

ANALYSIS 7
 ADAPT TO
 REMAIN ALIVE

MONEY 8
 MARKETS TO FOCUS ON GLOBAL CUES,
 FRESH NEWS FLOW ON COVID-19

SPORTS 12
 AUS TRAVEL BAN COULD
 AFFECT INDIA TOUR

HYDERABAD, MONDAYDAY MARCH 30, 2020; PAGES 12-13



the pioneer



NITHIIN'S
 WEDDING
 POSTPONED

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Railway extends medicare to all central govt employees

Indian Railways has extended services of all its hospitals and dispensaries to all central government employees and their families in view of the spread of coronavirus, a Railway Board order said. The services include those of all 128 hospitals and 586 dispensaries of the Indian Railways all over the country. "In view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ministry of Railways has decided that the services of railway hospitals and health units across the country would be available for use by all Central government employees, on showing their identity cards, at railway hospitals and health units," the order stated.



Spain announces record 838 virus deaths in 24 hrs

Spain confirmed another 838 deaths in 24 hours from coronavirus on Sunday, a new daily record bringing the total number of deaths to 6,528, according to health ministry figures. The number of confirmed cases in Spain has now reached 78,797 -- after the one-day increase of 9.1 percent -- as the country battles the world's second most deadly outbreak after Italy. Except for a brief lull recorded on Thursday, Spain's death toll has been rising daily. However, officials have pointed to a slower growth rate for both deaths and confirmed cases and expressed hope that the peak of the outbreak was approaching.

Defying Lockdown Is 'Playing With Your Life'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today underscored the need to enforce the restrictions announced to contain the highly contagious coronavirus, saying those who are violating the lockdown are "playing with their own lives". The warning came as the number of COVID-19 positive people rose to 979, with 61 new cases being detected. The fresh figures from the health ministry came this morning. "People must be wondering what kind of Prime Minister I am... But lockdown is the only solution in front of us," PM Modi said in his monthly radio address Mann Ki Baat.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Phalguna & Krishna Paksha
 Panchangam:
 Tithi: Shashthi 03:14 am (Next Day)
 Nakshatram: Rohini: 05:17 pm
 Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
 Rahukalam: 07:46 am - 09:18 am
 Yamagandam: 10:49 am - 12:20 pm
 Varjyam: 08:37 am - 10:21 am
 11:14 pm - 12:55 am
 Gulika: 06:17 am - 07:48 am
 Good Time: (to start any important work)
 Amritakalam: 01:49 pm - 03:33 pm
 Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 am - 12:44 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Clear
 Temp: 37/23
 Humidity: 43%
 Sunrise: 06:13
 Sunset: 06:28
 Current Weather Conditions
 Updated March 29, 2020 5:00 PM

BALLET OF CORONA



Ballet dancer and performer Ashlee Montague wears a gas mask while she dances in Times Square as the coronavirus outbreak continues in Manhattan, New York

Govt orders sealing of state, district borders

Corona positive cases cross 1,000-mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The central government on Sunday ordered the sealing of state and district borders across the country in a bid to stop community transmission of coronavirus by migrant workers, and warned that violators face 14-day quarantine. But thousands continued to march on highways as the nationwide positive cases neared 1000 with at least 27 dead.

As the 21-day lockdown entered its 5th day, the exodus of migrant workers from big cities continued unabated, desperate to return to their villages after being left jobless and many of them without food or shelter.

Charitable organisations, volunteers, religious institutions and government bodies including Railway Protection Force fed tens of thousands of people across the nation but many more remained outside the safety net.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcast, sought the nation's forgiveness for the hardships caused by the stringent nationwide lockdown, saying it was necessary because the country was fighting a battle between life and death.



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106 new coronavirus cases in 24 hrs: Health Ministry

At least 106 new novel coronavirus cases have been reported in India in last 24 hours, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said on Sunday. Addressing a press conference, Joint Secretary, Health, Lav Agarwal said: "There are 979 confirmed Covid-19 cases and 25 deaths so far in the country. 106 new positive cases & 6 deaths have been reported in the last 24 hours." He also said that the government is putting all efforts to make PPE and other equipment and ventilators available in sufficient numbers amid the surge of cases in India. "PPEs, ventilators and N95 masks are manufactured in the country and we are trying to import them also," he said.



He, however, expressed confidence that "we will definitely win the battle" against the coronavirus menace and praised the front-line workers in this fight against as well as countless workers delivering the essential services. The total number of positive cases rose by 106 in the last 24 hours and six deaths reported to official figures. The new cases, which included a SpiceJet pilot with no history of international

travel, were reported from the national capital's satellite town Noida, Bihar and Maharashtra, among other states.

A migrant worker reportedly died of heart attack in Uttar Pradesh after walking more than 200 kms on way to his hometown in Madhya Pradesh from Delhi.

A panic-like situation emerged due to mass exodus of migrant workers from various parts of the country, including the national capital, Maharashtra and Kerala, where thousands of people came out of relief camps and demanded being allowed to go to their homes.

Spike in domestic violence due to lockdown

NAVEEN KUMAR ■ HYDERABAD

One of the unintended consequences of the prolonged lockdown to contain Covid-19 is a spike in domestic violence, with the only difference being that perhaps fewer cases are being reported about what is happening within the four walls.

Although everyone is bound to remain at home during the lockdown period announced by the government, the massive efforts to save people's lives have,



Although everyone is bound to remain at home during the lockdown period announced by the government, the massive efforts to save people's lives have, however, put one vulnerable group more at heightened risk. Disagreements and quarrels are prevalent in Indian homes in general, but the lockdown is causing a spike, according to a

psychologist. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, people are facing calls to self-isolate in order to arrest the spread of the disease. Everyone is paying a price, be it a loss of income or a lack of social contact. But for those already in unsafe situations under the shadow of domestic violence, self-isolation could be fatal.

Domestic violence affects people of all ages, genders, sexualities, cultures, and levels of income.

A lockdown that leaves much to be desired

KINGSHUK NAG

As the lockdown announced in haste and without much thought? With thousands of workers fleeing big cities to their villages, this seems to be the case. Thousands of them are now trying to trudge hundreds of kilometers on foot from big urban centres to their homes in this summer heat. "This is a human tragedy of gargantuan proportions. More people would die because of this inhuman movement or fall ill," says a retired secretary to GOI. "A lesser number of people could die because of corona than this human dislocation. We might have to pay a bigger economic price for this," he avers.



Moreover, with thousands crowding bus stations and other places where they hope they can get transport, the objective of social distancing, which the Prime Minister recommended, has been lost. At its wits end, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Sunday announced that this movement was a 'violation of lockdown measures or maintaining social distance' and stipulated that the migrants who have reached their home states would be quarantined for 14 days. It also made mandatory on the part of state governments to provide shelter and food for stranded laborers and also made it incumbent on establishments

to pay wages (on the due date) for their employees for the period for their operations are closed. But analysts said that this was something that was easier said than implemented.

The order also made it mandatory on the district officials (district magistrates and SPs) to ensure this. "The poor people are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. It is a difficult time for all, but more so for the poor," says Swati Sinha, a techie based out of Bengaluru.

Distinctly caught on the wrong foot, Prime Minister

TS to be 'corona-free state' by April 7: KCR

Hints at payment of salaries to govt staff in installments due to Rs 12,000 crore revenue loss this month

L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

Presenting a positive picture about the containment of Covid-19 in the state, laced with forebodings of a grim financial position, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy on Sunday declared that Telangana State could become 'corona-free' by April 7, going by the pace at which corona-infected persons have been recovering and provided the states do not record any fresh cases. KCR stated that the chances of Telangana recording fresh cases were bleak due to the strict implementation of lockdown by the state government since March 22.

Addressing a press conference at Pragathi Bhavan here

11 positive patients who recovered to be discharged today; remaining positive patients, quarantine ones to be discharged by April 7 in phases

3 new positive cases recorded on Sunday; total goes up to 70

REVENUES DIP: Tough to pay salaries for govt staff this month; govt may have to pay salaries in installments; stopping salaries for MLAs/MLCs not ruled out

after reviewing the corona situation with collectors/SPs of all districts and senior officials of various departments, KCR said that as many as 25,937 persons with corona symptoms were under surveillance in the state. "Out of 70 positive cases, 11 have completely recovered in the hospitals. The multiple tests done on these patients fetched negative results. We

will discharge these 11 patients on Monday. Of the remaining 59 patients, barring the one who is over 75-year old with multiple ailments in addition to corona, are stable and recovering fast. They will be discharged by April 7. Even the 75-year old man is also not critical and may take sometime to recover," KCR said.



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy, along with his cabinet colleagues and senior officials, holding a video conference with all district officials on Sunday regarding Covid-19 situation

Indians have better immunity levels, says research

PV KONDAL RAO ■ WARANGAL

When it comes to tackling the dreaded Covid-19, Indians seem to have immunity levels that are relatively better than those of people in other geographical locations studied viz. Wuhan of China, Italy, USA and Nepal, going by the findings of recent research by pathologists in the country.

Research and comparative analyses of SAR-CoV2 genomes from different geographical locations and other coronavirus family genomes reveal unique features potentially consequential to host-virus interaction and pathogenesis suggest that Indians are immunologically strong when compared to citizens from the other areas under



study. The pathogenesis was conducted by Rahila Sardar, Deepshikha Satish, Shweta Birla and Dinesh Gupta of Translational Bioinformatics group, International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, New Delhi and the Department of Bio-chemistry of Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi.

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Telangana records second corona death

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has witnessed second corona death late on Sunday.

A 65-year old man who was admitted in Gandhi Hospital died while undergoing treatment.

The state reported first corona death on Saturday.

A 74-year-old with travel history to Delhi tested positive for Covid-19 on Saturday after he died at a private hospital earlier.

He was a resident of Khairatabad. Though he was not under government surveillance for corona, the police ordered tests after he was dead in a private hospital suspecting corona. However, he was tested positive later.

PM apologises for harsh steps to fight COVID-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday during his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' apologised for taking harsh steps to fight COVID-19 outbreak.

He said, "I apologise for taking these harsh steps which have caused difficulties in your

lives, especially the poor people. I know some of you would be angry with me also. But these tough measures were needed to win this battle." He further said, "The battle against COVID-19 is a tough one and it did require such harsh decisions to

keep the people of India safe." He also spoke to people who had suffered from the virus attack and had recovered. He asked them to take their stories forward. He spoke to doctors and asked them how they were dealing with the attack.

'Stay, Will Pay Your Rent'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal again appealed to migrant labourers to stay put wherever they are and not go home, pointing to the risks involved to them and the nation. He also assured the people they would have a roof over their head, promising to pay the landlords if the tenants are unable to pay rent.

"A lot of people are going back to their native places in several states," he said today. "I want to appeal to them with folded hands -- when the Prime Minister announced lockdown, he said 'jo jahan hai woh wahi rahi' (please stay wherever you are). This is the lockdown mantra. If we don't

follow this, we, the country will fail in the fight against coronavirus," he said. "If two or four people have corona, they will spread to others. You will also be infected. If you go to your village, your villagers will be infected. If this spreads in the country completely, it would be a difficult task to control it," he added.



The coronavirus-induced lockdown seems to be giving mankind a taste of zoo animals' life. Confined to home, as part of quarantine or lockdown, the experience of people at home is being likened to that of wild animals in their enclosures at various zoological parks across the globe. Wildlife experts say a zoo is nothing but caging of wild animals, though it is presented as a centre to educate people about wildlife. The zoo animals will never stay in the enclosures if one lets them free. According to zoo authorities, animals also get worried if it is noisy around them and hence the zoo area is marked as a silent zone. The movement of vehicles inside zoos and the flocking of thousands of visitors make the animals uncomfortable, said a former chief of Vizag zoo. Presently, the closure of the zoo because of the coronavirus would have surely made them cheerful.

Scribes know their worth
Given the mounting challenges in the field of journalism, these days not many venture into this field as part of their career dreams. Upon entering the field, only those having passion for

Covid-19 gives mankind taste of zoo animals' life

news survive. However, the lockdown triggered by coronavirus has added a different charm to it. The reason is that when all are confined to their homes with the lockdown in force, only journalists are among the few professionals allowed to go out for reporting. It is a different matter that at some places scribes are also being stopped by morons hired as cops. Feeling caged at home, non-journalist friends of journalists wish they were reporters. Moreover, news, verified or not, is spreading faster, thanks to WhatsApp and social networking platforms. At the end of the day, the discerning ones would call journalist friends to verify the real situation. What lends heroism to their task is that scribes also risk themselves by going out and interacting with people who may be Covid-19 carriers.

At a time when lakhs of people have been stranded at various places across the country due to the nationwide lockdown since March 23 and are facing several hardships to reach their

destinations, the rich and influential seem to be having their way always. The quintessence of this is PV Krishna Reddy, Managing Director of infrastructure major Megha Engineering Infrastructure Ltd (MEIL), popularly known as Megha Krishna Reddy. The authorities had ordered sealing of all the state borders from March 23 to prevent movement of people and confinement to their places wherever they are to check the spread of coronavirus. Police deployed on border points are dutifully not allowing anyone to enter their respective states even if some desperate people have walked hundreds of miles in the absence of any mode of transport. Amidst all this, Megha Krishna Reddy could cross AP and TS border easily within two days to meet none other than the Chief Ministers of respective states who are responsible for enforcing the lockdown orders strictly.

Krishna Reddy first met Telangana CM K Chandrasekhara Reddy at



Pragathi Bhavan on March 26 to handover Rs 5 crore cheque towards donation to CM Relief Fund to combat corona. The very next day he visited Vijayawada to meet AP CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy to handover Rs 5 crore cheque. This raised many eyebrows. People wondered how Krishna Rao could cross the states' borders so easily during the lockdown. He apparently went by his private jet, which also is not permitted as per rules.

Following rules for a change
Covid-19 may be an enemy of humankind. Yet, it has made lesser mortals more than aware of the basic rules of living in harmony. The virus

is teaching lessons to humans, many of whom have forgotten the basics of living. Human beings have been destroying Nature with their undisciplined behaviour, arrogance and selfish attitude. Following the lockdown, people are confined to their residences. They are coming out only to purchase essentials, while maintaining distance. Even those going to shops maintain distance even in queues. All this means that habitual offenders and rule-breakers have to change and follow rules, whether they like it or not.

Politics at crucial hours
Bringing into play politics in difficult times like Covid-19-induced lockdown is not fair. Still, a legislator of the TRS concentrated on suspending party leaders for reasons that do not reflect any public interest whatsoever. A day after the Janata Curfew, the legislator of Station Ghanpur, Dr. T. Rajaiah, sent a press communique to the media stating the

sarpanch forum chief Linga Reddy of Chilpur mandal had been "removed" from his post. That was of course rebutted by 14 of seventeen sarpanches in the revenue mandal. Soon he took another step by suspending two PACS directors in the same region. Both the directors of course were not the members of TRS. Subsequently, the sarpanches re-elected Linga Reddy as their mandal chief, though, on the day of their meeting, the MLA reportedly instructed the police to stop them from assembling in a place where a day curfew was imposed.

Competition in vain
When we face challenging tasks, the groups involved in tackling those matters would compete with one another. The present turbulent corona times are also revealing the same aspect. While professional doctors are likely to play the role of a catalyst in dealing with the challenging situation, three other departments are also

competing with one another and claiming themselves as the saviours at this crucial juncture. Doctors and healthcare professionals occupy the prime slot as they are likely to face the risks and life threats. The second major group to be exposed to life threat at this juncture are scavengers and sanitary workers in urban and rural parts of the country. The third group directly linked to this issue are media personnel. The role of media cannot be belittled by any other professional as the information collected by scribes alerts people and guides them in taking precautions. The other major player in this competition is the law enforcement agency; that is, the police. Still, some people are trying their best to position their own group as the sole champions. This competition is in vain.

(Contributed by Sumit Onka, L Venkat Ram Reddy, Kolishetty Venkateswarlu, P V Kondal Rao and Avinash Deepak Pulli)

Yellow Metal and silver record hefty increase

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Other economic parameters remained divergent. US dollar, after crossing the psychological barrier of Rs.75 in the previous week, settled at Rs.74.89, while the British pound commanded the exchange value of Rs.93.26

The seizure of almost the entire world by deadly COVID-19 having been complete by now and about one-third of the world's population experiencing lockdown and social distancing, all other modes of investment have lost their shine, except the all-season trust-worthy metals -- gold and silver.

Consequently, gold recorded a hefty increase of US dollars 120 and closed at dollars 1,617.50 (per ounce). Silver too, appreciated by about dollars 2, and closed at dollars 14.47. Similarly, platinum and palladium also marched forward and closed at dollars 979.15 and 2,165 respectively.

Other economic parameters remained divergent. US dollar, after crossing the psychological barrier of Rs.75 in the previous week, settled at Rs.74.89, while the British pound commanded the exchange value of Rs.93.26. Euro, Canadian dollar and Australian dollar stood at Rs.83.63, Rs.53.39 and Rs.46.16 respectively. New Zealand dollar was quoted for Rs.45.23, while

lowest levels following the total lockdown, recovered considerably after the announcement of sops by the Finance Minister and later by the RBI governor. Accordingly, Sensex closed at 29,815.59 points and Nifty 50 at 8,660.25. Similarly, MCX gold and silver closed at the higher levels of Rs.43,591 (per 10 gms) and Rs.40,894 (per kg). Copper moved in narrow range and closed at Rs.372 (per kg).

COMMODITIES

With the total lockdown of all markets for three days after which the authorities permitted the wholesale trade of food grains, the inflow of goods was affected adversely. The black sheep among traders have their eyes set on illegal gains due to the current critical situation. Though the authorities are sparing no efforts to ensure smooth supply of essential commodities, still efforts in this direction need to be strengthened. The arrivals of common vegetables from the growing areas were affected due to non-availability of transport vehicles and drivers at reasonable cost. Consequently, the common vegetables witnessed a spurt of 40 to 50 per cent in prices.

Brent oil production was affected due to the lockdown. Brent declined by US dollars 2.11 and closed at dollars 25.10 (per barrel), so also Crude oil, which closed at Rs.1,699.

While all the markets remained closed in the prevalent situation, online trading continued. Sensex and Nifty 50, which had dipped to the

with no collection of taxes, GST etc. The Chief Minister said that those kept under home quarantine and hospital quarantine were also recovering fast and they would be discharged in phases starting Monday, when their quarantine period ends. KCR said that 1,899 patients would be discharged on March 30, followed by 1,440 patients on March 31, 1,461 (April 1), 1,887 (April 2), 1,476 (April 3), 1,453 (April 4), 914 (April 5), 454 (April 6) and 397 (April 7). "With this, the corona cases will become zero in Telangana, provided the state does not

Banyan tree turns as quarantine centre

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Seven migrant workers, who came back home to West Bengal's Purulia district from Chennai amidst the Coronavirus-induced lockdown, perched themselves on a banyan tree to remain in quarantine, in the absence of separate room for self-isolation in their small huts.

