fears of recession due to the coronavirus outbreak. P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process. According to the latest data from Sebi, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets -- equity, debt, hybrid securities and derivatives -- stood at Rs 68,862 crore until February, while the same was at Rs 67,281 crore at the end of January. Of the total Rs 68,862 crore invested through the route, Rs 53,902 crore was invested in equities, Rs 14,739 crore in debt, Rs 144 crore in the derivatives segment and Rs 77 crore in hybrid securities.

Finance Ministry and regulators monitoring developments

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said regulators and her ministry are monitoring developments and volatility in stock markets. She said the developments on stock markets are monitored thrice a day. The government is working on an economic package to deal with the hardships caused by the lockdown to control the coronavirus crisis and the same will be announced soon, she said adding different sub-groups have held sectoral discussions.

RLDA invites bids to lease out 2 plots in Jammu

NEW DELHI: The Railway Land Development Authority (RLDA) has invited bids for leasing out its two plots at Katra in Jammu and Kashmir with reserve price of over Rs 14 crore each. RLDA has invited RFP (Request for Proposal) to lease two plots at Katra for commercial development. The combined plot is spread across 15,352 sq metre and is located near Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra railway station. The plot is proposed to be leased out in two parts with a reserve price of Rs 14.18 crore and Rs 14.97 crore, RLDA said in a statement. "Nested in the hills, this scenic property can be developed as a destination wedding farmhouse or a 3 or 5 star hotel. The region is a prominent tourist destination. Hence it will offer a good return on investment to real estate developers," said Ved Prakash Dudgea, Vice-Chairman, RLDA.

COVID-19

Retailers roll out steps to ensure social distancing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Big retailers, which are presently dispensing only essential items amid the lockdown, are taking precautionary measures like restricted entry and marked lines to maintain social distancing to avoid coronavirus infection at their stores.

Some stores as Reliance Fresh, More, Walmart and Metro Cash & Carry are even screening body temperature of their customers before allowing them entry into the store. Metro Cash & Carry India said it is pre-packing loose commodities to avoid infection at its stores and is ensuring plenty of cash tills and mobile checkouts to reduce the billing time. It has also introduced a token system to avoid large gathering at stores.

Several retailers like Future, DMart, and Walmart have marked special lines on their shop floors to maintain social distancing. They are also regularly sanitising the stores and disinfecting all touchpoints which include trolley and basket handles.



Several retailers like Future, DMart, and Walmart have marked special lines on their shop floors to maintain social distancing. They are also regularly sanitising the stores and disinfecting all touchpoints which include trolley and basket handles

"We are managing the queue in such a way that people are standing away from each other," Avenue Supermarts CEO and Managing Director Neville Noronha told PTI. venue Supermarts that

runs D-Mart stores, is handing out coloured coupons to its customers waiting outside in the open area and then allowing entry of a particular colour at a time as part of its crowd management plan. "We are calling out the

colour as yellow, green and then 20 to 30 people are walking inside the store. When these people out from the store, then we call the next colour," said Noronha.

Metro Cash & Carry MD & CEO Arvind Mediratta said: "We have initiated a token system to manage the customers and avoid a large gathering inside the store. The tokens are properly sanitized with disinfectants and then handed over to customers."

Walmart India, which operates in cash & carry format, has also marked lines and is only permitting one person per membership card. "We have marked the floors of our Best Price stores with yellow stripes and boxes to designate enough space for each member to maintain safe distance from each other," said a Walmart India spokesperson.

He further said: "The stores are also equipped with contactless thermometers for conducting temperature checks.

Sensex recovers 693 pts amid corrective measures

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A day after the historic rout, equity benchmark Sensex bounced back to close 693 points higher on Tuesday as investors noted governments across the world taking prompt economic measures to offset the financial damage from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indian equities followed an improved investor sentiment in Asia after the Federal Reserve announced limitless bond-buying programme to support the US economy.

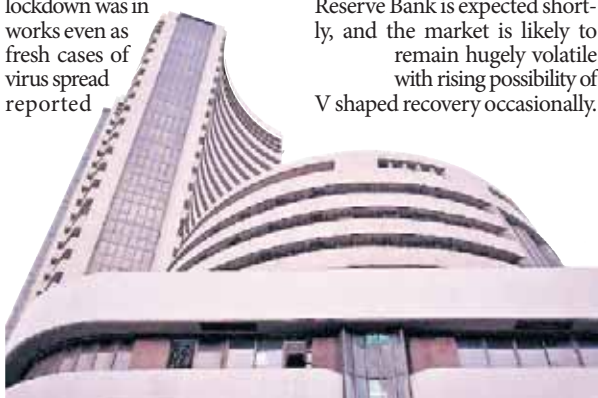
Meanwhile, Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said an economic package to help through the coronavirus lockdown was in works even as fresh cases of virus spread reported

from various parts of the country.

After gyrating 1,823.97 points, the BSE barometer gave up some gains to end 692.79 points or 2.67 per cent higher at 26,674.03. It hit an intra-day high of 27,462.87 and a low of 25,638.90.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty settled 190.80 points, or 2.51 per cent, down at 7,801.05.

