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the pioneer

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VARUN LEARNS SPANISH
10 VIVACITY

Actual corona number tenfold!

Only a fraction of cases/fatalities detected for want of adequate tests, worldwide, says former director of WHO's Health Action in Crises

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

On March 27, Daniel Lopez-Acuna, former director of healthcare in crisis situation with the World Health Organization (WHO) said the number of people currently affected by coronavirus is very, probably "ten times", higher than the official confirmed case, both in Spain and worldwide.

Nearly two months ago, when coronavirus spread was in its midway stages, Lopez-Acuna's warning failed to create any stir, both in Europe and elsewhere. After all, a Spanish citizen was speaking primarily in the context of the Spanish outbreak. Two months down the line, the entire world is haunted by the fear that the number of actual cases could be many time more than the reported ones. The death count could be equally manifold.

Various studies conducted across the globe have shown that only a fraction of the infection and fatalities are being detected due to inadequate testing.

This means the number of people who have been quarantined is far less than those out in the streets or filling up work places and spreading the virus. These undetected "carriers" may be the single biggest hurdle in preventing the spread of coronavirus, more so in India, where testing has been far less than other equally affected nations.

A monk uses a digital probe thermometer to measure the body temperature of a roadside vendor in Dharmsala on Sunday AP

Take the case of the United Kingdom, which has 2,57,154 cases till date. A study by the researchers at Stanford University estimated that the virus kills 1.04 per cent of affected patients in the United Kingdom. Since on May 19, the day the study was published, the UK had reported 48,417 deaths, it is estimated that the total infection stood at 4.65 million, nearly 19 times more than the tally of 2,40,00 cases on that day.

Similarly, researchers from the University of Bonn have said the number of coronavirus infections in Germany could be 10 times higher than currently thought.

The researchers tested 900 persons at Gangelt in Heinsberg district in the western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The finding published on May 3 showed that out of 900 persons from 404 households who were tested, around 15 per cent were found infected. This was five-time higher than the number of confirmed cases reported officially by the Robert Koch Institut.

The infection rate corresponded to fatality rate of 0.37 per cent. If this fatality rate is applied on a national scale, it would mean ten-time more infection than the reported ones in Germany.

Similarly, way back on March 24 itself, a top Italian Government official who headed the agency collating the Covid-19 data, confirmed that the number of cases in the country could be ten-time higher. "A ratio of one certified case out of every 10 is credible," Angelo Borrelli, the head of the Civil Protection Agency, told La Repubblica newspaper.

Let us now take a look at the US scenario. According to the Worldometer --- the foremost global website that 24x7 tracks down the countrywide number of new cases and fatalities --- since a large number of cases are asymptomatic and that testing is sparse, only a fraction of the infection is detected.

"The number of actual cases is therefore estimated to be at several multiples above the number of reported cases. The number of deaths also tends to be underestimated, as some patients are not hospitalised and not tested," it said.

"If we base our calculation (deaths/cases) on the number of reported cases (rather than on the actual ones), we will greatly overestimate the fatality rate," it said.

The Worldometer analysed the data provided by New York City, the New York State antibody study, and the excess deaths analysis by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and said that the number of actual cases is 10 times the number of confirmed cases.

States allow domestic flights with conditions

Maha allows only 10% flights from Mumbai from today; air travel in Bengal from May 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The States have agreed to allow a limited number of domestic flights operations from Monday with several riders while West Bengal will resume flight operation from May 28.

Maharashtra, which has been unwilling to reopen its airports for passenger flights has agreed to allow 25 flights to and from Mumbai on Monday instead of proposed 250 flights. West Bengal will allow flights from Kolkata and Bagdogra airports from May 28 instead of May 25.

The Tamil Nadu Government also allowed air travel but mandates 14 days home quarantine for passengers and who don't have facility for home quarantine will be moved to institutional quarantine. According to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Hyderabad airport has agreed to allow 15 arrivals and 15 departure fights while airports-Vizag and Vijaywada in Andhra Pradesh have agreed to resume flights from May 26. Meanwhile, pilots and first officers seem to be concerned over lack of clarity on quarantine requirements for them.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are home to some of the busiest airports in terms of passenger traffic.

According to Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, it has been a long day of hard negotiations with various State Governments to recommence civil aviation operations. Except Andhra Pradesh which will start on May 26 and West Bengal on May 28, domestic flights will recommence across the country from Monday. "For Tamil Nadu, there will be maximum 25 arrivals in Chennai but there's no limit on no. of departures. For other airports in Tamil Nadu flights will operate as in other parts of country," the Minister said.

A view of 'Scan & Fly' kiosk outside T3 departure gate of Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

Meanwhile, confusions prevailed on Sunday as different States imposed their own set of conditions on reopening airports. Many States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar, Punjab, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were opposed to opening up of their airports and have announced their respective quarantine measures for passengers arriving at their airports.

CAPSULE

GOVT ISSUES SOP FOR STRANDED INDIANS

New Delhi: The Government on Sunday issued a Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) for the return of Indians stranded abroad due to the lockdown.

