

NATION 5
MHA CHANGES RULES: SDF TO BE USED FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

MONEY 6
FARMERS SHOULD MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING WHILE HARVESTING: ICAR

SPECIAL 7
CLASS OF 2020

VIJAYAWADA, SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



sunday pioneer



12

www.dailypioneer.com

PM ANNOUNCES NEW FUND FOR PEOPLE TO MAKE DONATIONS

CORONAVIRUS: US TO AIRLIFT CITIZENS STRANDED IN INDIA

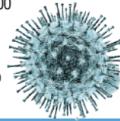
CHINA VIRUS EPICENTRE EASES TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AFTER LOCKDOWN

IRAN REPORTS 139 NEW COVID-19 DEATHS, RAISING TOTAL TO 2,517

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the creation of an assistance and emergency situation relief fund where people can contribute and help in the government's fight against coronavirus.



The US government is making arrangements to airlift over 2,000 American citizens stranded in India due to the suspension of flights and the lockdown in the country to limit the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.



The Chinese city of 11 million people that was Ground Zero for what became the global coronavirus pandemic partly reopened on Saturday after more than two months of almost total isolation.



Iran announced Saturday that 139 more people had died from the novel coronavirus, raising the official death toll to 2,517 in one of the world's worst-affected countries.



'ALL AND SUNDRY'
Curfews always cause conflict; knack lies in preventing them
4

AMIDST THE 'TEMPEST'



"Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by." Pope Francis stood alone in vast Saint Peter's Square to bless Catholics around the world suffering under the coronavirus pandemic, urging people to ease their fears through faith.

Lockdown 'botched-up', India deserves better: Prashant
5

As covid-19 spikes, India ramps up its health infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid looming fears of coronavirus infection entering the community transmission stage, India is boosting its overall health infrastructure by initiating measures like designating dedicated hospitals for affected patients in states, ramping up procurement of ventilators and mobilising resources of Railways and armed forces to deal with tougher challenges ahead.

India has launched a determined challenge to combat the spread of corona. I am particularly proud of the efforts being made by our civil aviation sector in ensuring smooth supply of medical & essential items during the current lockdown
-HARDEEP SINGH PURI CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

- As of now, the country reported 1,004 coronavirus cases and 21 deaths
Central government has asked all states to earmark hospitals only for treating COVID-19 patients
The armed forces are keeping ready 28 service hospitals to provide treatment to COVID-19 patients
India is under a 21-day lockdown from Tuesday midnight as part of efforts to check spread of coronavirus



and emergency situation relief fund where people can contribute and help in the government's fight against the virus.

In the midst of government ramping up preparedness to deal with rising cases of COVID-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of an assistance

and emergency situation relief fund where people can contribute and help in the government's fight against the virus.

Telangana reports first death, 6 test positive for Covid in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Even as the deadly Coronavirus claimed its first life in neighbouring Telangana, six persons tested positive for the virus in Andhra Pradesh, taking the number of patients in the state to 19.



male from Prakasam district who has returned from Delhi. Patient-17 is a contact of patient-16 and is a 50-year old female from Prakasam district. She had returned from Ongole. Patient-18 is a 65-year old male from Krishna district who returned home from Saudi Arabia, while Patient-19 is a 23-year-old male from Kurnool district who has

returned from Rajasthan. A total of 74 samples from AP were tested on Saturday, of which 68 returned negative and six were found positive. Telangana state reported its first Covid-19 death, after a 74-year-old man, who died on Friday while being treated for multiple conditions, tested positive on Saturday. The deceased was a resident of Khairatabad with travel history to Delhi. He was admitted in Global Hospital in a serious condition and was diabetic with Pneumonia symptoms. His family members are being quarantined.

Health worker fails to report returnee husband, sacked

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district Collector A Md. Imtiaz on Saturday dismissed from service an outsourcing employee working as a medical assistant in the Machilipatnam government hospital for hiding the fact that her husband had returned to India from abroad earlier in the month. The collector said that intentional failure of the medical assistant to report that her husband was a foreign-returnee was gross negligence and a crime at a time the entire world was fighting to overcome the spread of Covid 19. This negligence was tantamount to deliberately putting the lives of others at risk and a crime, the collector said. Imtiaz said that all foreign-returnees are mandated to spend 14 days in isolation for those who are asymptomatic and quarantine for those who



show symptoms so that they do not infect others with the deadly virus. The collector said that only by following the guidelines laid by the government we can prevent the virus from entering the third stage. "However, it is learnt that the person, after returning to India and Machilipatnam, had traveled to Vijayawada many times, which is a matter of concern," Imtiaz said.

453 foreign returnees untraceable, trigger stage-3 fear

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

While family members of those who have tested positive for Coronavirus have been isolated or quarantined, the fact that some foreign-returnees remain untraced is leading to fears that the pandemic will progress to stage-3, or community transmission. Visakhapatnam district authorities said that till March 22, as many as 2,795 people returned to the country who are not yet out of the 14-day incubation period. Of these, 31 people have left for other states and districts. However, the worry is that 453 of these 2,795 people never reported to the medical authorities and remain untraceable. So far, Vizag has not reported any community transmission case as only the foreign returnees or their relatives have tested positive for the virus.

Will speak to banks to facilitate cash flow: Finance Minister
8

Three-pronged plan to curb Covid-19 spread

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is adopting a three-pronged strategy to curb the spread of Covid 19, even as it takes steps to intensify the monitoring mechanism and providing help to those stranded at various other places. The government would strictly implement social isolation, ensure a continuous supply chain of essential commodities and see to it that agricultural harvesting is done on time and farmers get Minimum Support Price (MSP), said a Group of Ministers (GoM) on Saturday. The GoM was speaking after a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. The Ministers said so far 13 persons of the 428 suspected cases tested positive for the infection while the remaining 378 samples came negative. Test reports of another 37 patients were awaited. Health Minister Alla Nani said 29,115 persons have been asked to quarantine themselves at home while another 149 are on hospital isolation. The spread of the deadly virus is rapid in urban areas as 12 of the 13 persons who tested pos-



itive are from cities. So far, 29,264 foreign returnees have been identified in AP of whom 29,115 are quarantined at home and 149 in hospital. All these people are being monitored on a time-to-time basis. One doctor is being given the responsibility of monitoring every 10 foreign returnees and a specialist would monitor them all. Moreover, video conference facility is made available to connect the doctors and specialists, the Minister said. He added that necessary protection suits and tools would be supplied to doctors, volunteers, Asha workers to ensure they remain protected from Coronavirus.

States can use Rs 29,000cr SDRF fund

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday asked the state governments and Union Territory administrations to utilise the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), to which Rs 29,000 crore has been allocated for the next fiscal, for providing food and shelter to migrant workers hit by the 21-day lockdown. Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs Punya Salila Srivastava said the central government has



also asked the states and UTs to set up camps for migrant workers fleeing cities and carry out their health check-ups. Srivastava said the home

ministry has asked the state governments and UT administrations to utilise the SDRF money for providing food and temporary shelters to the unorganised sector workers affected by the lockdown. "Under the SDRF, whatever allocation is there in the current year, for the next year a total of Rs 29,000 crore has been allocated to the states under the SDRF. Therefore, there are enough funds with the states under the SDRF.

BJP MPs to release Rs 1 cr from their MPLAD funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda on Saturday announced that all party MPs will release Rs one crore from their annual development fund to the central relief fund to fight coronavirus pandemic. In his tweets, he also said that all party MPs and MLAs



will donate their one month salary towards it as well. "All MPs & MLAs of Bharatiya Janata Party will donate their one month remuneration/salary to the central relief fund to support the fight against Covid19. All MPs of BJP will release Rs 1 crore from their MPLADs fund to the central relief fund in support to fight against Covid-19," he said.

Newspapers don't spread COVID-19, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To dispel the misinformation, misconception and myths being spread through social media that Coronavirus spreads with mere touching of newspapers, the Centre has issued a circular to the States and Union Territories lauding the role of the printed media in disseminating the latest and objective news on the pandemic and helping people successfully counter it. To enable this to continue in the same fashion, it is important to see that newspapers reach the people, the circular said. The Central government said that to enable dailies and



other media organisations continue their operations, the required print material and all other amenities should be supplied without interruptions. "There is a need for newspaper establishments to work without any hurdles to sensitise peo-

The Central government said that to enable dailies and other media organisations continue their operations, the required print material and all other amenities should be supplied without interruptions.

ple on the latest developments on the virus and to check baseless rumours," the circular said. It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had gone one record on March 19 stating that media is a part of essential services and it should function even during the lockdown period. Similarly, the WHO had made it clear the dailies can be touched and as safe. Even if the

newspapers come from places affected by Coronavirus, they are safe since they pass through various phases right from printing stage to reaching the reader. There is very little scope of the virus spreading to others through newspapers which transcend various phases and travel through different weather conditions, the WHO had said.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Kartik and Shukla Paksha Panchangam
Tithi: Panchami: 02:00 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Kritika: 03:17 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 04:54 pm - 06:25 pm
Yamagandam: 12:20 pm - 01:51 pm
Varjyam: NIL
Gulika: 03:23 pm - 04:54 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 04:54 pm - 06:25 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:20 pm - 01:51 pm
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 39/24
Humidity: 64%
Sunrise: 06:12
Sunset: 06:28
Current Weather Conditions
Updated Nov 28, 2018 5:00 PM



Curfews always cause conflict; knack lies in preventing them

Curfews and lockdowns invariably cause conflict between the government's responsibility of keeping people indoors and the public's need to forage for food and other essentials. Compliance with these restrictions depends upon the extent to which a balance is struck between the two.

This harmony has been missing after Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a 21-day lockdown on March 24. None in officialdom foresaw its impact on daily wage-earners, migrants and the poor. Consequently, there was no planning on how they would survive for three weeks without money or food creating a ripe situation for conflict between the authority and the poor. Police forces in various States unleashed brutality against violators of the lockdown, while

in many instances, the latter attacked police.

Andhra and Telangana authorities made a spectacle of themselves after the latter evicted girls and boys from hostels in Hyderabad and issued them transit passes. Andhra Pradesh police personnel stopped them at the border. Chaos reigned on the borders while orderly queues were seen outside police stations in Hyderabad, both equally detrimental to the concept of social distancing. Somewhere in the higher echelons of Hyderabad and Cyberabad police, the PM's stay-at-home call was forgotten.

Chief Ministers of the two states had to intervene and sort out the problem, but not after the youth, particularly girls, suffered immensely without water, food and washrooms alongside the highways. The Telangana government, while evicting students from private

Chaos reigned on the borders while orderly queues were seen outside police stations in Hyderabad, both equally detrimental to the concept of social distancing. Somewhere in the higher echelons of Hyd and Cyberabad police, the PM's stay-at-home call was forgotten

hostels on which it has zero financial commitment, had no problem in allowing about 1,850 foreign students to remain in Osmania University hostels. Atithi devo bhavaah (Guest is God) at its best, but the problem here is that coronavirus doesn't respect anyone's nationality.

Expressways around Delhi presented heart-rending scenes of jobless migrants, along with women, children and infants, trekking to their villages far away in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Police

heaped misery by caning and subjecting them to corporal punishment. These scenes did not move either the AAP or the BJP government, though these two parties had fiercely vied for the migrants' votes in the Assembly polls.

The police-migrant conflict on the streets could have been avoided by rounding up people near their homes or in their mohallas, but not 30-40 kms away on the highways. The Delhi government's offer on the fourth day to feed 4 lakh people daily, though welcome,



S NAGESH KUMAR
Former Resident Editor,
The Hindu

is late because the gathering of thousands of migrants would have surely caused spread of the virus.

Undoubtedly, movement of people has to be stopped to the maximum extent (essential service personnel have to travel). But, politicians, bureaucrats and police have to think creatively and not just wield

the lathi or block inter-state movement of trucks carrying food, medicines and other items needed for survival. It is heartening that the Home Ministry and many State governments have woken up to this reality and arranged buses for migrants, a bad idea but inevitable now, and allowed movement of goods.

These conflicts divert attention from the primary task of containing and rolling back the Wuhan virus. India is doing a much better job than Europe and even America in keeping the numbers under check and preventing community transmission till now. The fewer fatalities tell their own story, though scientists and media in the West are sceptical and attribute this phenomenon to the lower testing rate.

The number of infections in India will definitely spike and spike alarmingly, going by Washington-based The Centre

for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy of Johns Hopkins University. The Cabinet Secretary's warning to States about the huge "gap" between the number of international passengers who reached India during January 18-March 23 and those who were monitored is worrisome as it might jeopardise efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Yet, it is heartening that public morale in India remains high unlike in America, Spain and Italy, where people seem resigned to their fate. Doctors and nurses are seen weeping about the plight of patients and their own because of inadequate infrastructure. In the US, the narrative is about governors and mayors openly complaining about lack of ventilators, personal protective equipment, and hospitals.

We may never match the West's infrastructure in terms of hospitals, beds, ICUs and

ventilators, but we are trying really hard to heed the dire warnings about deadlier outbreaks in April or in May. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu has expressed the State's preparedness to treat 60,000 virus cases at a time, besides creating a bed strength of 11,000, including 1,400 for critical care. It coincides with the likely number of hospitalised cases (medium scenario by Johns Hopkins University) during the peak period around May 9. Given the different forecasts, it won't be surprising if the lockdown continues beyond April 14 with a different set of restrictions and reliefs.

This is all the more a reason why governments become proactive by making decisions that are well thought out in advance, rather than reacting to situations. The threat posed by the pandemic warrants this change in mindset.

AFTERMATH OF COVID-19

Red chilli farmers see red

CH PRADEEP
VIJAYAWADA

With Chinese markets remaining closed amid the coronavirus outbreak, commodity exports from Andhra Pradesh especially those trading chillies are staring at a questionable future.

The most important and essential ingredient in every kitchen, which is used in day-to-day life, the dry red chilli and red chilli powder is facing the Covid-19 crisis, as the whole nation is under lockdown. The dry red chilli season has just begun and has come to a grinding halt with both the State and Central governments announcing lockdown to prevent the pandemic Covid-19 from spreading further.

Andhra Pradesh alone produces 60 per cent of the chillies produced across the country. Farmers in the State are happy with the good yield compared to previous years. Even before the traders and farmers could enjoy the good yield and a better price, their dreams were shattered with the Central government announcing 'Janata Curfew'



and later announcing lockdown till April 14.

The minimum price of chilli last year was around Rs 8,500 per quintal. However, the minimum price of dry red chilli during the current year creeps to a little more than Rs 12,500 per quintal, which is good news to farmers.

Though dry red chilli farmers had a bumper crop, they were unable to reap the harvest due to lockdown by both the Central and State governments to prevent the pandemic from spreading. Farmers are left high and dry, as the crop, which has been ready for harvest for a few days from now,

was lying in the field, as only 35 per cent business was done, while remaining 65 per cent has to be carried out.

Speaking to The Pioneer, G Sambasiva Rao, a chilli trader, said that as many as 35 lakh bags of dry red chilli was sold and about 25 lakh bags were stored in cold storage godowns. He said that with sudden shutdown of transport and lockdown everything has come to a standstill and even farmers are clueless.

He said if this lockdown continues both traders and farmers will incur losses, as the crop will go waste and farmers cannot pay the traders, which

■ The dry red chilli season has just begun and has come to a grinding halt with both the State and Central governments announcing lockdown to prevent the pandemic Covid-19 from spreading further

■ B Srinu Naik, a farmer, said that the government should think of an alternative and accord permission to cut the harvest and transport the material to the cold storage, as the lockdown will be in vogue till April 14

■ In this backdrop, if the government extends the lockdown further, they would be in trouble. He said that they seek bailout from the government to withstand the loss and demanded that the government pay compensation to cover the input cost, he added.

they took as investments, as they could not sell their harvest. He said that the government or the Collector/MRO/tahsildar should take initiative to grant permission to reap the harvest, which will save both the trader and the farmer.

B Srinu Naik, a farmer, said that the government should think of an alternative and accord permission to cut

the harvest and transport the material to the cold storage, as the lockdown will be in vogue till April 14. In this backdrop, if the government extends the lockdown further, they would be in trouble. He said that they seek bailout from the government to withstand the loss and demanded that the government pay compensation to cover the input cost, he added.



Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan speaks at a meeting at the Raj Bhavan in Vijayawada on Saturday. Chairman of Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education Prof Hemachandra Reddy and other officials are also seen

Guv exhorts students to create awareness on corona

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan said students should play a key role in creating awareness among people on community distancing to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The Governor said students should maintain community distancing among themselves and at the same time create awareness among their family members and other sections of society to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The Governor convened a meeting with Chairman of Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education Prof Hemachandra Reddy and other officials at the Raj Bhavan on

Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan opined that with the active participation of students in the social distancing awareness programme, the message can be effectively communicated to lakhs of people

Saturday. He said university authorities should convey the message to students through email asking them to follow the precautions to prevent the spread of coronavirus. He enquired with officials over the situation in various universities across the State.