After several days in their 'temporary home', the workers were on Saturday ordered to come down by the local administration. The workers, all residents of Bangidaha village of Purulia district under Balarampur block, said as they live in one-room mud huts with their families, there is no way they can keep themselves in isolation, which is a must to ensure not a single villager contracted the Coronavirus infection from them.

However, none of them have displayed symptoms linked to COVID-19, nor have they undergone any test for the disease. "At present we don't have any health issues. But in case we are detected positive for the disease at a later date, then at least none of the villagers will be infected because of us," said one of the workers Bijay



Singh Laya. The workers reached Kharagpur junction station on Sunday last from Chennai and underwent thermal screening and tests but the doctors did not find any symptom of the disease. "However, they asked us to live under self-quarantine for 14 days as a safety measure."

"But we don't have any separate personal room in our home. So, we decided to live on the branches of the banyan tree just outside our village," he said. The seven labourers tied their beds to the branches of the tree, and used a mosquito net to prevent themselves from bites of insects.

Their family members

brought them daily ration of rice, pulses, and vegetables, along with other cooking implements and left after keeping those under the tree, while strictly maintaining the norms of social distancing. "We get down from the tree, cooked, and then again went up," said one of the workers.

Villagers on their part kept night vigil by turn to ensure the tree-dwellers are not devoured by wild animals from the nearby forest or bitten by venomous snakes. On Saturday, however, the local administration got to know of the incident, and asked the workers to return to their village and left in isolation there.

Lockdown: Keeping kids entertained

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The nationwide lockdown has left children under house arrest. During this period, parents should know how to keep their little energy balls engaged and manage their time effectively. With almost no access to playgrounds and playdates, kids may get bored easily and this may result in an increase in screen time. Pavit Nanda from Momspresso lists few ways to help keep kids engaged.

Art and craft session: Since schools are closed, it's important to reinforce what's done at school, so make a daily schedule for kids and ensure they spend some time reinforcing what had been done at school. Give them worksheet or assignments to do.

DIY stuff: Try inexpensive ways to keep kids busy. Give them old CDs, match sticks, unwanted woollen threads, coloured papers, glues, balloons, ice-cream sticks, etc and encourage them to make some creative things out of it.

Flameless cooking: Get them to make their breakfast or evening snacks with easy flameless cooking recipes. They can make their vegetable sandwich or lime water or fruit chaat or bhel or sweet corn salad. Clean their toy stock - Ask them to take out all their toys and help them clean and segregate it.

Play with toy collection: If you have put away some toys for a period of time because your kid gets bored really fast. It is time to give it to them.



A lockdown that leaves much...

Continued from Page 1

Although Kejriwal has been accused — wrongly in all probability — it is a fact that almost all state governments are focusing on preventing entry of migrants into their states. This is so even though some migrants are seeking to enter various states only because their homes are located there. Photos of huge crowds at inter-state borders (of different states) where they are being held back have become common in newspapers/ electronic media and the internet.

"States don't want to increase the number of corona cases in their jurisdiction because they feel it will impact the economy seriously. Hence, they don't want more people in their states and believe that this would mean less corona," said a senior secretary to a state government.

"Not only this, I think that the communication of the message was poor. Everybody understands why this lockdown, but there is another angle that could not be properly communicated," says a chief secretary to a state. What is this? The chief secretary says that during the period of lockdown different state governments would use the opportunity to mount surveillance to figure out quickly the people who were infected and quarantine them and treat them at hospitals. "This has unfortunately not been done effectively, so the purpose of quarantine has been lost and people are getting restless," he says.

Meanwhile, a prolonged lockdown with the labor force having gone away to their villages will have a profound effect on the economy. It will not be easy to ramp up manufacturing at a time when it is on a slowdown phase and the labor force has vanished, point out corporates.

TS to be 'corona-free state' by..

Referring to revenue losses incurred by the state government on account of lockdown, KCR said that the state government had suffered around Rs 12,000 crore loss this month with no collection of taxes, GST etc

The Chief Minister revealed that those kept under home quarantine and hospital quarantine were also recovering fast and they would be discharged in phases starting Monday, when their quarantine period ends.

KCR said that 1,899 patients would be discharged on March 30, followed by 1,440 patients on March 31, 1,461 (April 1), 1,887 (April 2), 1,476 (April 3), 1,453 (April 4), 914 (April 5), 454 (April 6) and 397 (April 7). "With this, the corona cases will become zero in Telangana, provided the state does not

witness any more cases. The chances of state recording fresh cases are also remote because we are enforcing state lockdown strictly by closing airport, public transportation system and sealing state borders," KCR added.

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with no collection of taxes, GST etc.

The Chief Minister said the financial situation had turned so grim that payingsalaries for staff this month would be difficult.

"We may have to pay salaries for staff in instalments if the situation demands. We may also have to stop salaries for MLAs/ MLCs. We will review the financial condition soon before taking any final decision on payment of salaries. This is a crisis situation. Everyone has to come forward to bear problems that have

come up due to coronasituation." KCR assured farmers that the government would purchase the entire paddy and maize crops by giving MSP for farmers and there was no need for any panic.

"We have allotted nearly Rs 30,000 crore to the Civil Supplies Corporation and Markfed even in these difficult financial conditions to ensure MSP for farmers. We require around 75 lakh gunny bags to procure food grains from farmers of which around 35 lakh are currently available," KCR said.

Reacting to media reports about black marketing of essential commodities in Telangana, the High Court of Telangana has treated the said reports as PIL pleas and taken suo motu cognizance of the same. The court has issued notices to the concerned authorities of the State government.

Hope, this would ensure extra caution on the part of the concerned authorities and would keep the prices of essential commodities low.

copy for service on the Public Prosecutor/Assistant/Additional Public Prosecutor should be kept along with the bail petition and the same may be dropped in the box, which would be kept at the main entrance of the court complex. On the day of hearing, only the Advocate on-record shall be allowed entry into the Court.

TS-HC takes suo motu cognizance of black-marketing

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For filing of bail petitions: March 27, April 03 and April 13. For hearing: March 30, April 06 and April 09 respectively. The court has also directed that the

copy for service on the Public Prosecutor/Assistant/Additional Public Prosecutor should be kept along with the bail petition and the same may be dropped in the box, which would be kept at the main entrance of the court complex. On the day of hearing, only the Advocate on-record shall be allowed entry into the Court.

Celebrate 'Lockdown' as the 'Festival of national unity'

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

The dreaded micro-organism called Coronavirus or Covid-19 has been playing havoc throughout the world over the past few months. On March 22, the country witnessed a unique show of unity with people positively responding to the clarion call of the Prime Minister and thus, sending out a signal to the whole world that in India, despite diversity, people are one and solidly united.

Apparently buoyed up by the 'test' of March 22, the Prime Minister ultimately announced the major step of total lockdown of the entire nation of 1.4 billion on March 24 for full 21 days, beginning from March 25. The government also assured the people that the supply chain of life-essentials such as milk, food, medicines etc; shall remain uninterrupted. The State governments, ruled by different

political parties, too responded well and have been fully cooperating with the central government. In the very first two days, the government has rolled out a slew of beneficial measures including free ration and cash doles to the poor, women and hapless senior citizens. The results have started coming in and they are very encouraging in the sense that Covid-19 rate of progression has been comparatively much slower than in other countries, including the developed countries in the West.

Now, here are the matters to be pondered over. "We, the people of India," as the days pass on and the nation inches towards April 14 -- the tentative last day of the current 21-day total lockdown. Assuming that the lockdown period would be further extended for one or two more months in order to ensure complete sanitisation of the dreaded coronavirus, we, like disciplined soldiers of the country, should extend our full cooperation with the authorities by complying with their singular direction about home confinement. If the period of lockdown is not extended, then let's utilise this period for self-improvement and for leading quality family life.

The authorities, right from the local level to district and state level to the central level, should devote their time and resources not only to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic by providing necessary medical facilities and sanitisation of public places, but also to identifying and weeding out all irresponsible elements

who flout official orders either due to ignorance, adamance, individual arrogance or perceived, preached or virulent opinions gathered from ill-informed or anti-humanity sources. They do not deserve any sympathy since each defiant or disobedient person poses threat of life to hundreds, if not thousands, of people, which we can't afford.

Happily, so far, the results of the total lockdown have been quite encouraging. More than containing the deadly coronavirus, which is imperative, the country has stood like a rock against it, and that is more important. And this is, indeed, in conformity with the avowed idealism of the Constitution, which emphasises the "Unity" of the nation. Therefore, let us all celebrate this period of lockdown, not as a forced home confinement, but as a festival of national unity!

Multiple litigations against China

In the wake of the global spread of Covid-19, several rights groups have filed cases against China and claimed trillions of dollars as damages. Besides, Marco Rubio, the senator from Florida and one America's most anti-China politicians, has also filed a case that would prevent Huawei from seeking damages in US patent courts.

In a US \$ 20 trillion class-action suit, the Freedom Watch, a Washington-based advocacy group and Buzz Photos, a Texas-based sports photography company, have allegedly accused the Chinese government of developing coronavirus as an illegal biological weapon and for releasing the same by its Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Judiciary extends support to lockdown
The apex court, high courts

CRIME CORNER

MOTORIST INJURED AS BIKE RAMS INTO ROAD MEDIAN

A trainee pilot from Begumpet was injured as his bike crashed into a road median near Chatanpally bridge in the city outskirts early Sunday morning. He was returning from Andhra Pradesh when the mishap occurred, the police said. The 23-year-old trainee posted at the Begumpet airport was returning to Hyderabad from Madanapalle in Chittoor district of AP. When he reached Chatanpally bridge around 5 am, he lost control of the bike and crashed into the road median. "He suffered multiple injuries and is currently undergoing treatment in a nearby hospital. His condition is stable," police said. It is learnt that he has been riding the motorcycle overnight, all the way from Madanapalle which is around 550 km, the police said. The Cyberabad Traffic Police advised citizens to not to take up such long and dangerous rides anytime and more particularly during the lockdown period.

MISCREANTS PUT UP TRANSPHOBIC POSTERS NEAR METRO STATIONS

In an appalling act, some posters have surfaced in Ameerpet of Hyderabad inciting violence against transgender persons. Meera Sanghamitra, transgender rights activist from Telangana and National Convenor of National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) registered a complaint with Hyderabad Police to take action against such miscreants. Meera Sanghamitra appealed to Telangana DGP, Hyderabad City Police, GHMC authorities and Telangana CM to take strict action against mischief mongers who are spreading misinformation and inciting violence against transgenders, based on unscientific claims and prejudice. A poster that reportedly came up on the walls of Ameerpet Metro Station said, "Warning: Do not allow transgenders near the shops. If you talk to them or have sex with them, you will be infected with coronavirus. Beat and drive them away or call 100 immediately." A similar poster was spotted in the Raj Bhavan Road as well.

Police detain pastor for defying norms

The Neredmet police raided a church where congregants and church authorities were allegedly found defying the lockdown and detained a pastor here on Sunday. Police officials said the pastor identified as Samuel was detained briefly and warned of consequences before being allowed to go home. Samuel had allegedly defied the lockdown which aim at preventing gatherings and the spread of coronavirus, and organized worship at the church. Also read Over 450 held in Kolkata for defying lockdown order Covid-19: Over 3,400 people detained for violating lockdown orders in Delhi Following information from local residents, the police immediately reached the spot and detained the pastor.

TS readies 6 more hospitals to treat coronavirus patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Health Etela Rajender ordered officials to prepare at least six other hospitals ready to provide treatment to patients with coronavirus symptoms. This is apart from the Gandhi Hospital and King Kothi Government hospital. All the eight hospitals together will have a bed strength of 5,000.

The other hospitals identified to provide treatment are chest hospital at Yerragadda, Fever Hospital, Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital, MGM hospital at Warangal, ESI hospital at Nacharam. In addition, a 1500-bed quarantine facility is also being set-up at the sports village in Gachibowli stadium.

On the lines of Gandhi Hospital, treatment to all other diseases will be suspended in other hospitals too. Ventilators for these hospitals have been ordered. The government is of the view to use the district hos-



pitals to isolate the patients with coronavirus symptoms, if the number of cases increase the hospitals will be upgraded to full scale hospitals to treat coronavirus patients.

Since the virus entered the crucial third phase, the state and Central governments have taken serious view of the problem.

A member of the state-level monitoring committee on the condition of anonymity said that the virus penetrated into the

public and apprehended a bout its explosive growth. Hence the large scale precautions have been put in place, the member suspected.

Lack of sufficient number of N-95 masks and sanitisers for the doctors treating coronavirus patients is being criticised. Moreover, it is being alleged that these being cornered by VIPs.

It is reliably learnt that an internal enquiry is being conducted on disappearance of

Lack of N-95 masks for the doctors treating coronavirus patients is being criticised.

thousands of masks and sanitisers, an official who wished to remain anonymous said.

Meanwhile, Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao on Sunday took to social media platform Twitter and said that four exclusive coronavirus hospitals will be set up in Hyderabad.

"Completely refurbished and exclusive 350 bed hospital for corona patients at King Koti, Hyderabad made ready. Four more exclusive hospitals being refurbished and readied in Hyderabad", the MA&UD Minister tweeted.

Patients tested negative to be discharged soon: Etela

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Medical and Health Etela Rajender has said that the number of coronavirus cases registered so far is 67 and attributed the increase to four members of a family testing positive for the virus. However, he assured the people to provide treatment to all by procuring new equipment. A new quarantine facility with bed strength of 1,500 is getting ready in six days at Gachibowli stadium.

Medical tests are being run family member of four medical and health personnel, including doctors, who screened visitors at airport, he said.

Giving updates on the coronavirus situation at a media conference on Sunday, Rajender exhorted the people to give their support to medical officers of Gandhi Hospital. He said the number of persons quarantined so far decreased to 13,000.

The Minister prohibits people visiting places of worship



The blood samples of eleven out of 65 coronavirus patients tested negative

ous condition. Upon his death the diagnostic test result showed that he was tested positive for the virus.

Appealing to people living in localities where Gandhi Hospital medical officers live not to give any trouble to them, he asked the house owners who rented their houses to the medical officers not to give any trouble to them to collect their rent.

He appealed to them to give their support to the medical officers at this juncture.

If a person tests positive for the virus, all members of his family are likely to be infected with the virus, he said advising those who returned to the state from overseas to observe precautions.

Spike in domestic violence due ...

Continued from Page 1

It's not a problem directed solely at women, although they are statistically more likely to experience domestic violence than men, said Dr. Angel Sunaina, a psychologist.

"On top of the stress caused by confinement, fears around job security and financial difficulties are also increasing the likelihood of conflicts. This is causing trouble in households and might have edgy and short-tempered atmospheres.

Those alarming figures log only cases where women are able to seek help; many cannot make calls because they fear being overheard by abusive partners, or are stopped from leaving home," said the doctor.

The increased threat to women and children was a predictable side effect of the coronavirus lockdowns, said activists. Increased abuse is a pattern repeated in many emergencies, whether conflict, economic crisis, or during disease outbreaks, although the quarantine rules pose a particularly grave challenge.

Corona: Rail coaches to turn into isolation wards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Seeking to join the battle against the coronavirus pandemic, Railway authorities has initiated plans to convert train compartments into isolation beds for those tested positive with Covid-19.

According to South Central Railway (SCR), sleeper coaches are feasible for such facility as they can easily be modified into isolation beds for Covid-19 patients and would be a great help in handling the emergency.

As part of this, middle berths and ladders will be removed in the sleeper coaches for the convenience of patients and each cabin can be used for two patients while the restrooms and washbasins will be modified to meet the demands of isolation coaches.

"This facility can be used if positive cases increase and state runs out of isolation beds. These trains can be stabled at railway stations and move to any hinterlands so that nearby residents need not be scared about the pandemic," said an



The exclusive train for Covid-19 will be moved to any area in the State to shift patients infected with the virus and isolate the person safely

official.

Railway board is working on trains capacity in each zone, facilities for nurses, doctors, and storage requirement for keeping equipment and medicine, said an official adding that rail coaches, which have uninterrupted power are possible to be converted into isolation beds.

The move from railways would give much needed support to State government to contain the spread of pandemic and the coaches can also be used to quarantine persons who develop the symptoms of virus.

Prisoners feel jail is safer than home

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Many prisoners and jails department officials feel that the jail is safer than the home since there would be no communication whatsoever with the outside world at prisons.

On account of the prevailing lockdown situation, restrictions have been placed on movement of the people in the country.

In the wake of Supreme Court order to states to consider releasing prisoners on parole, the state government has constituted a committee headed by Home Minister to into the gamut of the issue. The committee will have DGO, CS to government, DG prisons and superintendents of jails as members.

Meanwhile, the prisons department officials have been implementing measures to improve sanitation in prisons. They have cancelled Milakhat facility given to prisoners. Under the existing circum-

The prisons department officials have been implementing measures to improve sanitation in prisons. They have cancelled Milakhat facility



stances, prisons are safer than the houses, according to officials and prisoners. A country wide health emergency has been imposed and restrictions have been placed on movement of people. Normal life has been paralysed in the state. The committee is gathering opinion of all and concerned on releasing prisoners on parole or not. In UP, jails are over populated. Therefore, parole is being granted to many in that state.

Indians have better immunity levels, says research

Continued from Page 1

The research group, while terming the ongoing pandemic of the Coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19) as an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2(SARS CoV2), maintained that they performed an integrated sequence-based analysis of SARS Cov 2 genomes from different geographical locations in order to identify its unique features.

It found some interesting facts, including unique features that were revealed in the samples of the Indians where the immunity levels have been found high when compared to other samples.

The phylogenies analysis of genomes, the nucleotide sequence diversity analysis of the genomes, the red anti-viral host miRNAs specific to the genomes and the prediction of immune active sequences in the genome have yielded these results.

HELPING HAND



IPS officials in state donated a day's salary to the Chief Minister's relief fund. The Director General of Police Mahender Reddy hands over the cheque to the Chief Minister of Telangana K Chandrasekhar Rao. Chief Secretary to state government Somesh Kumar was also present.

SUMMER STRESS

Sprinklers help zoo animals beat the heat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

PNS | Hyderabad Coolers, water sprinklers and seasonal summer food like beetroot and watermelon are some of the special arrangements the Nehru Zoological Park in the city has made to help the animals and birds beat the sweltering summer heat. The zoo has started to put in place special summer arrangements for it's animals, birds and reptiles.

The summer arrangements and precautionary measures which aim to prevent summer stress and protect them from heat while ensuring required health care measures will continue till mid-June.

Accordingly, sprinklers and small rain guns have been installed in all animal enclosures apart from foggers in all enclosures and spreading grass



The summer arrangements and precautionary measures which aim to prevent summer stress and protect them from heat while ensuring required health care measures will continue till mid-June

over the roof. More than 50 air-coolers have been installed in animal enclosures like those of

Chimpanzee, Monkeys, Tigers, Lions, Jaguars, Cheetah and Leopards and air-conditioners and exhaust fans in the

Nocturnal Animal House, zoo officials said.