MAN KILLS WIFE USING SNAKE TO BITE HER

Kollam: In a chilling plot, a man allegedly killed his 25-year old wife by letting a cobra bite her in her sleep near here early this month with police cracking it following suspicions raised by her family as it was the second time she suffered a snake attack in three months.

MIN: NO RELAXATION IN CONTAINMENT ZONES

New Delhi: Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday said that the Delhi Government has barricaded the containment zones and no relaxation has been given in these areas.

India pips Iran to be 10th worst-hit nation

Maha crosses 50K cases; with 7,107 new cases total in India at 1,38,532

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19

TOTAL CASES: 1,38,532

DEATHS: 4,024

RECOVERED: 57,643

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	50,231	1,635	14,600
Tamil Nadu	16,277	112	8,324
Gujarat	14,063	858	6,412
Delhi	13,418	261	6,540
Rajasthan	6,894	161	3,816
Madhya Pradesh	6,665	290	3,408
Uttar Pradesh	6,268	161	3,538
West Bengal	3,667	272	1,339
Andhra Padesh	2,780	56	1,841
Bihar	2,574	11	653

Maharashtra on Sunday crossed 50,000-mark, reporting the highest-single day coronavirus surge with Mumbai recording 30,542 cases as States of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Delhi also followed it with high spike in their coronavirus counts. With the addition of around 7,107 new cases and 156 deaths, the total coronavirus cases in the country rose to 1,38,532 and death count crossed 4,000. After today's spike India on Sunday pipped Iran to emerge as the tenth worst affected country in the world.

Maharashtra led all States in the count of those infected by the virus and crossed 50,231 numbers with 3,041 new cases. The State recorded 58 new deaths taking the total toll in the State to 1,635.

Besides Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu recorded 765 rise in the cases with total count of 16,277. With 8 new deaths, total toll in the State reached 112. Tamil Nadu Capital Chennai itself has registered total 10,582 cases with 587 new cases and with six deaths on Sunday the toll in the city has reached at 81.

In view status of coronavirus cases in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the Governments there have sought more time to resume large-scale domestic flight services in their respective States on Monday. West Bengal witnessed spike of 208 cases taking total number of affected people in the State to 3,667 with 272 casualties. The State Capital Kolkata witnessed 52 new cases and total affected in the city numbered 1,665 with 180 deaths.

Migrants undergo thermal screening after arriving from Bhubaneswar via special train to reach their native places at Praygraj railway station on Sunday PTI

Gujarat, among top three States in the coronavirus count, recorded a rise of 394 cases taking the total number of those affected with the virus to 14,063 and 29 fresh deaths taking toll figure in the State to 858. Delhi recorded total of 13,418 cases with 508 new cases. With 30 new deaths on Sunday , the National Capital stood at 261 deaths as on Sunday. Other States witnessing spike in cases include Karnataka with 130 new cases taking its count to 2,089 with total 42 casualties, Bihar with rise of 117 cases reaching the count at 2,511 with 11 deaths as on date.

Rajasthan witnessed 152 new cases with total count at 6,894 and 161 fatalities in the State, while Madhya Pradesh recorded 294 new cases for a tally of 6,665 cases and 290 deaths. Odisha addition of 67 cases took the count of coronavirus affected to 1,336 with seven deaths and Assam in the North-East recorded six new cases taking total number of virus affected people to 353 with four casualties.

Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier claimed that return of natives from southern and western regions of India to the Northeast region has led to a sudden rise in Covid-19 positive cases, especially in Assam.

The Central Government has claimed that around 50 lakh stranded migrant labourers have reached their homes.

All passengers belonging to Punjab shall be tested for Covid-19 at airport

PNS ■ MOHALI

As the domestic air travel set to begin after almost two-month-long halt, all passengers reaching Punjab would be tested for Covid-19 as they landed at the airports in the State. Issuing the orders in the wake of directions issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to resume air travel from May 25, Mohali Deputy Commissioner Girish Dayalan has issued orders that all passengers belonging to Punjab shall be tested for Covid-19 at the airport.

The orders stated that as the Chandigarh International Airport (CHIAL) falls in the jurisdiction of the district, the entry of inbound persons into the State needs to be regulated in line with the protocol of the Punjab Health Department for the containment and prevention of the spread of Covid-19.

"Therefore, all passengers belonging to Punjab shall be tested for Covid-19 at the airport. All such persons shall be required to undergo mandatory home quarantine for a period of 14 days from the date of arrival. In case, the test comes out to be positive, the person or persons shall be shifted to an isolation facility. In case the test comes out to be negative, the person shall still be required to undergo home quarantine for 14 days and shall self-monitor their health status and report to the nearest government health facility in case they develop any Covid symptoms," read the orders.

This is being done in line with the directions of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, which mention in that "states can develop their own protocol with regard to quarantine as per their assessment". However, it has been clarified that mandatory tests shall be done only of passengers whose destination is Punjab (any district). "The passengers for UT of Chandigarh, Haryana, HP etc, moving through the airport, shall be dealt with as per the protocol of the recipient State," added the Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Magistrate in the order.

Besides, the orders stated that the Airlines shall publicise this information extensively so as to ensure that this information is made available to all the passengers boarding the flights well before they reach the airports, that is the points of departure.