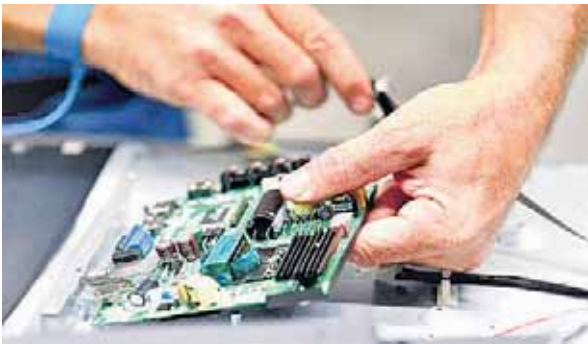
Top gainers in the Sensex pack included Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Maruti, HUL, HCL Tech and Reliance Industries, while M&M, IndusInd Bank, ITC, PowerGrid and L&T were among the losers. According to experts, a major package from the government of India and the Reserve Bank is expected shortly, and the market is likely to remain hugely volatile with rising possibility of V shaped recovery occasionally.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said an economic package to help through the coronavirus lockdown was in works even as fresh cases of virus spread reported from various parts of the country

The US Fed is now leading from the front with its historic package which includes open-ended purchase of securities, direct loans to companies, purchase of corporate bonds, lending against student loans and credit card loans, they said.

The Federal Reserve on Monday announced it will buy unlimited amounts of US Treasury debt -- essentially printing money for the economy -- as well as new steps to lend directly to small- and medium-sized companies that have been among the hardest-hit as economic activity dries up.



Coronavirus: TVS Electronics halts manufacturing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

TVS Electronics on Tuesday said it has suspended operations at all its manufacturing plants and offices with immediate effect until March 31 in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and in compliance with advisories by various authorities.

The company said the outbreak has affected supplies of some components to its manufacturing facilities and volume of business in service segment. "...in view of the widespread COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure health and safe-

ty of the company's employees and their families, customers and various stakeholders, the company has decided to halt operations at all its manufacturing plants and its offices with immediate effect until March 31, 2020, in line with the instructions of the central or state governments or local authorities," TVS Electronics said in a regulatory filing.

On the impact of the outbreak, the company said: "COVID-19 has affected the supply of some components to our manufacturing facilities and volume of business in 'Servicetec' segment.

Centre asks states to allow vet clinics to function

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid complete lockdown in many states to prevent the spread of coronavirus, the Centre on Tuesday directed state governments to allow normal functioning of veterinary hospitals and clinics.

However, veterinarians and related officials should ensure strict personal hygiene and avoid public gathering, the Union Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fishery Ministry said in a directive.

"...it is requested that veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in the state, including private veterinary clinics, veterinary pathologies, animal shelters etc. function in the normal course and the veterinary services be considered in the list of 'Essential Services'," the ministry said. It is necessary to ensure continuous emergency services in the animal husbandry and veterinary sector, especially in emergent animal health situations, it said.

CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES

One month's lockdown can erode 8-10 pc of Q4 revenue

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A nationwide lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic will adversely impact construction companies and a month's lockdown can erode 8-10 per cent of their fourth quarter revenue, a report says.

According to ratings agency India Ratings, fourth quarter of every fiscal typically accounts for 30-35 per cent of the annual revenue of construction companies, of which a month's lockdown can erode 8-10 per cent.

The agency believes that construction activities across cities like Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Delhi, Pune, and Bengaluru are likely to be stalled or progress at a significantly slower-than-anticipated pace for a major portion of March 2020 which may continue in April as well.

Companies with ongoing significant construction works in such cities are the ones likely to be the most affected, as they are turning out to be the epicentre of the outbreak, the agency said.

In addition, "continued



Companies with ongoing significant construction works in such cities are the ones likely to be the most affected, as they are turning out to be the epicentre of the outbreak, the agency said.

expenditure in the form of overheads and finance charges is also likely to affect the profitability of construction companies, owing to a lower base for absorption of these overheads," the agency added.

"Many large and established construction companies are facing corporate insolvency resolution process. The coronavirus will seriously impact the revenues of the construction

companies and almost all of them will face huge financial losses in the months to come," an authorised representative of Shapoorji Pallonji Group told PTI. He further noted that all site activities in Mumbai and the rest of Maharashtra have come to a grinding halt as material supplies have stopped, and key subcontractors were unable to arrange resources for the construction activities.

'Unprecedented collapse' for eurozone businesses

PNS ■ BRUSSELS

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

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

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



Mahindra Logistics appoints V S Parthasarathy as Chairman

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mahindra Logistics (MLL), a part of the USD 20.7 billion Mahindra Group, on Tuesday said it has appointed V S Parthasarathy as its non-executive director and Chairman of the board with effect from March 25.

Parthasarathy takes over from Zhooben Bhiwandiwalla, who stepped down as non-executive director and Chairman of the board of Mahindra Logistics on Tuesday, the company said in a statement.



Bhiwandiwalla continues in his role as President- Mahindra Partners and Group Legal and Member of the Group Executive Board of Mahindra

& Mahindra.