The Governor opined that with the active participation of students in the social distancing

awareness programme, the message can be effectively communicated to lakhs of people. He said universities should provide the basic infrastructure to the administration in the hour of crisis and extend cooperation to the government. He said that he would convene a video conference with Vice-Chancellors would be convened soon to discuss the issue.

Archer donates masks to police dept

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Arjuna awardee and international archer Vennam Jyothi Surekha handed over 500 masks to City Police Commissioner Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao at the Commissioner's office here on Saturday. "I am donating the masks as a token of gratitude to the untiring efforts and service rendered by the police department in the wake of coronavirus pandemic," she said.

JG Satyanarayana, DCP (admin) Mary Prasanthi, builder KV Narasiah, Dr VR Sarath Babu, P Ravi, K Rajasekhar and others were also present on the occasion.



Arjuna awardee and international archer Vennam Jyothi Surekha hands over 500 masks to a woman cop in the presence of City Police Commissioner Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao at the Commissioner's office in Vijayawada on Saturday

TTD hands over 15k food packets

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Upon the request of the district administration to provide food packets to the shelterless and on-duty staff deputed in view of Covid-19 lockdown in Tirupati, the TTD on Saturday prepared 15,000 pulihora packets.

JEO P Basant Kumar handed over the food packets to Revenue, TMC and TUDA officials, who in turn distributed to Vishnuivasam, Srinivasasam, first and second chowlties and Padmavathi Nilayam at Tiruchanoor.

Man ends life over doubt of contracting corona

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

People are living in the grip of fear psychosis for coronavirus. At the slightest incident of common cold or fever they are trembling with fear. A 55-year-old mason Akkala Venkataiah on Saturday called up his son Siluva Babu and expressed doubts that he has contracted the coronavirus and committed suicide by hanging from a tree on the outskirts of Kottapalli village in Marchala mandal of Guntur district.

Venkataiah returned to the village only two days ago from Hyderabad because there are no works following clamp down in the State. Ever since,



On Friday night, it was announced amidst beating of drums asking outsiders, who visited the village, should compulsorily register their names.

he returned to the village, he has been remaining aloof not mingling with family members.

On Friday night, it was

announced amidst beating of drums asking outsiders, who visited the village, should compulsorily register their names. He did accordingly.

Apparently in a state of deep depression, on Saturday morning he called up his second son Siluvababu and expressed doubt he might be carrying the coronavirus. He was worried over the possible community transmission of the virus.

To a question, he replied that he was currently at Kottapalli on the outskirts of the village. By the time Siluvababu went there, along with other villagers, Venkataiah's body was found hanging from the tree branch.

Based on a complaint, police swung into action and visited the scene of offence and took steps to send the body to a hospital.

TTD to provide new ventilators to SVIMS

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

To prevent the spread of Covid-19, the TTD has been taking measures and extending full support to the district administration, said TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal.

He participated in Maha Purnahuti of the three-day Srinivasa Shantiyotsava Sahita Dhanwantari Maha Yagam at Dharmagiri Veda Vijayana Peetham on Saturday at Tirumala.

Speaking on the occasion, the Executive Officer explained that the TTD has taken steps to combat the coronavirus in Tirumala and Tirupati.

He said on receiving the information that some shelterless beggars are starving in Tirupati for food due to lockdown, the TTD under the aegis

Singhal said BIRRD Hospital will be developed as Covid-19 Quarantine Centre. He said many cases of Covid-19 suspects are being referred to SVIMS

of the SV Annaprasadam Trust has decided to prepare 45,000 food packets everyday on the directive of TTD Trust Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy, which has commenced from Saturday onwards, he added.

The Executive Officer also said BIRRD Hospital will be developed as Covid-19 Quarantine Centre. He said many cases of Covid-19 suspects are being referred to SVIMS. Hence, the BIRRD Hospital has been permitted to be used as quarantine. Presently, the RUA, SVIMS and Padmavathi Hospitals are treating Covid-19

affected patients and Sri Padmavathi Nilayam Rest House at Tiruchanoor is also converted into a quarantine centre, he maintained.

Due to shortage of medical ventilators, he said the TTD is ready to purchase and provide new ventilators to SVIMS Super Specialty Hospital to tide over the crisis. The Executive Officer also appreciated the TTD employees, including the health, Srivari temple, reception, annaprasadam, vigilance and other critical departments for rendering service in spite of difficulties and personal risks.



TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal addresses the media in Tirumala on Saturday

Covid-19 hits coconut traders

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Farmers of East and West Godavari district are expressing their concern over their future, as the COVID-19 has affected coconut trade across the country.

Anticipating good demand for coconuts across the country during the summer and during the Sri Rama Navami festival, farmers of East Godavari have sent 100 lorry loads of tender coconuts for selling for during the current summer, 40 lorry loads of copra and six lorry loads of newly harvested coconuts.

The destination of tender coconuts with water is Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Bihar and Chhattisgarh, while the lorrys with copra load head-



ed for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh.

The traders are worried about where the lorrys were stranded. The regional coconut traders have suspended purchasing coconuts because of the lockdown. This has affected the livelihood of those who harvest the coconuts from the trees and other workers dependent on coconut industry.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Blood shortage bites as Vizag stares at crisis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The number of units of blood in all blood banks in the city is dwindling, as there are no fresh donors. Delivery cases require units of bloods for transfusion. Doctors are also conducting only emergency operations.

The available units of blood are being used in treating patients. Unless people come out and donate blood replenishing the expended units of blood seems to be impossible. More over blood camps, which are slated in March, have been postponed.

There are 14 blood banks in the city, which supply at least 250-300 units of blood daily. King George Hospital alone expends 30-40 units of blood per day. Since February beginning the hospital has over 1,727 units with it. Of them, 1,124 have been used in treating patients.

In March procurement has come down drastically. Only 1,002 units of blood can be procured during the month. Of them, 947 have been expended. Only 546 units of blood is



■ In all, 14 blood banks are located in the city, which supply at least 250-300 units of blood daily

■ The available units of blood are being used in treating patients. Unless people come out and donate blood replenishing the expended units of blood seems to be impossible. More over blood camps, which are slated in March, have been postponed

available in the district, including initial opening balance. In maternity ward, the daily use of blood is put at least 20 units a day. The existing stocks are exhausting steadily with no procurement of blood.

All blood banks put together in the city, only 2,000 units of blood is available. If these stocks exhaust, it will be alarming.

The situation in the Lions Club blood bank, Rotary Club blood

bank, NTR blood bank and so on is more or less the same.

The supply of blood units from Indian Red Cross Society to blood storage centres in Chintapalli, Araku and Paderu in Visakhapatnam Agency areas has come down. In case of medical emergencies, the government hospitals there will encounter problems.

On the positive side, in view of the current lockdown, the use of blood units in all hospi-

tals put together is limited to just 100 per day.

Indian Red Cross Society blood bank chairman Dr P Venugopal said that there is an acute shortage of units of blood in the blood banks. Donors are not able to visit the blood banks for want of transport facility. He appealed to the donors to come forward to donate blood and offered to send ambulances to their door step to fetch them.

Govt fixes prices for aqua products

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Following Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's order to avoid the aquaculture farmers from distress sale, the government has decided to fix prices for the aqua products from Saturday to April 14, said Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Mopidevi Venkata Ramana Rao.

Speaking to the media here on Saturday, the minister said that strict action will be taken against those who purchase the aqua products less than the government fixed price.

The government is taking necessary measures to rescue the aqua and poultry sector from loss. About 90 per cent of aqua products are being exported to other countries.

The fixed price details for 30 count is Rs 430, 40 counts Rs 310, 50 count Rs 210, 90 count Rs 190 and 100 count Rs 180. The Minister emphasised that the government would help the farmers in whichever way possible at the tough situation arising out of the pandemic coronavirus.

Vizag doctor's umbrella theory for social distancing

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Well-known Vizag doctor and Padmashree awardee Dr Kutikuppala Surya Rao suggested mandatory use of umbrellas by the people, who venture out to procure emergency needs and groceries.

He said use of umbrella would keep a distance of one metre between two persons and prevents transmission.

"Even corona positive droplets of one person cannot reach the other person as long as a person remains under umbrella cover," he said. Even covid-19 virus droplets on umbrella will be killed or inactivated by keeping use of umbrellas in hot sun for some time, in other words till next use when one goes out for any emergency to purchase food items or medical emergency or visiting Rythu Bazar for purchase of vegetables.

He said the government should also make it mandatory for police personnel out on the road to implement locked down orders to use umbrellas. He assured that if the government implemented it seriously the rate of spread of corona will be dropped dramatically. This principle has been validated by experts and the suggestion was mailed to the World Health



Dr Kutikuppala Surya Rao assured that if the government implement umbrella theory seriously the rate of spread of corona will be dropped dramatically

Organisation, Geneva. Dr Rao claimed that he was collaborator of several WHO projects.

He also suggested people take rest, consume nutritious food and have enough sleep with home isolation and do yoga and exercise. Recovery or nil cognizable of corona infection develops antibodies and transforms as a potent vaccine against future corona epidemics, he added.

Organisation, Geneva. Dr Rao claimed that he was collaborator of several WHO projects.

He also suggested people take rest, consume nutritious food and have enough sleep with home isolation and do yoga and exercise. Recovery or nil cognizable of corona infection develops antibodies and transforms as a potent vaccine against future corona epidemics, he added.

Tirumala echoes with Dhanwantari mantra chant

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The green environs of Tirumala echoed to the rhythmic chants of Dhanwantari mantra on Saturday as a part of the Maha Purnahuti performed on the final day of the three-day Sri Srinivasa Shantiyotsava Sahita Dhanwantari Maha Yagam.

This unique Vaikhanasa Agama fete aimed at invoking the blessings of Sri Dhanwantari-the Lord of Medicine in Hindu Sanatana Dharma, which was performed by Ritwiks from Chaturvedas with utmost devotion from March 26 to 28 at Dharmagiri Veda Vijnana Peetham in Tirumala.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohana Rangacharyulu, the Vaikhanasa Agama advisor to TTD, said among the different utsavas mentioned in Agamas, Dhanwantari Maha Yagam comes under the category of Shantiyotsavam, peace, prosperity, health and wealth of the humanity. "In the seven Maha Yaga gundams set up in this



sacred place, we invoke the blessings of 24 deities to ward off the negative forces and harmful viruses, including Covid 19, which are troubling the humanity. Dhanwantari Maha Japa Mantra is being recited for eight times by everyone, who has directly participated in the ritual, as well those who witnessed the fete via SVBC live programme across the world," he said.

Sitaramacharyulu, one of the chief Vedic exponents, who con-

ducted the yagam, said on Saturday Maha Purnahuti was performed and the sacred waters, which were rendered as abhishekam to Dhanwantari and Sudarshanamurthy will be mixed in the theerthas of Tirumala so that these waters will evaporate and reach the solar system. The rays from Lord Surya will suppress the toxic effects of the harmful viruses across the globe and protect the humanity from dreadful Covid-19 viruses, he added.

Railways relax refund rules for travel between March 21 & April 15

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Passengers, who have cancelled tickets before the announcement of the cancellation of trains by railways for the journey period between March 21 and April 14 shall now get full refund i.e., the balance amount foregone as cancellation fee.

In the wake of Covid-19, all passenger train services on Indian Railways, including premium trains, mail/express trains, passenger trains, suburban trains, Kolkata Metro Rail and Konkan Railway have been canceled till April 14.

In this regard, railways has liberalised refund rules and a full refund will be granted for all the trains cancelled by railways during the period from March 21 to June 21. They can

get a refund for up to three months from the date of the journey for the PRS tickets purchased through counters.

In case of e-Tickets (online tickets) cancelled before the announcement of the cancellation of trains by railways for the journey period between March 21 and April 14, balance amount foregone, as cancellation fee will be automatically credited to the respective accounts of passengers

Gajanan Mallya, General Manager, SCR, has appealed to the rail users to utilise the liberalised refund rules and avoid rushing to the PRS counters to avoid mass contact at the railway stations. He advised the public to stay at home and be safe in view of the outbreak of Covid-19.

Prisoners' list eligible for parole sent to govt

PNS ■ KADAPA

A list of 101 prisoners serving term at the Central Prison here has been sent to the government for release on parole in the wake of the corona threat.

Those who have been serving life term in the prison are denied the parole opportunity. On directions from State government, names of 97 persons serving time in the males division and four from the women's division have been sent to the government.

Only general prisoners, including remand prisoners, are being considered to extend benefit, it is learnt. A high-powered committee constituted will go through the names and give green signal for release of the eligible persons in four or five days.

In view of the virus threat, mulakhat has been suspended in the Central Prison here.

Prisoners working in the Central Jail's petrol bunk are not being sent back to their prison cells at the end of the duty. They have been asked to stay put in a room near the petrol station.

Free ration to card holders from March 29

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ration will be supplied to the ration card holders from March 29 to April 15, said Krishna District Joint Collector K Madhavilatha here on Saturday.

She said that the VRO, VRA and Village Secretariat staff shall take the biometric fingerprint and supply rice, red gram, sugar and other essentials to the cardholders from 6 am to 1 pm at fair price shops.

She said that ration will be supplied to the beneficiaries through fair price shops under their circle and the dealer should make arrangements and see that social distancing is maintained by painting lines with one-metre distance. The beneficiaries can revive the essentials from the FP shop from 6 am to 1 pm from March 29 to April 15.

The Joint Collector said water, chalk and staff should be made available at the FP shops, all the beneficiaries should wear masks, while coming to the FP shops. Village volunteers should take measures to send 50 beneficiaries in a slot per day to receive the ration and the cardholders should cooperate by not gathering in large crowds.

Village volunteers should take steps to send 50 beneficiaries in a slot per day to receive the ration and the cardholders should cooperate by not gathering in large crowds

She said that all the authenticated village revenue officers, village revenue assistants and village secretariat staff should be present at the allocated FP shops from March 29 to April 15 from 6 am to 1 pm regularly for a hassle-free distribution of the ration to the beneficiaries.

She further stated that people should cooperate with officers by not coming out of the house except during the emergency in the wake of pandemic Covid-19 and to prevent the virus from spreading.

States can use Rs 29,000cr ...

Continued from Page 1

We hope that with this fund, the states and UTs will be able to help the migrant workers," she said at a press conference here.

Srivastava said Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has written another letter on Saturday asking them to set up camps for migrant workers and provide them food and shelter.

The states and UTs were also told to communicate about the availability of free food and accommodation to migrant workers through the public address system, volunteers and other mode of communications, she said.

The home secretary on Friday in his letter to chief secretaries also had emphasised on the issue of the difficulties being faced by the unorganised sector workers. The DGPs of the states were also told the same.

"The home ministry is constantly in discussions with the states and UTs on the issue of migrant workers," she said, adding, steps should be taken so that the migrants would get information about these facilities.

On the availability of essential commodities during the lockdown, the joint secretary said the home ministry, along with the states and UTs, is constantly monitoring the movement of essential commodities and enforcement of the lockdown.

Asked about the issue of price rise in some parts of the country, she said the states and UTs are monitoring the situation and taking action wherever such incidents are com-

The states and UTs were told to communicate about the availability of free food and accommodation to migrant workers through the public address system, volunteers and other mode of communication

ing into knowledge. "The home ministry has already allowed cargo movement so that no such incident takes place," she said.

On the question of some migrants facing difficulties in paying rent to house owners, Srivastava said it was a very important issue and that the central government has been insisting that migrant workers should remain wherever they are.

"Instructions were also given to convey this to the employers. State governments are aware about this issue and taking action," she said.

Asked about the possibility of migrant workers carrying the disease, Srivastava said the home secretary in his letter specifically talked about providing accommodation to the migrants workers along with health check-ups so that their health parameters are known regularly.

BJP MPs to release Rs 1 cr...

Continued from Page 1

The party at present has 386 MPs - 303 in Lok Sabha and 83 in Rajya Sabha. An MP gets Rs 5 crore every year as part of the MPLADS. As part of his party's ongoing exercise to help the poor during the lockdown, Nadda also spoke to BJP leaders from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to oversee the relief work, an official statement said. The leaders included state and district chiefs, MPs and MLAs besides other senior functionaries as Nadda told them about various measures announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the fight against the coronavirus.