Sadhu killed in Maha ashram, hardened criminal arrested

PNS ■ MUMBAI

In another shocking incident involving a sadhu from Karnataka, Shivacharya Nirvanarudra Pashupatinath Maharaj, the founder-spiritual head of Nirvanji Pashupatinath Mutt, was found dead in his bedroom at his ashram in Umri near here on Sunday morning, with police stating that robbery may have been the motive.

Later in the evening, the Nanded police arrested the prime suspect behind the Mutt head and one of his associates.

After killing Pashupatinath Maharaj's associate Bhagwan Shinde, the prime suspect - identified as one Sainath Langote — went to the ashram late on Saturday night.

Finding Maharaj alone resting in his bedroom at his Ashram, Langote allegedly threw chilli powder in his eyes, blinding him. He took away ₹69,000, his laptop, other valuables in the bedroom worth approximately ₹1.50 lakh and the sadhu's car keys.

As Maharaj put up some resistance, Langote overpowered and strangled him. Later, he dragged the deceased Mutt head's body to the latter's parked outside and dumped it into the vehicle's boot and sped off from the place.

Acting on a tip-off that the prime accused had fled to Telangana, the police traced to a nearby Tanur village in the neighbouring State and arrested him.

Brace for scorching heat as Nautapa begins today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Just a day before "Nautapa', beginning from May 25, the maximum temperature of Rajasthan's Churu and Ganganagar on Sunday recorded 47 degrees Celsius, hottest in the country. Nautapa is considered hottest days of the summer season when the sun enters into the Rohini Nakshatra.

The next nine days beginning from Monday, could be hottest days of the season.

During Rohini Nakshara, the distance between the sun and the earth gets reduced significantly resulting in days and nights getting hotter than the rest of summer months comparatively. During this period, maximum and minimum temperatures soar up.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the maximum temperatures could soar up to 47 degrees Celsius while minimum temperature could also soar up to 25-28 degrees Celsius in several parts of the country.

During Rohini Nakshara, the distance between the sun and the earth gets reduced significantly resulting in days and nights getting hotter than the rest of summer months comparatively

The IMD on Sunday issued a "red" warning for Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Rajasthan for the next two days. The IMD has also issued an orange warning for heatwave for east Uttar Pradesh. This is also for the first time this summer season that a red warning has been issued for heatwave.

According to Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre, this season, the temperatures did not rise the way it usually does in North and Central India because of significant rainfall activity during April that continued till mid-May. Srivastava said due to dry north-westerly winds and a trough between Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, conditions are favourable for heatwave to severe heatwave.

"Heatwave conditions over some parts with severe heatwave over isolated pockets are very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Telnagana during the next five days," the IMD said in its daily bulletin.

A mirage appears on India Gate as mercury soars in the national Capital on Sunday Ranjan Dimri I Pioneer

Met Dept issues 'red alert' for Pb, Hry, Chd

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With temperatures surpassing the 45 degrees Celsius-mark across several parts in the region, the Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued a "red" warning for Punjab, Haryana and their joint capital- Chandigarh for the next two days.

Intense heat wave continued to swept Punjab and Haryana with maximum temperature soaring several degrees above normal in most parts of both states.

A Met official said that both maximum and minimum temperature levels were recorded above normal limits across the region.

According to the Met Department forecast, severe heat wave conditions are likely at many places in Punjab and Haryana May 25 and 26.

In Haryana, Narnaul was the hottest place as it recorded mercury at 45 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal. Hisar settled at a high of 43.6 degree Celsius, two degrees above normal while Ambala recorded a maximum of 42.6 degree Celsius, up by four degrees from normal. Karnal recorded a high of 41.6 degrees, three notches above normal.

Punjab's holy city Amritsar braved the scorching heat at maximum temperature of 41.2 degree Celsius, two degrees above normal. Patiala and Ludhiana recorded respective maximum temperatures at 42.6 degrees and 41.9 degree Celsius, both three notches above normal limits.

Chandigarh, the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana settled at maximum temperature of 41.7 degree Celsius, up by four notches from normal.

The union territory of Chandigarh settled at minimum temperature of 25.7 degrees, which was two notches above normal. The minimum temperature recorded in Narnaul was 27 degrees, Ambala 23.2 degree Celsius, Hisar 24.1 degrees, Amritsar recorded 23.2 degree Celsius, Ludhiana 23.6 degrees and Patiala 23.5 degree Celsius.

TEMPERATURES CONTINUE TO RISE IN HIMACHAL

Temperatures continued to rise in parts of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday and Una was the hottest place in the state with a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius, the Meteorological centre here said.

Most other parts of the state recorded temperatures above the 30-degree mark.

Una recorded the highest temperature in the hill state at 42 degrees Celsius, Shimla Meteorological Centre director Manmohan Singh said. Bilaspur recorded a maximum temperature of 41 degrees Celsius, followed by 40.8 in Hamirpur, 38.8 in Sundernagar, 37.2 in Nahan, 37 in Kangra, 35.9 in Chamba, 34.8 in Solan, 31.6 in Dharamshala and 31 in Palampur.