The herbivore enclosures are equipped with shady shelters and seasonal fruits like water melon, musk melon and citrus variety fruits are given to all apes, monkeys, primates, birds and bears.

The officials said that ample protected drinking water is being provided to all animal houses from time to time to avoid dehydration while vitamin supplements and thermocare liquid is dissolved in water and given to avoid summer stress.

Almost 80 per cent of the enclosure surroundings like windows, ventilators and doors are covered with 'kashkash thattis' and gunny cloth to avoid direct sunlight exposure on the animals. These covering is watered at least three to four times every day.

Hyderabad air cargo keeps link of essential supplies alive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In such crucial times, when the world is battling with Covid-19 pandemic and India is under virtual lock-down; GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo is keeping the vital link of essential supplies fully alive and operational.

Notified as one of the essential services, GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo is working round the clock in close coordination with the Customs, Ground Handlers, Forwarders, CHAs (Customs House Agents), Regulators, State Police, Cargo Trade associations, to keep rolling the critical chain of essential supplies viz. Medicines, Vaccines, Medical equipment, Pharma raw material, Defense Goods, Bank related etc.



seamlessly. With around 200 dedicated and highly motivated personnel working in a shift, Hyderabad Air Cargo is operating round the clock to ensure all these essential supplies are properly handled and timely cleared. The personnel include GMR cargo staff, Customs officials, Regulatory Agencies, Ground handlers, Freight Forwarders, CHAs among others. GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo is handling 11 freighters weekly along with some special cargo charters, which are connecting Hyderabad with all major international desti-

To ensure the safety of its personnel, the airport is leaving no stone unturned to keep the volume and labour intensive area of cargo fully sanitised round the clock

Lufthansa Cargo, SpiceXpress Cargo and BlueDart Cargo. All crew members are properly screened with the help of Airport Health Officer (APHO) and then only allowed to exit the airport building. Based on the fuel requirements, the freighters also uplift fuel, for which GHIAL fuel farm is available 24 x 7.

Currently, GMR Hyderabad Air Cargo is witnessing over 100 tons of export and import cargo daily. Out of this over

70% consignment belongs to Pharma and essential products.

Approximately 40 to 50 trucks (Bonded trucking, Temp-controlled trucks and General cargo trucks) are coming to Hyderabad Airport cargo for consignment delivery and lift-off daily.

To ensure the safety of its personnel, the airport is leaving no stone un-turned to keep the volume and labour intensive area of cargo fully sanitised round the clock.

Survey to assess needs of migrant labourers in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A field level survey to meet the minimum needs of migrant labourers to the city from other states in lakhs has been undertaken in view of the present lockdown situation.

Many people reach Hyderabad from the states of AP, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra in search of greener pastures. For want of public transport due to lock down conditions, many have set out for their places on foot. Unable to walk long distances, some have settled on the outskirts of twin cities.

In Kotipalli mandal of Mancherial district, labourers were brought from



Maharashtra and they got stranded here. Revenue officials visited them as part of a survey to assess their needs and noted down their requirements. They are also gathering details of their ration cards.

On the basis of the 13-point field survey reports, the government is likely to frame a policy soon.

Ryots stare at major crisis

Majority of ryots in TS, AP are scared to come out of their homes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Farmers in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh could be heading for a major crisis as the 21-day nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of Coronavirus has affected the harvest of Rabi crops. Though agriculture is exempted from the lockdown in both the states, a majority of farmers are scared to come out of their homes. Shortage of agricultural labourers has added to their woes.

The lockdown, from Tuesday midnight till at least April 14, has dealt a blow to the agricultural sector at a time when crops like paddy, maize, red jowar, pulses, chillies are ready to be harvested. With the agricultural markets shut, the state governments have told farmers not to come to the towns with their produce but wait in their respective villages for procurement by authorities.

With no hopes of an early return to normalcy, the farmers are keeping their fingers crossed despite assurance by the governments that all their produce would be procured. While exempting agricultural activities from the lockdown restrictions, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao said farmers would be allowed to complete the harvesting of the



crops spread over 50 lakh acres.

However, non-availability of agriculture labourers has hit the farmers hard. Many labourers have gone back to their native states due to the lockdown and those available are demanding higher wages, complained many farmers. "No one is coming out due to lockdown. If there is a delay of another 10-15 days in harvesting, the paddy crop will get damaged," Rythu Sangham leader S Malla Reddy said.

The Telangana Chief Minister last week asked the farmers not to visit the markets to sell their produce. "We will get it procured in your villages. All you have to show is your passbooks. We will give you tokens informing you

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procure the produce when everything was fine, how will it procure now," asked Malla Reddy, general secretary of All India Kisan Sabha. He believes that with no money in hand and banks refusing to give fresh loans, the farmers may struggle to go for cultivation in the Kharif season, which begins in June.

He claimed that the banks were refusing to give fresh loans because the government failed to release funds towards the waiver of farm loans. The farmers depend on private money-lenders for cultivation.

Reddy said a survey conducted by his organization revealed that farmers get Rs 20,000 crore from private money lenders at higher interest rate — 30 rupees for every hundred rupees for six months.

Tipplers quench their thirst with toddy

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Coronavirus is not only taking a toll on the people but is also showing its impact on the mental health of the tipplers. More than 2,400 liquor retail outlets and over 700 bars in the state have been closed ever since Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao announced the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Already, tipplers have been showing extreme behavior with instances of desperate liquor addicts making vain attempts to break into liquor shops.

Though the liquor shops have been closed, toddy came to the rescue of tipplers in rural areas. In urban areas, along with the wine shops and bars, toddy shops have been closed. However, the toddy tappers are tapping toddy in rural areas for their livelihood.

Thota Ramaiah of Thimmapur village in Suryapet district, who consumes liquor regularly, started consuming toddy again due to non availability of liquor in his village. "Toddy will not give that 'kick' immediately. One has to consume a lot of toddy to feel that. I have no option but to consume toddy due to non-availability of liquor these days. I am having toddy though I am



More than 2,400 liquor retail outlets and over 700 bars in the state have been closed ever since CM K Chandrashekar Rao announced the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19

not satisfied fully," he said.

S Krishnaiah from Mudhiven village in Kadthal mandal in Rangareddy district said, "I am drinking toddy due to non-availability of liquor. My day will not end without consuming liquor. Demand for toddy increased these days. I will not get toddy if I go five minutes late. Tipplers from my neighboring villages - Konapur, Govindapalli Thanda and Shettipalli and Gouraram are coming to the toddy trees areas before us and are taking away the toddy. Before lockdown there was no such problem," he said.

Chamakuri Karunakar, a toddy tapper from Thimmapur village said that he is following social distancing rule as he is well aware of prevailing situation across the globe. "Tipplers are thronging those places

where toddy is available. But each tree will be enough only for five people. The demand for toddy has increased manifold. I hiked price from Rs 20 to Rs 25 keeping demand in view. I am happy these days as I am selling my toddy in advance every day," he said.

Telangana Neera and Palmyra Producers Development Society state joint secretary Dr Gopagoni Anand Goud said that consuming liquor is good for health as compared to liquor. No doubt, demand increased for toddy as liquor shops have been closed. "We suggested our toddy tapper community people to follow social distancing. We also suggested the tappers to clean their hands every time and asked the people to maintain cleanliness in view of virus impact," he added.

SHORT READS



COVID-19: MP teen girl 4th in family to get infected

UJJAIN (MP): A 17-year-old girl who tested positive for the novel coronavirus on Sunday in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh is from a family in which three others were also infected, one of whom died, health officials said. The state, as on Sunday, has 37 active COVID-19 cases, while two have died of the infection. "The 17-year-old girl belongs to the same family in which three others were infected with the novel coronavirus. One of them, a 65-year-old woman, died in Indore a few days ago," Ujjain district hospital's chief medical and health officer Dr Ansuviya Gavli said.

5 killed, 7 injured after being hit by truck in Gurgaon

CHANDIGARH: Five people were killed and seven more injured after being hit by a truck in Bilaspur area of Gurgaon in the early hours of Sunday, police said. The accident took place on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway near Manesar, they said. The deceased include a woman and a child, Bilaspur SHO Inspector Jai Prakash told PTI over the phone. The official said the victims were yet to be identified. "Further investigations were underway," he said.

Man killed in tiger attack in Gondia in Maharashtra

NAGPUR: A 42-year-old man was killed on Sunday by a tiger in Goregaon forest range of Gondia district in Maharashtra, some 150 kilometres from here, an official said. The incident happened at around 7:30am when deceased Arun Bhalavi and his friend, both residents of Dhanutola, went into the forest to graze sheep, he said. "A tiger attacked and killed Bhalavi. His friend managed to escape," he informed.

'KCR trying to covert tragedy into event'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Sunday strongly condemned Chief Minister

K Chandrashekar Rao for his failure to supply ration and other essential commodities to poor people despite the lockdown completing more than one week. Shabbir Ali, in a statement said that the people of Telangana, especially poor, middle class, salaried, daily wage earners, labourers and other weaker sections were living in an extremely bad condition with no food to eat and no access to other facilities.

"While the total lockdown is essential to prevent further

spread of Coronavirus, it is the duty of the government to provide food and other commodities to people during the lockdown period. We don't want people to suffer from Coronavirus. But we also don't want them to die of hunger," he said.

The Congress leader said that the Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had promised supply of 12 kg free rice and Rs 1,500 each to nearly 87 lakh White Ration card holders. Even after one week, no arrangements have been made to provide the promised help. "We are facing an emergency situation where entire population is combating an epidemic.

Doctors gear up to meet challenges

AVINASH DEEPAK PULI ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Doctors in rural areas across the state are gearing up in anticipation of the coronavirus pandemic graduating into its third phase. The training for trainee doctors, at the state capital held in the second week of March, has now been extended to the Community Health Centres limits and district headquarters of respective districts as the official machinery is taking necessary steps to identify the quarantine centres and isolation wards for the patients and suspected patients.

Pathology experts, attached to the Community Health Centres and hospitals attached to Primary Health Centres are guiding the lab technicians in their respective areas and they are imparting swift training classes in all the hospitals with the guidance of District sur-



veillance Officers deployed for the purpose.

Each and every district in the rural Telangana districts under Medical and Health Departments is keenly taking part in the orientation programme and since this programme is time bound and implemented and initiated with immediate effect, the doctors are implementing it on a war footing basis.

Doctors in the Primary Health Centres and Community Health Centres, including the district area hospitals have been advised to make it mandatory to attend to the duties to meet the challenges at the crucial hours. A similar kind of training for the trainers and the already deployed lab and pathology forces has been executed in all the rural Telangana districts.



Minister comes to the rescue of migrants

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Women and Child Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod on Sunday came to the rescue of migrant labourers, who were heading to their native places in Maharashtra.

The Minister, Satyavathi Rathod reached out to them and convinced them to stay back. She also asked the authorities concerned to conduct medical tests on the

labourers. Later, the Minister arranged accommodation for the labourers in a nearby school and handed over Rs 10,000 and 2 quintals of rice, cooking utensils. The Minister for Women and Child Welfare said that a total of 5,000 migrant workers were working in Mahabubabad and added that the state government would extend the necessary support to them.

Modi interacts with recovered Covid-19 patient

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday enquired the first Corona Positive Case in Telangana - Ram Gampa Teja, who is now cured of the virus and has been discharged from hospital, of his experiences of his encounter with the virus.

The following are the excerpts of the conversation between Modi and Ram Gampa Teja...

Modi: Yes Ram

Ram Gampa Teja: Namaskaram sir

Modi: I heard that your successfully came out of danger called Corona virus

Ram Gampa Teja: Yes Sir

Modi: I wish to know from you how you could wriggle out of the grave danger. I wish to hear from you your experiences

Ram Gampa Teja: I work in the IT sector. As part of my job, I had to go to Delhi to attend meetings. Inadvertently, it happened so there. Upon my return, I have many symptoms including fever. After a gap of five days upon my return, I was



tested for Corona virus. Then I tested positive for it. I was immediately admitted to Gandhi Hospital. After 14 days, I tested negative for the virus and was discharged. The experience was harrowing.

Modi: Did you know that you tested positive for the virus?

Ram Gampa Teja: Yes Sir.

Modi: How did you feel upon learning that you tested positive for the virus?

Ram Gampa Teja: I was frightened. I could not believe my eyes. I was at a loss of comprehension how it all could happen to me because at that time

only two or three persons testes positive for the virus. I did not comprehend any thing. I was quarantined by doctors upon admission to hospital. Two or three days went by. I could see only doctors... nurses...

Modi: What was the mental state of your family members?

Ram Gampa Teja: At first, soon after my admission to hospital, they were subjected to mental agony. Here media also became a bit problematic. Afterwards, my family members were also tested for the virus. They tested negative bringing a great

relief to me, my family members and our neighbours. Afterwards, my condition began to improve. Doctors used to speak with me and they also shared everything with my family members. They updated my family members on the line of treatment and precautions observed.

Modi: What precautions did you observe and also your family members?

Ram Gampa Teja: I came to know upon being quarantined that I should spend 14 days in home quarantine upon discharge. The hospital authorities asked my family members to observe quarantine all by themselves. I used to confine myself to one room at my house upon discharge. I used to wear mask all through the day. When I stepped out of my room to have food, I used to wash my hands thoroughly. This is important.

Modi: Okay Ram. You regained your health and discharged from the hospital. I conveyed my greetings to you and your family members.

Ram Gampa Teja: Thank You Sir.

Modi: But, your experience

Ram Gampa Teja: Sir...

Modi: Since that you are in IT profession, share your experience with others with people. Make it go viral on social media so that people would not panic. They also know what precautions they should observe. They will try to keep away from the deadly disease.

Ram Gampa Teja: Yes Sir. When I came out I notice that people think that observing quarantine is similar to spending time in prison. But this is not so. Everyone should understand. People quaranting themselves are doing good not only to them but also to their family members. I wish to convey the same to all. Get medical tests done. Do not fear for observing quarantine. People should regard observing quarantine as not a blot in their lives.

Modi: Good Ram. Many many greetings to you.

Ram Gampa Teja: Thank You ... Thank You Sir

Migrant workers returning home in Bihar not welcome

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

Many of the thousands of jobless workers, marching from their workplaces to their native villages in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh hundreds of kilometres away amid the coronavirus lockdown, are not being welcomed back home.

In many places in Bihar and elsewhere, those returning back home from states and even from neighbouring countries like Nepal and Bhutan were reported to the police, who, in turn, handed them over to medical authorities for tests and subsequent measures.

Some villages in Bihar have gone into lockdown, refusing entry of people even from neighbouring areas, to curb the spread of infection.

"Four of my co-villagers working in Nepal returned home two days ago. But villagers informed police about them following which they swooped on the village with ambulances



and handed them over to the medical team," Abhishek Singh told PTI over phone from Alawalpur village on the outskirts of Bihar's capital Patna.

"In neighbouring Fatehpur village, six people returned home from Bhutan yesterday, undertaking part of their journey on foot in Bihar and West Bengal, but were handed over to police by neighbours," said Singh.

In a similar case, nine people

returning to their village Jamalpur, near Alawalpur, from Mumbai were handed over to police and medical authorities, said Luv Singh of Jamalpur village, though they had been examined earlier in Mumbai by medical authorities. They too were asked to stay at home, he added. Station House Officer Nagmani Kumar of Guari Check police station, having jurisdiction over these villages, confirmed this trend to PTI over phone.

Migrant workers hit streets in Kerala seeking transportation

PNS ■ KOTTAYAM (KER)

Seeking transportation to travel to their native places, hundreds of migrant workers on Sunday hit the streets near Changanassery violating the 21-day lockdown announced by the government to prevent spread of novel coronavirus.

Soon after the incident was reported from Payyappad village, a shocked Kerala government quickly stepped in to defuse the tension by deploying police force and sending Kottayam district authorities to pacify the agitat-



ing migrant workers, who are called guest labourers in the state.

The Kottayam district Collector and Superintendent of Police held talks with the agitating migrant workers on the

streets of Payyappad village town and managed to send them back to their camps.

They assured them that all facilities would be provided for their comfortable stay in the state during the lockdown period but rejected their demand for travel facilities citing directives issued by the Central government banning movement of people outside the dwelling place.

"They are saying that they want to go to their native places. That is practically impossible," district Collector P K Sudheer Babu said.

Hundreds rendered homeless as massive landslide damages dozens of houses in JK

VPNS ■ BANIHAL/JAMMU

A massive landslide damaged 28 houses in a village along Jammu-Srinagar national highway in Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir, rendering hundreds of people homeless, officials said on Sunday.

The landslide had also damaged a 500-meter stretch of the 270-km highway, diminishing the chances of early restoration of the traffic on the arterial road which remained closed for the third consecutive day on Sunday, the officials said.



Ramban's Additional Deputy Commissioner Ashok Kumar Sharma said the incessant rains over the past two days led to the

massive landslide and sinking of Dalwan village land near Chanderkote.

"At least 28 houses have been

damaged, requiring shifting of 40 families to safer places in nearby schools," Sharma, who is supervising the relief and rescue operation, told PTI.

He said a team of officers along with rescue teams from police and paramilitary forces rushed to the village on Saturday after reports of massive landslides along with sinking of land. "At least 15 houses have suffered extensive damages while the rest 13 houses have suffered partial damages," the official said, adding the affected 40 families were offered

shelter inside quarters at Nashri but they declined and were later accommodated in nearby schools. He said the district administration is making all necessary arrangements for the affected families.

DSP (Traffic, National Highway) Ajay Anand said the Dalwan landslide has also damaged a 500-metre stretch of the highway, causing a serious setback to the efforts of early restoration of traffic on the crucial highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country.

SHORT READS



K'taka CM apprises Oppn leaders about steps to contain coronavirus in state

BENGALURU: Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Sunday convened an all-party meeting and apprised the Opposition leaders about the measures taken by the government to contain the coronavirus in the state. "I have been regularly holding meeting since March 13 regarding the measures taken to contain the transmission of COVID-19," the chief minister said at the meeting at the Vidhana Soudha. Health Minister B Srinamulu, Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar, IT-BT Minister C N Aswath Narayan, Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi, former chief minister and Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, Opposition MLAs H D Revanna, D K Shivakumar and former speaker K R Ramesh Kumar attended the meeting. The chief minister said a task force comprising ministers and officials has been formed to oversee the implementation of the government orders. Yediyurappa highlighted the prevailing situation across the globe saying that normal life had been paralysed everywhere.

Goa allows e-commerce firms to home deliver essentials

PANAJI: The Goa government on Sunday allowed e-commerce platforms providing home delivery of essential items to operate during the 21-day lockdown in place for the novel coronavirus outbreak. The decision to allow firms like Swiggy and Zomato to deliver food to people's doorsteps was announced by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. In another development, CRPF troopers started patrolling several areas of the state along with local police.