Continued from Page 1

For this, an order has been placed to purchase about 1.35 lakh PPEs, 5 lakh N-95 masks, and 400 ventilators, the Minister added.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney briefed the Chief Minister the measures being taken by the government for prevention of COVID-19. People who have been stopped at interstate borders were being provided accommodation and food in the camps. Only those who agree to 14-day quarantine are being allowed at the border and a Resident officer has been appointed to monitor them, the CS said.

The Chief Minister sought details on the second survey results conducted by village

volunteers and instructed the officials that this process should be continued where every volunteer records the condition of 50 households.

The Minister revealed that the services of doctors who voluntarily come forward in fighting against COVID-19 would be utilized.

Those who were identified in the survey conducted by ANMs, Asha workers, and volunteers should be sent to doctor and treatment should be provided as per the protocol.

Alla Nani said that the government was taking steps to increase samples testing capacity. With concern to the negative feedback on the blockade of goods vehicles, the Chief Minister ordered the DGP to resolve the issue

Three pronged plan to curb Covid-19 spread

Continued from Page 1

Jaganmohan Reddy directed the officials to coordinate with collectors in the state borders and make use of marriage halls and hotels to accommodate people only after sanitising those places, Minister briefed to media.

Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana asserted that there was no shortage of food and essential goods in the state and the state government would strictly implement the central government's protocol at the inter-state border.

Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kannababu said banana crop is getting ready for harvesting in Rayalaseema as well as the second crop of rice. For transport of agriculture products

from the state, the government would seek permission from other states, he added.

PV Ramesh, CMO's special secretary asked the people not to panic and be careful as the Coronavirus does not shows any symptoms till at least 14 days from the day of infection.

The Chief Minister ordered officials to concentrate on agriculture, aquaculture, and related sectors and resolve the issues as soon as possible. He instructed the officials to take strict actions to ensure the social distancing among the public, said GoM.

The Group of Ministers present at the review meeting were Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, Botsa Satyanarayana, Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, M Sucharitha and Kurasala Kannababu.

Newspapers don't spread...

Continued from Page 1

The Centre for Disease Control of the USA had also declared that the threat of the virus spreading through newspapers was almost nil. In spite of virulent form the virus has assumed, there was no precedent of newspaper establishments downing shutters, opines Dr Subhash Salunke, technical advisor to government of Maharashtra on contagious diseases. As automated systems are prevalent from right from printing to packing, the dailies are totally safe to touch and read, he said. For the Coronavirus to survive, it requires live cells. It cannot survive on newspapers because the newspapers have minute pores and made of lifeless cells.

As covid-19 spikes, India ramps up its health infra

Continued from Page 1

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

The armed forces are keeping ready 28 service hospitals to provide treatment to COVID-19 patients apart from five hospitals which are carrying laboratory tests for the infection.

Defence public sector undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited has been tasked with manufacture ventilators with premier defence research laboratory DRDO is producing protective gears for medical personnel and supplying hand sanitisers and face masks to various agencies involved in

patient care.

On Friday, the government granted emergency financial powers to Army corps and divisional commanders to procure equipment to set up medical and quarantine facilities for affected people.

On its part, the railways has manufactured a prototype of an isolation ward for treating coronavirus patients by converting non-air-conditioned train coaches. Once the best practices were finalised in the next few days, each railway zone would manufacture a rake with 10 coaches every week, the national transporter said.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said aircraft are crisscrossing the country's airspace to ensure that the COVID-19 testing kits reach their destinations on time.

"India has launched a deter-

mined challenge to combat the spread of corona. I am particularly proud of the efforts being made by our civil aviation sector in ensuring smooth supply of medical & essential items during the current lockdown," he tweeted.

Doctors at leading hospitals expressed fear that India ran the risk of seeing the viral transmission in stage three of infection if the lockdown and quarantine norms were not diligently complied with.

As part of its preparation to deal with large volume of cases, the Centre has also directed the states to keep some beds reserved for creating isolation facilities in public and private hospitals and ensuring that stable patients are discharged as early as possible.

The health ministry has already asked hospitals and medical education institutions

to procure sufficient number of ventilators and high-flow oxygen masks to deal with rising number of patients.

A senior Uttar Pradesh government official said the state has arranged for 11,000 additional isolation beds and that eight testing labs are functional at present.

Haryana has also taken a series of steps to increase the strength of doctors and paramedical staff besides setting up isolation wards to deal with COVID-19 cases.

In Delhi, the AIIMS has set up a task force to develop management protocol for COVID-19 and has constituted several committees to be able to respond to challenges which may come across in coming days due to the rising infection, officials said.

The Centre has also asked hospitals to postpone all non-

essential surgeries. In Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the spread of COVID-19 is "quite under control" in the city and asserted that even if novel coronavirus cases go up to 100 per day in Delhi, arrangements are in place to tackle the situation.

Addressing a digital press conference, he said a five-member panel of doctors, headed by S K Sarin, had submitted its report, prescribing the standard operating procedure for dealing with a situation involving 100, 500 and up to 1,000 new coronavirus patients per day.

Sarin is the head of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS).

Private hospitals too have ramped up their facilities and creating focussed team to handle any surge of patients in

future. Dr Sandeep Budhiraja, group medical director, Max Healthcare, said, "This is worse than a World War situation. And, we are in it together."

He said Max group has planned a three-pronged strategy to "meet the worse scenario" in future, in case the situation befalls on India. "We are creating a designated facility at our Greater Noida hospital only for COVID-19 patients. It had 200 beds, 40 ICU beds and 160 wards. This will be solely for coronavirus patients," Budhiraja told PTL.

Besides, at three hospital units, one each in north, south and east Delhi -- BLK Hospital, Max Saket and Max Patparganj respectively, there are segregated wards for suspected patients of coronavirus, he said.

PM urges AYUSH practitioners to pitch in to combat covid-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday suggested that AYUSH medicine producers could utilise their resources to produce essential items such as sanitisers, keeping in mind the high demand for such items following the coronavirus outbreak.

The prime minister also said there is a need to counter unsubstantiated claims that AYUSH has the cure for the disease.

Ayurved, Unani, Siddhi and Homeopathy come under the AYUSH system of medicines for which there is a separate Union ministry.

Modi made these remarks while interacting with AYUSH practitioners via video.

He praised the efforts of the AYUSH Ministry in promoting "Yoga At Home" to de-stress the mind and strengthen the body during this difficult



He praised the efforts of the AYUSH Ministry in promoting "Yoga At Home" to de-stress the mind and strengthen the body during this difficult phase, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

phase, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

"The prime minister underlined the importance of countering and fact-checking unsubstantiated claims of AYUSH having cure for the disease, adding that AYUSH scientists, ICMR, CSIR and other research organisations must come together for evi-

dence-based research," it added.

Modi said if need be, the government will seek help from private doctors practising the AYUSH system to counter the spread of the deadly virus.

He also urged the AYUSH practitioners to utilise the platform of telemedicine to reach out to the public and generate constant awareness to fight

the pandemic.

The prime minister said it is important to create awareness on India's traditional medicines and medical practices all over the world. He thanked the AYUSH practitioners for constantly striving to serve the people and highlighted the important role they have to play in India's fight against COVID-19, the statement said.

Security agencies look into role of Kerala youth in Kabul attack

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Central security agencies are looking into the role of Kerala youth -- Mohammed Muhsin -- who is believed to be one of the terrorists of ISIS that claimed responsibility of an attack on a gurdwara in Afghanistan killing 25 people, officials said on Saturday.

The youth hails from Kasargod, Kerala, and had left India to the UAE in 2018 from where he is believed to have joined the ranks with the global terror organisation in Afghanistan, they said.

His identity was established after an Islamic state publication posted his picture identifying him with his 'kunya' (Arabic name) Abu Khalid al-Hindi, the officials said.

They said he, along with his family, had returned to Kerala from Malaysia in 2017 and later had left for Saudi Arabia in search of work. The same year he returned and stayed with his family for sometime before leaving for the UAE in



2018, the officials said.

At least 25 worshippers were killed and eight others injured when a heavily armed suicide bomber stormed his way into a prominent gurdwara on Wednesday in the heart of Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, in one of the deadliest attacks on the minority Sikh community in the strife-torn country.

The Islamic State terror group, which has targeted Sikhs before in Afghanistan,

claimed responsibility for the attack. The central agencies with the help of local police reached out to the family of the accused, who identified him to be Muhsin from the published picture which had ISIS flag in the background, they said.

The parents had claimed to have received a message from the ISIS confirming the death of their son during the attack on gurdwara in Kabul on Wednesday, the officials said.

SHORT READS



GSI urges all staffers to donate 1 day's salary to PM relief fund

KOLKATA: The Geological Survey of India (GSI) on Saturday urged its employees to donate one day's salary to the prime minister's relief fund to aid the government's efforts to fight the coronavirus outbreak. GSI's director general M Sridhar requested heads of the departments and deputy director generals of six regions to appeal to employees to make the donation, according to a statement issued by the organisation. "As always done, GSI shall do its bid in the fight against the Covid-19. "In this regard, it is an appeal to all the members of GSI family to come forward and contribute at least one days salary from the pay bills of April 2020 to the PMNRF," the director general said.

Amid lockdown, helpline set up for stranded J&K residents in Delhi

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has set up a dedicated helpline centre in Delhi to address the issues faced by stranded residents of the Union Territory due to the ongoing countrywide lockdown, an official spokesperson said on Saturday. The 24x7 helpline with three telephone numbers -- 011-24611210, 24611108, 24615475 -- has been established in Jammu and Kashmir Resident Commission, New Delhi to address the issues of the local residents stranded in the national capital and elsewhere in the country, the spokesman said here. Additional Secretary Rimpri Ohri is supervising the overall functioning of the centre in Delhi, he said. "J&K residents facing any issue due to lockdown may contact the helpline," the spokesman said. He said hundreds of students from across the country have already been facilitated by the commission to return to their home districts while several have been facilitated to stay at various dedicated hotels in Delhi.



Jail inmates manufacture sanitisers, face masks to fight coronavirus in Raj

PNS ■ JAIPUR

At a time when finding labour is difficult than ever, inmates of central and Jaipur Open Air jails in Rajasthan have been tasked with producing protective masks and hand sanitisers to fight coronavirus.

In Jaipur Open Air Jail located in Sanganer area, about 70 prisoners are on the job after an MoU between the jail department and a sanitiser manufacturing company.

According to Additional Director General (Jail) NRK Reddy, the private firm

approached the jail administration for production of hand sanitisers as it was not getting workforce due to the coronavirus lockdown.

"We have signed an MoU with the company and jail inmates are working for the cause and also earning livelihood for their families," Reddy said.

The company installed equipment at the jail premises, provided the raw material and oriented the inmates to do the work. The inmates will be paid Rs 350 per day for the job, he said.

C'garh districts to get 100 beds each for COVID-19

PNS ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government will provide 100 beds each to all districts of the state to deal with coronavirus cases, a senior official here said on Saturday.

As many as six persons have tested positive for COVID-19 in Chhattisgarh, while swab reports of 81 people are awaited.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel chaired a high-level meeting with his cabinet colleagues and officials late on Friday to review the steps taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic and to ensure supply of essentials during the 21-day lockdown, the official said.

Baghel directed officials to provide 100 beds in each of the 28 districts and ensure treatment of suspected coronavirus patients in all medical colleges of the state, he said.

The beds will be provided to government and private hospitals based on the availability of space, the official said.

The CM also reviewed the availability of COVID-19 testing kits and masks at AIIMS Raipur and Jagdalpur Medical



College in Bastar district. Raipur Institute of Medical Sciences College is being developed as a COVID-19 hospital, where 500 beds are being arranged, the official said, adding that the facility will be ready in the next 10 days.

Chhattisgarh natives, who are stranded in other states because of the lockdown, have been asked to stay put and all necessary arrangements are being made for them through administrative channels, he said.

Baghel has assured that people from other states who are stuck in Chhattisgarh are being taken care of, the official said.

The Chief Minister also asked officials not to prevent

Baghel directed officials to provide 100 beds in each of the 28 districts and ensure treatment of suspected coronavirus patients in all medical colleges of the state, CM said

farmers and labourers engaged production and supply of essentials from working and asked them to spread awareness about social distancing among these people, the official said.



MP gov orders closure of liquor shops till April 14

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government on Saturday issued a fresh order, asking the liquor shops owners to keep their outlets shut during the countrywide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of coronavirus, officials said.

The state government also extended till 14 the closure of cinema halls in the state, they said. The government had earlier ordered that the cinema halls be kept shut till March 31 as a preventive measure to check the spread of coronavirus. In the order issued on Saturday, the Commercial Tax Department of the state asked the liquor shop owners to keep their outlets shut till April 14.

On Friday, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had directed the authorities to order closure of liquor shops during the ongoing lockdown.



People can apply for movement passes on Delhi Police's website

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police on Saturday said people can apply for movement passes on their website during the 21-day nationwide lockdown. According to a senior police officer, the applicants can visit the website of the Delhi Police to apply for a movement or curfew pass. A movement pass is required for those in essential services to move without any hassle during the lockdown.



4 more positive for COVID-19 in Raj; cases touch 54

JAIPUR: Four more persons were tested positive for the coronavirus in Rajasthan on Saturday, taking the total number of cases to 54 in the state, an official said. Among the four cases, three are staff members of a private hospital in Bhillwara, where some doctors and nurses had tested positive earlier, whereas another is a resident of Ajmer district, they said. The person found positive in Ajmer is a salesman who had travelled to Punjab and returned back on March 22, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Rohit Kumar Singh said. He said the total number of coronavirus cases in the state has risen to 54. The entire state is under the lockdown from March 22 to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. A massive survey and screening is underway to trace out the contagion, officials said.

Multiple landslides blocks Jammu-Srinagar NH, hundreds of trucks stranded

PNS ■ BANIHAL/JAMMU

The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was blocked at over a dozen places by landslides triggered by heavy rains in Ramban district, leaving hundreds of trucks carrying essential commodities to Kashmir stranded, officials said on Saturday.

The men and machinery are on the job and efforts are on to make the 270-km-long highway, the only all weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, trafficable, they said.

High altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir experienced snowfall, while the lower hills and plains were lashed by incessant rains throughout the day on Friday, resulting in consider-



able dip in the mercury.

"The highway was blocked around Friday noon due to landslides and shooting stones from the hills at over a dozen places between Chanderkote and Banihal (Ramban district),"

Deputy Superintendent of Police, traffic (national highway), Ajay Anand said.

With the improvement in the weather this morning, he said, the road clearance agencies rushed to the landslide hit areas

including Cafeteria morh, Ramban, Monkey morh, Battery chashma, Panyal morh, Digidol, Panthyal, Mompassi, Hingni and Sherbibi and are making efforts to restore the highway.

"The restoration work will take time but we are hopeful of clearing the stranded trucks by this evening," he said.

In view of the lockdown due to coronavirus outbreak, only trucks carrying essential commodities are plying on the highway over the past four days.

Meanwhile, a 56-year-old woman was killed and four members of her family were injured when their mud-house collapsed due to heavy rains in R S Pura sector of Jammu, a police official said.

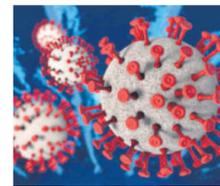
Odisha mulls inviting top professionals in its fight against COVID-19

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a bid to infuse professionalism in its efforts to arrest the spread of the highly infectious coronavirus, the Odisha government is mulling inviting expression of interest from experts across the globe to manage the emergent situation in the state.

The evolving scenario presents dynamic challenges and calls for high-level professionalism, Chief Secretary A K Tripathy said in an official statement.

The statement was issued by the state government after the administration feared that the coronavirus could be advancing towards community trans-



mission in the state after a 60-year-old man with no recent travel history tested positive.

We have witnessed overwhelming interest from senior professionals across the globe to lend their expertise voluntarily, Tripathy said.

Therefore, the state administration intends to invite expression of interest from

senior professionals with long experience of working in large corporate initiatives in healthcare, hospital infrastructure and management, international logistics and sourcing of equipment, accessories and materials, and governments, private and public charitable sectors, he said.

Such individuals may write to the chief secretary for consideration to be engaged as honorary advisors to work with the government.

They will be required to assist the government at senior management level, he said.

The government has also named the officer to be contacted for the purpose, he added.

Gadkari asks toll operators to give food, water to migrant workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday asked NHAI Chairman and toll operators across national highways to provide food, water and other necessary support to migrant workers.

The directions came amid reports that migrant workers are facing severe hardships while stranded at various parts in the country on account of nationwide lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic.

"I have advised Chairman NHAI and Highway Concessioners/Toll operators to consider providing food, water or any kind of support to migrant workers/citizens who are trying to reach to their respective native places.

"At this time of crisis we have to be compassionate for our fellow citizens," Road Transport



The suspension of toll collection on national highways will ease supplies of essential goods across the country while facilitating movement of patients and needy people who have obtained curfew passes



and Highways Minister Gadkari said.