Parthasarathy is currently the Group CFO and Group CIO of Mahindra & Mahindra and will continue till March 31.

"From April 1, 2020 he will take charge of the newly created Mobility Services Sector of the Mahindra Group. He is a Member of the Group Executive Board of Mahindra & Mahindra, and on the Board of several listed Mahindra Group companies, as well as other entities including Smartshift Logistics Solutions where he is the Chairman," the company said.

Minister Pradhan asks PSUs to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential goods

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Petroleum and Natural Gas and Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday held a review meeting with the top management of PSUs under the administrative control of his ministries to take stock of the situation amid the coronavirus outbreak, sources said.

The minister chaired the meeting via video-conferencing in which the heads of ONGC, GAIL, SAIL, RINL, NMDC, MOIL and KIOCL, among others, participated,

sources said.

In the meeting, he reviewed the status of supplies of petroleum products in the country, operations of refineries, and functioning of important sites at steel plants, a source said.

One of the sources said the minister was working from home on Tuesday.

Pradhan also enquired about measures being

taken by the management for the employees and their families to protect them from the spread of coronavirus.

The minister also directed the chiefs to take necessary steps to make sure that supplies of essential goods for the employees and their families are not affected during the lockdown.

The CMDs have also been asked to ensure supply of essential goods at plants and sites are also not affected. On Monday,

The CMDs have also been asked to ensure supply of essential goods at plants and sites are also not affected

the steel ministry held a meeting with the management of PSUs under its control to take stock of the situation amid the coronavirus outbreak, and asked them not to reduce production.

Pune-based firm develops testing kit for faster results

PNS ■ MUMBAI

In what may go down as an important solution in India's fight against coronavirus, Pune-based Mylabs Discovery Solutions has created an indigenous solution to test patients for COVID-19 that can halve the time taken for results.

The molecular diagnostic company, which received statutory approvals late on Monday from authorities, can manufacture over 15,000 testing kits per day from its facility at Lonavala in Pune district and the same will be ramped up to 25,000 kits per day, its co-founder Shrikant Patole told PTI.

Citing the experience in South Korea, the World Health Organisation has been stressing on the importance of tests to fight the pandemic, which has



so far claimed nine lives in India.

Though around 500 people have been tested positive for the virus in India so far, experts are bracing for a sharp increase fearing it may have spread across and also point out to a low level of testing in the country.

Patole explained that the company is able to shorten the

test time to 2.5 hours with the 'Mylab PathoDetect COVID-19 Qualitative PCR kit' as against the prevalent 6-8 hours because its team has created a solution that does both the screening and confirmation jobs simultaneously.

Its team of 25 scientists started working on the solution six

Patole explained that the company is able to shorten the test time to 2.5 hours with the 'Mylab PathoDetect COVID-19 Qualitative PCR kit' as against the prevalent 6-8 hours because its team has created a solution that does both the screening and confirmation jobs simultaneously

weeks ago, fearing that the crisis may eventually hit India, he said, adding that the company had started as a trading firm in 2012 and diversified into research in 2016.

The test for COVID-19 will also pick up positive cases among asymptomatic patients, Patole said, adding that the approvals from the National Institute of Virology, Indian Council of Medical Research and Central Drugs Standard

Control Organization (CDSCO) were received after a test sampling on patients at Mumbai's Kasturba Hospital which is the nodal location for treating Coronavirus cases.

He did, however, specify the sample size where the kit was used to confirm results.

The Mylab kit was selected along with a solution offered by a German company for the tests.

Patole explained that till

now, India has been using kits prepared by the state-run National Institute of Virology (NIV), also based in Pune, but it was the fears over the increase in numbers which made private sector interventions in manufacturing necessary. The testing kits done by NIV are costing up to Rs 4,500 per sample if we include both screening and confirmation, Patole said, claiming that Mylabs is confident of selling the kits at a fourth of that cost.

He said allowing private labs to conduct tests is essential given the potential threats.

Patole also said that its kit can work within the infrastructure for testing available with Indian diagnostic labs, and does not require any new machinery, which the most imported.



Spot gold markets remain shut due

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Spot gold markets in India remained shut on Tuesday due to lockdown in major states to prevent spreading of Covid-19, according to HDFC Securities. The central and state governments in the country have decided to lock down

several districts from where Covid-19 cases have been reported in order to break the chain of transmission. Meanwhile, in the international market, gold and silver both were trading with gains at USD 1,574 per ounce and USD 13.70 per ounce, respectively.



the pioneer

Hyderabad

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Wednesday
March 25, 2020

UGADI, A CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Ugadi, the Telugu new year celebrated by both the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, is one festival the Telugus look forward to. SHIKHA DUGGAL speaks to people across all age groups to find how they're ringing in the new year this time

A day of festival in our lives brings with it, a sense of rest from everyday work and rush. It reminds us to put aside our workload and daily chores for a while and celebrate and feast as a family. Religious ethnicity associated with every festival gives us a moment of leaning towards the spirituality of Almighty. Ugadi, celebrated widely in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh with pomp and fun is one such festival. It's a cultural mix of religion, agriculture harvesting, folklore and food.