NRI under home quarantine in Kannur dies of heart attack

KANNUR: A non-resident Keralaite (NRK) under home quarantine here since he returned from Sharjah recently died on Sunday, officials said. According to health authorities, Abdul Khader (65), a resident of Kannariparamba, was kept under home quarantine after he returned from abroad on March 21. Police said the man had no symptoms of coronavirus but was under isolation as per Covid-19 protocol for persons returning from abroad and other states. "The relatives of the deceased took him to hospital after seeing him unconscious in his room. However he died before reaching the hospital," police said. Quoting medical college authorities, the Mayyil police said he died of cardiac arrest. However, the health officials said they will test his blood sample to ascertain whether he was affected with novel coronavirus. The body has been kept at the Kannur medical college and will be handed over to his kin only if the result of his blood test is negative, sources said.

PM interacts with people daily to get updates on covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with over 200 people on a daily basis to get a first-hand feedback on India's fight against the coronavirus, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Sunday.

It said the prime minister's interactions include phone calls to governors, chief ministers and state health ministers.

Modi also reaches out to doctors, nurses, health workers and sanitation staff in various parts of the country over the phone "to encourage them and pay gratitude to their yeoman service to the nation and society", a statement issued by the PMO said.

It pointed out that Modi also interacts with people from various walks of life through video-conferences in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus.



The PM Modi telephonically reaches out to some of those infected with the coronavirus and some of those who have recovered from its effects in order to keep an update on their progress

navirus.

The prime minister telephonically reaches out to some of those infected with the coronavirus and some of those who have recovered from its effects in order to keep an update on their progress.

Since January, Modi has

held several rounds of meetings and discussions with people from various walks of life and officials in order to find ways and means to fight COVID-19.

He has been holding meetings on a daily basis, wherein he is updated by the cabinet

secretary and the principal secretary to the prime minister, the PMO statement said. The prime minister is also updated by the Group of Ministers (GoM) on the steps being taken by the government, it added.



Ker Women's panel to offer tele-counselling

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Women, suffering from mental stress and strain in the time of coronavirus outbreak and lockdown, now have an indoor remedy to get relief, thanks to the tele-counselling initiative of the Kerala Women's Commission (KWC).

The women's panel is all set to provide the service to the women cutting across their age in the southern state. As the country is under complete lockdown, this would help women suffering from stress and tension to share their worries and get relief by staying safe within their house, official sources here said. As part of the initiative, the agency has published a set of phone numbers of their expert counsellors.

Iran-returned Indians shifted from Delhi to Jodhpur



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SpiceJet and IndiGo aircraft took 275 Indians, who were recently evacuated from coronavirus-hit Iran, from Delhi to Jodhpur for quarantine on Sunday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

India is currently under a 21-day lockdown till April 14 to curb the spread of the coronavirus and consequently, all international and domestic commercial passenger flights have been suspended for this period.

"Operation Namaste! Efforts to safeguard Indian citizens against Covid19 continue," Puri wrote on Twitter. "The 275 Indians who were

evacuated from Iran have been screened & shifted by IndiGo and SpiceJet aircraft to Army Wellness Centre at Jodhpur for quarantine," he added. In a statement, IndiGo's Chief Executive Officer Ronojoy Dutta said, "We are honoured to have the opportunity to operate this relief flight, which enabled the shifting of 139 Indian citizens evacuated from Iran to Jodhpur for testing, isolation and treatment as needed."

The IndiGo flight 6E9121 was operated by two pilots and four cabin crew members, the statement said.

All 139 passengers aboard the IndiGo aircraft tested negative for the coronavirus prior to the flight, it added.

Truck carrying 64 men to UP stopped, siblings booked

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Two siblings owning and operating a truck service were on Sunday booked for allegedly ferrying 64 labourers illegally to Uttar Pradesh, Saki Naka police in Mumbai said. The labourers were found crammed in the truck in the early hours of the day in Powai, an official said.

"Amjad Ali Razzak Shah (32) who was driving the truck and his brother Mohammad Shah who owns the vehicle have been booked. They were charging Rs 2,500 per person to transport them to Uttar Pradesh," an official said. Zone X Deputy Commissioner of Police Ankit Goel said the labourers were let off while civic authorities were asked to provide them food and other basic amenities. "We registered a case under section 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 188 of the IPC. Both have been detained," he said.

Will take care of migrant labourers, don't leave Maha: CM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday assured that his government will take care of all migrant labourers and provide them basic necessities like food and water.

The 'Shiv Bhojan' scheme offering meal at Rs 10 will now be available at Rs 5 from April 1, he said in a webcast.

Thackeray said the state has already set up 163 centres across the state to provide food and water to the migrant labourers.

"The state will protect them and provide food, but they should not leave their place. I understand that they are anxious but they should not leave. They should avoid increasing the risk of infection, he said.

In view of the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus, sever-



al migrant labourers are left with no work and hence, they are leaving the state to return to their native places.

A number of them have been marching on foot, while some tried to make their way out of the state in goods trucks and tempos, but were caught during police checking.

The total number of COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra has gone up to 193 with 12 more people testing positive for coronavirus, a health official said on Sunday.

Will die of hunger say migrant workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"We will die of hunger before any disease if we stay here. There is no one to even take care of our cremation," says migrant worker Savitri, who set on foot for her home in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj district amid the coronavirus lockdown even though her destination is over 400 km away.

Savitri (30), who lived in a slum in Rajouri Garden area, had no option but to undertake the arduous trek as the nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic left her jobless and with no means to arrange food for her two small children.

"People are talking about the danger of some virus which can kill all of us. I don't understand all these. As a mother, I am pained when I cannot feed my children.

Exodus of migrant workers out of Delhi unabated

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after thousands of migrant workers thronged Anand Vihar bus terminus on the Delhi-UP border to go back to their villages, hundreds attempted to leave again on Sunday but were blocked by police barricades some distance from the bus station.

"I came here in the morning and have been waiting for police to let us go ahead, but it seems like they would not allow us," said Joginder Singh, 40, a fruit merchant who came to Anand Vihar terminus with his family in the morning to catch a bus for his hometown Moradabad.

"They are beating people who try to move further. I am here with my wife and 11-year-old son and we can't afford to be beaten up by police. Now we have only one option -- go back to our home in Shahdara's Vishwas Nagar area," Singh said.

Many people were seen trying to walk on the railway track at Anand Vihar to go their home towns in Uttar Pradesh.



Since the nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24 to deal with the coronavirus epidemic, all business and economic activity has come to a virtual standstill, leaving migrant workers with no work. Most of them are daily wage earners who live a hand to mouth existence in big cities, and cannot afford to pay rent or buy food unless they earn.

"If police open the borders, we can walk all the way to Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh some 100 kilometers away. Due to this lockdown, my work got affected. From past one week,

I have nothing to do. I sell fruits, for which I have to go to Ghazipur mandi and police are not allowing us to go there.

"I live in a rented accommodation and it will become very difficult for us to give rent and bear us daily expenses. We can somehow manage these things in Moradabad," Singh said.

On Saturday, thousands of daily wagers and labourers from Delhi, Haryana and even Punjab reached Anand Vihar, Ghazipur and Ghaziabad's Lal Kuan areas after arduous treks on foot in a bid to ride buses to their respective native places.

Tripura CM asks to donate food, other essentials

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb on Sunday appealed to all wealthy businessmen in the state, including brick kiln and tea garden owners, to donate food and other essentials for the destitute, amid the lockdown imposed by the Centre to check the spread of COVID-19.

In his address from Doordarshan Kendra, Agartala, Deb said his government was striving hard to ensure everyone in the state was safe and healthy.

"I appeal to tea garden owners, brick kiln owners, businessmen, traders and government employees who can afford to help others to donate food to the

poor and the needy in their respective areas," Deb said in his televised appeal.

The government will remember those who were reaching out to the poor, and return the favour, when the time is right, the chief minister said.

On availability of food supplies, Deb said Tripura has rice in stock which would last up to 76 days, wheat sufficient for 52 days, sugar for 15 days, salt for 24 days and petrol for up to eight days. Meanwhile, Tripura's lone Rajya Sabha MP and prominent CPI(M) leader, Jharna Das Baidya, has allocated Rs 1 crore from her MPLAD fund for procuring testing kits and other necessary medical equipment.

Punjab govt issues advisory, asks industry not to sack workers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government has issued an advisory to industries and commercial establishments in the state, asking them not to terminate employees or deduct their wages, as non-essential factories remain shut due to a countrywide lockdown to combat coronavirus.

Any employee who takes leave due to the COVID-19 pandemic should be treated on duty as also the workers of factories or units made non-operational by any government order over coronavirus, the advisory said.

Principal Secretary (Labour) V K Janjua said the department felt that termination of workforce or deduction in their salaries would hamper the



morale of workers in this fight to contain the virus. "We have issued an advisory," he said.

Notably, on Saturday, reports emerged from neighbouring Haryana about migrant workers setting out on foot to go back to their homes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. All modes of transport have been suspended

due to the countrywide lockdown announced on March 24. In the advisory, the labour department has asked all employers, owners of factories, shops and commercial establishments not to terminate the services or deduct the wages of their workers, particularly casual or contractual ones.

Salman to help to 25k workers of bollywood

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has pledged to financially support 25,000 daily wage workers from the film industry in the wake of the national lockdown, according to Federation of Western Indian Cine Employees (FWICE).

The country is witnessing a 21-day lockdown, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to contain the spread of the virus. The daily wage workers across different avenues are badly hit by the lockdown.

According to FWICE president B N Tiwari, Salman via his Being Human Foundation reached out to their organisation to help the workers.

"Salman's Being Human



Foundation has come forward to help daily wage workers. They called us three days ago. We have about 5 lakh workers out of which 25,000 are in dire need of financial help. Being Human Foundation said they will take care of these workers on their own. They have asked for account details of these 25,000 workers as they want to ensure that money reaches them directly," Tiwari said.

BMC opens 31 fever clinics

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, the metropolitan municipal corporation of Bengaluru on Sunday started 31 fever clinics in Bengaluru.

Working on a war-footing, the BBMP set up these clinics a day after announcing the launch of these hospitals.

These clinics will work all the week days including government holidays from 9 am to 4.30 pm where the fever test camp will be held, the BBMP said in a press release.

The BBMP said these clinics have been equipped with all the necessary equipment and adequate number of doctors and paramedics.

"Fever clinics are being set up in Bengaluru under the guidance of Special Commissioner Dr Ravi Kumar Surpur which will help ramp up infrastructure and thereby

increase the number of First Response Clinics during the lockdown," the BBMP said in a statement.

It also said drugs and medicines, protocols, staffing, sanitization and surveillance were issues focused on during the video conferencing with 187 BBMP Health Centres.

The Palike also said that seventeen hotels have been identified in the city to quarantine the suspected COVID-19 patients. Air-conditioners will not be used in these hotels. Payments will be made to these hotels based on the occupancy of patients.

The BBMP also set up a war room to deal with the coronavirus patients. The doctors deployed have been trained on how to handle patients walking in with #Covid19 symptoms, Palike said in a press release. The civic agency said 187 frontline warriors were trained concurrently.

Kamathipura sex workers struggle to survive amid lockdown

PNS ■ MUMBAI

It is late afternoon and still no customer has turned up at her door in Kamathipura, infamous as the flesh trade district of Mumbai.

This is the eighth day that sex worker Soni, 49, has not got a single "kastamber" (customer), as she pronounces it. Dressed in a velvet maxi, she peeps out every now and then from behind the curtain of her room door on the road outside lying empty, in view of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus.

The situation has brought despair not just for her but for thousands of other sex workers who have been involved in prostitution in Kamathipura since several decades.

Soni, who hails from Nepal,



has been a sex worker in the '10th gully' of Kamathipura since the last 25 years.

"Poora jindagi idhar nikala, itna bam fata, attack hua, kitna bimari aya, lekin aisa halat kabhi nahi tha" (spent the whole life in this work. The city witnessed bomb blasts, attacks, many diseases, but this kind of situation never occurred in the

past," she told PTI in 'Mumbai style' Hindi. She has not earned a single rupee since last Sunday and does not see any chance of the situation improving in the next few days. "If this continues, what will I eat, how will I pay rent to room owner as the questions before me," she said.

Besides Soni, there are three more women in the room who

Small she is, big is her heart for the infected

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

The outbreak of COVID-19 across the country has brought out several latent humanitarian qualities and concern of people hit by the infection. A two-and-a-half-year-old child Spoorthy in Villupuram in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, along with her parents S J Raganathan, an auditor, and Shalini, a home-maker, was listening to the Prime Minister's recent address to the nation on the deadly virus.

The child was so moved by the current situation caused by the spread of the virus that she made an instant announcement to contribute her savings to the Prime Minister's fund.

Pleasantly surprised by the girl's resolve, her father asked her what was the source of her contributions.

Without hesitation, Spoorthy



now in a play school said she had been saving the money given to her by her parents for the last two-and-a-half years in a small 'hundi' (an earthen piggy bank).

She got her father's permission to break the 'hundi' and the parents counted the amount saved by the tiny-tot, which was around Rs 4,400. The child felt that the amount be divided equally and contributed to the Relief Funds of Prime Minister and the Tamil Nadu CM.

Lessons from the East

Prolonged lockdown can't be a solution and we need to learn from control models in Japan, South Korea and China

Let there be no doubt that India, which had probably misread the extent of the COVID-19 explosion at home, desperately needed to hold the upward curve by way of a lockdown. It looks draconian at the moment but given the huge humanitarian crisis it has generated, with the exodus of daily wage earners back to their villages on foot — a heaving mass of humans that can accelerate the spread — it can only be a stopgap. Dragging the economic slowdown further would mean the country would barely manage to pull along and its vast unorganised labour force would have to live in penury. Which is why all stakeholders concerned should use this lockdown to plan alternative containment strategies. Hereon, India, like any other country in the world, would have to learn to live with the virus. China, Japan and South Korea have already executed templates that work as both our Government and private stakeholders are now planning to ramp up testing kits and facilities on a war footing. Without this, we would not be able to make head or tail of the subterranean monster at work, which might be sleeping during a lockdown. All three nations have resorted to an aggressive testing protocol and enforced quarantine during the early onset of the disease, thereby arresting it, and codified a new lifestyle with military precision. The latter may seem like an insurmountable challenge in India but given the innovative distancing and no-contact models developed in some Government ration shops in some of our smallest towns, might not seem an impossibility. A vaccine isn't coming till the second half of 2021 and till then only a practicable and implementable containment model can work.

Both Japan and South Korea, despite being so close to China, have evolved containment models and have not locked down either the economy or airports, although they've limited civic movement by encouraging work from home possibilities. In South Korea, once the country with the worst outbreak outside China, there is some semblance of normalcy around COVID-19, considering that it had internalised lessons from the first outbreak of a virus causing respiratory syndromes. It has one of the lowest casualty rates from COVID-19 in the world, just one per cent, simply because it is transparent, has mass-tested people (at accessible points like drive-throughs) enforced quarantine and traced contacts. It has even prepared itself for a relapse scenario by stockpiling on supplies like masks and other equipment. It has tested early and it has been swift. There was a time when medical experts were diagnosing more than 900 new cases a day. Yet it flattened the curve. It continues to remain vigilant through data analytics, looking for newer hotspots as they emerge and going for precise and targeted action. At the same time, the South Korean Government created a GPS-enabled app to monitor those under quarantine and set off an alarm if they ventured outdoors. Travellers entering the country are also being asked to record their symptoms on a state-sponsored app. In fact, the term "social distancing" originated here, with the Government codifying and marking spaces for use at public spaces like railway platforms and aggressively propagating guidelines on minutiae like using lifts and common spaces even in apartment complexes. China has used mass surveillance and algorithms to trace contact circles, quarantine them, monitor their daily activity and identify potential hotspots. Apartment blocks have scanners to monitor and screen every resident. Japan is unique, too, simply because it has ensured that 80 per cent of identified cases didn't pass on the infection. No matter how badly it handled the cruise ship *Diamond Princess*, it targeted infection clusters at a comparatively early stage and contained the spread. Of course, Japan's hygiene standards are impeccable — most people wear a mask at public spaces round the year and use sanitisers frequently. Washing hands works better for us and we have a habit that can be built upon. Besides with a culture that is not effusive about hugs and shaking hands, Japan has the advantage of having internalised a social distancing protocol longer than us. That's why Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that his nation did not need an emergency. Like us, all these countries have high population densities with a high propagation possibility. And like us, they all belong to an Asian culture. It is from these examples that we can draw as, though we are frail on health infrastructure, we can leverage technology to work out enforceable pre-emptive protocols. And use our popular culture media to disseminate the idea of a new way of living.

Animal farm

Wild animals straying into city streets during the lockdown show how we have stifled our biodiversity

They say the Coronavirus is Nature's way of reclaiming its space on its terms for all the degradation of its splendour and resources by humans. So cities across India, that are at a standstill, with no vehicles or people across vast swathes, are witnessing unfamiliar sights of wild animals straying from the natural sanctuaries they have sought out around the peripheries. From Italy to Japan to Thailand and even in India, the roads, that perhaps were once their transit corridors, are now part of their return journeys. In Japan, herds of sika deer, that you got to see only at the tourist hotspot called Nara Park, were seen wandering the streets. In Italy, one of the worst-hit countries by COVID-19, people spotted sheep and horses wandering around without a shepherd or rider. In Spain, more wild boars are having a free run in quiet, deserted streets. Back home, too, there are plenty of videos of animals frolicking on city roads. In Punjab's Chandigarh, a sambar deer was seen walking on a zebra crossing. And in northern Kerala's Kozhikode, the critically endangered civet, a species not seen since the 1990s, casually strolled past police patrol. Closer home, in Noida, nilgais are literally wandering the street in front of an otherwise busy mall. In the mornings, the twitter of the heron, the mynah and unseen birds soothes our souls.

While the wild animals may be testing newer territories, most of the urban species like street dogs, cats, monkeys and stray cows are not having it so good. Dependent on food waste generated by eateries and restaurants and home clearances limited in a time of crisis, these creatures are going hungry. Except for some samaritans, city animals and birds have been forced to fend for themselves foraging in garbage dumps. They are also a vulnerable lot as they could get the virus from humans instead. We cannot ignore them as they are part of our ecosystem too. This is our wake-up call, for co-existence, co-dependence and the dire need to reverse our relationship with the sentient world. We care little for the natural world though ancient texts tell us about protecting and nurturing every creature or *jiva*, not exploiting them selfishly. Can a Coronavirus-free world ensure that endangered species do not go extinct? Can we limit indiscriminate human action that is causing much damage to the entire ecosystem and biodiversity? Can our cities develop mini sanctuaries and forests within them so that the animal world can thrive? Predatory food chain behaviour is not working, we must change that to accommodate the lesser species for our well-being.