The minister expressed hope that toll operators will respond to his call positively.

Earlier, Gadkari had asked NHAI to suspend toll on all national highways to ease transportation of essential goods and supplies.

The suspension of toll collection on national highways will ease supplies of essential goods across the country while facilitating movement of patients and needy people who have obtained curfew passes, Gadkari had said.

Urging people to adhere to the nationwide lockdown, the minister has said suspension of toll is for people who have to venture

out for necessary travel.

"Even though it's a complete lockdown all over the country, there are provisions to issue necessary passes/permissions for those people who approach the relevant authorities and convince their necessities to travel," he had said.

Such passes are being issued by local authorities so that the needy people can travel, he added.

"Suspension of toll collection is for such people who travel in private vehicles. This will

ease their journey without wasting time at the toll plaza.

"Toll collection has been suspended to reduce inconvenience to such people who have been issued curfew pass by local administration/authorities for all vehicles transporting essential goods and even the vehicles carrying patients," the minister said.

At the same time, he urged people to stay indoors and follow advice of local authorities to fight the spread of coronavirus.

The government earlier this

week temporarily suspended toll collection on national highways to ease emergency services in view of the coronavirus outbreak.

This will not only reduce inconvenience to emergency services but also save critical time, Gadkari had said.

Maintenance of roads and availability of emergency resources at toll plazas will continue as usual.

Delhi minister hits the streets, urges migrant workers not to leave city

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi minister Rajendra Pal Gautam hit the streets in the national capital on Saturday to urge lockdown-hit migrant workers not to leave the city.

The social justice minister reached the Anand Vihar area around 12:30 pm and addressed migrant workers, labourers and daily wagers, who usually come to Delhi in search of a livelihood, with the help of a mic installed in his car.

"Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has sent me here. I appeal to you please don't leave Delhi, please return to your places," he said.

The minister said the Delhi government has made arrangements to give them shelter and free food.

"You will be given free food in nearby schools. Those who don't have a place to live can stay in night shelters," he said.

With the 21-day lockdown enforced to contain the spread of coronavirus leaving them without work and food, thousands of migrant workers, daily wagers and labourers from different states have started walking back home as public transport remains off the roads.

According to official data, Delhi has around 15 lakh migrant daily wage workers.

SHORT READS



HC seeks report from Centre on supply of essential goods to Andaman & Nicobar

KOLKATA: The Calcutta High Court on Saturday directed the Centre to immediately file a report on the supply of essential goods to Andaman & Nicobar Islands during the 21-day lockdown prompted by the coronavirus outbreak. The court asked the Union of India and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands administration to file reports on the prevailing situation by March 30 through email. A division bench comprising Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan and Justice Dipankar Datta also constituted a monitoring committee and directed it to report to the court on the situation with regard to supply of essentials, including food grains and medicines. The high court took note of a letter by an advocate which was treated as a petition.

Seven more people test positive for COVID-19 in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Seven people tested positive for coronavirus in Kashmir on Saturday, taking the total number of cases in Jammu and Kashmir to 27, officials said. Contacts of the fresh positive cases are being traced, they said. "Seven more positive cases in Srinagar today. Four cases had a history of contact with already positive cases of religious congregation while the other three had travel history outside J&K," government spokesman Rohit Kansal said. "Tough to be harbinger of unpleasant news. But being informed is being prepared," he posted on Twitter. Of the total 27 cases, 21 have been reported in the Kashmir Valley, while six in Jammu region.

Maha: Four migrant labourers killed by speeding tempo

PALGHAR: Four migrant labourers were crushed to death and three others seriously injured when a speeding tempo ran over them on Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway on Saturday, police said. The incident took place at around 3 am near Parol village in Vasai tehsil, where the speeding tempo knocked down a group of migrant labourers from Rajasthan, who were travelling towards Mumbai on foot, police PRO Hemant Katkar said. While four were crushed to death, three others sustained serious injuries and were rushed to a nearby hospital, he said. The tempo driver, who initially fled the scene, was subsequently arrested by the Virar police, he added. A case under sections 304(A), 279 and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Motor Vehicles Act was registered against the driver, he said. The deceased were identified as Ramesh Mangilal Bhat (55), Nikhil Pandya (32), Naresh Kalasuva (18) and Kaluram Bagore (18), he said.

MHA changes rules: SDF to be used for migrant workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Saturday changed the rules for assistance under the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF), facilitating availability of money for food and temporary accommodation for migrant workers during the 21-day lockdown. In a communication to all chief secretaries, the ministry also said medical care and clothing can be provided to migrant workers during the lockdown period announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the new rules of the SDRF, provision for temporary accommodation, food, clothing medical cure etc, would be applicable to homeless people, including migrant labourers, stranded due to lockdown measures and sheltered in relief camps and other places, a home ministry official said.

There have been reports of a large number of migrant workers leaving their work places in different parts of the country



and walking down to their native places, hundreds of kilometres away facing hardships on the way.

The migrant workers are left with no option but to walk as normal transport services have been hit after the announcement of the nationwide lockdown by Modi on Tuesday.

In a communication to all chief secretaries, the ministry also said medical care and clothing can be provided to migrant workers during the lockdown period announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to combat the coronavirus pandemic

Lockdown 'botched-up', India deserves better: Prashant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Election strategist Prashant Kishor on Saturday slammed the Union government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, alleging that the lockdown has been "botched up" and there has been "non-existent" treatment and care facilities for people needing such services.

India's response to COVID-19 needs to get better, he said in a tweet.

"For all our optimism, the bitter truth is India's covid response needs to get better than just banking on a botched-up lockdown, less than 10 covid test per million & non-existent COVID treatment & care facilities for people needing such services. India deserves better," the former JD(U) leader said.

In his tweets, Kishor has been highlighting the hardships being faced by migrants following the lockdown and attacked official handling of their plight.



His constant criticism of the BJP and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar over the amended citizenship law and the measures like NPR and NRC had led to his expulsion from the Bihar party.

Following the announcement of a 21-day nationwide lockdown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Kishor had described the length of the shutdown "a bit too long" and taken a dig at the government, saying this is the price one pays for "being behind the curve".

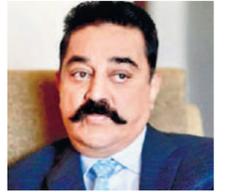
Home quarantine sticker pasted, removed at Kamal's office

PNS ■ CHENNAI

City Corporation personnel stuck a home quarantine sticker on Saturday at the office of actor-politician Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam leading to speculation that the matinee star was quarantined for coronavirus.

The sticker, however, was removed later from the gate of Makkal Needhi Maiam office.

While there was speculation if Haasan was quarantined, the Greater Chennai Corporation said their staffers pasted the sticker at the premises because actress Gautami Tadamalli "has returned from Dubai recently and her passport has this address (Eldams Road in upscale Alwarpet)."



Govt: Response to COVID-19 pre-emptive, pro-active, graded

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's response to COVID-19 has been "pre-emptive, pro-active and graded", the government said on Saturday, brushing aside the allegation that the 21-day nationwide lockdown was announced without any planning.

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry, in a statement, said the government had already put in place a "comprehensive response system" at the borders of the country, much before the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coron-



avirus as a public health emergency of international concern on January 30.

The government has come in for criticism that the lockdown was announced without planning and also for the fact that migrant labourers are

stranded across the country without any resources.

The government said screening of incoming air passengers, followed by suspension of visas and a ban on international flights were done much ahead of any other country.

"Thermal screening of incoming international passengers from China and Hong Kong was started on 18th January, much before the first case of coronavirus was detected in India on 30th January.

"India's response to COVID-19 has been pre-emptive, pro-active and graded," the statement said.

Rlys manufactures prototype of isolation ward in non-AC coaches

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The railways has manufactured a prototype of an isolation ward for treating coronavirus patients by converting non-air-conditioned train coaches, it said on Saturday.

Once the best practices are finalised in the next few days, each railway zone would manufacture a rake with 10 coaches every week, the national transporter added.

"Then we will serve the hinterlands or whichever region needs the coaches," Northern Railway Spokesperson Deepak Kumar said.



The prototype was manufactured at the Jagadhri workshop of the Northern Railways in

Haryana's Yamunagar. A senior official of the workshop told PTI that a Link Hofmann

Busch (LHB) coach was used for the purpose.

To make the modified isolation ward, the middle berth was removed, the lower portion of the compartment plugged by plywood and a provision of partition provided from the aisle side for the isolation of the compartment, the railways said.

Each coach would have 10 isolation wards, it added.

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

When hunger overrides disease: thousands throng Delhi shelters for food

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Every day, Rampal leaves his rickshaw at the edge of the road near Delhi's Nigambohd Ghat and joins a queue of hundreds, sometimes thousands, at a government run shelter for food - gnawing hunger subsuming the coronavirus threat and the need for social distancing.

"Hunger will kill us before any disease does," said the rickshaw puller from Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh, trapped like many thousands in a city that is not their home and unable to either return or earn money in a 21-day lockdown that has brought life to a grinding halt.

Battling hunger and joblessness, he knows about coronavirus and its perils but it's an awareness that barely registers in his consciousness as he waits, one among the large crowd of daily wagers, homeless people and beggars outside the Yamuna Pushta shelter.

On Friday, said officials,



about 5,000 people gathered outside the shelter, the imperative of food overriding the necessity to maintain at least one metre social distancing and the risk of infection.

Most are without masks, leaving them vulnerable to the disease that has affected more than 590,000 people worldwide and claimed over 27,000 lives. India has reported more than 820 cases and 19 deaths.

"What option do I have? Where else can I go? I haven't

earned rupee in two days," Rampal, who had been waiting for about an hour, told PTI.

The situation is the same in other shelters.

The Delhi government has asked the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to provide free food to homeless and migrant workers who have been hit hard by the lockdown.

The DUSIB runs 234 night shelters in the national capital. According to DUSIB member A K Gupta, they can provide

food to 18,000 people per day but end up serving double that sometimes. The government spends Rs 20 per person on food, which includes four chapatis or puri, rice and lentils.

"Due to the lockdown, a huge number of people are thronging the night shelters in search for food... Yes, there is some strain but there is no shortage of raw material," he said.

"Our staff is taking all precautions -- they wear face masks and wash hands regularly -- and following social distancing measures. But it is not feasible to ask people converging at the night shelters to maintain the mandatory one metre distance between them. Their first priority is food," Gupta said.

Videos of serpentine queues of people, mostly men, sitting close on the floor as they are served their meal have been doing the rounds of social media. Rights activists say a large number of people have no idea where to go.

K'taka DGP's appeal to philanthropists

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Director General of Police Praveen Sood on Saturday asked philanthropists who want to support the poor during the lockdown to leave food at the nearby police station, who will ensure that it reaches the needy.

The DGP has asked the Bengaluru City police Commissioner to take steps in this regard and ensure fair distribution.

"All philanthropists, in case you want to support poor. Leave cooked, packed, simple food at the police station and it will reach poor. @CPBIRpl announce a nodal officer for deciding the police station for fair distribution," Sood wrote on his official twitter handle. Bengaluru police's initiative of distributing food, snacks, water and certain essential requirements to those in need has received wide appreciation.

5 villages declared red zones in J-K's Rajouri

PNS ■ JAMMU

Five villages in Manjakote tehsil of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district were on Saturday declared as red zones and their surrounding villages as buffer zones to prevent the spread of coronavirus, officials said.

The villages include Sarola, Dehridhara, Mangal Nar, Gambir Muglan and Kotli, the officials said quoting an order issued by Rajouri District Development Commissioner Mohammad Nazir Sheikh.

Three persons hailing from Manjakote tehsil have tested positive for coronavirus in Rajouri district since Thursday.

"The area has become more vulnerable as far as further transmission of the COVID-19 virus is concerned. It is necessary to break further transmission of the disease in the area and it becomes imperative to take



stringent precautionary measures like declaring some villages as containment/red zone and surrounding areas as a buffer zone," Sheikh said in his order.

Invoking prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC, the National Disaster Management Act and the Epidemic Disease Act, the district development commissioner said there would be no inward and outward movement of any person from these villages and the people would stay at their homes to ensure complete lockdown.

He said there would be no vehicular movement on the Rajouri-Bhimber Gali road.

10 persons hide themselves in tanker to reach Rajasthan, held

PNS ■ PALGHAR

Ten migrant labourers were on Saturday found travelling to Rajasthan from neighbouring Thane district by hiding themselves inside an empty milk tanker amid the ongoing nationwide lockdown, police said.

All the 10 persons, including some women, were detained by the police at Talasari in Palghar district, located along the Maharashtra-Gujarat border, an official said.

"Ten persons, including some women, hid themselves inside the milk tanker. They started their journey from Kalyan in neighbouring Thane district and wanted to go to their home state of Rajasthan. They chose this method as regular transport vehicles are currently not available due to the lockdown,"



spokesperson of Palghar police, Hemant Katkar, said.

"When the vehicle reached Talasari check-post, the police sensed something amiss and checked the tanker. During the search, they found the ten persons hiding inside," he added.

All of them are labourers from Rajasthan working in and around Mumbai, Katkar said.

"They have been detained and booked under IPC section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant)," he added.

Cops open fire in air to quell unrest at Assam market

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Police opened fire in the air in Assam's Bongaigaon district on Saturday morning to disperse an unruly mob at a market that attacked the security personnel when asked to abide by the lockdown order, an officer said. None was injured in the melee, he said. People had gathered in large numbers at meat and poultry shops of Bhawlaguri market in the district without maintaining social distancing norms. As police intervened, most of them dispersed only to return with machetes and stones to attack the officers on duty. The police personnel, when pelted with stones, resorted to lathicharge and opened fired in the air to quell the unrest. Additional police forces rushed to the site and cordoned off the entire area, the officer said.

COVID SPELL:

Animals explore roads as humans stay indoors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With humans under lockdown, many wild animals, including the endangered species, have been spotted on the deserted streets at several places in the country.

India is under the biggest lockdown with around 1.3 billion people asked to stay home in view of the coronavirus outbreak, which has claimed 19 lives and infected over 800 people in the country.

Indian Forest Service (IFS) officials shared videos of wild animals, including the critically endangered Malabar large-spotted civet which was last seen in 1990, taking over the streets in absence of human interference.

IFS officer Sushant Nanda shared a video of the Malabar large-spotted civet roaming on the streets of Kozhikode in Kerala.

"Now it's turn of the Malabar



large spotted civet on the road. Critically endangered with fewer than 250 matured individuals. Endemic to western ghats, not seen since 1990 surfaced at Kozhikode during present lockdown," he said in a tweet accompanying the video.

In another tweet, he shared a photo from Noida Sector 38 in which a Nilgai (blue bull) can be seen roaming on the

streets. The officer also shared a video showing a Chital (spotted deer) running on the lanes of Dehradun. Another IFS officer Parveen Kaswan tweeted a video in which sambar deer could be seen on the streets of Chandigarh. Mass nesting of endangered olive ridleys at the Rushikulya River mouth in Odisha was

another such rare sight. Forest officials found an extremely rare albino turtle there.

Nanda shared the video with the caption, "Arribada (mass nesting) of Olive Turtles are almost over off the coast of Odisha. 10000+ were recorded tonight (March 26). It will now be sporadic. It was bit late this time. Happened during daylight at Rushikulya mouth,

after 2015. An Albino was recorded by the staff for the first time".

Animal rights activist Gauri Mulekhi said the COVID spell has demonstrated how nature can rebound and flourish in the absence of human interference.

"We have pushed the boundaries of nature and cornered wildlife to near extinction over decades of industrialisation and urbanisation. The COVID spell has demonstrated how nature can rebound and flourish in the absence of human interference. Even in the urban areas, it is heartening to hear and see all kinds of birds and small mammals making an appearance," she told PTI.

"A big lesson to learn is to stop worldwide deforestation, minimise consumption and thereby industrialisation and take a step back to a global lifestyle more aligned with nature," she added.

CAPSULE



Prabhudatta donates one month's salary in fight against Covid-19

NEW DELHI: Former Union minister Suresh Prabhhu will donate his one month's salary to the Prime Ministers National Relief Fund to strengthen the efforts to combat the coronavirus outbreak. The Rajya Sabha member has also sanctioned Rs one crore from his Member of Parliaments Local Area Development fund for fighting Covid-19 crisis. "As our @PMOIndia @narendramodi appeals to all sections of society to cooperate to fight unprecedented health emergency #Covid19India its bounden responsibility & duty to do whatever is possible. I contribute 1month salary to #PMReliefFund All our volunteers working to fight #corona," he has said in a tweet.