A local from Hyderabad, Vijaya Lakshmi, 84, recalls the time she celebrated the festival with her parents. During her childhood, her parents would wake her up and apply oil for a refreshing bath. Soon after, all the kids in the household were served the traditional Ugadi Pachadi. "My parents enlightened me about how Ugadi Pachadi relates to the various stages of our life. Life is a mixture of happiness and sadness, you have to face the challenges life throws at you," she explains.

"I would wear my new pair of clothes made of cotton and visit the Hanuman temple with my family to pray for



a prosperous new year," she recalls. A sumptuous lunch including *Pohlis* or sweet *rotis*, tamarind rice, *vadas* and *payasam* would be served. "I still cherish those times with my mother," she adds. Another important aspect of Ugadi, Lakshmi says, is the relevance of the *Panchanga* calendar recited by the priest of the temple who

My parents enlightened me about how Ugadi Pachadi relates to the various stages of our life. Life is a mixture of happiness and sadness, you have to face the challenges life throws at you. I would wear my new pair of clothes made of cotton and visit the Hanuman temple with my family to pray for a prosperous new year.

84-YEAR-OLD VIJAYA LAKSHMI

would list the catastrophes or well-being prospects of the year. "Ugadi, for many, is a festival of authentic food. Ugadi Pachadi a sign of *Shadruchulu*, is the most vital dish we look forward to. The origin of this dish, with a blend of six flavours, makes me embrace the fact that our lives are also a mix of various flavours," says Prashanthi Vennam, a homemaker

With the festival coinciding with Gudi Padwa, a festival celebrated by people of Pune, a bunch of south Indians and marathis attend cultural parties in the U.S marking the celebration of the onset of a new year.

VENKAT SAI, AN INDIAN RESIDING IN THE USA

er who celebrates this festival with all its rituals. Rice mixed with sour, raw mango gives *Mamidikaya Pulihora*, her daughters' favourite dish of Ugadi. "I prepare rice grated with *chana dal*, chopped mangoes, peanuts and green chillies with a pinch of asafoetida. Both my daughters love the smacking flavours," she says. The festive occasion ends with a sweet dish called *Bobbattu* made of tasty bread stuffed with *toor dal*.

For budding psychologist Aishwarya, Ugadi is a time of making new resolutions for the new year. "My resolution last year was to do my bit to have a dust-free environment around me," she says. Ugadi, for Aishwarya, is a time for her to look back on the past year and make better plans for the coming year. "I love tasting everybody's 'Ugadi Pachadi' and judging the best one of them all," she laughs.

An Indian residing abroad hasn't forgotten his roots and culture, Venkat Sai ensures that he raises a toast to Ugadi, even when away from home in the United States of America. "With the festival coinciding with Gudi Padwa, a festival celebrated by people of Pune, a bunch of south Indians and marathis attend cultural parties in the U.S marking the celebration of the onset of a new year," informs a Venkat Sai.



My resolution last year was to do my bit to have a dust-free environment around me. I love tasting everybody's 'Ugadi Pachadi' and judging the best one of them all.

AISHWARYA

UGADI festivities a sombre affair this year

Ugadi, which is the Telugu New Year, is usually marked with great fervour by devotees thronging temples across most South Indian states. This year though, the mood is quite sombre as temples wear a deserted look. In light of the Covid-19 scare, Ugadi has become a quiet affair this year, writes RACHEL DAMMALA



One of the most important elements of decor are the mango leaves, which are brought into the city from villages. Since the state government is only allowing transport of essential commodities, we will get only limited mango leaves this time.

UDAYA SREE

The import of some grains and pulses that are important to make

most of the Ugadi delicacies could be a problem due to the curfew. Since local markets can't stock up so much food, this year's Ugadi will not be the same



SATYAVENI

Friday as a precautionary measure to check the spread of the virus. The famous *laddus* which were prepared are now being distributed free of cost among the temple staff.

The *Pioneer* speaks to some people from different walks of life on what they feel about how the festival is going to be this year.

"Ugadi is always that time of the year, where all relatives gather and spend some quality family time by having lunch together, playing games and making merry. We are definitely going to miss that this year," laments Navaneetha, a teacher.

Satyaveni, a business development manager at Cyient, said that the import of some grains and pulses that are important to make most of the Ugadi delicacies could be a problem due to the curfew. "Since local markets can't stock up so much food, this year's Ugadi will not be the same," she tells us.

Around the same time last year, Hyderabad was bustling with many events being held in Shilparamam and other venues. This year, however, all events have been called off. Railways and bus services too have been stopped so people can't even visit their villages. Tourism as a whole, has been badly hit, since temples have all shut.

Gold sales too, which are usually at the peak during Gudi Padwa and Ugadi, will remain muted, much to the disappointment of jewellers.

"One of the most important elements of decor are the mango leaves, which are brought into the city from villages. Since the Telangana state government is only allowing transport of essential commodities, we won't get mango leaves in the city, even if we get they are going to be very limited," informs Udaya Sree, a homemaker.