Can our cities develop mini sanctuaries and forests within them so that the animal world can thrive? Predatory food chain behaviour is not working, we must change that to accommodate the lesser species for our well-being.

opinion Friendship in trouble

If COVID-19 does stall/delay Chinese 'aid' to Pakistan, which is heavily dependent on it, the latter could be saddled with incomplete projects and unsustainable interest payments



BHOPINDER SINGH

As the inevitability and magnitude of the impact COVID-19 would have on global economies sinks in, with estimates worsening day by day, there is no denying the fact that those economies substantially dependent on China will be poised precariously. The traditional Chinese Sinosphere strategem had been to bankroll, financially and diplomatically, desperate regimes with the help of readily available, uncomplicated and "non-judgmental" Chinese largesse. The dragon leveraged its treasury to systematically ensnare alienated regimes in Pyongyang, Islamabad and Tehran among others to even include financially gasping countries in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, right across to Polynesian Islands, all under its tutelage.

The Chinese economic juggernaut funded its hegemonic instincts and Beijing rapidly connected the dots with "win-win" infrastructural projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), supporting inter-linkages like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). For this purpose, it even used the ports around the String of Pearls, which vassalised nations and made them directly susceptible to Chinese whims as also fate.

Pakistan is among the most hinged nations within the Sinosphere, which is poised to feel the direct squeeze of COVID-19. China will inevitably recalibrate its priorities and focus on protecting itself from immediate damage before being concerned about others. Extreme paranoia about managing the expectations of its 1.4 billion population, to avoid a USSR-like implosion, haunts the regime. Such are the insecurities faced by the single-party Government over there. China deploys a combination of fear, opportunism, populism and nationalism to willfully or unwillingly get its populace to accept one-party rule. The bargaining assurance is continuous societal progression of the Chinese masses and their lifestyle.

Undeniable progress on various socio-economic parameters has allowed that bargain between the regime and the Chinese people to maintain the status quo. Now, this economic miracle runs the real risk of a very hard landing as the entire Chinese ecosystem goes into a COVID-19 "containment mode," which will necessitate a pullback from internationalist priorities. Top Chinese priority would now be on a domestic stimulus package that entails a slew of Government-led spending, investments, subsidies and all sorts of deliberate financial pumping that will automatically shrink budgets for external endeavours, at least temporarily.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani economy is on a ventilator mode. It has partaken a record 22nd bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) besides the many "aid packages" from China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While the conditionalities of the IMF's \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) will be subject to unpopular economic reforms and would



be doled out only in tranches, the Chinese have been the single most generous source, donating \$4.6 billion in the form of deposits and commercial loans.

Ties with the US are circumspect. Though the Taliban peace deal may force optics of a thaw but hopes for any meaningful financial aid from Washington, DC, are highly unlikely. Not only has Pakistan maxed out its deals with Saudi Arabia and the UAE but it has unendured itself to both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi recently by cozying up to a rival "bloc" within the Ummahie, the Turkey-Malaysia-Qatar-Iran combine. This leaves limited scope for any more substantial inflow from the Arab Sheikhdoms. Pakistan has extremely limited manoeuvring space. The only viable option is/was China.

Our neighbour has survived embarrassing defaults in the balance of payment timelines by borrowing more. The singular hope that is described by the establishment over there as the "game-changer" is the China-funded CPEC. This \$62 billion infrastructural hope is mired in dangerous opacity with credible murmurs of disproportionate pro-China terms, sovereignty compromises and an eventualty of China's fabled "debt trap." All of this leads it to abject surrender to Beijing. Law-makers had earlier likened the CPEC to a modern-day East India company, yet with no alternatives for an economic revival in sight, the

“ THE TIMING OF COVID-19 COULD NOT BE WORSE FROM ISLAMABAD'S PERSPECTIVE AS PHASE-II OF THE CPEC PROJECT AND ITS BENEFITS ARE KEY TO THE SURVIVAL OF ITS ECONOMY. THE BILL FOR FULL CHINESE AID COULD COMPOUND TO A CRUSHING ESTIMATE OF NEARLY \$100 BILLION OVER THE NEXT THREE DECADES ”

CPEC is the sole sovereign punt. Such are the stakes involved that the Pakistani military has raised and deployed a dedicated division to protect the CPEC imperatives. It is now raising a second dedicated division level force. The gargantuan investment in CPEC is "aided" by China. The CPEC project has just completed phase-I but the forthcoming phase-II is predominantly about industrial cooperation, agriculture and trade — essentially the component that is more relevant to the Pakistanis than the Chinese.

The timing of COVID-19 could not be worse from Islamabad's perspective as phase-II and its benefits are key to its economy's survival. The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had openly warned the IMF a couple of years back against bailing out Pakistan. He feared that such an aid would be used by it to repay Chinese lenders. Today, the bill for full Chinese "aid," if it were still to be given, could compound to a crushing estimate of nearly \$100 billion over the next three decades. If COVID-19 does stall the Chinese "aid," then Pakistan could be saddled with incomplete projects and unsustainable interest payments for the "aid" already taken.

Beyond bailouts and commerce, "all-weather friendship" has seen China provide invaluable diplomatic and military provisioning. While this could continue, the material wares

may not necessarily come on terms as "soft" as earlier, given the financial angularity. Islamabad is also over-indexed in trade with a whopping 18 per cent of its total trade with China. This also accounts for over 31 per cent of the total imports by Pakistan. This disproportionate tilt exacerbates the Pakistani situation with looming disruptions from China.

While the exact long-term impact of COVID-19 is still unknown and China is known to have sufficient economic buffers, wherewithal and a strategic commitment to withstand setbacks with speedy recalibrations, the health of Pakistan to withstand even a temporary "switch-off" is suspect. Pakistan is too dependent on China to manage without its "aid," especially given its recent relationships with other potential donors.

Unsurprisingly, Pakistan has pitched countries like Turkey to sell the CPEC dream and incredulously so, even the US. American diplomat Alice Wells nipped the idea in the bud by sounding out the alarm bells on CPEC *per se*, even without accounting for the new curveball of COVID-19. This could be the proverbial last straw. As of now, all global economies are mired in untellable uncertainties of post-Corona revival, some completely China-hinged like Pakistan, worse so.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUNDBITE

At this time of crisis we have to be compassionate to our fellow citizens. I'm sure to operators shall respond to this call and provide support to migrant workers.

Union Minister
—Nitin Gadkari



Appearing in pageants gave me great confidence. It's something I'm proud of. It gave me a trampoline to my acting career and a sense of self, a sense of confidence.

Actor
—Priyanka Chopra



It's clear that we have entered a recession. We project a rebound in 2021 but only if we contain the virus and prevent liquidity problems from becoming a solvency issue.

IMF chief
—Kristalina Georgieva



'Back to villages' in crowded buses or on foot has significantly dented the lockdown. It is another distressing example of the Government's unpreparedness.

Congress leader
—P Chidambaram



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protect the workers

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "States take charge" (March 28). In desperate times as we are right now due to the spread of Coronavirus, united efforts on the part of stakeholders — the local administration, State and Central Governments — can help us tide the present crisis.

Relief packages announced by the Government will aid our efforts to fight the disease but this may not be enough. The enormity of the situation is such that there are millions of underprivileged people, who are faced with dual challenges. On the one hand, they have been robbed off their livelihood opportunities, which has forced them to walk back home. On the other, mass movements of migrant workers make them susceptible to the virus, defeating the very purpose of a lockdown.

These workers need to stay put where they are. State Governments must join hands and help migrant workers by assuring them proper care, be it in the form of providing temporary shelter or food. Governments in Kerala, Punjab and West Bengal have been

doing exemplary work. Other States must learn from them. Only a collaborative approach will help us sail through.

Bal Govind
Noida

Understand the science of Coronavirus

At a time when social media is flooded with myths and spurious theories, we should be amenable to trust only scientific data and evidence. Efforts must be made to spread information regarding the novel Coronavirus — how it infects the body, what it does and how the body treats/reacts to it. A basic knowledge of the disease will equip us better in the battle against the pandemic. The Coronavirus is a RNA virus with the capability to reproduce and replicate itself. It infects the cell lining of the throat, airways and lungs. The spikes bind the virus on to the host cells and facilitate the infection.

Coronavirus is highly infectious and spreads easily. This is evident from the fact that the killer virus has become a pandemic within a few months of its outbreak. It is, usually or mostly, transmitted from one person, who is infected, to another through droplets while sneezing or coughing. Disinfecting localities where people are "condemned" to live in groups like slums and refugee camps is important. The hand, too, is a vector. This necessitates "regular and thorough" hand washing with water or hand sanitizers. Once inside the host, the virus uses the cell as a "factory" for reproduction and infects more cells. A correlation between age and fatality has been discerned but no age group is immune to the infection or its consequences. The virus multiplies and



becomes a viral load in the face of the immune system's failure to fight it. It puts people with pre-existing conditions such as cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease at greater risk. While "lockdown" helps in containment, testing, identifying, isolating, tracking and tracing contacts are indispensable to break the chain of transmission. Till scientists succeed in developing safe and effective vaccines to save mankind from the scourge, we are left with no option but to continue to take precautionary measures to protect ourselves from the life-threatening Coronavirus.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Keep up the good work

Sir — Along with the medical professionals, the police force, too, must be lauded for risking their

lives in a bid to protect the citizens from falling prey to one of the deadliest virus the world has seen in recent times. Though in most cases the police has been dealing with the public patiently,

sometimes, they are forced to take severe action as some people are not taking the virus seriously, flouting all rules and regulations. If not for the police, the lockdown would have ended in chaos in most parts of the nation. The society is yet to understand the gravity of the situation. The Government must ensure that our personnel are provided with all essentials like masks, gloves and sanitisers to protect them from falling a prey to the virus.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Role of the media

Sir — At a time when the entire world is combating COVID-19, the media has been doing a commendable job by giving all updates regarding the virus without thinking about their own safety. Today, because of the media, people from different religions, have come together to fight the infection and have understood the importance of hygiene and health.

Varsha
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Pandemic not the first nor the last

The present experience forms a part of the collage of this planet's history. How we respond will determine how the future shall emerge



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Clearly the planet is passing through challenging times. However, this is not the first time in the history of mankind that, what is now being termed as a "pandemic", has struck. From plagues, to floods to various viral threats, the Earth has periodically witnessed humongous disasters. It is all chronicled for anyone with a curious mind who wants to update his/her knowledge about the Blue Planet. This is also not the first time, nor will it be the last, when a disease has struck to which there is no known, tested and established antidote available. However, such experiences in the digital era acquire a completely unique aura and dimension. News travels at a speed which has not even been mapped.

A comparative perspective emerges as never before in history. When the nationwide lockdown was announced, one of the questions that was uppermost on everyone's minds was: Has a complete shutdown ever been attempted at such a scale, to include all 1.3 billion people, all together? Add to it the unique dimension of the period over which it will be spread: Three weeks.

To the singularity of the situation add the diversity of the ethnological clusters, which make up the composition of this country. Compound this lay of the land with the reality of the distances people travel to make a living.

Remember, the announcement of the lockdown was based on the expectation that people would stay put wherever they were. The trek that some people have undertaken, in certain cases over several hundred kilometres, to get back to their places of origin can only be an act of desperation brought on my heartless, unscrupulous employers/businessmen. This aspect of the ground condition was not factored in for sure and is not amenable to debates and arguments.

Times such as these, unleash a barrage of perceptions. Kathleen O'Meara's poem *And people stayed home* written in 1869 has been evoked: "And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently."

Some philosophising has been met with some re-envisioning. The wise are shaking their heads and saying that things will never be the same again. The nature of resources will have to be recalibrated, the nature of work shall change, nature of skill-formation and education will have evolved paradigms.

With the aviation sector down to less than half of its normal operational strength and seafarers almost left to stare at the empty blue wilderness, based on no movement on their part, self-isolation has acquired many more overtones than what the dictionary has so far granted.

Clearly we are passing through seminal times. There can be no discussion of this without some reference to climate change or speculation over nature having its "revenge." The full imprint of the experiences of the last few weeks on the present and future of the Earth will take time to become evident. Yet, it does not take a genius to realise that the contribution of the human species to the present plight of the planet has not been insignificant.

Typically, a research by Alexander Kotch and his colleagues is reported to indicate certain theories. Of them, one is that climate change did not begin with industrialisation. They propose an alternate theory to an understanding of climate change. This was projected for publication in 2019. The study holds that changes in the environment, of the territorial focus of the study, (the Americas), began with the disease and war which the European migrants brought there. By their reported estimates, 90 per cent of the indigenous populations were wiped out by pestilence, warfare and the after-effects of this movement. With Christopher Columbus pioneering the route to the Indies in 1492, began the process which altered the character of the population there, in a hundred years, by simple decimation. Colonisation, virulent or otherwise, altered the character of the ecosystems they ventured into. Most colonisers were essentially "soldiers of fortune." They may not even have been aware of what they could be triggering but the "innocence" of the culprit does not change the fallout of the nature of the act.

The reported media findings hold that this ushered in new vegetation which "preserved" heat. It trapped carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Other researches have thrown up differing theories. There is one attributing the phenomena, this time, of severe cold, to weak solar activity and heightened volcanic activity.

Irrespective, the consensus seems to be that study of the history of mankind must begin with the recognised date of presence of mankind on this planet and not have a beginning, marked with a bias towards "records" of history.

The present experience forms a part of the collage of this planet's history. How we respond will determine how the future shall emerge.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant)

WE HAVE IMPOSED FULL CURFEW. WE DID NOT GAUGE SEVERITY (OF COVID-19) EARLIER. BUT AFTER THE VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH MODI WE REALISED.
 —PRAMOD SAWANT
 GOA CHIEF MINISTER

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I HAVE URGED THE GOVERNOR TO INTERVENE ON THE ISSUE OF SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES. I AM SURE HIS MEDIATION WILL BRING RELIEF TO GOANS.
 —DIGAMBAR KAMAT
 LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Adapt to remain alive

Businesses across the world and in India are facing unprecedented shutdowns and many may not survive the Coronavirus' economic impact. However, those who remain alert and pliant will endure



HIMA BINDU KOTA

COVID-19 has caused worldwide disruption and all countries are desperately battling this virus. From the most developed nations of the world to the least developed, all are sailing in the same boat. Businesses across the world, both small and large, are facing unprecedented shutdowns and many may not survive this global pandemic. Given the scale of the economic damage being inflicted by the Coronavirus, it is absolutely necessary to understand the risks faced by our businesses in these times.

Social distancing may become a norm: According to Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, most of the time flu-like activity peaks between December and February, although activity can last as late as May. So, in times to come, during the December to March period, it is possible that some virus or the other may rear its ugly head. We may have to get used to the concept of social distancing during these months, which means lower footfalls in malls and shopping areas and a decline in consumer purchases during these times.

Lower employee productivity: The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated the annual mortality burden of influenza to be between 2,50,000 to 5,00,000 globally. Based on the 2019 research paper of Gianino and other researchers on the Italian industry, the economic burden of absenteeism due to influenza and other virus-related infections was studied. According to them, the highest number of working days lost were reported in the 40-49 age group, accounting for 37 per cent of the total costs. So, every business may be impacted with employees taking long leave due to sickness, either directly or indirectly. Businesses in future may need to adjust to flexible working hours due to several reasons — sickness and tending to children due to school or day care closures.

Stressed logistics network: Globalisation and integrated business have increased the length, complexity and vulnerability of supply chains. Now most companies rely on vendors located in Asia for their businesses to function normally. With the entire world affected by COVID-19, we are already facing delays in the logistics network and the same situation can arise in the future, too.

Economic instability: The world is going through major economic turmoil. Consumers have started spending less and industries are feeling the impact, particularly as more and more nations go into lockdown to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Investors are pulling money from markets and corporations are cutting back their investments. Since the economic engine of growth is driven by continuous investment as well as consumption, any cutback in any one or both aspects may lead to recession or economic instability. In fact, economists are already warning of the possibility of a recession in the near future due to the lockdowns.

With these risks facing the business world, how should organisations prepare themselves for these unpredictable times? Here are some strategies.

Safety first: Safety, of both employees and customers, should be the logical requirement of any organisation during any crisis, particularly during a pandemic like the Coronavirus outbreak. Even before the 21-day lockdown began in India, many companies began allowing people to work from home. Once the lockdown is lifted, people will return to their offices. Here are some of the strategies that businesses can employ to ensure that their employees are safe. They can spread the correct information about COVID-19 and the way to stop its spread in the office. Going forward, organisations have to make relevant changes in their sick leave policies and

“ COVID-19 HAS STOPPED THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WHEEL. AS INDIVIDUALS ARE WORKING FROM HOME, HAVE STOPPED OR CUT DOWN THEIR SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND BINGE SHOPPING TO FIND SOLACE AT HOME IN THE COMPANY OF THEIR LOVED ONES, BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE TO TAKE CRISIS MANAGEMENT AS A PRIORITY AND WORK TOWARDS CREATING RESILIENT ORGANISATIONS TO WITHSTAND THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT ”



encourage people who are sick to take leave and not come to office due to anxiety over job loss. Formalise this situation by creating new policies for your organisation like an incubation policy, where employees suspected of contracting the COVID-19 virus, can take time off and quarantine themselves. This could be an added policy for your organisation to refer to during any future epidemics. Allow employees to take time off if their relatives or family members are sick. Consider all non-essential travel and use technology to its maximum potential. In addition, make sure that the entire workplace is sanitised before the employees start working again. Showing compassion towards your employees can help both the organisation and employees in these difficult times.

Business continuity: After ensuring the relevant safety for your employees, the challenge is to ensure the continuity of business operations during this pandemic. Some technology-driven organisations may continue operations from remote locations but other traditional manufacturing companies may have to shut their operations temporarily. The impact is not only economic but also social and cultural. For example, Ford, General Motors, Fiat Chrysler, Honda, Toyota and Hyundai have shut their factories in the US. Ford and Daimler have also suspended their production in European factories. The airline industry is bearing the brunt of this virus, with both international and domestic travel severely restricted. All industries are affected with sporting leagues across the world being shut down, the Olympics being called off, major gatherings, including technological events and music festivals cancelled and restaurants and malls closed. To make sure your business continues, establish a reliable communication process with your employees and actively involve them in developing and updating your plans. Unpredictability is the unfortunate reality of the pandemic that the world is fac-

ing now. The way it impacts your business is not known, it may show an immediate effect or the financial distress may take months to become apparent. Protection of your business should be the ultimate goal and a proper scenario analysis that addresses several situations should be created by business owners. Analyse how operationally efficient you are. Are you lean enough to pull this off without a severe impact? Identify your critical operations and key resources that would enable the critical business functions. So focus on mainly three things: Key personnel, important clients and raw materials/supplies required. After identifying critical success factors, create contingency plans for each category. Training of employees to act as back-up for key personnel is crucial and make sure that raw materials/inventory are stocked to tide over any disruptions in supply chain networks.