NHPC earmarks Rs 4.5 crore to fight COVID-19

NEW DELHI: State-run hydro power giant NHPC has pledged Rs 4.5 crore to fight COVID-19 amid the lockdown. According to a company statement, the decision was taken at a meeting chaired by CMD A K Singh with other directors through video conference. "NHPC stands in steadfast support of the nation and the Government of India in this moment of crisis. We will also help the local people near our power stations/projects by providing all possible support," the statement said.



Godrej Prop buys 82 acre land near Bengaluru city

NEW DELHI: Realty firm Godrej Properties has acquired a 82 acre land parcel near Bengaluru city from its group company Godrej Agrovet for nearly Rs 135 crore. In a regulatory filing, Godrej Agrovet has informed that it has entered into a sale deed with Godrej Properties Ltd for the transfer by way of sale of a land parcel measuring 82 acres and 29 Guntas (approx) for a consideration of Rs 134.68 crore. The land is located at Tiruvuranga Village, Begur Village, Anugondanahalli, Hobli, Hoskote Taluka, Bangalore Rural District, Karnataka. Both the companies has cancelled the development management agreement for the joint development of 100 acre of land at the same location.

Will speak to banks to facilitate cash flow: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lauding efforts of bankers in this difficult time, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that she will speak to all banks to facilitate cash flow and enable timely access to all.

She also assured that she will talk to states and ensure that there are no restrictions in the movement of cash, bankers, vendors or bank mitra.

"Appreciate the service Bank Mitra/Banking Correspondents are undertaking across the country. Will talk to states - request no restrictions in their movements. Will speak to all banks to facilitate cash flow. Let's ensure timely access to all," the Finance Minister said in a series of tweets.

It is to be noted that the government earlier this week announced a slew of measures, including direct benefit transfer of cash assistance to poor, old age people and disabled, for mitigating hardship posed by outbreak of coronavirus.

"The entire banking fraternity deserves recognition and



thanks for their tireless and brave efforts to ensure that banking services continue in these adverse times and that every customer is reached in a timely and safe manner," she said.

Appreciating efforts of bankers, she said, "Bank officials and staff have consistently been on the frontline in providing services to customers during this time of adversity, whether it is physically providing cash where it is needed or keeping branches open no matter what".

According to Indian Banks

Association (IBA), 1,05,988 bank branches across the country were operational on Friday.

However, banks are closed on Saturday and Sunday.

Meanwhile, IBA has appealed to customers to strictly observe social distancing and avoid visiting branches unless very necessary.

Avoid touching counters, common places by maintaining proper distance from staff before and after physical transactions, IBA said.

It also urged customers to

44 The entire banking fraternity deserves recognition and thanks for their tireless and brave efforts to ensure that banking services continue in these adverse times and that every customer is reached in a timely and safe manner — NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, Finance Minister

Working to ensure critical coal supplies during lockdown: Joshi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said it is working to ensure critical coal supplies during the lockdown on account of coronavirus outbreak.

Coal stocks at power plants stand at 41.8 million tonnes (MT) equivalent to 24 days consumption as of March 26, 2020.

"Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pralhad Joshi has ensured that Coal supplies are declared as an Essential service and directed all the officials of Ministry of Coal to work harder to ensure that critical coal supplies are maintained during the lockdown period due to COVID 19 pandemic so that power and other critical sectors are unaffected due to the current situation," Ministry of Coal said in a statement.

Daily meetings of all senior officers of the ministry are being held for monitoring coal production, supplies and despatch, it said.

The first such virtual meeting was taken on March 26, 2020 through video conferencing by Coal Secretary Anil Kumar Jain.

A daily report will be given to



the coal minister. As Ministry of Coal is a fully paperless office the entire staff is working on the e-office platform from the ministry or at home as per duty rosters, it said.

The minister informed that various steps have been taken to ensure the easy and adequate availability of coal to every coal dependent industry/Power Sector.

The Union minister appreciated work being done by Coal India Limited where all officers and workers are ensuring the coal production and supplies are not affected in these critical times.

Joshi further assured that no

The minister informed that various steps have been taken to ensure the easy and adequate availability of coal to every coal dependent industry/Power Sector

approvals requiring concurrence of Ministry of Coal would be held up during the current lockdown.

Farm activities exempted from lockdown: Tomar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday said farming operations and related activities have been exempted from the lockdown rules for smooth harvesting of rabi crops and to ensure food security in the country.

"At this critical time, the exemptions have been given for agriculture related activities to ensure enough food supply to the people after the lockdown. It is also done to ensure ordinary citizens and farmers do not face problems," Tomar said in a statement.

To ensure that farmers do not face problems in harvesting, the Centre has directed concerned ministries and state governments to follow the exemptions strictly, he added.

Tomar said exemptions for farm activities were given after he raised the concerns of farm-



ers and farm organisation with the Home Ministry.

On March 27, the government exempted farming operations, farm workers, custom hiring centres of farm harvesters and implements as well as mandis and procurement agencies from the lockdown rules. The government has allowed fertiliser shops to function, and even manufacturing and packaging of fertilisers, pesticides and seeds have been permitted during the lockdown period.

Trump signs USD 2 trillion coronavirus stimulus bill, tells Americans 'help is on the way'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has signed into law the historic USD 2 trillion rescue package, setting in motion a desperately needed financial relief for millions of Americans and secure the country's economy ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 1,700 and infected more than 100,000 people across the nation.

Trump signed the bill on Friday just hours after the House passed it in a bipartisan vote.

The far-reaching legislation is the largest emergency aid package in US history and promises to deliver a tidal wave of cash to individual Americans, businesses and health care facilities all reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Help is on the way," Trump assured his countrymen as he signed the bill in the Oval Office at the White House. The Senate and the House of Representatives earlier passed



the Bill.

"We got hit by the invisible enemy and we got hit hard," he said, adding the economy would come roaring back. "I think we are going to have a tremendous rebound," he said.

The legislation among other things gives USD 3,400 for most of the American families of four, and billions of dollars' worth of financial assistance to small and medium businesses, and big corporations like Boeing.

"This is a very important

together and putting America first," he said.

The first stimulus check is likely to be sent to the Americans in the first week of April. More than half of the country's 330 million population is now confined in their homes. Major Disaster Declaration has been announced in over a dozen states and a national emergency has been declared.

A record three million people have applied for unemployment, the entire travel and tourism industry have come to a standstill and companies have stopped their operations and only essential services are running in the US.

The United States is now the hotspot of the coronavirus in the world, where according to Worldometer, 104,256 confirmed cases of the contagion have been recorded. a total of 1704 people have died and 2,463 people are in critical condition.

"I never signed anything with a T on it," Trump said. "I want to thank Democrats and Republicans for coming



Maruti joins hands with AgVa to scale up ventilator production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Saturday said it will work with AgVa Healthcare to help it rapidly scale up production of ventilators in the country in wake of coronavirus pandemic.

"An arrangement has been entered into with AgVa Healthcare, an existing approved manufacturer of ventilators," MSI said in a statement.

The company would work with AgVa Healthcare to rapidly scale up production of ventilators with intention of reaching a volume of 10,000 units per month, it added.

As per the arrangement, AgVa Healthcare will be responsible for the technology, performance and related matters for all the ventilators produced and sold by them, MSI said.

The auto major on its part will use its suppliers to produce the required volume of components and use its experience and knowledge to upgrade systems for the production and quality control of the higher volumes, it added.

MSI would also help, to the required extent to arrange financing, and obtain all permissions and approvals required to enable the higher production, the auto major said. The company would provide these services free of cost to AgVa Healthcare, it added.

Besides, Krishna Maruti Limited, a joint venture of MSI with Ashok Kapur, will be manufacturing 3-ply masks for supply to Haryana and the central government.

Production is expected to start as soon as all approvals are received, MSI said.

GeM creates separate page for medical equipments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Public procurement portal GeM has created a dedicated page on its platform for medical and protective equipment like thermal scanners, biohazard bags and disinfectants to help the government fight Covid-19 pandemic, an official said.

It has created several categories for medical supplies such as COVID-19 sample collection kit, reusable vinyl/rubber gloves (cleaning), eye protection (visor/goggles), disposable thermometers, single use towels, thermal scanner, cardiac monitors, ICU beds, ambulance, stretcher, wheel chair, portable x-ray machines and surgical isolation face shield, among others.

"All original equipment manufacturers, re-sellers, and suppliers for these products are



being identified for on boarding on GeM portal. So far, we have created 95 categories on the platform," GeM CEO Talleen Kumar told PTI.

He said shorter duration bids with shorter delivery period for specific categories have been fixed.

"Bid cycle for COVID-19 related categories has been reduced to 3 days from existing 10 days. Buyers would also be able to reduce the Delivery Period for such items to 2 days

considering the critical nature of the items," he said.

He added that the new page for tracking COVID-19 categories and the number of sellers will be live from Saturday.

Kumar also said PFMS (public financial management system) buyers can now place orders without blocking the fund and this facility will remain available till March 31.

Further, the dedicated page has also provided features to shorten the procurement cycle for related items.

The Commerce Ministry launched Government e-Marketplace (GeM), an online platform for public procurement, in August 2016 with the objective of creating an open and transparent procurement platform for government, which runs in several lakh crore.

AEPC welcomes rate cut, calls for more relief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apparel export promotion body AEPC on Saturday said interest rate cuts by the RBI will help the sector deal with the Covid-19 crisis but more financial relief is required for this labour intensive segment.

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman A Sakthivel expressed hope that the reduction in repo rate to 4.4 per cent will translate into lower lending rates for both retail and corporate credit, and also encourage consumption and investment.

"Cut in reverse repo rate by 90 basis points to 4 per cent will encourage banks to lend money to productive sectors rather than parking it with the RBI.

TVS Motor Company Announces Service Support for Customers

PNS ■ CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU, INDIA (NEWSVOIR)

We are all in the midst of unprecedented times as we navigate the rapidly-evolving situation of COVID-19. Over 1.3 billion are under total lockdown till April 15, 2020 as India looks to contain the spread of coronavirus, we all need to support all actions that are being taken at national and local level in the interest of the entire community. At TVS Motor Company, we want to reassure that we are taking necessary and comprehensive actions to connect with our customers and support their well-being.

TVS Motor Company has been synonymous with cus-



tomercentricity. It will be our priority to continuously work towards minimising any inconvenience to our valued customers during these challenging times. As a law abiding, responsible partner of our network associates, we are gearing up to address urgent requirements from customers while factoring safety of our associates.

Farmers should maintain social distancing while harvesting: ICAR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As rabi harvesting likely to pick up in the coming days, the government's agri-research body ICAR on Saturday asked farmers to follow social distancing and safety precaution while handling farm machines and labour in the field.

For tackling any emerging issue related to managing crops, livestock and fisheries, farmers should consult and be in touch with agri-scientists in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), ICAR research institutes and state agricultural universities for timely advisories, it said.

"The disease crisis has coincided with the harvesting season of rabi food crops such as



wheat, millets, pulses and oilseeds and other crops. We need to take precautions as we will be engaged in the harvesting of grains, fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs and fish," Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Director General Trilochan Mohapatra said in a statement.

Similarly, proper sanitation is required for using shared or hired machinery for harvesting, he said, adding simple measures on washing of hands with soap, alcohol rub and maintaining isolation distance at personal level and proper cleaning of shared machinery are to be followed.

If food is not available to migrant workers, food riot may be a real possibility: Pronab Sen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former chief statistician Pronab Sen has warned that if food requirements of migrant workers with no income are not fulfilled amid country-wide lockdown, then 'food riot' may be a real possibility.

In an interview to The Wire, Sen said that if the coronavirus pandemic spreads in rural areas, containment will be impossible. In wake of the countrywide lockdown to combat the coronavirus threat, thousands of migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other states have started returning back to their home states from cities, including Delhi and Mumbai. "The problem is that if food



is not made available (to migrant workers) and this, we have experienced in this country earlier, we had food riots during the times of famine. "...we could have food riots again if food is not made available. Let's we clear about this,"

the economist said while replying to a question on impact of the lockdown on India's vulnerable section. "If supply system doesn't come unstuck, if the requirements of people who have no income are not met then food

"...we could have food riots again if food is not made available. Let's we clear about this," the economist said while replying to a question on impact of the lockdown on India's vulnerable section

riots are very real possibility," Sen asserted. On Friday, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that from Saturday the government will be serving lunch and

dinner to nearly four lakh people at over 224 night shelters, 325 schools and other locations.

He pointed out that the whole objective of the lockdown was to arrest spread of the coronavirus.

"Now, If we are in a situation when a very large number of population are forced to come together at a very short period of time in order to access food, whether it is cooked meal in rain basera or what they have done in Punjab and uttarakhand which is shops will open only three hours in the morning which is a classic curfew model...you will probably get a higher spread of infection because of this..." Sen observed.

CLASS OF 2020

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saiju Aravind, founder of EduBrisk tells you with certainty that physical classrooms are not going to disappear as they offer something beyond knowledge and rote learning. "Schools teach so much more than academics. It teaches life skills and communication skills, how to share things, it is about character building and regimented discipline. So physical classrooms will not disappear and therefore, learning environment will not change. It is a similar situation when computers were introduced in Railways and people feared job loss," Aravind says.

He sees the present scenario as a blessing in disguise for the online education even though it is bad bargain. "Major developments took place due to constraints. This is a typical case of constrain. While online courses have been there for years, it is all augmented learning. These were great tools in the hands of regular teachers. But now, three things are likely to take place in the near future," he says.

First, technology empowerment, how people will take to adaptive learning. Second, very high-level of curriculum adaptation by teachers

where they will have a lot more at their disposal to play around with the curriculum and an exam system based on them. Third and the most powerful — the analytics-based intervention. In other words, teachers will teach to the exact needs of the students.

Educationist Dr Shayama Chona tells you that given the present situation, there is no choice but to go online. "There are many free apps from the Government and even CBSE, an effort that needs to be lauded, that one can access for learning and students can utilise their time optimally," Chona says.

She tells you that online mode is not an option but is a parallel to offline education. "There are many children who are disabled. The online mode is a boon for such students. However, there is no replacement for schools. They are more than just a place where a student goes to gain knowledge. A school is a place where it teaches how to interact with peers, it teaches social quotient and there is sports that adds to a child's physical development," Chona says.

Kamini Vidisha, founder ACadru, an online learning platform that offers multi-disciplinary modules and practical experiences, tells you that there are several advantages of e-learning. "It is extremely affordable. Second, accessibility as people have powerful streaming on their mobiles it makes it virtual learning from any place. Third, efficacy. While it is low in e-learning since it is linear but there are many edtech platforms that offer multi-disciplinary modules. This means that even an engineering student has to take up an Arts subject leading to a more experiential learning," Vidisha says.

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

deeper understanding of the subject with the Professor and peers discussing could be the way forward.

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

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

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

'Online study an excellent option in present situation'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ How well-placed and prepared are you?

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



OPTIMISM IS THE FAITH THAT LEADS TO ACHIEVEMENT. NOTHING CAN BE DONE WITHOUT HOPE AND CONFIDENCE — HELEN KELLER



YOUR WEEK AHEAD



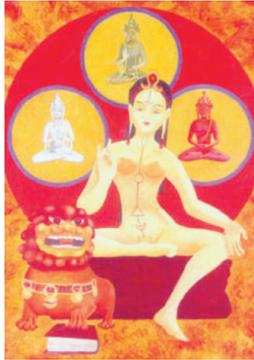
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Your emotional well-being will decide the state of your health. Channelise your energy in the right direction and you will find yourself in the pink of health. In your professional life, you are fairly clear about your goals and what you have to do to achieve those goals. A stimulating time with heaps of opportunities puts your determination and ambition at a higher notch. Business dealings and negotiations are favoured, especially for long-term investments and real estate. This is the right time to make long term strategies and plan ahead. The card indicates a sharp focus on your intimate relationship. Be sensitive and passionate towards your partner. You may meet a new admirer, who shares the same mind-set.

Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You need to be careful while exercising this week, as you are prone to mild injury or sprain. At work, you will be very professional and follow the company policy to the letter. You are likely to make new friends and admirers. You will have a lot of work on your plate that you must take up. Dedication towards task is important, but oversteering yourself may prove counter-productive. Do not hesitate to seek help, if needed. It will ease pressure off your back. On the personal front, the week indicates love, harmony and friendship. This is a good time to relax and have fun with the loved ones. Your loving and friendly mood will make you popular. This is an excellent time for dating because your charm and beauty will attract genuine, honest love.