Tourist places Shimla, Manali, Dalhousie and Kufri recorded maximum temperatures of 27.9, 26.8, 23 and 19.8 degrees Celsius respectively.

The mercury settled at 19 degrees Celsius in tribal district Lahaul-Spiti's administrative centre Keylong and Kinnaur's Kalpa recorded a maximum temperature of 23.8 degrees Celsius.

Hry BJP suspends Chander Prakash Kathuria from party

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has expelled its leader from Haryana's Karnal, Chander Parkash Kathuria, from the primary membership of the party for six years.

Kathuria, a special invitee of the party's state executive committee, was suspended by state BJP chief Subhash Barala on Sunday.

However, the reason behind his suspension was not mentioned in the letter issued by Barala. A letter issued at the state BJP headquarters in Rohtak stated that Kathuria has been suspended for six years from the primary membership of the party.

Kathuria (51) is a former chairman of the Haryana State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Mills Limited.

The party's action against Kathuria came two days after a video purportedly showed the party leader having fallen on the ground when he allegedly tried to descend from the second-floor balcony of a flat in Chandigarh with the help of a cloth.

He had fractured his foot while trying to come down the balcony and was admitted at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) for treatment.

After the incident, the Chandigarh Police had issued a statement stating that the BJP leader was injured after he fell while escaping from the second floor of a building in Sector 63 where he had gone to meet a female friend on Friday evening. A person had come there and to avoid to see him, Kathuria tried to come down through balcony and feel down from second floor.

No complaint was made in this regard. While the family told that they are taking him to Fortis from PGIMER, he was not admitted in Fortis as per records. The patient was declared unfit for statement by the PGIMER. A text was received by concerned SHO from Kathuria's wife saying that they will inform the police about his heath, the UT Police had stated.

The incident had brought major embarrassment to the ruling BJP in Haryana and is seen as a reason for Kathuria's expulsion from the party.

371.67 lakh quintals of sugarcane procured in Hry

Chandigarh: Haryana Cooperation Minister Banwari Lal on Sunday said that in the current crushing season 2019-20, all ten cooperative sugar mills of the state have procured 371.67 lakh quintals of sugarcane by May 21.

The procurement is made after spending an amount of Rs 1262.54 crore, for which the payment of about ₹897.12 crore of sugarcane farmers has been made. Out of this the financial assistance of ₹290 crore provided by the State Government in the form of unsecured loan and ₹607.12 crore has been given to the farmers by the mills, the Cooperation Minister said.

As compared to the amount of ₹517.17 crore outstanding till the same date of the previous crushing season, there is an outstanding amount of ₹365.42 crore during the current crushing season which is 29.34 percent less than the outstanding amount of the previous season, he said. Banwari Lal said that all necessary steps are being taken to make the due payment of ₹365.42 crore of the current season, at the earliest.

During the current season, till May 21, 370.52 lakh quintal of sugarcane has been crushed, whereas during the previous season, 354.96 lakh quintal of sugarcane had been crushed till the same date, he said.Similarly, during the current season, all the cooperative sugar mills of the state have recovered an average of 10.08 percent sugar till May 21, 2020, while on an average of 10.06 percent sugar was recovered till same date during the previous season, said the Minister. ***PNS***

IN BRIEF

HRY GOVERNOR AND CM GREET PEOPLE ON EID

Chandigarh: Haryana Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya and Chief Minister Manohar Lal has greeted the people, especially the Muslim community, on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. They have also extended their greetings on the occasion of Maharana Pratap Jayanti which falls on the same day. The Governor said, Eid-ul-Fitr marks the culmination of the period of fasting and prayer during the holy month of Ramzan and infuses the spirit of fraternity, brotherhood and harmony. The Chief Minister urged the people to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with the spirit of peace, love and mutual understanding which would go a long way in strengthening national unity and integrity. The Governor and the Chief Minister urged the people of the state to follow the social distancing norms while celebrating the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr and Maharana Pratap Jayanti.

HP GOVERNOR AND CM GREET ON EID-UL-FITR

Shimla: Himachal Governor Bandaru Dattatraya and Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur have felicitated the people of the state, particularly the Muslim brothern on the auspicious occasion of Eid. In the felicitation message on the occasion, Governor said that unity in diversity is our strength and we should all unite to maintain harmony in the society besides strengthening the unity and integrity of nation. The Chief Minister said, may the holy festival of Eid bring happiness in the lives of the people and may Allah approve all our kind deeds and ease the suffering of all individuals.

#THANKYOUINDIANRAILWAYS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Chandigarh: A campaign — #ThankYouIndianRailways — has been created by WolfzHowl and Mavcomm the strategy and Communications firms respectively to spread positivity, acknowledge, and appreciate the stellar and tireless work of Indian Railways during the COVID-19 pandemic. The campaign consists of two videos including of Indian Railways – The Unsung Covid-19 Heroes consisting of a song titled 'Chuk Chuk Rail gadi'; and Indian Railways, the COVID Warrior which is a poem on the role played by Indian Railways.