Prepare your organisation to survive: For many organisations, the first and foremost way to deal with any crisis is development of risk management policies which are detailed contingency plans to assess and respond to any pandemic/disaster. But in these VUCA (volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous) times is simply having guidelines/frameworks/plans or policies sufficient? Or is there a need for companies to be ever-alert and agile, with a keen sense of the changing environment and the ability to respond quickly and efficiently?

The answer is that only companies that can respond quickly can survive in these unpredictable times. To do this effectively, the structure of the organisation may require some changes. An organisation which is hierarchical in its structure with centralised leadership, driven by strict policies with a concentrated workforce of specialists, will definitely have problems in changing, whereas a networked organisation with distributed leadership, driven by flexible and simple policies with dispersed

workforce of generalists will be less rigid and springy and will be able to adapt and survive these unprecedented and unpredictable times.

Collaboration is the key: The uncertainty created by Coronavirus does not have any precedence in contemporary times. No one has any clue as to how long this crisis will continue and what would be the cumulative impact of this virus on the global economy. In this situation, collaboration, co-development and cooperation of organisations with other institutions and members of the community, would be the key to survival. All of us have to tide over this crisis together.

Add a new source of revenue: Winston Churchill once famously said "Never let any crisis go waste." Organisations should take this opportunity and try and create new revenue streams. A cue can be taken from airports, which transformed themselves into entertainment hubs by adding restaurants, shops and so on, after the September 11 attacks and in the process added to their revenue streams. The same goes for banks as they added different fee-based services after the 2008 financial crisis.

COVID-19 has stopped the global economic, social and cultural wheel. As individuals are working from home, have stopped or cut down their social gatherings and binge-shopping to find solace at home in the company of their loved ones, business leaders have to take crisis management as a priority and work towards creating resilient organisations to withstand the unpredictability of the current economic environment. However, at the same time, they have to be flexible and agile enough to adapt to these fast-changing times. By doing so, organisations can try and protect themselves against a range of threats, both natural and man-made, including the COVID-19 pandemic that we all are facing now.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

Of contagions and conspiracy theories

In societies hardwired to understand life through the lens of faith alone, it is a challenge for the Government to impose certain restrictions during outbreaks like the one the world is facing right now



NADEEM PARACHA

A worried colleague at my office asked another if it was okay for a Muslim to use hand sanitisers that contained alcohol. The second colleague took a step back from the inquirer and sardonically replied: "Were the Saudis using juice to disinfect the holy sites?" Later in the day, I saw the worried colleague washing his hands with an alcohol-based sanitiser. Personally, I did not feel any annoyance towards him. There are many like him whose minds have been bombarded with numerous, often

contradictory, ideas about faith and morality. According to Andrew Newberg, the Director of Research at Philadelphia's Thomas Jefferson University, overtly religious people "have more tissue in the frontal lobes, or regions of the brain associated with attention and reward." Therefore, they are what they are not only due to doctrinal reasons but also due to a physiological variance.

In societies that have been hardwired to understand life through the lens of faith alone, it is a challenge for the Government to impose certain restrictions during pandemics. For example, how to tell people not to gather at mosques, temples or churches? A scientific explanation alone does not cut it. That's why one often sees Governments utilise clerics and priests in such societies to wrap the scientific rationale in theological justifications.

The March 14 issue of *The Guardian* reports that a cleric of a major mosque in conservative Kuwait

changed certain words of the *azaan* (call to prayer). Instead of inviting people to come pray at the mosque, he asked them to pray at home due to the Coronavirus scare.

Thousands of miles away, in the otherwise constitutionally secular US, newspaper reports suggest that instructions to the people by the authorities to avoid attending church services in the so-called "Bible belt states", have increased anxiety levels in regular church-goers. In India, a country recently in the grip of Hindutva nationalism, a Hindu organisation invited fellow Hindus to a "party" where cow urine was served to the guests as a serum against COVID-19.

Psychologists believe that a crisis that may restrict people from engaging with their faith in a normal manner can also cause anxiety within the caretakers of faith — they may become more brazenly exhibitionistic to remain relevant or to "save faith" from eroding.

On March 16, a video clip of a Muslim cleric in Pakistan went viral in which he was inviting people to a large rally and claiming that "God will never allow anyone at the rally to be infected by the virus."

To secularists and even moderate believers, such acts may seem bizarre. Yet, these acts are not emitting from the lunatic fringes of society as such. They are taking place within mainstream segments that have been hardwired to understand reality from a religious point of view — or rather, from their particular religious point of view.

At the same time, there are numerous believers in Muslim, Christian and Hindu societies who do not see any dichotomy between faith and science. In fact, they maintain that their respective faiths are flexible enough to better harness science. Then there are the usual conspiracy theorists. Once relegated to the confines of the so-called lunatic fringe, the

mushrooming of social media outlets, in the last 20 years or so, has lobbed their ideas and claims into mainstream discourses.

One of the stickiest conspiracy theories about the outbreak of COVID-19 doing the rounds is that the virus is in fact man-made and/or it is a "biological weapon" gone astray or — worse — it has been deliberately deployed by China or the US or even that it has been spread to enrich pharmaceutical companies.

There is not an iota of evidence to substantiate these claims. But conspiracy theorists do not deal in evidence, only in connecting disparate dots which may make sense in minds plagued by fear and uncertainty. Viruses have been around for millions of years. Humans have continued to develop antibodies to fight them through the natural evolutionary process or by developing vaccines which introduce new antibodies in the system to ward off what virologists call

"Novel viruses." The dreaded COVID-19 is one such virus. It's a "flu virus" but it isn't the first, nor will it be the last. There have been at least six flu or influenza pandemics in the past. There may have been more but scientists so far have been able to trace just six in the last century and a half. Virologists trace the viruses of each of these pandemics to infected birds who transferred the virus to a mammalian animal before it entered the human body. Bird viruses are largely unable to stick to human cells and when they do, are often slain by human antibodies. However, sometimes, through the evolutionary mutation process, a flu virus from a bird manages to stick to a cell of a mammal. There, it further mutates and is then able to stick more easily to human cells. Further mutations help it fight off human antibodies rendering them obsolete, and this is when the virus becomes "Novel." The natural development of new antibodies, or antibodies triggered through a

vaccine, are the only means to neutralise it. The COVID-19 outbreak has been traced back to an animal and seafood market in Wuhan, China. An infected bat infected a pangolin from which a human handler caught the mutating virus. Many outside China have demanded that the Chinese stop eating "strange animals."

But do they really? Yes, some do. Why? According to Frederick J. Simoons in *Food in China: A Cultural and Historical Inquiry*, China has a history of eating rats, snakes and dogs during famine. The practice receded in the early 20th century but returned when Mao Zedong's radical economic policies in the late 1950s triggered widespread famines. But even after the famines receded in the late 1970s, the practice of getting meat from unusual sources continued in some quarters.

Nevertheless, shops dealing in "unusual meat", are now likely to be closed down for good.

(Courtesy: Dawn)

CAPSULE



NPPA asks to ensure distribution of mask, glove, sanitiser

NEW DELHI: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has asked all state and UT governments to ensure availability and distribution of masks, gloves and sanitisers in the wake of novel coronavirus outbreak. In a letter to the chief secretaries of all state and UT governments, NPPA Chairperson Shubhra Singh has asked them to resolve issues in movement of stock and manpower on priority to ensure uninterrupted production and supply of medicines and medical devices in the country. Stating that it is learnt that various state governments/UTs are facing problems in placing orders for masks, gloves, sanitisers due to non-availability of details of manufacturers of these items, letter enclosed a indicative list of manufacturers received from the industry body AiMeD.

DLF Foundation donates Rs 5 cr to Haryana CMRF

NEW DELHI: DLF Foundation, the CSR arm of realty major DLF, has donated Rs 5 crore to Haryana CM's relief fund and is also distributing dry ration, cooked meals, face masks and sanitisers to migrant workers affected by the nationwide lockdown. "The COVID-19 has disrupted normal life and business in India and across the world. The need of the hour is to protect all sections of society in the country and to keep them safe and protected," DLF Foundation said in a statement. "Rs 5 crore has been donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in Haryana," it said. Enumerating some other steps taken, DLF Foundation said the organisation in coordination with the district administration is providing cooked meals to more than 60,000 migrant labourers in Gurugram and Manesar.



Anil Agarwal for the 1st time takes board position

NEW DELHI: Metals and mining magnate Anil Agarwal has for the first time taken a board position on his flagship Indian firm, Vedanta Ltd, replacing his brother Navin. Agarwal, 66, who turned a tiny scrap metal business into a mining conglomerate, had so far headed the board of London-headquartered Vedanta Resources. The Indian flagship Vedanta Ltd houses its oil and gas, aluminium, power, iron ore, steel and copper business. In a statement, the company said Agarwal has been appointed "as the non-executive chairman of Vedanta Ltd".



USFDA classifies Sun Pharma's Halol facility

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Drug major Sun Pharmaceutical on Sunday said the US health regulator has classified its Halol facility in Gujarat as OAI. The USFDA had inspected the facility from December 03-13, 2019 and had issued eight observations, the company had earlier said in a regulatory filing in December. "The company has received a communication from the USFDA indicating that the Halol facility has been classified as OAI," Sun Pharma said in a BSE filing. The OAI classification implies inter-alia that the USFDA may withhold approval of any pending product applications or supplements filed from this facility till the outstanding observations are resolved, it added.

Labour Min allows EPF withdrawal amid lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The labour ministry has allowed over 6 crore subscribers of retirement fund body EPFO to withdraw an amount not exceeding their three months basic pay and dearness allowance from their EPF account in view of the lockdown to fight COVID-19.

The ministry has issued a notification in this regard on March 28, 2020 to amend the Employees' Provident Fund Scheme 1952, a labour ministry statement said.

The decision is taken in view of lockdown across the country to fight COVID-19.

The notification permitted non-refundable withdrawal not exceeding the basic wages and dearness allowance for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to the credit of their EPF



The ministry has issued a notification in this regard on March 28, 2020 to amend the Employees' Provident Fund Scheme 1952, a labour ministry statement said

account, which ever is less, the ministry said.

The COVID-19 has been declared pandemic and therefore employees working in establishments and factories across entire India, who are members of the EPF Scheme, 1952 are eligible for the benefits of non-refundable advance.

A sub-para (3) under para 68L has been inserted in the EPF scheme, 1952.

The amended Employees Provident Fund (Amendment) scheme, 2020 has come into force from March 28.

Following the notification, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has issued directions to its

field offices for promptly processing any applications received from members to help them fight the situation.

In its communication, the EPFO has stated that officers and staff must process claims of EPF subscribers promptly so that relief reaches the worker and his family to help them fight with COVID-19.

Union Bank expects Rs 2,500 cr benefits due to amalgamation : CEO

PNS ■ MUMBAI

State-owned Union Bank of India, which is amalgamating Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with it, hopes to reap cost benefits of over Rs 2,500 crore through rationalisation of branches and savings on technology on the combined entity.

The amalgamation of the three banks, which will be effective from April 1, is part of the government's mega consolidation of 10 public sector banks to create four global-sized lenders, beginning next financial year.

Union Bank said implementation of all the processes under amalgamation will happen without much disruption to customers and employees of



Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.

"There will be revenue generation due to cost cutting on account of branch rationalisation and also on the technology side. We are looking at more than Rs 2,500 crore of synergy benefits in the next three years," Union Bank of India's Managing Director and CEO Rajkiran Rai G told PTI in a telephonic interview.

Markets to focus on global cues, fresh news flow on Covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets will focus on global cues and fresh news flow on Covid-19 pandemic for further cues in a holiday-shortened week ahead, according to analysts. Equity markets will remain closed on Thursday for 'Ram Navami'.

"The stimulus package announced by the government and the RBI will have limited effect, until the actual impact of the contagion is known, both economically and with the number of infections. In spite of the relief rally seen this week, investors will need to be conservative in their investments and still focus only on accumulating quality stocks and not go all in," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Vikas Jain, Senior Research Analyst, Reliance Securities said,



"The uncertainty will keep the markets nervous and going ahead markets would now focus more on global cues and fresh news flow of Covid-19 pandemic". PMI data for the manufacturing sector is scheduled to be released on Thursday.

Also, auto companies will come out with their monthly sales data, which will keep the

Contributions to PMRF will help cos meet CSR obligations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Corporates have spent Rs 52,000 crore towards social welfare activities in the last five financial years and now making contributions to the Prime Minister's relief fund will further help them meet their obligations under the companies law, according to a senior government official.

As the country fights the outbreak of coronavirus, which has so far infected nearly 1,000 people, the government has initiated a slew of measures to deal with the situation.

The corporate affairs ministry has said contributions to the PM-CARES Fund would qualify as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending under the companies law.

Under the Companies Act, 2013 -- which is implemented by the ministry -- certain classes of profitable corporates are required to shell out at least two per cent



of their three-year annual average net profit towards CSR activities in a financial year. This provision came into force on April 1, 2014.

"The macro picture is that over the last 5 years, CSR contributions amounting to around Rs 52,000 have been made against total demand of around Rs 77,000 crore.

"In other words, some are not spending and some underspending whilst a few are spending

beyond their obligation. More than 50 per cent of the companies are fulfilling their CSR obligations in full," Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas told PTI on Sunday.

Now that PM-CARES Fund has been set up, those who have not discharged their obligation towards CSR or have under-spent, can utilise this opportunity to contribute to PM-CARES Fund to make good the deficiency, he said.

Pradhan speaks to Saudi for uninterrupted crude, LPG

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday discussed global oil market developments and sourcing LPG with Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman to ensure uninterrupted fuel supplies in the world's third largest energy consumer. Indian refineries have cut run-rates in view of slump in fuel demand resulting from an unprecedented nationwide lockdown that has shut businesses, suspended flights, stopped trains and driven most vehicles off-road.

But the reduced run-rates of refineries also means lower output of LPG. Cooking gas demand has, however, seen a surge and India is relying on imports to keep supply lines going. Saudi not just supplies crude oil to India but also is its biggest LPG source.



Min donates month's salary to PMRF

NEW DELHI: Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday donated his one month's salary to Prime Minister National Relief Fund as he joined likes of Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari in helping cement funds to fight against coronavirus pandemic. Pradhan also released Rs 1 crore from his MP Local Area Development Fund for the same purpose. In a Tweet, he said: "In these difficult times, let us stand for those who need us the most."

Mafia primed to feast on Italy's virus devastation

PNS ■ ROME

As Italy mourns thousands of coronavirus dead, and survivors brace for life in an economic wasteland, one rung of society looks to win big: organised crime. "The Italian mafia can turn threats into opportunities," top government anti-mafia investigator Giuseppe Governale told AFP.

Over 10,000 people have died in Italy of the flu-like disease, which has forced the country into a lockdown that is devastating the eurozone's third largest economy. From the historic Cosa Nostra in Sicily, to the immensely powerful 'Ndrangheta in Calabria and trigger-happy Camorra in Naples, Italy's mafias were "caught on the back foot (by the virus), but are now organising themselves," Governale said.

JSW Group commits Rs 100 cr to fight coronavirus pandemic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The JSW Group on Sunday said it will extend a financial assistance of Rs 100 crore to combat the deadly coronavirus. Besides, the Sajjan Jindal-led group will also provide equipment to healthcare workers to deal with the situation, and its employees will donate one-day's salary to prevent the spread of the virus.

"In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, the JSW Group has committed INR 100 crores to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) in support to all on-going relief efforts," JSW Group said in statement.

Each employee of the JSW Group has also committed a minimum of a single day's salary as a donation to the fund, it said.



Separate funds have been earmarked by the group to import ventilators to be supplied to healthcare facilities across the country, besides COVID-19 testing kits, personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, among others, for health care workers.

The statement further said that communities in and around the JSW Group facilities will be provided with staples and other essential dietary requirements.

No detention charges on EXIM shipment: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To maintain proper supply lines at seaports and facilitate unhindered cargo movement, the government on Sunday asked all shipping companies not to collect any detention charges on export-import (EXIM) cargo in the wake of the situation arising due to coronavirus outbreak. Shipping companies have been asked not to levy any container detention charges on import and export shipments till April 14. The decision was taken after delays were reported in evacuation of goods from ports due to disturbance in the downstream services. "In order to maintain proper supply lines at the Indian seaports the shipping lines are advised not to impose any container detention charge on import and export shipments for the period from March 22, 2020 to April 14, 2020," an advisory issued.

CORONAVIRUS: India urges FTA to allow imports without certificate of origin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has urged the countries, with which it has free trade agreements (FTAs), to allow imports of goods without certificate of origin for the time being as the domestic authorities are currently not issuing the document on account of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. An exporter has to submit a certificate of origin at the landing port of the importing country.

The document is important to claim duty concessions under FTAs. The certificate is essential to prove where the goods come from. It also helps in checking dumping of cheap and standard goods from a third country.

On account of lockdown/curfew in India due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian agencies authorised to issue the certificate



of origin under India's free trade agreements (FTAs), comprehensive economic cooperation agreements (CECA), comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) and preferential trade agreements (PTAs) are temporarily "closed" and unable to issue the certificate of origin, according to a trade notice by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

"In view of these exceptional circumstances, the certificates

would be issued retrospectively by the concerned Indian agencies after they open their offices.

"Therefore, in the interim period, the customs authorities and other competent authorities in the trading partners with whom India has a trade agreement may kindly allow the eligible imports under preferences on a retrospective basis subject to the subsequent production of the certificates of origin by the Indian exporters," it has said.

Appliances, consumer electronic makers assist customers virtually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Appliances and consumer electronics makers are using social media platforms and other online tools to reach their customers, who are facing problems with products amid the lockdown.

Companies — like Sony, Samsung, Panasonic, Haier and Godrej Appliance — are leveraging Livechat, WhatsApp, DIY video as well as on-call assistance, and helping remotely on real time basis as their service centres are closed in compliance with the government directives.

Besides, some firms such as Haier has also extended the warranty on products across all categories by two months after the lockdown is lifted.

"As the entire market is closed, we are educating our consumers through videos and in case if any service intervention is required, then we have a chat facility. We are also try-



ing to do WhatsApp calls (Video), in which both sides can see what is happening and help the customers, in some minor changes, which they can do themselves," Godrej Appliances Business Head and EVP Kamal Nandi told PTI.

As the summer is knocking and use of air-conditioning is going to start soon, the manufacturers are helping the customer with DIY video (Do it yourself) to clean their machines themselves.

"Summer is here and AC will require servicing soon. We have developed a DIY video helping people to clean their machines themselves," said a Panasonic India spokesperson, adding that it is "calling all registered customers and sharing the mobile numbers of our local staff for support, if required.

The company is also active on social media, where its consumers can tag it and share their issue.

As the summer is knocking and use of air-conditioning is going to start soon, the manufacturers are helping the customer with DIY video to clean their machines themselves

The appliance and consumer electronic manufacturers have already suspended manufacturing operations at their plant in compliance with the government directives to prevent Covid-19 pandemic.

Sony India, which has suspended its call centre support, is requesting customers through IVR message to visit the support page on its website for self-help and fill the service request web forms for the company to contact them.