Lucky number 31
Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Health is good this week. Continue with your daily exercise or yoga routine. If you have not yet started, then this is a good time. You will feel driven to succeed at something with a strong sense of purpose and initiative. You will face all challenges with great courage and fighting spirit. This week, you would be able to finish a lot of work in a short amount of time. It is a favourable time for business matters and negotiations. Financial situation is not good, avoid lavish spends. You will be more emotional and sensitive than usual. This is a great time to talk about relationship issues because you will be in touch with your true feelings. You will generally know how people are feeling and will be more sympathetic and nurturing than normal.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Even though you enjoy good health this week, you need to be vigilant. Those with existing health problems are likely to find a way to recovery. Maintain a positive mind-set and things will surely come easily to you. In professional life, your talent will help you distance yourself from difficulties and you will feel optimistic about future. Work wise, you will gain the confidence that you have always dreamt of. New opportunities, in terms of a new venture or projects, are indicated. A few of you may decide to leave a job that no longer works for your betterment. It is a great time to interact with others. You are likely to have an open and honest communication with your partner. The discussions that you engage in now are likely to be of a serious nature.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Camel brown
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Health is satisfactory this week. Those going through health problems, must fix the root cause. Seek proper consultation to find solution to your problems. Cards indicate a positive, new beginning at work. If you have had a difficult time in the recent past, then know that things are likely to get better very soon. New possibilities in this week will escalate your chances of making new discoveries and fetching new admirers. Some of you may expect a good news, possibly a promotion. In personal space, you will probably want to nurture and protect your partner. Most of all, you will want to cuddle and kiss them, to give them kindness, love and affection. Someone will call you out of the blue, or you will plan a reunion with a lover or an admirer.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Friday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

Your health is in good state. This week you are in a greater psychic/intuitive phase. It is important that you trust your instincts and pay heed to signs. At work, your mind is likely to be very active. Make sure to communicate your thoughts to others. Fine tune your goals and make clear plans and strategy to reach your objectives. This is a good time to discuss these plans with others because you will get good feedback and support. There will times when you may become a victim of confusion that will lead to insecurity. But, the bad time shall pass. Expect a slight delay in your travel plans. Romance is blooming this week. You are likely to take your relationship to the next level. Those who are single may have to wait for some more time.

Lucky number 30
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Health is excellent this week. Despite your busy schedule, you will take time out to relax and rejuvenate. Those with pre-existing health issues, will find a way to their recovery. The card indicates that people around you will appreciate your efforts, and notice the quality of your work. Keep doing what you are doing, as you are on the right track. You will have a lot of luck in investments. Property dealings are likely to be resolved. This week will bring peace and harmony to your life. This is a great time to relax with the loved ones. Your loving mood will make you sexually attractive to your partner. Studies and exams should go well, especially in technical areas like the sciences, computers and mathematics.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

After a bad phase, this week brings you a big relief in terms of positive health. You will be able to revive the inner child like energy and be active the entire week. Things are looking good on professional front. You will be able to fulfill your long term ambition. Whatever you put your mind to should lead to lasting results and achievements. People around will look up to you for a sound advice. You must have a profound vision and a vigilant analysis of all the plans and strategies which will enable you to move towards success. Socialising and love life will benefit from extra charisma and intellectual attractiveness. You may find yourself taking care of family matters such as insurances and wills. You can be confident about making commitments.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Monday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Health looks good. Those dealing with existing health issues are likely to recover. This week brings quick thinking, decisiveness and influential communication style. This makes it an apt time for debating, asking for favours and public speaking. You can expect positive reactions and valuable assistance. The forceful nature of your communication makes it a perfect time to defend yourself and your loved ones. Those in academics, this is a good time for studying and sitting for exams. This is also a good time for making important decisions, negotiations and business dealings. Your romance seems to be a little disturbed this week. Try to keep a two-way communication with your partner to avoid any misunderstandings.

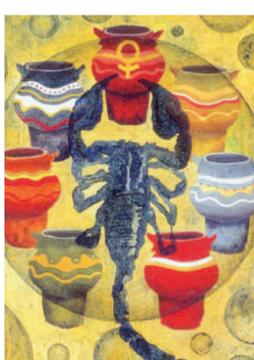
Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You are likely to face health issues this week. Therefore, you need to be careful. Those facing ailments may breathe easy as things will get a lot better. On the work front, your innovative spirit will help you expand your horizons and reach new goals. Later this week, you can expect an exciting news and stimulating conversations which will lead to a wise business deal. Some of you may face competition at work. Stay alert as someone may try to frame you for something serious. This is a good time to be with your partner, friends and family. You may forge new friendships or a significant new romance may begin. Your improved charm will fetch you popularity, so your dating should be successful.

Lucky number 22
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week your health will be good. Try not to get into ego conflicts and retreat to a safe place where you can develop your creative, spiritual and generous nature. You will be smart and optimistic at work and will accomplish all your incomplete tasks. You can expect some exciting opportunities coming later this week. Waiting task for some news on domestic front will make you feel frustrated. Love life looks satisfying. You will maintain a better harmony in your relationships and will have a greater ability to express your love and affection towards your partner. Travelling to far off destination to meet someone is on the cards. Those thinking for investments, think and discuss with your close people before taking any actions.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

You will enjoy good health this week. Continue with your meditation and yoga routine, as it will keep your mind fresh and connected to your inner soul. Those who are dealing with health issues, need to take things seriously and go for proper treatment. Your ability of quick thinking and determination will make this week an apt time to prepare long term plan on work front. Networking with some promising contacts will allow you to make a change. You will have a better mental energy and concentration, and this will help you to succeed in studies or researches. Do not worry about taking risks as this week luck will be in your favour. You can expect some exciting news in your love life. You are likely postpone your travel plans to another day.

Lucky number 28
Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Tuesday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Revive age-old hygiene traditions

The whole world is faced with a panic situation because of coronavirus scare. With over 175 countries in its grip, and the number of casualties heavily mounting, the pandemic is taking a toll on the physical and mental health of people and the state. The entire world is in a lockdown state and all of this is certainly going to take a toll on our economy, which was already hit hard.

Such situations serve as a reminder about the harsh realities of life, which most of us, caught up in the mundanities and routine, often forget. Ancient Indian learned masters, through allegories and similes, tried to raise our consciousness and make us aware that the world is a unified organism. One, that is set into an interdependent framework, where no individual has a reality independent of the entirety. The obvious implication is that resonance of the echoes at one end of the globe shall have far reaching consequences. That makes it imperative that aberration of even a few, knowingly or inadvertently, could threaten our very existence. So, no wonder, what began in China, has spread its wings all across the globe.

That calls for remaining conscious about our collective obligation even while pursuing one's individualistic aspirational urges.

The above concept seems to have gone out of the reckoning of most of the leaders of leading nations, not to say anything on individual beings. Otherwise, they would not be passionately trying to excite emotional chord of people to build up their vote bank, as has been evident in the recent years. The present crisis is a wake-up call for them. If, however, they join hands, quality of human life may improve substantially, not simply in terms of health but economy as well. Statistics available suggest that whenever world trade goes strong, each country's economy grows. But whenever world trade took a downturn in the past, world war happened.

The universe being a unified organism, would also mean that there remains connect and correspondence between the cosmic line up, continuously changing, and the live world on the earth. That offers us with the opportunity to foresee things expected to happen through prognosis of the changing dynamics of the planetary line up in the



cosmos. Most important markers in this respect, in so far as mundane matters are concerned, are major eclipses happening every year.

During eclipse, the Sun, which is supposed to be health manager of the Universe comes under cloud together with Moon which signifies masses. Whenever the Ascendant at time when the Sun and Moon are in exact conjunction, has close linkage with the death indicating 8th house denominator, points to the possibility of heavy mortality. Major eclipses during the years, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1957, 1968, and 2009 bear testimony to the above fact. No wonder pandemic overtook almost the whole world during those years when more than hundred thousand people died because of one form of virus or the other.

Another common factor noticed, except in 1920 was cluster of more than four planets on eclipse axis. But then, in 1920's chart, death indicating 8th lord Saturn was placed adverse to Rahu. The Sun and Moon were ill-disposed off to mischievous Neptune and Uranus, meaning massive death unusual way. Kindly recall my discussion on eclipse chart of December 26, 2019 in the opening issue of the year. There was a cluster

of seven planets — the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, Ketu, Saturn, and Pluto on the eclipse axis. Out of them, Saturn and Pluto are death indicating planets, the latter being more lethal. If that would not be enough, even the 8th lord Mercury happened to occupy lunar constellation owned by another death indicating planet Ketu. What further worsened the situation was placement of Rahu in Mercury owned sign Gemini. Even otherwise, Gemini relates to lungs.

Bear in mind: the world is premised on the concept of 'Unity in Diversity'. Accordingly, it's time now that we resolve to remember our collective obligations, remain alert, and revive our age-old tradition of maintaining cleanliness. Till recent past, in our villages, whenever somebody came from outside, they washed their hands and feet before entering the house. Even as on date, Muslims wash their hands, feet and face before they enter the Mosque to offer their prayer.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Write to him at G-102, Bharat Nagar, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110 025
Tel: 91-11-49848475/9818037273
Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

There's no bad
consequence to loving
fully, with all your heart.
You always gain by
giving love
— Reese Witherspoon



Beyond political ideologies
Spiritually conscious people respect
all others on a spiritual plane,
irrespective of their material position



When streets turn canvas'
Rewinz, an interior design consultancy
company is leaving no stone unturned to
help and add new demensions to city walls



STOP, LOOK & GO

RULES OF COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In times when social media is proving to be an important tool of information and expression, it is best to use this medium effectively to build relationships with people in your areas of interest and engage with them. Treat people with the same respect as you would expect from them, writes HORY SANKAR MUKERJEE

Social media is new opium of our masses. A two-way gate, where you listen to people and connect with people, instantaneously. Almost everyone uses it, in some form or the other, consciously or unconsciously guilty of making mistakes. With its rising popularity comes the challenges of bullying, trolling, circulating fake news, misinformation, violence, FOMO (Fear of missing out) and manipulations of facts. In such volatile environments, the onus cannot be put on 'no one', but 'everyone'. It becomes essential that we act 'now' to communicate with a sense of responsibility, empathy, care and compassion. The 'traffic light' approach—stop, look and go, is the first check point for you.

Stop: Stop before you read, write and post. Pause for a minute. You probably may want to revisit if you want to read, write or post.

When I started investing, I had an ocean of information floating around, later to realise that I do not have enough bandwidth to read, much of it being repetitive and things I never need to know. I pruned it down to two, saving time. Social media is loaded with information. Everything that you read; you forget some, retain some and use some of this information later. What goes in, eventually, comes out in some form. Ensure that you are reading or writing about things which is worthy of your attention and not garbage for your mind, heart and soul. Would you be more interested to read about a celebrity and his Mauritius vacation or a scientific invention that has the potential to change the world? While both are okay depending on 'who you are, what you want to read and where your interests lie', thumb rule is to 'downplay what you do not want to read'. Keep asking, 'am I enriching myself by reading this piece of information?' If yes, move ahead, if no, shun it down or block it. Limit yourself to an area or two that interests you. It could be your hobby, research, work or a social group.

The post that you just read is a wonderful piece and it agrees/disagrees to your established thought processes. Your hand itches to put down some comments, give a 'piece' of your mind to the author or laud him. Do you want to spend your precious minutes and is it worth doing it? If you are still not convinced, think about the dog who barks when your car passes by. It really does not matter for both. Irrespective of what role you play (dog or the driver), remember that the dog will forget after your car has passed and the driver will not have a second glance on you. When you are hurt, angry, rejected, dejected, in pain, avoid writing. When you want to vent out your frustration, correct someone who is grossly incorrect, bully someone or troll, rethink your decision. Applauding, appreciating, sharing

your thoughts can be done without being a miser or sarcastic.

Stop being a virtual source of junk or a JIJO — Junk In, Junk Out. We have this precarious habit of sending out the information to everyone we know, or 'think' we know. Stop being the middleman for junk. People probably may be thoroughly offended with the piece of information shared, and you risk losing your personal brand and reputation. Be careful with your action. First, avoid spreading information unless it comes from an authentic source and second, avoid passing it on to others. If at all you need to, ensure that the information you spread around, is not negatively impacting any person, organisation or group adversely.

Look: Look, if your words or actions would demean someone, socially, physically or mentally. Are you being sarcastic, rude or just posting to have fun at the cost of the other? Is your intention good and acceptable?

If you have now decided to write it down, forward or post, ensure that you have a sanity check in place. Avoid the usage of 'biased' words. Ascertain your company's policies on social networking. Avoid posting or writing on topics related to acts that are defamatory, political, or religious in nature. Ensure that the nature of your post is not damaging you or your organisation's reputation. Are you over-sharing, things which are untrue or unverifiable? Are you reacting to events or incidents, especially when things are flaring up? Are you lying or speaking half the truth? If yes, hold your message back. Remember that your image will be associated with 'your' content. Would you like to risk your reputation?

Go: Go, only if you are clear of your conscience that this is now ready for sharing, reading and adds substantial value to your readers. Posting to the social media means exposing yourself to everyone. Remember that some organisations as well as governments take keen interest in what you post. Their decisions as well as your future employment opportunities and your image can be severely affected based on what you post or what your interests are.

Communicating in the world of social media is different and complex. The audience is diverse and can reach out to everyone. You also need to keep doing the right things to keep your audience engaged. Here are some tips that are likely to help you:

Get your facts: Have you done your research for what you want to write. If you want people to read, you will need to engage them in a few words. The relevance of your content would matter the most to your audience. Understand your audience before you write and post. Get the right demographics and their level of understanding. Write content



IN THIS CHAOS OF ENGAGING IN MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND DELIVERING ENGAGING CONTENT TO YOUR AUDIENCE YOU NEED TO BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WITH WHAT YOU DO. IF YOU ARE THE ONE, WHO ENGAGES MOSTLY INTO READING AND NOT GENERATING CONTENT, YOU SHOULD SPEND TIME CHOOSING ON WHAT YOU INTEND TO READ OR NOT TO READ/COMMENT



that is original or things that people would not have read anywhere. Your audience will check the 'freshness' of your post before it is read till the last.

Choose the right social platform: Choose the right platform. While posting on all platforms seems beneficial, it may not actually have the desired results. Find out what works for you. Do not spend money on a medium (if you are running a business) and forcing it to work for you. What works in Twitter, does not work with Facebook or vice versa.

Talk in a language, they understand: If you are a technology consultant writing a blog, you will need to use terminologies that your audience understand. Ensure that you know for whom you are writing and what you are writing. Keep it simple, precise and clear. Remember the KISS principle — Keep it simple, silly. Keep your language simple, easy to comprehend. Use headings, bullets and images. Avoid writing dragging paragraphs with one or two central ideas.

Use the 'right' images and videos: Never under play or over play with this powerful tool. It helps you tell a story and a picture is worth thousand words. But when the content is lousy and boring and refuses to engage the audience, it creates negativity. It can make or break your post, therefore use with clarity and be clear about how it helps you achieve your objective.

Call to action: Do you want only likes or upvotes or do you want to hear from your audience, or do you want them to share the content? Prompt your audience with what action you would want them to take. If you have not, then probably they would not.

Cross promote your profile or other content: If you are using multiple platforms or writing on different topics that interests you, ensure that you are cross promoting yourself. Ensure that you link to other articles, posts and write ups that interest you or encourage people to click on other things that you would have written.

In this chaos of engaging in multiple social media platforms and delivering engaging content to your audience you need to be effective and efficient with what you do. If you are the one, who engages mostly into reading and not generating content, you should spend time choosing on what you intend to read or not to read/comment. Follow the traffic light approach and spend a part of your day engaging with social media content.

If you are the one doing both, you may find yourself hard pressed against time. Your effectiveness will be guaranteed when you make the best use of the platforms. Here are things that would help you become effective:

First, give it some quite time of your day. It should not be the first thing in the morning,

while driving or on the dining table but some time to respond to the social media activities. Ensure that you are not at the habit of responding immediately nor delaying your responses. You must have something original to offer or a pressing need. If you are talking something which people already know, you will not be able to garner their interest.

Second, cut down on peer pressure to 'be in'. 'Are you on Instagram?' and you immediately start off with an account. You are a member of many such platforms, which you rarely visit or maintain. Can you find out a way to rationalise your social platform requirements? Can it be limited to only three? Ask these questions: First, are my contacts available in the platform I am using? Second, does the connections really justify a new platform? Third, how much of my leftover time will it take to manage this new platform.

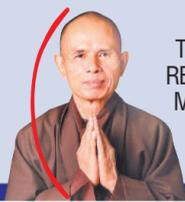
Third, if you are managing your business and needs to connect to your customer or stakeholders, you cannot be doing it, alone. Take professional help. Agencies that will help you get your word ahead. In case you cannot, fix up a person from your organisation who would be doing that.