And it's not just here in India. Ugadi is going to be a lonely affair

for folks in the United States and other countries too. Telugu communities in America come together every year to ring in the new year. But this year, all events have been cancelled. Ramya Lingaa, an IT-professional in the US is torn between celebrating Ugadi all by herself and coming home, but finally decided on doing the latter.

Jeevraj Dirasam, an accountant working for an automobile company in Muscat, misses home. "I have no choice but to stay back here and have a lonely Ugadi," he says.



Telugostavam — an event of and by Teluguites in the city, is as Telugu as it can get. Right from donning traditional clothes to indulging in arts and crafts of our region, the event aims to help the Gen Z learn about and practice, Telugu culture and tradition, reports V SATEESH REDDY

Ugadi marks the Telugu New Year. Teluguites celebrate the day by cooking traditional dishes and the famous Ugadi Pachadi.

Hyderabad-based volunteers struck upon the idea of making the most of the festivities to help promote the Telugu culture, especially among the youngsters. Many restaurants or group of individuals host various events to mark the festivities in the city. However, this year, the festivities is going to be a dry affair due to Covid-19 pandemic. The organisers generally serve

Of Telugu culture and TRADITIONS

TELUGOSTAVAM IS AN ATTEMPT TO GENTLY REMIND THE FORGOTTEN ECSTASY OF TELUGU TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND FESTIVALS

scrumptious traditional food, encourage telugu folklore, promote customs and music of and by Telugus.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Sankalp of Hyderabad Foodies Club, says "We have been conducting the Telugostavam event for the last three years in Hyderabad. It is unfortunate that we had to call off this year's event due to the Coronavirus pandemic." The event is an attempt to gently remind the forgotten ecstasy of Telugu traditional celebrations and festivals. "It is a celebration of pure 'Teluguness' in true spirit. It also brings the essence of traditional Telugu celebrations — best of festive food, entertainment and a memorable evening," he tells us. The organisers serve all authentic Telugu dishes right from

Vankaya Masala to *Kakarakaya* curry to desserts like *Pootarekulu* and *Sunundalu*.

"Every year for the Telugostavam event, participants turn up in traditional dresses that adds to the beautiful environment. We also set up pottery workshop for visitors. We encourage and get people to share stories about the famous 'Parrot Prophecies'. We also have people narrate the actual story behind Ugadi and more," informs Tumala Srinivas Sampath,

Managing Director, The Spicy Venue.

"An event of this kind was a long-standing vision and we are happy that it's growing with each year. It is very important to keep our current and forthcoming generations updated on our culture and rituals. This festival provides a great opportunity to do just that. This is our humble attempt to strengthen the Telugu bond," he adds.

Every year, the organisers encourage and promote a Telugu band, that performs at the venue for the guests. They indulge the audience in ancient and the latest Telugu hits. Some of the bands that took part until now are Capriccio and Merakee, among others.

The proceedings from the event are donated to orphanages in the city. "For the last three years, we have been donating to orphanages. It gives us great joy to be able to help those in need. Thus, through the event, we help promote Telugu culture and get a chance to be of some help to the needy," Sampath shares.



PARTY



● Harsha



● Members of YEA including its new president Vikas (3rd right) and former president Sumit (second right)



● Ashwini



● Chetan



● Saloni




● Raniya



● Abhishek and Soumya

Change in president

YEA — Young Entrepreneur Association announced its change of guard at its Annual AGM held at Hotel ITC, Kohenur recently. The organization was formulated to provide a platform for young entrepreneurs to network, learn and grow as business leaders. The event started with the speech of outgoing president Sumit Agarwal sharing the list of events on Family Business Management followed by a small presentation on the road-map for the coming year and activities planned by the new president Vikas Jhabakh.




Rajini, Suriya, Karthi, Vijay Sethupathi donate for daily wage workers


Superstar Rajinikanth has donated Rs 50 lakh for the wellbeing of daily wage workers of South Indian film industry in the time of complete shutdown owing to the coronavirus pandemic, according to reports. Several other top star of southern cinema including Suriya, Karthi and Vijay Sethupathi, besides many filmmakers have pitched in, too. Given the recent outbreak of COVID-19, theatres across Tamil Nadu have been closed, and shoot of films, television serials and advertisements are on hold as well. The Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI) president RK Selvamani earlier issued an appeal through a press release requesting the South Indian film fraternity to provide financial help to the daily wage members of the federation who don't have an income right now. Within a few hours Suriya, Karthi along with their father Sivakumar donated Rs 10 lakh. It was later reported that actor Sivakarthikeyan too donated Rs 10 lakh. Now, it is said that superstar Rajinikanth has donated 50 lakhs, while Vijay Sethupathi has donated 10 lakhs for the welfare of FEFSI members. Actors Parthipan and Prakash Raj have provided several rice bags weighing 25 kg each. Ever since RK Selvamani had put a request, Kollywood celebrities are leaving no stone unturned to help FEFSI members in need. In fact, it is these members who worked incredibly hard for the success of their films. Due to the lockdown, the shooting of Rajinikanth's *Annaatthe*, which is directed by Siruthai Siva, has been put on hold. The film was reportedly scheduled to release in Diwali 2020, given the delay in shooting we are unsure if films will stick to their stipulated release dates.