USIBC urges govt to ease regulatory curbs on APIs



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid coronavirus pandemic, a top American advocacy group has urged the Indian government to ease regulatory curbs to expedite production of active pharmaceutical ingredients, medical devices and other critical healthcare equipment.

US-India Business Council has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week to suggested the Centre to "temporarily relax regulatory barriers that impede the quick production of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), medical devices, and other critical

healthcare infrastructure and avoid the imposition of export restraints on these products".

India, the world's main supplier of generic drugs, earlier this month restricted export of 26 pharmaceutical ingredients and the medicines made from them, including Paracetamol - a common pain reliever also sold as acetaminophen, as the coronavirus outbreak plays havoc with supply chains. It was unclear how the restriction would impact the availability of these medicines in the countries that import from India and also depend on China.

Peak power demand falls 28 pc to 117 GW

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Peak power demand in the country dipped over 28 per cent to 117.76 GW on Saturday as compared to 163.72 GW on March 20, showing the impact of nationwide lockdown amid COVID-19 outbreak. National Load Dispatch Centre data showed that in actual terms, the peak power demand met has come down by about 46 GW since March 20, which would further aggravate the ailing electricity generators whose outstanding dues stand Rs 88,311 crore as of January this year. The peak demand met was down mainly due to lower demand from industry and state power distribution companies across the country due to the lockdown to fight against COVID-19.



Known now for his roles in films like *Padi Padi Leche Manasu*, *Dear Comrade*, *Majili*, *Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya* and *Prati Roju Pandage* among others, Suhas' earlier projects include short films on YouTube. These very roles helped him hone his skills before his break onto the silver screen. But his most memorable one has to be the critically acclaimed role of a detective in the film *Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya*.

Suhas, up close and personal

THEATRE BACKGROUND

Suhas was into acting and drama right from his childhood. "I dreamt of being on the silver screen ever since I was a kid. I always looked up to SV Ranga Rao *garu* and Chiranjeevi sir. I wondered if I'd ever get to act in films. During my graduation, I acted in many plays. Theatre gave me the confidence to believe in myself. My friend Teja and I began auditioning for roles, but nothing worked out then," he says.

MAKING OWN VIDEOS

After several futile attempts to enter the Telugu Film Industry, Suhas decided to make videos on his own to showcase his talent. "After several failed auditions, I decided to make my own videos. One of these videos went viral and that's how my talent was recognised. Sometime later, I worked as an RJ in Vijayawada, before being called to act for a famous YouTube channel and other short filmmakers," he informs.

FIRST CHANCE

After watching Suhas' acting skills in various short films, director Hanu Raghavapudi offered him a role in *Padi Padi Leche Manasu*. Suhas shares, "Director Raghavapudi liked my acting in one of the short films and offered me a good role."

BREAKTHROUGH MOVIE

But it is his role in the movie *Majili* that got people to sit up and take note. Suhas says, "After *Padi Padi Leche Manasu*, I was offered the role of a friend in *Majili*. The role received tremendous response from the audience and critics alike. My roles in *Majili* and *Dear Comrade* helped me prove my mettle."

Speaking to V SATEESH REDDY, actor Suhas talks about his theatre background, struggle he faced to get the right roles, breakthrough opportunity, an all-YouTubers film and more



PLAYING A DETECTIVE

One can't forget the ripples that the film *Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya* created at the Box Office. Suhas donned the role of a private detective in the comedy-thriller. When asked if he had to do any research for the role of a detective he played, Suhas replies, "Director Swaroop RSJ wanted my character to look like a Kannada detective. We did a week of rehearsals so I would develop the right body language for my character and it came out very well."

PLENTY OF PLATFORMS

Suhas is happy that youngsters today have several platforms to prove their talent. He adds, "Ten years ago, youngsters weren't so fortunate. Back then people would run from pillar to post carrying their portfolios for movie offers. But that is not the case now. We have YouTube, social media and OTT platforms today. Filmmakers are now looking to social media to find fresh, real talent." On OTT platforms taking over theatres, Suhas believes that true cinema lovers will always prefer to watch the film on the big screen. "Web series are also being made with great talent and budget. There is a great scope," he adds.

BEING GOOD CHARACTER ARTIST

Asked if he has any dream role that he'd want to play, Suhas says, "I'm fine playing any role. My dream is to become a good character artist and I hope that I will get all kinds of roles in the years to come."

YOUTUBERS' FILM

Suhas will next be seen playing the lead role in the upcoming film *Colour Photo*, which is being made by a cast and crew who are all YouTubers. "Sandeep is directing it. It is a love story. The shooting is almost complete," he tells us.

LIFE AFTER LOCKDOWN



"I want to drive back to my studio in the middle of busy traffic. I would like to do a special programme on post-lockdown aftermath, about people finally being free to go to office without being hauled."

TWINKLE GURNANI, NEWS PRESENTER



"Post the lockdown period I would foremost visit my close relatives and friends who are currently off-limits and also resume my professional teaching duties with a more healthy outlook."

PRIYA PARANANDI, FACULTY



"I want to return to my wife at the earliest. Heightened tensions in the valley during current quarantined times making things worse."

VINOD KUMAR YADAV, SUB-INSPECTOR FROM CRPF



"I will see to it that my family and neighbours continue to maintain precautions like frequent handwashing and social distancing."

POONAM SINGH, HOUSEWIFE



"My plans to move abroad for my post-graduation has been delayed. I will be searching for a part-time job now to earn extra money. I don't wish to sit idle at home."

ABHISHEK BHANDARI, INDEPENDENT ARTIST

Staying inside seems to be the new going out, thanks to the quarantine. But what after this 21-day-lockdown? *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL, through an interactive conversation with people from diverse backgrounds, finds that people have already made plans on what to do next! Read on..

"This quarantine has made me realise that I need to give myself some time apart from my 9 to 5 job. I want to focus more on my passion of practicing artwork."

NISHA NEGI



These days of 'quarantine' has many netizens beginning challenges online, relieving their 90's on *Doordarshan*, uploading crazy stories on Instagram, interacting with friends and families on video calls, cooking brunches, uploading make-up and workout videos, etc.

Most of Hyderabad has been religiously following the nationwide lockdown called by the government of India. While some seem to be making the most of the lockdown, some others are busy making plans on what they're going to do once the lockdown ends.

On what's the first thing they wish to do after the clampdown down ends, many replied that there's an instant urge to go back to seeings streets bustling with crowd, vehicles honking in the midst of traffic, employes operating from offices, factories manufacturing commodities again, functioning of rail and airways etc.

Nisha Negi, an employee of PUMA at Jubilee Hills branch thinks of giving new incarnations to mast old objects such as fabric, canvas shoes, and plastic bottles once the lockdown ends. "This quarantine has made me realise that I need to give myself some time apart from my 9 to 5 job. I want to focus more on my passion of practicing artwork," Negi says.

Health is wealth says Poonam Singh, a housewife who appreciates the efforts been taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "I will see to it that my family and neighbours continue to maintain precautions like frequent handwashing and social distancing," Singh says. She

wishes to celebrate Navratri with pomp, be more devoted to God and read holy books more often with her daughters.

Even though media personnel are being allowed to go to work, news presenter from a prominent news channel couldn't get to her studio. The instant the lockdown is withdrawn, Twinkle Gurnani hopes to drive back to her studio in the middle of busy traffic. "I would like to do a special programme on post-lockdown aftermath, about people finally being free to go to office without being hauled," she says.

The police across the country are working day in and day out to ensure the lockdown is followed. They're having a tough time convincing civilians to practice social distancing. Sub-inspector from CRPF, Vinod Kumar Yadav, posted in Jammu and Kashmir yearns to return to his wife at the earliest. "At times, due to improper internet connection in Jammu, I can't get through to her. Heightened tensions in the valley during current quarantined times making things worse," he tells us.

The closure of educational institutions at this critical juncture has augmented the strain of curriculum completion for both students and teachers. Without the scope of effective classroom discourse, students are left to self-tutor themselves. "Post the lockdown period I would foremost visit my close relatives and friends who are currently off-limits and also resume my professional teaching duties with a more healthy outlook," says Priya Paranandi belonging to the faculty of English from Villa Marie Degree College, Somajiguda.

An independent artist Abhishek Bhandari's plans to move abroad for his post-graduation has444444 been delayed. "I will be searching for a part-time job now to earn extra money. I don't wish to sit idle at home," he says. He believes that apart from sickness due to the disease, there are also effects elsewhere including psychological stress.



SALMAN KHAN

to help 25000 daily wage workers from film industry, will transfer money in their accounts

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan has pledged to financially support 25,000 daily wage workers from the film industry in the wake of the national lockdown, according to Federation of Western Indian Cine Employees (FWICE).

According to FWICE president B N Tiwari, Salman via his Being Human Foundation reached out to their organisation to help the workers. "Salman's Being Human Foundation has come forward to help daily wage workers. They called us three days ago. We have about 5 lakh workers out of which 25,000 are in dire need of financial help. Being Human Foundation said they will take care of these workers on their own. They have asked for account details of these 25,000 workers as they want to ensure that money

reaches them directly," Tiwari told PTT.

Meanwhile, Bhojpuri actor and politician Ravi Kishan is also helping technicians from Bhojpuri film industry. He has been donating ration to the needy.

Earlier in the week, filmmakers and actors, including Karan Johar, Taapsee Pannu, Ayushmann Khurrana, Kiara Advani, Rakul Preet Singh, Sidharth Malhotra, and Nitesh Tiwari pledged their support to a new initiative aimed at supporting the daily wage earners. The initiative, I Stand With Humanity, started by organisations — the International Association for Human Values, the Art of

Living Foundation and the Indian Film and TV Industry, will provide families of daily wage workers with 10 days of essential food supplies.

On March 18, the Producers Guild of India announced that they have set up a relief fund for daily wage earners impacted by the shutdown of film, television and web productions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Their decision came after many film makers, including Sudhir Mishra, Vikramaditya Motwane and Anurag Kashyap, raised concerns over the impact of shutdown on the daily wage workers.

THE INITIATIVE, I STAND WITH HUMANITY WILL PROVIDE FAMILIES OF DAILY WAGE WORKERS WITH 10 DAYS OF ESSENTIAL FOOD SUPPLIES

Kanika Kapoor tests +ve for Covid 19 for 4th time, kin worried

Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor has tested positive for coronavirus for the fourth consecutive time, causing considerable concern to her family. Kanika, who was hospitalised on March 20 after she tested positive for coronavirus, had returned from London on March 9 and then travelled to Kanpur and Lucknow and during her stay she developed cough and fever.

After she tested positive, she was slammed by the media for attending parties and spreading the virus though none of those who came into contact with her tested positive. Kanika, who is presently admitted to the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), was also criticised by the hospital administration for her 'starry behaviour'.

Meanwhile, one of her family members who did not wish to be named, said, "We are now worried over the test reports. It seems that Kanika is not responding to treatment and in this lockdown, we cannot even airlift her for advanced treatment. We can only pray for her recovery." Doctors at the SGPGIMS, however, said that the singer's condition was stable.

Earlier, Kanika was booked on charges of negligence for attending various social events. She has been booked under Sections 188, 269, and 270 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Sarojini Nagar police station in the city. The FIR was lodged based on a complaint filed by the chief medical officer (CMO) of Lucknow. Kanika had posted about testing positive, which she deleted later. "At this stage I would like to urge you all to practice self isolation and get tested if you have the



signs. I am feeling ok, like a normal flu and a mild fever, however we need to be sensible citizens at this time and think of all around us. We can get through this without panic only if we listen to the experts and our local, state and central government directives. Wishing everyone good health. Jai Hind! Take care."



Bhushan Kumar to donate Rs 11 crore to PM CARES Fund

T-series honcho Bhushan Kumar has pledged to donate Rs 11 crore to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative PM CARES Fund and Rs 1 crore to the Chief Ministers Relief Fund, Maharashtra to lend support to the ongoing battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

Kumar took to Twitter on Sunday and tweeted, "Today, we are all at a really crucial stage & it's extremely important to do all we can to help. I, along with my entire @Tseries family pledge to donate Rs. 11 crores to the PM-CARES Fund. We can & will fight this together, Jai Hind @PMOIndia @narendramodi #IndiaFightsCorona."

He added, "In this hour of need, I pledge to donate Rs. 1 crore to the CM's relief fund along with my family at @Tseries. Hope we all get through this difficult time soon. Stay home, stay

safe. @CMOMaharashtra @OfficeofUT @AUTHackeray #IndiaFightsCorona."

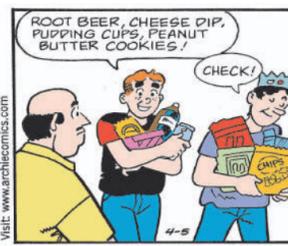
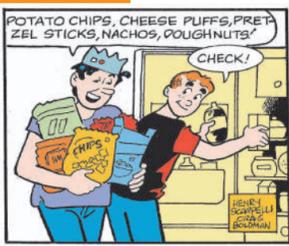
Earlier, the government set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund, or the PM CARES Fund, with the objective of dealing with emergency situations such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Contributors to the fund will enjoy tax benefits, it has been announced.

"People from all walks of life expressed their desire to donate to India's war against COVID-19. Respecting that spirit, the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund has been constituted. This will go a long way in creating a healthier India," PM Modi announced in a tweet on Saturday.

The Prime Minister is the chairman of the trust that includes the home minister, the finance minister the defence minister.

FUN

ARCHIE



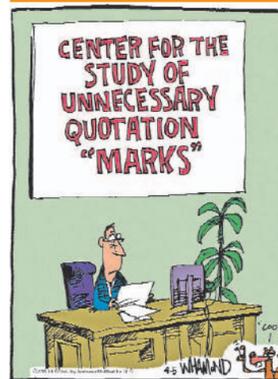
CALVIN AND HOBBS



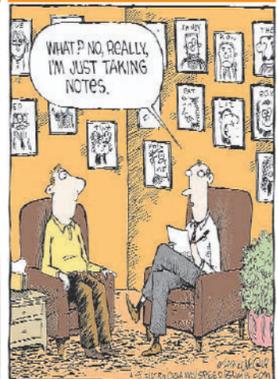
GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



NANCY



SUDOKU

3		8	7	5				
4	5							
	6		5					1
			5	6	4			2
				2				
5		1	7	9				
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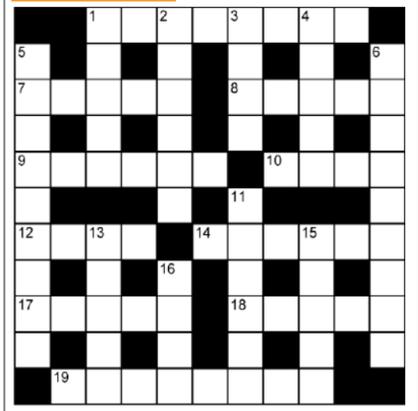
Yesterday's solution

5	7	9	6	4	1	2	3	8
2	1	6	8	9	3	4	7	5
4	8	3	7	2	5	6	1	9
3	4	5	2	1	9	7	8	6
6	2	7	4	3	8	9	5	1
8	9	1	5	7	6	3	2	4
1	3	4	9	5	2	8	6	7
7	5	8	3	6	4	1	9	2
9	6	2	1	8	7	5	4	3

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.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Use these for cutting paper
 - A smelly vegetable
 - Rest and take it easy
 - Stop working because you are too old or ill
 - A curved support
 - Hurry
 - Not working; out of order
 - A keyboard instrument
 - A female relation
 - An offer of marriage
 - You will find a judge and jury in here
 - Swapped
 - Machines for lifting things
 - A sweetener
 - Rest on your knees
 - Break in two
- SOLUTION**
- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L | A | N | I | E | R | | | | |
| A | N | I | E | U | | | | | |
| D | E | C | K | D | E | C | A | I | S |
| N | E | L | L | E | | | | | |
| L | L | L | V | I | C | | | | |
| I | G | L | O | O | Y | E | A | S | T |
| D | E | I | T | C | H | | | | |
| E | I | G | H | T | | | | | |
| C | E | A | | | | | | | |
| E | S | T | R | E | A | M | E | R | |
- DOWN**
- Move
 - Take no notice of
 - Painful to touch
 - Measuring stick



T'wood rises to the occasion again



A day after Megastar Chiranjeevi formed Corona Crisis Charity (CCC) to aid cine workers who depend on daily wages to make their ends meet, donations have poured in. Actors who have already donated to the governments of two Telugu states to battle Covid-19 have loosened their purse strings again to aid the daily wage employees. Superstar Mahesh Babu, Jr NTR and Naga Chaitanya have announced Rs 25 lakh each respectively for CCC, while Ram Charan has agreed to contribute Rs 30 lakh. Ravi Teja and Varun Tej will be donating Rs 20 lakh each respectively. "The purpose of taking is never complete till the aspect of giving comes in. It's not a measurement of the pain but just a contribution to the needs of the cineworkers. An amount of 20 Lakhs will be added to the #CCC account on my behalf."

#StaySafeStayHome (sic)," Ravi wrote on Twitter on Sunday.

Taking to Twitter, superstar Nagarjuna on Saturday announced "An amount of Rs 1 Crore for now as my bit for the well being of daily wages Film workers during this #Coronacrisis".

Daggubati family as well announced Rs 1 crore for film workers and workers in healthcare departments. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several lower income groups in the industry are struggling to meet their daily needs. Shoots of all the films have to come to a standstill due to the coronavirus outbreak. Theaters also are shut down in the lockdown period. On the other hand, the nature of their job puts healthcare workers at an increased risk of catching COVID-19. They spend a lot of time up close with the patient performing high-risk activities. They indeed are the real heroes at the moment. So keeping in view all of this, we will be donating a sum of Rs 1 crore,"

Suresh Babu, Venkatesh and Rana said in a joint statement. Sai Tej and producer house Sri Venkateswara Creations respectively has assured a sum of Rs 10 lakh to CCC, while Vishwak Sen, who is rising up through the ranks, will be donating Rs 5 lakh. Lavanya Tripathi too has come forward to do her bit. "As a part of the film industry, I would like to extend my support to the people who work on daily wages through the Corona Crisis Charity started by the film fraternity. Doing my part by donating Rs 1 lakh rupees to this initiative," she said. Karthikeya announced Rs 2 lakh.



After Chiru, Sharwa joins Twitter now



One of the most reclusive actors of Telugu cinema, Sharwanand, has now joined the Twitter bandwagon. He is the latest celebrity to have taken a plunge into Twitter after Megastar Chiranjeevi, who debuted on social media last week.

He is going by the handle @ImSharwanand. His first tweet was his Rs 15 lakh donation to Corona Crisis Charity. "Daily wage workers are the most hardworking and diligent on sets. Now they are severely affected by this crisis. In these tough times I would like to contribute Rs 15 lakhs to the Corona Crisis Charity initiative and support them," the actor, who will be next seen in *Sreekaram*, posted. The actor already is a popular celeb on Facebook where he commands a large number of followers.