Fourth, remember that managing social media for businesses are different from that of individuals. The approach, methodology, purpose, usage, time required would be different. Responding to the messages, creating engaging content and writing is different. Use the most suitable platform. Don't force it to work. Consider your limitations.

Fifth, acknowledge that social media is a two-way communication method. Just as you write, it is important to listen. When you listen, you tend to understand the likes and dislikes, of your audience, sharpening yourself. This needs a balance with your interests and skills sets. People will read you or follow you only when you are consistent. If you are irregular or spending too little time, posting or writing, your audience will not be incentivised to come back to read. A teaser on 'what follows next' can also motivate people to come back.

Use social media effectively to build relationships with people in your areas of interest. Share your expertise, offer help and engage with them. Treat them with the same degree of respect you would give, when you meet them in person. There is no denying that social media is effective in connecting with people and an excellent way to collaborate. But be aware that it is making us indolent and disrupting our need for a great conversation.

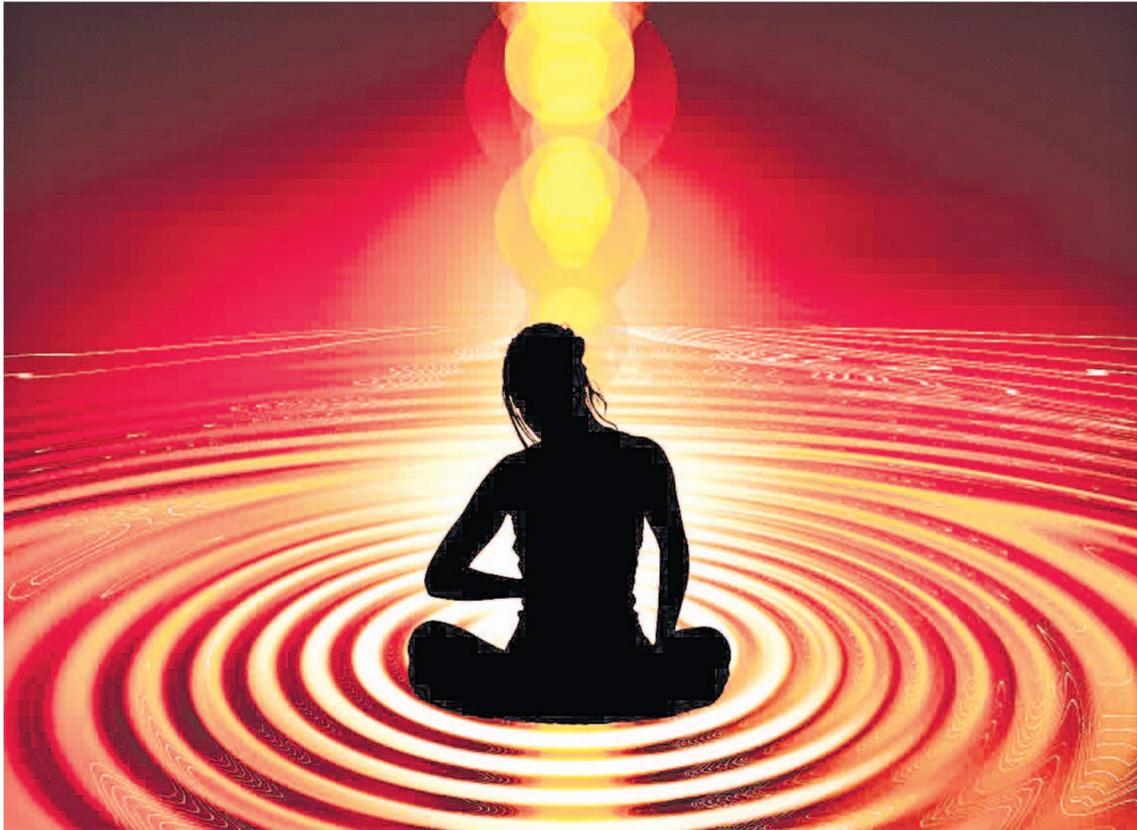
The author is Principal — Education, Training and Assessment at Infosys Ltd; Author of *The Gift of the Gab: The Subtle Art of Communicating*, published by SAGE Publications India



THE PRACTICE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IS ONE OF THE MOST VITAL AND ARTISTIC OF HUMAN ACTIONS — THICH NHAT HANH

BEYOND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

Despite their leanings, spiritually conscious people respect all others on a spiritual plane, irrespective of one's material position, writes RADHANATH SWAMI



In modern political world there has been a constant conflict between values of conservatism and liberalism, fascism or socialism. The values of right wing are to acknowledge social orders and hierarchies, protectionism of individual's, capital and property, security. The values of the left wing are egalitarianism — social equality among all strata of society, fairness, etc. Values of either of the wings are important but the question arises, how to make decisions which satisfy interests of the both of the parties.

Spirituality synthesises ideologies of both that is, the left and right wing. Spirituality acknowledges that on physical platforms there has to be hierarchy based on the natural order and individual preferences based on the psychophysical inclinations but on the spiritual platform, everyone is similar in nature beyond the physical boundaries of creed, caste, race, nationality or color. So, while dealing in this

world, one may acknowledge differences, and act as per assigned roles and responsibilities, and yet respect the others, understanding their spiritual nature. Spiritually conscious people respect others on a deep spiritual plane which is irrespective of one's material position. The spiritual concept of Karma helps one to understand the reason for inequality seen in this world, still encouraging one to live a life with good karmas to have better opportunities for present and future and be not callous for the sufferings of other.

To give another example, left ideologists recommend higher taxes on the high net worth individuals for redistribution of wealth. But it risks of making people dependent on government and lazy. Spirituality aims to achieve same goal of equality by compassion and education. When individuals are educated about the equality of the living beings on the spiritual platform, they can see oneness among all

WHILE DEALING IN THIS WORLD, ONE MAY ACKNOWLEDGE THE OTHER'S DIFFERENCES, AND ACT AS PER ASSIGNED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND YET, RESPECT THEM FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL NATURE

other differences.

For those who learn spiritual path, practicing compassion becomes necessary to go ahead on the chosen path. Sharing of ones gifts with others becomes a source of pleasure and way of furthering ones prospects in the spiritual line. In this way, spiritually conscious people willingly share what they possess to those who need through the medium of God, although, such charity is not meant for lazy ones who want to avoid their duties but for those who are weak links of society or those who are contributing to the world without personal financial gains.

Right wing ideology focuses on preservation of one's culture and heritage, specifically religiosity through government support, such conservative attitude sometimes results in violence or coercion against those who transgress the traditional norms and customs. Freedom of expression is seen as transgression by rightists when it doesn't fit in traditional cultural ideas.



Leftists see such a place as a police state where people are controlled with the help of security establishment. Spirituality achieves aim of protection of one's culture and heritage, religious tenets not through enforcing beliefs upon people by coercive means but by educating them about its importance, benefits and relevance. Such educated people willingly adhere to traditions if they find reasonable logic behind them.

There is no wonder that western world is getting more and more enamoured by the oriental wisdom over the decades, since there has been consistent efforts by various eastern philosophers to logically introduce them with their philosophy and practices, it has resulted in mushrooming of Yoga studios, *kirtan* clubs and Ayurvedic treatment centers all over the West especially USA. There are 300 million yoga practitioners all over the world including 36 million people in USA itself, it is an indication that people are increasingly adopting an age old practice when results are proven with the help of education and practical demonstration.

Spiritually advanced people know the art of changing the forms of traditions but maintaining the substance to have the same effect. The spiritual education which would happen at Guru's *ashram* in forests, now happens in an air-conditioned classrooms of our temples, with the help of various types of media, although the gist of the content remains same. In this way the external aspects may be modified as per the time, place and situations to accommodate more quantity of people, but the core principles remain same to maintain the quality of them.

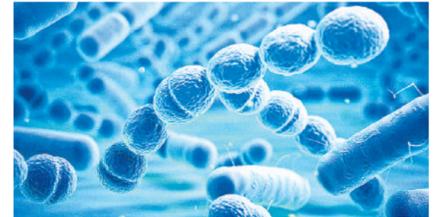
In this way, spirituality can play a major role in filling the gaps between these ideologies to have a peaceful society.

The writer is a spiritual guru at International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)



HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK

Lessons to learn



These are difficult times. More importantly, these are times to learn some most basic lessons which humanity forgot in its ambitious march to conquer everything. As the threat of Covid-19 spreads, mankind realises how vulnerable it is in the face of a crisis that emanates from the nature. The difficulties have their own lessons to offer. They are testing human resilience in times of adversity. That mankind will emerge from this is also certain. History has proved this time and again. Of course, a price was paid each time, but what mattered was the indomitable will to survive from the crises. However, the essential point was that with time the same mistakes that led to those crises were forgotten and the same pursuits went on. Human beings have hardly learnt from their past mistakes and their memories are woefully short. But the micro-organisms keep on learning from their past and continuously adapt to regain their strike power. The multidrug resistant micro-organisms that give rise to the same old diseases that struck humanity ages ago keep on bouncing back. The coronavirus that has struck this time with a vengeance is a grim reminder of this basic fact. The adaptability of the virus is something that must give humanity a lesson or two. There are other lessons, too, that the present crises offers. First and foremost, that despite those geographical boundaries, racial and cultural differences, the uniformity in reaction to this corona threat proves emphatically that humanity has a common thread. And the collective unconscious hypothesis of Carl Jung holds goods. Rightly did Napoleon opine that two things unite humanity — fear and self-interest. Look the way people are reacting globally. Same 'me first' mind set where it comes to survival interest, and same 'me-not' mind set when it comes to threat. Though it is rather a tall order, yet can we not think of others, for a change? Rather than thinking of buying provisions to last till eternity can we not think of leaving something for the others to buy? An extreme example is that of the people of the United States of America who as per newspaper reports are going for panic buying of guns and cartridges. And the reason is quite strange. It is based on a chain of assumptions. First that the virus threat will last long. Second, if it lasts long there will be scarcity of basic necessities. Third, the deprived will be forced to think of snatching and looting those who have it. So the conclusion is that the guns will have to be used for defense. The point is how much can be stored and how many can be kept at bay by fire power. Sanity is giving way to vanity. To quote former President of the US, John F Kennedy — "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich". We need to learn to share our resources in these trying times. In times of crises that threaten collectively, we need to stand collectively. Not just for me and myself but for us. These adversities are times that test not just our wit and grit, but also our character. There is little justification of people running from isolation wards and risking others. Behaving responsibly is what these times call for. Time to be human and act human.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

The formula of happiness

Breathe-Observe-Smartphone fasting — Just add these three principles to life and see the difference it makes to your inner world, says VENUGOPAL ACHARYA



There are some things that we have known since we were kids, and then there are others that we realise intuitively that guide us to what is good for us and what is not. Yet we never give it a serious try. And that could very well be the cause of our distress. Here are three known but least-tolerated life-changing principles to achieve happiness and contentment

B: BREATHE. JUST PAUSE

We all breathe but are we conscious of it? In my seminars, I often ask participants to place their hands on their stomach and feel it as they inhale and exhale. When you breathe in, does your stomach come out or go in? What happens when you exhale? The class is often divided with half the students claiming that their stomach goes in during a deep inhale and the other half is unsure. The point driven home is emphatic: we don't even know how to breathe, something which even animals do so naturally. Our disconnect with our self and nature is acute; we

could therefore first learn to breathe normally and consciously. A simple technique is to inhale deeply to the count of four, hold the breath to the count of eight and then exhale slowly to the count of eight. Focus on the sound of your breath; listen carefully as you inhale and exhale. In no time, you'll catch your mind wandering. Gently bring the mind back to breathing and in 10 minutes you'll be recharged with fresh energy. A five-minute break a few times during the day or even a ten-minute breathing break could make your day more productive.

O: OBSERVE MORE, JUDGE LESS

Secondly, you could try simple 'observations' where you gently pull the mind back to the present and remove judgements. Once I was on a flight and saw a passenger stand up from his seat. He looked around, his face twitching, and then with a sudden grin, he hurriedly sat down again. A few seconds later, he rose again and paced up and down the aisle, murmuring to himself. He's defi-

nately angry with his wife, I thought to myself. Then I instantly realised I'd made a judgement. After all, how could I say he was 'angry' or she, his 'wife'? Then I admonished myself for 'judging' the man and that again was a judgement! This time I gently said to my mind, "Please come back dear mind and observe without judgement."

When you observe without attaching labels, you release yourself from your disarrayed mind and enter a higher dimension of reality. This is a platform beyond your own prejudices. Often we err because we observe little and analyse a lot. Instead, if we observe more and judge less, it's likely we'll see the real picture and paradoxically, improve our judgement! Observation practices are like bright sunshine; they help us remove the fog of confusion and bring clarity.

S: SMARTPHONE FASTING

The overdose of social media and the virtual world could potentially throttle their individuality. An inordinate time on the electronic world tends to disconnect one from his or her feelings and needs.

A modern variant of traditional fasting is giving up your gadgets for some time in a week. In many monasteries, monks occasionally fast from cooked grains and rice. Besides the spiritual benefits, this gives rest to our digestive system. The body releases toxins and you feel an overall sense of wellness. Likewise in our internal world, a lot of clutter gets flushed out when we 'fast' from social/electronic media. We could for a change experience 'real' exchanges. More than ever before, we need to now pause, disengage from the loudness of it all, and look at the vast expanse of the sky above our heads, rather than on our gadgets. Let's connect deeper to our own inner selves and catch the grace around us.

The writer is a motivational speaker and author of the book Mind Your Mind: Three Principles for Happy Living

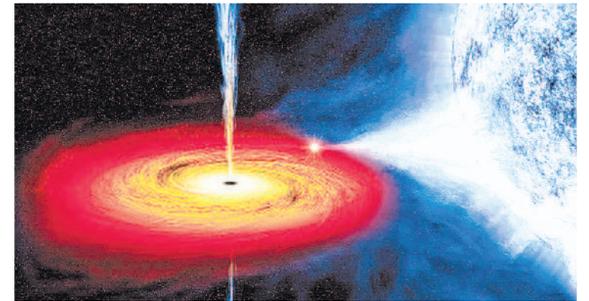
Tamoguna is lurking...

Born of ignorance, *tamoguna* (or darkness inducing properties) causes delusion to all living entities, says AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

The *Bhagavad Gita* explains *tamoguna*: The mode of darkness, that is *tamoguna* is born of ignorance. It causes delusion to all living entities. It binds with carelessness, laziness and sleep. (14.8) Darkness signifies anger (intolerance), greed, idle talk, violence, being a parasite, hypocrisy, excessive physical efforts, quarrel, lamentation, illusion, depression, being pathetic, excessive sleep, false expectations, fear and laziness. (*Bhagavad Gita* 11.25.4)

When this mode is predominant, absence of illumination, lack of motivation towards duty, carelessness, delusion and foolishness all these arise. (14.13) Consciousness gets covered with foolishness and dullness. Given to lamentation and getting deluded, one sleeps excessively; indulges in false hopes; and displays violence towards others. Awareness gets limited and one is unable to concentrate. The mind gets affected and there is preponderance of ignorance and depression. One, who dies predominantly in this mode is hell-bound, and, ultimately, is born in lower species. Work is impelled by violence and envy, and the strength of wicked people increases.

How do we identify if someone is essentially in *tamoguna*? One will get angry readily; worships God seeking His help for causing harm to one's enemies; considers oneself a material body, not the soul that one is; takes shelter of a gambling den; performs acts without considering their consequences; is unable to tell right from wrong; eats food, which is unclean and which causes distress; is hardly conscious during sleep and has faith in irreligious activities. One's happiness is in delusion and being pathetic; knowledge is at the material level and spiritual knowledge



is alien to such a person.

We all have a percentage of this in us besides the mode of passion (*rajoguna*) and the mode of goodness (*sattvaguna*). Together they constitute us, and they always try to overpower one another. (14.10)

Have you ever wondered as to why some people commit suicide? Because the *tamoguna* in them overpowers them. This *tamoguna*, when it is at its peak, completely possesses and make one do what goes entirely against even our basic instinct of survival. How does it become so powerful inside of us? Because we associate with its various forms. Beginning with the mind, we harbour sexual thoughts, angry feelings, greedy plans and hateful ideas, etc. One may feel that these are harmless. They are not; they reinforce *tamoguna* in us. And the punishment is from inside; one implodes. They cause fear, anxiety depression, etc. When such feelings peak, one harms the self helplessly, even to the extent of killing one's own self.