'DELHI GOVT'S ADVT EXPOSES AAP'S REAL FACE'

Chandigarh: Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) president Sunil Jakhar on Sunday said that an advertisement issued by Delhi Government, which portrays Sikkim as separate nation, has once again exposed the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) separatist face. Jakhar said that the Delhi Government on Sunday issued an advertisement in newspapers for recruitment of volunteers in the Civil Defense Corps, in which it was described that Sikkim, an integral part of the country, would be a considered separate country like Bhutan and Nepal. "It may be considered as a human error but given AAP's background, it is safe to say that it was done deliberately to promote its separatist ideology," he said.

IIT ROPAR DEVELOPED ANTI-MICROBIAL COATINGS

Ropar: IIT Ropar's team, including Dr Narinder Singh, Prof C Raman Suri, Prof Harpreet Singh and Amanpreet Singh, has developed noble synthetic materials for anti-microbial coatings on PPE kits, spray for disinfecting tunnels, and for fogging purpose. These materials are non-volatile in nature with no foul smell, possess very high anti-microbial activities, and showing high shelf life on different metallic or non-metallic surfaces. The team has developed two types of coatings — Hydrophilic (for fogging and spray on walls etc), and Hydrophobic (for coatings on PPE, hospitals and furniture.

DISINFECTANT DRIVE CARRIED OUT IN PU

Chandigarh: A two days long drive of spraying the disinfectant got finished at Panjab University campus on Sunday. This drive was conducted by the NSS volunteers which covered all the construction sites of Sectors- 14 and 25 of Panjab University campus, a spokesman said. This drive was part of the ongoing efforts of NSS,PU initiative named as Mission Maitri. In this all the hutments of all the migrant construction workers were sprayed with the disinfectent.

15 ARRESTED FOR NOT WEARING FACE MASK

Chandigarh: Ten different cases under Section 88 IPC have been registered against fifteen persons who were arrested while roaming outside without wearing a face mask and disobeying the orders of District Magistrate in Chandigarh. Later they were released on bail. The detail of police stations in which cases U/S 188 IPC got registered on May 23 included Police Station-Sarangpur- 3 cases, PS-19-2 cases, Ind. Area-1, Maulijagran-1 case, Sector 34- 1, PS-36-1 and PS-39 1 case.

66KV SUB STATION DEDICATED TO PEOPLE BY ARORA

Hoshiarpur: Sunder Sham Arora Cabinet Minister Industries &

Commerce Punjab dedicated the new 66kv Sub Station Mall Road to the people of Hoshiarpur while observing standards of performance of covid-19 like maintaining social distance, wearing hand gloves etc. With the commissioning of this sub station, the supply of around 50000 domestic & commercial consumers of city will improve power supply and it will also help Punjab State Power Corporation Limited for reduction of Transmission & Distribution losses, he said. P.S.Khamba SE Hoshiarpur said that PSPCL has incurred around ₹22 crores for this underground system & sub station.

Sri Chamkaur Sahib to be developed as one of the best Tourism hub

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/ CHAMKAUR SAHIB

As Punjab Government is making special efforts to develop the holy historic city of Sri Chamkaur Sahib as a one of the best tourist destination in the world, Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh has approved ₹47 crore for beautification and theme park under this project.

"₹14 crore would be spent on the beautification project and ₹33 crore on the theme park," said the state Tourism and Cultural Affairs Minister and local MLA Charanjit Singh Channi after the inauguration of the beautification project.

Channi said that ₹14 crore beautification project includes façade development at Gurudwara Katalgarh Sahib Road, beautification of canal embankment and pathway along the canal etc.

Sri Chamkaur Sahib holds a great significance in the Sikh history as elder Sahibzadas of tenth Sikh Guru of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji were martyred here

"Sri Chamkaur Sahib holds a great significance in the Sikh history as elder Sahibzadas of tenth Sikh Guru of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji were martyred here fighting with the Mughals. The Sikhs from all over the world come here to pay obeisance to Baba Ajit Singh Ji and Baba Jujhar Singh ji. Due to its importance, the Punjab Government would leave no stone unturned in beautification of this holy place," he added.

"Besides, development works of theme parks are in progress with the cost of ₹33 crore. The work is being done by the best designers, engineers, artists, singers with the latest technology from all over the world," said Channi, adding that all the development works of the holy city would be completed well in time.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Haryana IAS officer Coop. House Building 1'st Society Ltd. Sector 49-A, Chandigarh.

It is hereby notified for the information of general public and all the concerned that the Sh. Asheesh Sharma S/o Late Sh. P.C. Sharma has applied for issue of NOC for transfer/sale of the Flat No. 615, The Haryana IAS Officer Coop. H/B 1st Society Ltd. Sector 49-A, Chandigarh. In the favour of Mrs. Mamta Jain W/o Sh. S.K. Jain R/o H.No. 1422, Sector 34-C, Chandigarh.

Note: In case any person has objection in respect of transfer/sale for the above property, he/she may file objection if any in written within 30 days of publishing the notice before the undersigned along with the documentary evidence if any.

(S.S. Duggal)
President
The Haryana IAS officer Coop.
H/B 1st Society Ltd.
Sector 49-A, Chandigarh.

One death, 23 fresh cases reported in Chandigarh

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A three days old baby girl from Dadumajra here died of Coronavirus on Sunday becoming the youngest fatality due to the virus in Chandigarh.