FUN


ARCHIE




GARFIELD



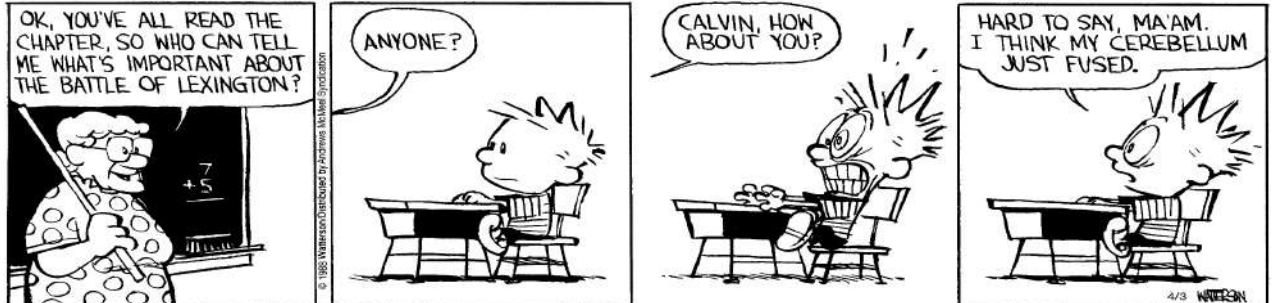
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS




CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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7									
8			9			10		11	
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19									

ACROSS

6 A thing with wheels that is fun to ride on

8 A word for rabbit

10 A large bird of prey

13 See-through

14 Time of darkness

17 Sickness with a high temperature

19 On a trip

DOWN

7 Stubborn

9 Follows eighth

11 Think the same way as someone else

12 A large hairy animal

15 An animal with horns

16 Large plant

17 Use this in a camera

18 Grape plant

SUDOKU

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Yesterdays solution

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Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

A love story in Kashmir

Dulquer, who is the lead actor in the film asked filmmaker Hanu if he can make the film in Malayalam as well and the latter is comfortable with the idea, finds

NAGARAJ GOUD

In what is a first for a Telugu filmmaker, Hanu Raghavapudi will be making his next with Dulquer Salmaan in both Telugu and Malayalam languages. It was on the insistence of the Malayalam heartthrob that the filmmaker agreed to make the film in Malayalam as well, thus marking his Bollywood debut.

A source says, "The film is a period romantic drama with a pan-India appeal and Dulquer wasn't keen on missing his home turf audience while pleasing the Telugu audience with it. So he asked if Hanu is comfortable with the idea of directing it in Malayalam as well. The latter had no issues as such."

The source adds the film was supposed to go in front of the cameras in May but with Covid-19, it may be deferred to June or July. "The film is set in 80s Kashmir and major part of the filming will take place there. If the makers don't get required consent to shoot there, they may cheat it with Himachal Pradesh like most filmmakers do. There's a major schedule in Hyderabad as well. Like the male lead, the female lead too has a lot of significance in the film. In fact, she will be the heart of the film and Hanu is keen on a familiar yet very young face for the part."

Swapna Dutt will be shepherding the venture under her Swapna Cinema in association with Vyjayanthi Movies, while Vishal Chandrasekhar will provide the musical accompaniment.



tollywood

Chiru to make his social media debut

Unlike his peers like Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth and Mohanlal, Megastar Chiranjeevi doesn't have a social media account but that is going to change from today — on the occasion of Telugu New Year Ugadi. In a video announcing his arrival on social media on Tuesday, the Megastar said he wants to use the platform as a way of sharing his thoughts with his fans and people at large.

A source close to the actor told us that his public relations team has been asking him to join the social media bandwagon for the last three years but he didn't entertain the idea back then. "Of late though, he has been very expressive with his views on varied issues, ranging from politics to epidemic like Covid-19. So he decided that it'd be better if he communicates using right platforms. From Ugadi, fans and people will get to interact with him on his brand new Twitter and Instagram accounts," added the source.

On the work front, Chiru will be next seen in Koratala Siva's *Acharya*. He had to stop the shooting in Hyderabad sometime back due to Covid-19.

— NG



OF LATE, THE ACTOR HAS BEEN VERY EXPRESSIVE WITH HIS VIEWS ON VARIED ISSUES. SO HE DECIDED THAT IT'D BE BETTER IF HE COMMUNICATES USING RIGHT PLATFORMS

Venky hikes his fee

With his last two films — *F2: Fun & Frustration* and *Venky Mama* — doing well at the ticket counters, victory Venkatesh has hiked his fee. He was charging somewhere around Rs 5-6 crore earlier per film but we now hear, he is demanding Rs 10 crore.

A source says, "F2's phenomenal success is solely attributed to his performance in it, while *Venky Mama*, riding on his shoulders, grossed more than Rs 50 crore. So it's natural for him to demand a hike in view of his market pull."