Another young actor Vishwak Sen too made his Twitter debut on Sunday. "Happy to share my first tweet on my birthday. I would like to do my bit of contribution by donating 5lakhs to #CoronaCrisisCharity that was formed under @KChiruTweets Sir for helping Film workers in this #Covid_19 crisis. Thanks to Doctors, Police & Governments for your hard-work (sic)," his first post read.

“Daily wage workers are the most hardworking and diligent on sets. Now they are severely affected by this crisis. In these tough times I would like to contribute Rs 15 lakhs to the Corona Crisis Charity initiative and support them.”

— SHARWANAND

Nithiin's wedding postponed



Actor Nithiin, who was to tie the knot with longtime girlfriend Shalini, a doctor, on April 16, has decided to postpone his wedding in view of the lockdown. The actor planned a destination wedding in Dubai on April 16 but the coronavirus scare led him to reconsider the venue at a farmhouse that belongs to his parents in Hyderabad outskirts. However, with the central government announcing a lockdown last week, he decided to defer his wedding plans.

A source says, "While the lockdown expires on April 14, Nithiin and family are sure that the government will extend it further. Even if it's lifted on April 14, the family doesn't want to take a chance with the Covid-19 outbreak as the marriage will attract a huge turnout. So they've decided to postpone the wedding. The new date will be announced after the lockdown is lifted."

The actor issued a statement on Sunday indicating that he is postponing his wedding because of the coronavirus scare. He appealed to everyone to stay at home and also asked his fans not to celebrate his birthday on Monday. He said that he will also be not ringing in his birthday.

Online music sessions for 18 Pages

Like SS Rajamouli who used video calls to connect to Jr NTR and Madhan Karky for the dubbing of a short video of Ram Charan from *RRR* last week, other filmmakers as well are using the technology to desired effect. Launched early this month, the music sessions of Nikhil-starrer *18 Pages* have been disrupted because of Covid-19 outbreak. But it didn't dampen the spirits of the composer Gopi Sunder and director Surya Pratap. They started interacting on video calls for music sessions and going by the pictures, we must say they are doing great.

Meanwhile, buzz is that the film's makers are also in talks with Anu Emmanuel besides Krithi Shetty for



the female heroine lead role. An announcement regarding the same is around the corner. The film, a joint production venture between GA2 Pictures and Sukumar Writings, is a quirky love story.



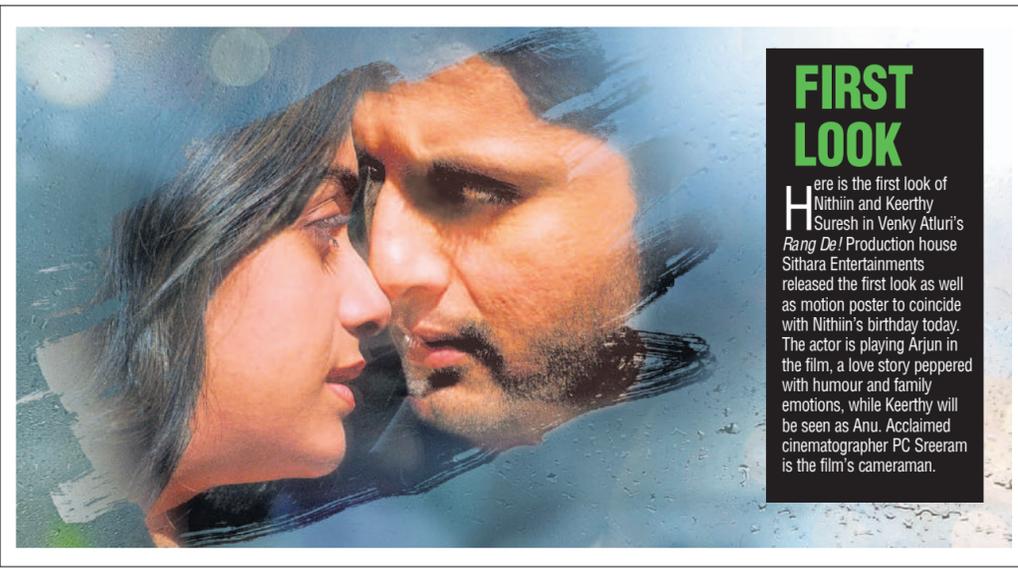
Sudheer Babu, Harsha Vardhan film called off

Actor Sudheer Babu and writer-director Harsha Vardhan's proposed project, which was to roll this summer, has been shelved. Although the project—after having been announced more than two years ago—was delayed considerably, Harsha was hopeful of its start this year, but not anymore. He had even undertaken a recce in Italy last May to scout locations for the project, a romantic thriller. Besides Italy, a major part of the film was to be shot in Hyderabad.

A source close to the development tells us, "Like with most projects, this project too has been called off because of creative differences between the actor and the director. There's nothing to add



more at this juncture. Both have moved on without any animosity. Harsha is writing another script, while Sudheer is looking for new scripts."



FIRST LOOK

Here is the first look of Nithiin and Keerthy Suresh in Venky Atluri's *Rang De!* Production house Sithara Entertainments released the first look as well as motion poster to coincide with Nithiin's birthday today. The actor is playing Arjun in the film, a love story peppered with humour and family emotions, while Keerthy will be seen as Anu. Acclaimed cinematographer PC Sreeram is the film's cameraman.



Virat Kohli kisses Border-Gavaskar trophy after India win 2-1 in 2019 AP

Aus travel ban could affect India tour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Australian government's decision to seal its border for the next six months owing to the COVID-19 pandemic could adversely affect India's Futures Tours Programme (FTP), including the much-awaited face-offs Down Under later this year.

India's tour of Australia is to begin with a T20 tri-series in October and end with the Tests in December.

In between is the World T20, scheduled for an October 18 start, but the mega-event's future is also shrouded in uncertainty due to the global health crisis.

In Australia, there has been over 2000 positive cases, prompting the government to seal the country's borders.

The Sourav Ganguly-led BCCI, in all likelihood, might have to explore alternate plans amid the pandemic.

While the BCCI is yet to take a final decision on this edition of IPL, the international calendar will be another cause of concern as there are tours of Sri Lanka (ODIs and T20s), Zimbabwe, Asia Cup (T20) and home a white ball series against England lined up.

A six-month travel ban means no teams will be allowed to enter Australia for the assignments lined up in the coming times, which includes the World T20 and the tour by the Indian team.

Hanuma using break to sharpen skills for series Down Under

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Confined to his home due to the nationwide lockdown, India cricketer Hanuma Vihari says he will use the time to "sharpen" his skills for the Australian tour, scheduled towards the end of the year.

"I am going to use this time to focus on my fitness, sharpen my skills for county cricket as well as for the Australia tour in late 2020," Vihari, who was part of India's last tour of New Zealand, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Though there is a lot of uncertainty over when sport will resume, the middle-order batsman said he has his "fingers crossed".

"Mentally I am trying hard to keep myself positive and busy. My challenge is: there is no cricket for the next three to four months. I do have a summer to look forward to having signed with a team in the English County Championship, where my contract starts from late August. Fingers crossed about that."

"Right now it's too early to say anything. It's a potential six-month travel ban. If the situation is under control, it could be lifted early also," a senior BCCI officer-bearer, privy to the developments, said.

But those who have an idea of the FTP calendar admitted that the practical problem in such a situation could be the T20 tri-series, which starts in the beginning of October and involves Australia and England.



Hanuma Vihari plays a shot during India's 1st innings against New Zealand in 2nd Test AP

"If international travel ban in reality exists for six months, then it becomes a logistical nightmare. At least, for the T20 tri-series before the World T20.

"The processing of visa, tickets everything becomes a logistical challenge. Also not only Australia, England is supposed to tour India in September for their white ball leg. Will things be normal in the UK and players allowed to travel. These are big questions," another BCCI source said.

If the World T20 is pushed back, then the four-Test series between India and Australia, which is part of the World Championship, could also get affected.

"The frustrating aspect is that you can't even decide anything as the situation varies from country to country. However helpless it might sound, we can only wait and watch," the source said.

Smith again eligible for captaincy

SYDNEY: A two-year leadership ban slapped on Steve Smith after the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa ended on Sunday, leaving the master batsman free to captain Australia again.

The 30-year-old captained the team until he was suspended for 12 months over a brazen attempt to alter the ball with sandpaper under his watch during a Test in Cape Town in 2018.

Part of his punishment included a further year-long exile from any leadership role, which has now expired.

Co-conspirator and former vice-captain David Warner was banned from any leadership role for life, although both have successfully resumed their international careers.

There have been calls for Smith to take back the Test captaincy from Tim Paine, but it remains unclear whether he wants to, with the 35-year-old seemingly intent on playing on.

Coach Justin Langer last year praised Paine's leadership as "brilliant" and said Smith may not want the "burden" of captaincy on top

of batting pressures. Aaron Finch is skipper of the Twenty20 and one-day teams.

Smith told Channel Nine television on Sunday he was focused only on trying to stay physically and mentally fit during the coronavirus shutdown of Australian cricket.

He was supposed to be preparing for a big-money payday at the Indian Premier League, but the tournament has already been delayed until April 15.

With India in a three-week lockdown in a bid to contain a spread of the virus, Smith admitted the IPL appeared unlikely to go ahead.

"I think the country's basically shut its borders until the 15th of April," he said.

"It's obviously not looking likely at the moment, I think there might be some meetings over the next couple of days to discuss what the go is with it all."

"But just trying to stay physically fit and mentally fresh," he added. "If it goes ahead at some point, then great. If not, then there's plenty going on in the world at the moment. Just play it day by day." AFP

Laxman's 281 among Chappell's all-time great knocks against spin

MELBOURNE: Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has picked his two all-time favourite innings against high-quality spin bowling and one of those is VVS Laxman's iconic 281 at the Eden Gardens in 2001.

Thanks to Laxman and Rahul Dravid (180), India went on to win the game against Australia after following-on.

"The absence of any cricket gives me an opportunity to reflect on an aspect of the game I enjoy: watching a batsman utilise good footwork to combat top-class spin bowling. Two innings stand out: one played by India's VVS Laxman, the other by Doug Walters of Australia," Chappell wrote in a column for ESPNcricinfo.

Laxman and Dravid shared a marathon 376-run stand to engineer an unforgettable win for



India. Chappell was simply in awe of Laxman's batting as the wristy Indian batsman toyed with the likes of Shane Warne. "Laxman's incredible 281 at Calcutta in 2001 is the best I've seen against top-class leg-spin. At

out of his crease and hits an unbelievable on-drive against the spin and you then flight the next delivery a little higher and shorter to invite another drive and instead he quickly goes onto the back foot and pulls it, that's not bad bowling. That's good footwork.

"Laxman regularly did this during his 452-ball stay, in which he hit 44 boundaries. Therein lies a clue to Laxman's success: he consistently hit the ball along the ground," said Chappell, also praising Laxman's temperament.

Talking about fellow Australian Walters, Chappell called him the best player against spin.

"Walters was the best player of off-spin bowling I have seen; he didn't just survive against the very best, he occasionally battered them into submission," said Chappell. PTI

Juve players agree to take pay reduction

TURIN: Juventus on Saturday announced that they had cut their players' and coach Maurizio Sarri's salaries after all Italian sport was suspended until at least April 3 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The economic and financial effects of the understanding reached are positive for about 90 million euros (\$100.5 million) for the 2019/2020 financial year," said a club statement.

Juventus, who led second-placed Lazio by a point in Serie A before the suspension of the season, said they had agreed a "reduction" for pay from March until June.

Juve added that should the season be finished later in the year, the players could be paid extra in those months. "Juventus would like to



thank the players and the coach for their commitment at a difficult time for everyone," Turin giants said. Players at other big European clubs have also agreed to take pay cuts, including Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in Germany. Juventus' highly-paid stars include five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo and Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey, who joined from Arsenal on a free transfer last year. AFP

Italy's sports minister to extend ban on events

ROME: Italy's sports minister is planning to extend the ban on games and competitions in the country through all of April.

The current lockdown is due to expire on Friday but Italian health experts have said the need to try to contain COVID-19 will likely last weeks beyond that.

Minister Vincenzo Spadafora tells Italian daily La Repubblica that talks about restarting the Serie A on May 3 are "unrealistic."

He adds: "(On Monday) I will propose extending the ban on sports competitions at every level for all of April. And I'll extend the measure to training — an area where we hadn't intervened because there was still a possibility of holding the Olympics." AP



Neymar would be 'spectacular signing' for Barca: Xavi

BARCELONA: Xavi Hernandez has reiterated his desire to coach Barcelona in the future but suggests he will not return until a different board brings a new sense of direction to the club.

Hernandez is in charge of Al-Sadd in Qatar and turned down an approach in January after Barca sacked Ernesto Valverde, which led to the appointment of Quique Setien.

In an interview with Spanish newspaper La Vanguardia published on Sunday, Xavi said Neymar would be a "spectacular signing", and singled out former Spain defender Carles Puyol and the one-time Dutch winger Jordi Cruyff as people he would like to work with.

Yet the relationship between Barcelona's board, led by president Josep Maria Bartomeu, and the players has remained tense, with Lionel Messi's public criticism of technical secretary Eric Abidal among a number of off-field controversies.

"I am clear that I want to return to Barca, I am very excited," said Xavi, who was asked if a change of board would be needed for it to happen. "Obviously I would like to be in tune with everyone," he said. "In the dressing room there can't be a negative or toxic atmosphere."

"Everything has to fit," Xavi added. "I would like to come in with

people from my environment that could form a good team."

Pushed on whether working with the current board would be a deal-breaker, Xavi said: "It wouldn't be definitive but I insist I would like to have total harmony. I don't know if that can happen... I have nothing against anyone and I don't have a bad relationship with Bartomeu."

Xavi mentioned the likes of Puyol, whom he played with under Pep Guardiola, and Cruyff, son of Johan and former Barca and Manchester United winger, as the kind of people he would like to work alongside.

"I would like to work with people in whom I have confidence, with whom there is loyalty," said Xavi. "We are talking about Carles Puyol, who was captain of Barca, and Jordi Cruyff, a very good businessman with a lot of experience as a technical secretary."

He also said Neymar, whom the Catalans tried and failed to sign from Paris Saint-Germain last summer, would be a "spectacular signing". "Most of the squad seems extraordinary," Xavi said. "The base is very good. I would sign forwards, like Neymar. I don't know if he would fit in a social sense but in football terms I have no doubt he would be a spectacular signing." AFP



2007: #T20WorldCup hero 🏆
2020: Real world hero 🦁

In his post-cricket career as a policeman, India's Joginder Sharma is among those doing their bit amid a global health crisis.

[Joginder Sharma]



International Cricket Council (ICC) has hailed India's cricketer-turned cop Joginder Sharma for doing his bit in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Joginder, who bowled the match-winning final over in the 2007 World T20 final against Pakistan, is a DSP in Haryana Police and is currently involved in dealing with global health crisis. "In his post-cricket career as a policeman, India's Joginder Sharma is among those doing their bit amid a global health crisis," the ICC tweeted on Saturday along with Joginder's photos as a cricketer and cop.

Tokyo organisers eye July 2021 for delayed Olympics

AFP ■ TOKYO

Tokyo Olympics organisers are eyeing next July as a start date for the postponed Games, Japanese media reported on Sunday.

Given the ongoing pandemic and need for preparation time, the most likely plan would be for the Games to begin on July 23, 2021, public broadcaster NHK said, citing sources within the organising panel.

It came after Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike raised the idea on Friday of moving the event to a less hot and humid time of year.

She argued that this would make marathons and other races easier to endure, meaning they could be held in the capital instead of in northern Sapporo city, where the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had decided to move them.

The Tokyo 2020 team led by Yoshiro Mori is currently discussing possible dates with the IOC, according to the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.



Postponing Oly save athletes from mental turmoil: Coe

LONDON: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe on Sunday said that the decision to postpone this year's Tokyo Olympics because of the coronavirus has saved athletes from "mental turmoil".

Former Olympic champion Coe supported the move to push and said competitors would have been placed in an impossible position if the event had been left to start on July 24 as originally scheduled. They would have been tempted to continue training despite large parts of the world being in lockdown.

"We didn't want to have athletes in a position where they were countering govt advice, maybe even breaking law," Coe told TalkSport. "And of course in the back of their minds was always that concern, it wasn't just their own training programme, but that they ran the risk of effectively infecting themselves, their families, and we just wanted to take them out of that mental turmoil as quickly as we possibly could."

"We're no different from everyone else out there but I think we just concluded that sport, on this occasion, had to take a back seat." AFP

On Saturday, Mori told a Japanese TV station that "some kind of conclusion" would be reached within a week.

The Olympics were scheduled to open on July 24 this year with the Paralympics on August 25, but Japan announced last week it had secured agreement from the IOC to postpone the Games — a decision unprecedented in peacetime.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said they would be held in around a year instead as a testament to humanity's victory over the pandemic.

The decision had been seen to open options for Tokyo, with IOC chief Thomas Bach saying that "all the options are on the table" and rescheduling "is not restricted just to the summer months".

Meanwhile, NHK said the Olympic flame would be displayed for a month at the J-Village sports complex in Fukushima, which was used as a base camp for thousands of relief workers in radiation protection suits during the 2011 nuclear disaster.

BFI start online coaching for Olympic-bound boxers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Their training halted by the coronavirus-led national lockdown, India's Olympic-bound boxers will be provided online classes by their coaches from Monday to ensure that aspects such as mental well-being and nutrition are taken care of.

Nine Indian boxers — M C Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohani (69kg), Pooja Rani (75kg), Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg) — have qualified for the Tokyo Games, postponed to 2021 due to the glob-



al pandemic.

In a conference call with these boxers on Sunday, Boxing Federation of India (BFI) President Ajay Singh took stock of their preparations amid a national lockdown till April

14 to fight the pandemic.

"This is a challenging time for all of us and is all the more a reason for us to take care of ourselves... Stay fit, continue with the exercises as directed by the coaches and try to main-

tain your weights as much as possible," Singh told the boxers.

"We will tide over this crisis soon and get back to the ring but staying motivated in the meantime is absolutely necessary," he added.

Elaborating further on the 45-minute discussion, BFI's Executive Director R K Sacheti said that the areas of concern are diet control and mental health.

"They are at their homes right now where diet can go for a toss. So the idea behind these online classes starting tomorrow (Monday) is to ensure that they are kept aware of their nutritional needs," he said.

Sacheti said India boxing's High Performance Director Santiago

Nieva, who is now in Patiala after completing a 14-day self-isolation period in Delhi, will be conducting classes for men.

The classes for women will be conducted by the high performance director Rafaele Bergamasco.

"Santiago is the only boxing coach who is in Patiala right now. He will have access to the boxing hall where he will educate the boxers on technicalities. The idea is to keep them connected and aware," he said.

"We hope things improve and the lockdown ends but we can't start from the scratch when that happens. We have to have something going so that when it ends, there is a seamless transition," he added.