This is the fourth Coronavirus related death in Chandigarh. 23 fresh cases were also reported from Bapu Dham colony in Sector 26 on Sunday

"The three days old girl was born at Civil Hospital, Sector 22 here. She was referred to PGIMER on Sunday and was brought dead there. Later her sample was taken and the report came out positive for Coronavirus. The mother was also tested for the Coronavirus and her report is awaited," stated Chandigarh Health Department's bulletin.

The total cases stood at 256 while the active cases were 67 till late evening in the city.

Meanwhile, the Bapu Dham colony (BDC) in Sector 26 continues to remain the epicenter of spread of Covid-19 in Chandigarh, with 23 fresh cases reported from the colony.

The BDC, which has been declared as containment zone in Chandigarh has reported 184 positive cases out of total 256 till now. The colony in Sector 26 here has an approximate population of 60000 people.

"23 fresh cases have been reported in BDC on Sunday. The post midnight positive cases include 18 years old male, 23 years old female, 37 years old and two females aged 30 years," stated Chandigarh Health Department's media bulletin.

"14 years old male, 18 years old male, 42 years old male,19 years old male, 29 years old male and 56 years old male- six persons of three households within the same house have been reported to be positive for Covid -19. Apart from this, 28 years old male, 45 years old male and 38 years old female from two different households within the same house. Other cases include six females aged 6, 18, 23, 25, 28, 50 and two males aged 12 and 32 years," the bulletin stated.

The positive cases have been admitted in GMCH-32, GMSH-16 and Covid Care Centre Dhanwantri, Sector-46 here. Meanwhile, one patient was discharged from PGIMER and six from Sood Dharamshala on Sunday. The seven patients (25 year female,44 year male ,32 year male,7 year male,35 year male,25 year female and a half year female) who were positive Covid-19 cases have been treated, cured and discharged, it stated.

A total of 99 samples were collected at the sampling centre set up in a school at BDC on Sunday. 3904 samples have been tested so far in the city. Four deaths related to coronavirus have been reported till now, the bulletin added.

While the Administration has made arrangements for separate quarantine centre for the residents, who want to go out of BDC and stay in Government quarantine centre due to extreme congestion in their own houses, it has so far failed to break the chain of infection in the colony.

Punjab CM announces a slew of reliefs

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday announced a slew of reliefs for the people during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially for the transport sector. At the same time, the Chief Minister maintained that the State Government "is exploring more avenues to assist our people during this crisis", which he would share once finalized.

The Chief Minister declared that no commercial vehicle would be charges any tax during the time period of lockdown, from March 23, 2020 till May 19, 2020.

Besides, the Chief Minister announced that the transport tax for the ordinary buses will also be reduced by five percent.

In addition, the Chief Minister also announced to distribute 14 lakh additional ration packets, containing 10 kg Atta, one kg gram and one kg sugar. "We had earlier distributed 15 lakh such packet," said the Chief Minister in his tweet on Sunday.

Capt Amarinder, in a series of two tweets, said: "To continue providing immediate relief to our people during #Covid19, Punjab Government has decided to implement following: 14 Lakh additional Ration packets to be distributed containing 10 kg Atta, 1 Kg gram & 1 kg sugar. We had earlier distributed 15 lakh such packet."

"No tax to be charged on commercial vehicles from 23rd March-19th May. Transport tax for ordinary buses to be reduced by 5%....We are exploring more avenues to assist our people during this crisis, will share once finalized," he tweet

Huge illegal liquor consignment seized in UT

Chandigarh: In a major breakthrough, the UT Police on Sunday arrested one person and seized a total of 440 boxes of liquor (21120 quarters) concealed in his milk tanker."An accused named Gaurav Khatri, resident of Mohali, Punjab has been arrested by the UT Police for possessing huge illegal liquor consignment concealed in milk tanker. An FIR has been registered against him under Section 61-1-14 Excise Act," said a spokesman of Chandigarh Police.

Giving more details, the spokesman said that a team of crime branch led by ASI Rajinder Singh Dhanda got a tip-off from secret informer that one Gujarat registration number milk tanker will carry illegal liquor from Industrial Area, Phase-1 to Gujarat.

It was informed that by adopting this method, illegal liquor has been supplied to Gujarat from here, several times.

Accordingly, a naka was laid near Poultry Farm Chowk, Chandigarh. A Gujarat registration number GJ25-U-3717 milk tanker coming from Industrial Area, Phase-1, Chandigarh was stopped.

During the search of milk van tanker, 440 boxes of illegal liquor make Crazy Romeo Whisky Quarters (total 21120 quarters) were recovered from the tank of this vehicle, the spokesman said. ***PNS***

PUBLIC NOTICE

BEFORE MANISH KUMAR LOHAN, HCS. ASSISTANT ESTATE OFFICER. EXERCISING THE POWERS OF THE ESTATE OFFICER, U.T., CHANDIGARH.

Subject - Transfer of ownership rights to the extent of 25% share in respect of House No 2034. Sector 15-C, Chandigarh RP-8801 in the name,s of Smt. Sukhwinder Kaur Bal. Sh. Gobind Manmohan Singh Bal and Sh. Gurwinder Singh Bal on the basis of Intestate death of Sh. Balkar Singh Bal.