Another source states the Venky's new pay structure didn't go well with leading producer Dil Raju, who is repeating him for *F3*, to be directed by Anil Ravipudi. "Raju wanted Venky to come down from Rs 10 crore but the actor wasn't in a mood to budge. There was a point where the producer considered another A-lister instead of Venky, but in the end Raju managed to sign on the Raja star for somewhere between Rs 8.5-9 crore. Moving forward though, Venky will be charging Rs 10 crore per projects except for films made under his home banner Suresh Productions, where he will share profits."



T town's helping hand

Actor Nithiin, who is basking in the success of *Bheeshma* on Monday, has announced Rs 10 lakh each to governments of both Telugu states, as they fight Covid-19. He met Telangana CM K Chandrasekhar Rao at Pragathi Bhavan on Tuesday and handed over the promised sum.

Other industry personalities too have come forward to help film employees who depend on daily wages to make their ends meet. Actor Sivaji Raja informed that he will be distributing masks and vegetables that grew in his farm house in the outskirts of Hyderabad to poor colonies that are next to his farm. The former MAA president has also indicated that he will supply essentials like rice, lentils and cooking oil to MAA members who are in need for the next 15 days. He added members in urgent need of essentials can contact him.

Similarly, Shankar, president of Telugu Director's Association noted that the association will be distributing food essentials for the needy film employees from April 1. Distributor B Prashanth Goud announced donating essentials worth Rs 1,000 for 500 families, with the distribution beginning already. Employees in need can contact 9398131493 to avail the benefits. *3G Love* producer Pratap announced Rs 1 lakh for AP CM relief fund.

“Humanity is waging a war against coronavirus right now. The world is in a danger.

Our culture tells us how to value health and it is important for us to maintain social distance and defeat the pandemic. As we enter a New Year, we should eliminate the dark and welcome light and feel it. Only when someone is happy, does he think of entertainment. As we are living in fear, it's better to postpone entertainment. We should discuss cinema only after the situation settles down.

PRODUCER
RAVI KISHORE



Ravi Kishore hints at *Red* postponement!

While films like *Uppena*, *Nishabdham* and *Aranya*, which have been scheduled for April 2 release have been postponed, there has been no word yet on Ram-starrer *Red*, which is to release on April 9. On Tuesday though, film's producer and Ram's uncle Sravanthi Ravi Kishore dropped hints at a probable postponement of the investigative thriller, which sees his nephew in dual roles for the first time.

The veteran producer said, "Humanity is waging a war against coronavirus right now. The world is in a danger. Our culture tells us how to value health and it is important for us to maintain social distance and defeat the pandemic. As we enter a New Year, we should eliminate the dark and welcome light and feel it. Only when someone is happy, does he think of entertainment. As we are living in fear, it's better to postpone entertainment. We should discuss cinema only after the situation settles down."

Directed by Kishore Tirumala, *Red* features Nivetha Pethuraj and Malavika Sharma as leading ladies, while Mani Sharma has composed music.

THE FILM IS AN INVESTIGATIVE THRILLER, WHICH SEES RAM IN DUAL ROLES FOR THE FIRST TIME



2020 Tokyo Olympics postponed

AFP ■ TOKYO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CROWDED CALENDAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

World football’s governing



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

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

DEVASTATING FOR TOKYO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Japan puts brakes on torch relay

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

The flame arrived to a muted welcome in northern Japan in front of a few dozen officials and guests, after plans to invite 200 schoolchildren were abandoned. It has been on display in Japan and attracted large crowds, despite calls from organisers to avoid mass gatherings because of the virus.

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

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

will do their best.”

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

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

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

“This year is off the table.”

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

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

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

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

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

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

DELAYED OLYMPICS WILL STILL BE CALLED ‘TOKYO 2020’: GOVERNOR

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

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY POSTPONED

The Olympic torch relay, due to start on Thursday from the Fukushima area devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, will be postponed.

“The Olympic torch relay, which was scheduled to start from 26th (March), will not start,” Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori told reporters. Mori said the flame will remain in Fukushima for now, but it was not clear how long it will stay there.

OLYMPICS POSTPONEMENT ‘ABOUT PROTECTING HUMAN LIFE’: BACH

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

Life comes first, we can wait

India’s Olympic-bound athletes welcome Tokyo Games postponement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



—MC MARY KOM

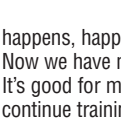
“The situation right now is not good. Life always comes first, everything else can wait. Players’ safety is paramount. I think it’s (postponement) good for everyone. Now I get more time to prepare, our training plans can be extended. And it’s not just for me, it is true for everyone around the world.”

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



—SAINA NEHWAL

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



—BAJRANG PUNIA

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

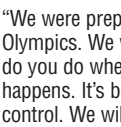


—MIRABAI CHANU



—RAHI SARNOBAT

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



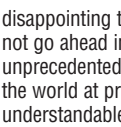
—RAVI DAHIYA

“We were prepared for this year’s Olympics. We were ready but what do you do when something like this happens. It’s beyond everyone’s control. We will again prepare for 2021. I would have fought well this year also, but now I have more time to toughen up.”