How should one deal with this vicious internal enemy? Try to avoid associating with it. The mind should be

controlled and no illicit or harmful thoughts should be encouraged. Nothing is harmless. Thoughts are also karmas and they cause *karmaphalas*. Similarly, we have to be careful in what we eat, see, hear, speak, etc. They all count. Eating meat and drinking alcohol reinforces *tamoguna*. Lust also enhances *tamoguna* in oneself. The same goes for hearing and speaking. Then the enhanced *tamoguna* acts from within. It causes fear, anxiety, depression, etc. Once it becomes highly potent, it can kill or force one to commit suicide.

I have realised the dangers associated with *tamoguna*, and have taken shelter of God. I pray regularly seeking God's help in controlling my mind and senses. Whenever my mind strays, I chant. Similarly, when I have to make choices in what I eat, see or hear, I seek God's guidance, and He obliges with the right intelligence. I am determined not to allow *tamoguna* inside me to cause havoc; I fully intend to tame it with my Lord's help.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com



When you walk across the urbane areas of Hyderabad, you cannot help but glance at the artwork on the city walls that capture different moods and ambiances around. *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL speaks to the creators of this artwork, a group called Rewinz, which is determined to leave no stone unturned to help add new dimensions to the walls and cafes around Hyderabad

WHEN STREETS TURN CANVAS'



Decorative imagery of art on walls is the new mania in the city. One such atelier Redwinz is embellishing the walls of various cafes from Hi-tech city to Nanakramguda in Hyderabad. 'Big Cup Theory', chain of 'Apsara' ice creams, 'Wichway' and 'Vapour Brewery Tollgate' are some of the cafes that this group has showcased their work on.

So who are they? Rewinz began as an interior design consultancy company with a team of design experts who started their work with wall paintings. "We wanted to create an exceptional impact on the lives of people walking across the city," says Sreekanth, the Managing Director of Redwinz.

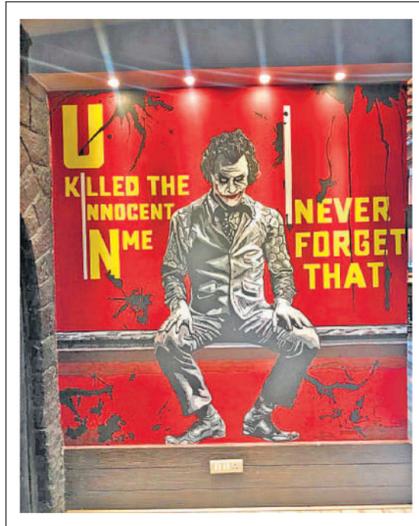
Painting walls with aerosol sprays has become an expression of signifying salient messages. Redwinz's collaboration with Misaal India, an initiative by the Rouble Nagi art foundation has resulted in beautiful artwork across the city. "We had a tremendous experience working with the Misaal team. We thoroughly enjoyed adding new dimensions to the city walls. With a union of a team that helped in cleaning the slums and a team that painted their homes, we were a creative force of nine enthusiastic artists who gave them a colourful canvas," Sreekanth adds.

The group has now set foot into digital painting, sculpture making, and street art. Redwinz is tinting the city with multiple vibrant colours and believes in creating an exceptional impact on the lives of people strolling or those taking a walk or even those that drive past. "We like to experiment with different types of artwork and textures for lively experiences for the watchers," informs Sreekanth.

The group paints figurative sketches along with word-based arts emphasising on ideas through visual forms without the usage of brushes and canvas considering texts are an effective tool of communication in artistic expression. Functional with a positive effect on the city landscape, they manage to tap and spray paint humongous buildings.

Cafes and urban spaces are now giving artists prominent platforms to several artists across the city and the result is a beautiful sight to behold. It's no longer just about having the best coffee. Visitors are now looking to visit spaces that have good coffee and great artwork on walls.

Rewinz's street art is also helping viewers learn about the happenings around the city through which, they also make a point, or pose a question or opinion. Unlike a few graffiti artists, the group has secured permission by local authorities including GHMC for street and wall art.



Renew your home decor with fresh pattern

Good home decor is not all about expensive accessories — even a beautiful motif on home furnishing can amp up the interior with a fun and joyous vibe.

One can bring out the fun side with interesting customized ideas and fill up the walls with vivid designs and colors, says Rishabh Sarpal, the concept interior designer of Rishabh Sarpal Atelier.

From floral and botanical to geometric and damasks, he suggests ways in which one can paint your home beautifully.

Bold black and white

High contrast: Black and white, in the interior, definitely add a little drama. With its timeless look, a black and white pattern draws an emotional response. Through its use in fabrics, rugs, upholstery or solid surfaces, one can infuse a wow factor in the decor.

Combination patterns

Repetitive patterns can give a visual boost in the decor. A combination of patterns on the walls creates a nice symphony of colours and patterns that bring some surreal effects to the living space.

Go large

Large patterns are an excellent way to decorate a spacious area, making the space look closer. However, to avoid overpowering interior, furnish the floor with loud patterns so that it won't visually steal attention away from the main pieces. One can laminate wood flooring with irregular patterns that stand out prominently, or a smooth grey flooring to tone it down.

Artistic engrave

The most common pattern one can engrave on the walls of the home is — floral and botanical. In fact, these styles go well with all types of interior and decor pieces in the living room, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen or installations on the accent wall in the entryway. Moreover, the timeless versatility of the beautifully engraved patterns can effortlessly add joy and delight to the interior of a home.

Polka dots

The classic pattern, polka dots, is a la mode in interior



decor. Numerous variations are used in stylish and original ways to render a classy and modern look for the living space. Further, one can keep the colour palette in the room simple yet subtle to keep the surrounding overwhelming, but not overly flashy.

Quarantined? Show your home some love

Quarantine period has been tough on many people. While you are at it, why not make your home clutter-free and snazzy? Interior stylist Bhawana Bhatnagar, who has founded Casa Exotique, shares some tips for you and your home in the lockdown

Starting Wednesday, the country has gone into a three-week lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, making most people self-quarantine themselves at home. While you are at it, why not make your home clutter-free and snazzy?

Interior stylist Bhawana Bhatnagar, who has founded Casa Exotique, has these tips for you and your home in the lockdown.

1. During self-isolation, try to ensure that your house is not cluttered. Given that this situation is going to prevail for a while, it would be smart to make your home clutter-free and spacious, so that you don't get crippled by an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia. Free up some spaces where the family can gather to play games and do interesting activities together.
2. These days, you have a lot of free time, you can thoroughly check the attic or store. There are enough chances that you will find something interesting that you were searching for years. By mending some old decor pieces, you



can easily turn the trash in to treasure and can give a vintage look to your home, incorporating memories into your present.

3. Turn your bedroom into an art gallery, library, or a sports complex. Whatever be your choice, try to make your home as lively as possible with some

classic posters, paintings, and heirloom decor pieces if you have some. Also, since it is not possible to go out, one thing we can do is to bring the outside in. By placing plants inside the house, and nurturing your garden, add natural charm to the surroundings.

4. Colours can have a huge impact on creativity, so be very conscious when choosing colours. It shouldn't be so drab that makes you fall asleep, but it also shouldn't be so stark that it agitates you — somewhere in the middle is perfection. Usually, shades of blue or yellow are great for boosting productivity.
5. For the bedroom, as the summers are approaching, you need to create a calm, cool environment. Placing a floral headboard above your bed is a great idea. You can also hang a light canopy from the ceiling for a royal vibe.
6. Usually, people spend the maximum time in the living room during the day, it is most important to ensure there is plenty of circulation space and the area is free of clutter. Whatever you don't need and is just sitting there collecting dust, needs to be stowed away.
7. Placing houseplants is also a great idea as it makes the place feel fresh and natural.

— IANS

FEARLESS, FUN AND FIERCE



Became a rowdy in school...

My entire schooling was in Chennai except for a year when I was sent to Rishi Valley. I think I imbibed a lot of good values from there. After I returned from Rishi Valley, I completed my Class X in Chennai and became a rowdy. I felt that was my calling. Later I came to Hyderabad and did my Intermediate at St Ann's, Mehdiapatnam. I then did a one year course in fashion designing at NIFT and left for the USA for my under-graduation.

I enjoy being notorious...

I always feel I am shy. Even when I look at myself in the mirror, I feel very shy and introvert. But none of my friends thought so even during school. They always said I was a rowdy, but I guess that phase was only in Class IX and X. Until then I was quite shy. But now, I enjoy being notorious. Breaking rules is fun.

Sports became a part of us from a young age...

Our dad would wake Vishnu, Manoj and me at 5 am. He would drive us to the YMCA and make us run and do gymnastics. We were introduced to sports early in life. I was into gymnastics and played tennis for a while. My dad made sure we took swimming lessons and horse riding too. During holidays, when we would accompany our dad to his shoots, he would never let us sit idle. He always used to tell us to go learn something.

Bunking school...

I did a lot of naughty things in school. I bunked classes and got my friends to do the same. I used to bring them back just before the school got over. We used to get caught all the time and I never learnt my lesson (laughs).

Beaten up a lot as a child...

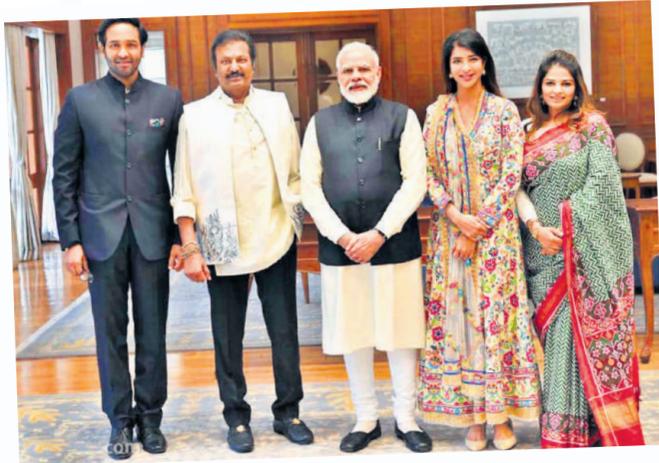
My mom would come up with creative ways to punish us. We were raised the old-fashioned way. We always wanted the punishment to end with mom and not go to dad. We sometimes got away with dad, but there was no escaping mom.

Me-time with dad in the air...

My bond with dad got stronger only now. During childhood it always was dad saying something and us listening. I don't think he believed in communication. It's only after going to America that I got my voice and I'm still trying to understand his temperament as even I am temperamental like him. I want to get close to him, so I'm trying reverse psychology by being more patient and not yelling. I love being on flights with him because I get his undivided attention. So I simply go with him so that I get to spend some time alone with him. I get to play with him, talk, take pictures and more. That's my me-time with my dad and it's always in the air.

World changed for me after going to America...

Very early on in life, perhaps when I was 5 or 6 years old, I knew I wanted to be an actor, but it took me my entire life to tell dad that. I'm possibly the only or one of the very few Telugu actresses whose father is in the industry. Because fans would be very upset and you had to make sacrifices. After going to America however, my world changed. When people saw what I was doing there and that I was doing it with full conviction and



didn't care about being somebody's daughter, everybody started to respect that. I thank America for giving me that space to find my voice and nurturing me.

Mom was the one to say 'do it'...

When I got an opportunity to act here, my mom was the first person to say 'do it'. I had doubts as I was building my

because of my two brothers. All the boys call me 'akka' because of them. They never introduced me as Lakshmi, but always as 'Lakshmakka' and now my name itself has become Lakshmakka. It's all their fault. Sometimes when my parents were out of town, we would sneak out to go dancing. It would be Manoj and I and all his friends. Whenever I went out, it was with my brothers and growing up with them was very, very difficult.

Life changed after Nirvana...

Everything in my life changed after I became a mother. Before I was pregnant with Nirvana, I didn't care much. I was more like it's 'my life'. But once she was born, everything changed. One becomes more conscious of one's decisions when one becomes a parent. I think even a marriage solidifies when a child is born. Mommy first, everything else next.

I am all for women who need me...

I am my own competition and I fight for my own rights. In every field, women are fighting for their voices to be heard. We have had a woman Prime Minister in the 1980s and we should show the world the progressiveness the world's largest democracy has. I don't look at myself as a man or a woman. I am what my work is and I am always there for women who need me at any point.

Love story telling...

I worked so hard in life to be where I am today. To make a mark for myself, to be relevant and consistent is not easy. I am a storyteller and I feel I have the best job in the world. But when people back off on their words, I feel like quitting everything. But the biggest picture is that I love the 'big picture'.

Getting first role in Las Vegas...

My first job was *Las Vegas*



Dad didn't know about my acting...

My dad didn't know about my acting stint in America for years. It was only after his friends noticed me that they told him. He didn't really know as he didn't know what I was doing in America. I kept telling him that I was doing documentaries.

Husband's patience paid off...

I met Andy, my husband, at a friend's wedding in Chennai through a common friend. I was sitting in the car and he was tying his shoe lace and looked up at me. He knew I was the girl for him and decided he was going to marry me. And seven years later, he did exactly that. He hung in there didn't let me go. I guess his patience really paid off.



career in America and had just gotten married. But my mom convinced my dad and spoke to everybody, including

Vishnu and Manoj.

Growing up with 2 brothers was difficult...

I never had a boyfriend my entire life

When one hears the name "Manchu Lakshmi", there are many images that come to mind. Instead of taking advantage of the fact that she is the daughter of superstar Mohan Babu, Lakshmi has chosen to tread her own path, creating a niche for herself through her acting and social work. Even when she was a five-year-old kid, she knew that she wanted to be an actor. Breaking stereotypes and barriers, she has now set a mark for herself in the Telugu film industry. In a heart-to-heart conversation with **THE PIONEER** Lakshmi opens up to **K Ramya Sree** about her childhood, growing up with two brothers, getting into acting after facing many hurdles, being a mother and more

Vegas and it was an emotional moment in life. It changed my trajectory. I did not even have a SAG card then. But the crew picked me and only me, and they gave me the card because they wanted only me among hundreds of other Indians who looked like me. That was the biggest moment in my life. It was a moment for which I had worked all my life, during school, college, family and so on.

Came to industry at the right time...

I think I came to the industry at the right time when there were so many people around me. Bunny, Rana, Ram Charan, Manoj, Nithiin, Nani, Swati, all these guys are amazing and they are locals. It is a good group and there is tremendous camaraderie. We get together to talk and have had great times ever since I joined the industry.

Went to Rishi Valley because of Vishnu...

When we were kids, Vishnu would make *Manoj* and I do naughty things *and*

because we did it, he would blackmail us always. It is because of him that I went to Rishi Valley hostel because I used his 'pinky' pencil. He would cry all the time about that pencil. I bought him 10 new pinky pencils, but he wanted only that one. He apparently kept the nib a certain way and I used it. That pinky pencil changed my childhood. Another time when my *ammama* went to Kashmir, she got a card that had a 3D design of a temple when you open it which can be cut and used multiple times. So my tuition teacher and I cut it on my dad's birthday and wrote Happy Birthday and gave it to him. My brother cried like crazy over it. I then started growing my nails and would pinch them whenever they did this. They have scars to talk about now.

Want to share my knowledge...

I started realising that I parent the kid and the mother when I'm with my friends. Every mother is doing the best they know and that is not always right for the child. You know what the best is, based on your upbringing. I am in a lot of mommy groups and most of them are from America where they talk about kids crying at 3 am and seek suggestions. I don't see this much in India as each mother here do their own thing and I thought there are so many things that we can do beautifully in India that people don't really know much about. I learnt a lot, I read a lot and have met a lot of people and I feel I have a lot of knowledge that I should share. We felt why not have our YouTube channel and share our knowledge. We shot a few episodes along with my daughter and it is a hit now. My daughter is the best toy. She wants to do everything I do and having grown up on the sets, she is very comfortable in front of the camera.

RAPID FIRE:

Describe yourself in three words:

Fierce, fearless and fun

Favourite holiday destination: Any place with a beach

What are you most inspired of: People who are not afraid to live their life fully. I love Oprah, Madonna and Lady Gaga as they are not afraid to put their heart on their sleeves

and be unapologetic. Women like that inspire me.

I am friend in the industry:

I have many, but since its 3 am I think only Rana will pick up my phone

Favourite film: Anything that Mani Ratnam makes

What does creativity mean to you: Expression

How do you start your day: Hugging my daughter and giving her a hundred kisses

What is the city you wish to visit: I have been thinking about Northern Lights but I really don't want to go through all that to visit that place.

Worst subjects: Hindi and Math

Celebrity crush:

Aamir Khan. Here it's Nag

Guilty pleasure: Chocolate cake with Vanilla ice-cream

How do you deal with anxiety and anger issues: Yoga

What is your breakout project: In Telugu, Anaganaga Dheerudu will take the cake for me as it took a lot of effort to make.

Do you want to get into direction: Lot of people tell me to dive into it, but I would shoot myself if I get into it... It's a lot of hard work.