It is notified for the information of general public and all concerned that as per record of this office the property known as House No. 2034, Sector-15-C, Chandigarh, to the extent of 25% share stands in the name of Sh. Balkar Singh Bal. It has been reported by Smt. Sukhwinder Kaur Bal and others that Sh. Balkar Singh Bal expired on 29-07-2019. Now Smt. Sukhwinder Kaur Bal, Sh. Gobind Manmohan Singh Bal and Sh. Gurwinder Singh Bal have applied for transfer of 25% share, in respect of House No. 2034, Sector-15-C, Chandigarh in that names on the basis of Intestate death of Sh. Balkar Singh Bal and informed the names of all the legal heirs of deceased as under :-

Smt. Sukhwinder Kaur Bal	Wife
Sh. Gobind Manmohan Singh Bal	Son
Sh. Gurwinder Singh Bal	Son

However, If anybody has any information about any others legal heirs of the deceased owner other than mentioned above, the same may be intimated to the Estate Office UT, Chandigarh immediately.

If anybody has any objection upon the mutation of the said property in favour of above earned applicant they may furnish in writing in the office of the undersigned within 30 days front the date of publication of this notice, failing which the said share in the said property will be mutated accordingly and no further claim whatsoever shall be entertained at any later stage.

Manish Kumar Lohan, HCS,
Assistant Estate Officer

Civil surgeons directed to watch quarantined persons

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

All the Civil Surgeons across Punjab have been instructed to keep a close watch on quarantined persons. At the same time, they have also been asked to personally monitor the functioning of Rapid Response teams to ensure maximum visits at their home and at quarantine centres.

The instructions to this effect were issued by the state Health and Family Welfare Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu on Sunday. "To ensure cent-percent compliance of guidelines, quarantined person must active COVA app on his or her mobile (available at Android PlayStore and Apple play store) and make sure that it remains active at all times (through Bluetooth or wi-fi) to keep a watch on his or her activities," he added.

Besides, the Minister said that to further increase the testing procedure in State, the State Government has taken several initiatives, and now, "on an average, 2,088 samples are being taken during this week of May to ensure 100 percent contact tracing of high and low risk persons".

Sidhu said that currently, Punjab has witnessed cases of Covid-19 mostly related to travel and local transmission from imported cases to their immediate contacts. "Community transmission of the disease has not been documented till now," he added.

Revealing about the testing strategy for Covid-19 in Punjab, Sidhu said that apart from international traveler, symptomatic contacts of laboratory confirmed cases and symptomatic healthcare workers, pregnant residing in cluster or containment area or in a large migration gathering centers from hotspot districts representing labor or likely to deliver in next five days even a asymptomatic has to be tested.

He said that all patients with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (fever and cough and/or shortness of breath), asymptomatic direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case would have to undergo through testing once between Day 5 and Day 14 of coming in his or her contact.

The Minister said that the State Government has already made mandatory all those coming to the state, including via domestic flights, trains and buses, would have to undergo compulsory home quarantine for 14 days.

"Total 531 RRTs have been constituted in the State. Main job is contact tracing, identify suspects and refer them for testing, ensuring home quarantine, creating awareness about prevention from Covid counseling of home quarantined persons. They also attend to calls received at 104 regarding symptomatic persons and screen them and refer for testing," he added.

He said that about 1,57,13,789 persons have been screened by teams of Health Department in the month of April 2020 and flu corners have been established in all government hospitals where samples of suspected patients are being taken on routine basis.

Ludhiana fire incident: CM orders magisterial inquiry

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the fire incident at a closed factory in Ludhiana. No loss of life has been reported, so far, in the incident.

A fire broke out at RT Woollen Mills factory in the afternoon. Even though the factory was closed, the owner was present on the premises and managed to escape.

"I have directed DC Ludhiana to look into the reasons behind the fire that broke out at RT Woollen Mills today. Luckily there have been no casualties. The fire department took prompt action and prevented the fire from spreading and causing more damage," tweeted the Chief Minister.

As per the fire department official, the fire incident was reported at around 12:30 pm, and services of more than 40 fire tenders were used during the entire operation. The fireman reportedly faced a massive challenge in dousing the fire as there was only one way to enter the mill.

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53 new cases in Haryana, tally jumps to 1,184

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With 53 fresh coronavirus cases in Haryana on Sunday, the total tally now stood at 1184. The state has so far reported 16 Coronavirus related fatalities.

"Out of 53 fresh cases, 14 were reported from Faridabad, 9 from Gururgam, 8 from Karnal, 7 from Hisar 5 each from Sonepat and Rewari, 2 from Jhajjar and one each from Panipat, Rohtak, Kaithal," according to the state Health Department's evening bulletin.

The total active Covid-19 patients in the state are 403 while 765 patients have been cured and discharged from hospitals, as per the state's health bulletin.

The worst-affected districts of the state with the maximum number of positive cases are Gurugram with 271 cases, Faridabad with 209 cases and Sonepat with 159.

As many as 97006 samples have been tested so far, of which 591138 have tested negative in Haryana. However, the report of 4648 samples is awaited, the bulletin stated.