—CHIRAG SHETTY

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



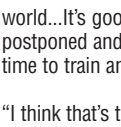
—GRAHAM REID

“It is very disappointing that the Olympics will not go ahead in 2020, but given the unprecedented circumstances facing the world at present it is totally understandable and expected.”



—SJOERD MARIJNE

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



—ANJUM MOUDGIL

“...It was really required as no athlete is able to train all over the world...It’s good that the Olympic is postponed and now we have proper time to train and prepare and plan.”



—SHARATH KAMAL

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

IPL 13 fate: We are at same place, don’t have an answer right now: Ganguly



Sourav Ganguly in a file picture PTI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Tuesday said he “doesn’t have an answer” on the fate of this year’s Indian Premier League (IPL) amid a nationwide lockdown to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BCCI suspended the IPL, originally scheduled from March 29, to April 15 after government suspended all visas, barring few categories like diplomatic and employment, making it impossible

for foreign players to participate.

Amid the ongoing complete lockdown, it is becoming increasingly difficult for all the stakeholders to work out an alternate plan.

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

The former India captain also ruled out any possibility of something being planned three or four months down the line considering the prevailing situation worldwide.

“You can’t plan anything. The FTP is scheduled. It’s there and you can’t change the FTP. All around the world, cricket and more so sports has stopped,” he said.

He also expressed his doubts on whether the current situation can be covered by insurance to make up for the losses that all stakeholders will suffer.

“I am not sure whether you can get insurance money. Because this is a government lockdown. I am not sure whether a government lockdown is covered by insurance or not.

“We will have to see. We have not assessed all these things. At this point of time, it is very difficult for me to give any concrete answer,” the charismatic former batsman said.

UEFA postpones CL, Europa League finals

AFP ■ NYON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Only war has cancelled Olympics

LONDON: The Olympic Games has suffered political boycotts (Moscow 1980) and terrorism (Munich 1972), but has only ever been cancelled due to outbreaks of war.

Here is a look back at Berlin 1916, Tokyo 1940 and London 1944 — when global conflicts forced the Games to be scrapped.

BERLIN 1916

At the IOC meeting in Stockholm in July 4, 1912, the sixth Olympic Games were awarded to Berlin, with the German capital beating out competition from Alexandria, Amsterdam, Brussels, Budapest and the US city of Cleveland.

Germany pulled out all the stops, opening a stadium with a capacity of around 33,000 in western Berlin’s leafy Grunewald district in 1913 to celebrate 25 years of Kaiser Wilhelm II’s reign as head of the German Reich.

The stadium took only 200 days to build, according to the German Olympic Committee (DOSB) and featured a 100-metre-long swimming pool on its northern side.

The sporting programme was to feature athletics, wrestling,

fencing, shooting, modern pentathlon, cycling, gymnastics, swimming, rowing, hockey and golf.

For the first time, women were invited to participate in swimming, diving, tennis and netball, the DOSB said in its history of the 1916 Games.

A two-day test event was held on June 27 and 28, 1914 in the Berlin stadium. On the second day, Archduke Frank Ferdinand of Austria and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo, starting a chain of events that would lead to the outbreak of World War I.

It is not clear when the Games fell victim to the war but the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, decreed that the Berlin 1916 Games still be counted as the sixth Olympiad, even though they never took place.

TOKYO 1940

In the same way Tokyo 2020 officials have framed the Games as the “Recovery Olympics” after the devastating 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, Tokyo cast a bid for 1940 as a chance to show it had recovered from a catastrophic earthquake

in 1923.

Spearheaded by legendary Japanese figure Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo and the country’s first IOC member, Tokyo was awarded the 1940 Games after ferocious lobbying, including persuading Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to pull out of the race.

The Games were supposed to celebrate the 2,600 years since the enthronement of Japan’s mythical first emperor Jimmu, but they became untenable because of the country’s military aggression in China.

With Japan at war with China from 1937, diplomatic pressure grew for Japan to give up the Games and the military began to question why resources should be diverted from the war effort to fund Olympic construction.

The Japanese Olympic Committee eventually bowed to the inevitable and in 1938 told the IOC it would not be hosting the Games, euphemistically citing the “trouble with China” as the reason.

They also abandoned the winter Games, planned in the northern city of Sapporo.

The IOC awarded the sum-

mer Games to Helsinki instead and the winter Games to St. Moritz in Switzerland, but these too fell victim to World War II.

LONDON 1944

Despite what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the “gathering storm” over Europe due to Nazi Germany, the IOC met in London in July 1939 to decide which city would host the 1944 Olympics.

They plumped for London, which beat bids by Rome, Detroit, Lausanne and Athens.

But only three months later, Britain had declared war on Germany and the 1944 Games was a non-starter.

The winter Games were due to be held in Cortina d’Ampezzo in Italy but these were also scrapped. The city hosted the 1956 Winter Olympics and is due to co-host the 2026 Winter Games with Milan.

Just three years after the war ended, and with the world began gradually getting back onto its feet, London hosted what became known as the “Austerity Games” in 1948. Neither Germany nor Japan were invited to participate.

AFP