The Covid-19 positive rate stood at 1.28 percent, recovery rate at 64.61 percent and doubling rate of Coronavirus cases at 18 days on Sunday in Haryana, it stated.

A day before, as many as 21 of the 73 Haryana natives deported from the United States were tested positive for Coronavirus.

These 73 people, who were part of a group of over 160 Indians who had landed at Amritsar International Airport by a special flight on May 17, were brought to Panchkula on May 19.

Since then, they had been quarantined at various hotels and Dharamshalas, as per the quarantine protocol of foreign returnees. Meanwhile, more than 50.17 lakh persons have so far downloaded Aarogya Setu App in Haryana.

ONE DEATH, 5 FRESH CASES IN PUNJAB

One more Covid-19 patient succumbed to death in Punjab with the state's death reaching 40. The state also recorded 15 fresh cases taking the tally to 2,060, of which only 122 are active cases.

The Covid-19 death was reported from Amritsar where a 60-year-old man, resident of Katra Dullo area, died on late Saturday evening. The victim, who was reportedly on ventilator at Amritsar hospital, had tested positive for Covid-19 on May 21.

The official maintained that his wife and two sons have also tested positive for coronavirus a day before.

As per the health bulletin, out of total 15 new cases, seven were reported from Pathankot, four from Hoshiarpur, two from Gurdaspur and one each from Amritsar and Jalandhar.

"Amritsar case is detected after the person reported at the hospital by himself. Another 'self reported' case was reported from Pathankot, which reported total seven caes on Sunday. The remaining six cases were the "contacts" of the already positive case," said the official.

Even as Jalandhar reported a new case, the remaining cases reported on Sunday were the contacts of positive cases.

Total 28 coronavirus patients were discharged from different hospitals of Ludhiana (18), Fazilka (three), SBS Nagar, Mansa, Patiala (two each) and Faridkot (one), taking the state's tally of cured patients to 1,898.

Amritsar continued to top the Covid-19 tally in the State with 319 coronavirus cases, followed by 214 in Jalandhar, 173 in Ludhiana, 153 in Tarn Taran, 132 in Gurdaspur, 105 in SBS Nagar, 107 in Patiala, 102 in Mohali, 106 in Hoshiarpur, 88 in Sangrur, 66 in Muktsar, 61 in Faridkot, 60 in Rupnagar, 59 in Moga, 57 in Fatehgarh Sahib, 44 each in Fazilka and Ferozepur, 42 in Bathinda, 39 in Pathankot, 35 in Kapurthala, 32 in Mansa and 22 in Barnala, it said. As per the bulletin, one patient is critical and on ventilator support.

Of the total 66,142 samples tested so far, 60,114 samples were tested negative and reports of 3,968 samples are still awaited.

IMPROVING NUMBERS

Capt tweets…

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday tweeted about the improving numbers in the State under the State Government's 'Mission Fateh', while at the same time, asked the people to keep their guard up. "Punjab has shown tremendous improvement, thanks to efforts of all Punjabis and our #CoronaWarriors. Our doubling rate is at 98 days and we have far less cases as compared to rest of India. Our testing capacity has also been ramped up. But we cannot let our guard down. #MissionFateh," he tweeted.

10 fresh cases of Covid in Himachal, tally rises to 196

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Inching towards the 200 mark, Himachal Pradesh recorded 10 more cases of Covid-19 on Sunday, taking the tally in the state to 196.

Two coronavirus patients from Bilaspur district have recovered from the disease on Sunday, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) R D Dhiman said. Four of the fresh cases were reported from Una and one each from Bilaspur, Chamba, Mandi, Kangra, Hamirpur and Solan districts.

All the new cases had recently returned from other states including six from Mumbai, Maharashtra, three from Delhi and one from West Bengal.

A woman, her brother-in-law and two sons, who had returned from Mumbai recently, have tested positive for coronavirus. In Mandi, a 19-year-old asymptomatic woman from Dharampur in Sarkaghat tehsil tested positive for Covid-19 and is being shifted to a Covid-19 care centre at Dhangshidar, a district official said.

She too had recently returned from Mumbai with her parents and all of them were in an institutional quarantine centre in Dharampur, he said, adding that the woman's parents tested negative for the virus.

In Chamba, a 30-year-old youth tested positive. He was institutionally quarantined after recently returning from Mumbai and is being shifted to a Covid care centre at Balu, a district official said. In Bilaspur, a man has tested positive days after returning from Delhi on May 21, deputy commissioner Rajeshwar Goel said. A permanent resident of Mandi district, he was institutionally quarantined at Bilaspur's Swarghat on the Himachal Pradesh-Punjab border since his arrival from Delhi, he added.

In Kangra, a man from Palampur's Panchrukhi tested positive for the virus, Superintendent of Police Vimukt Ranjan said, adding that he had returned from Delhi a few days ago and was kept under quarantine at a facility at Baijnath.

Hamirpur Deputy Commissioner Harikesh Meena said that a 20-year-old woman has tested positive for Covid-19. A resident of Baragram in Badsar area, the woman had returned from Delhi along with her relatives on May 18 and was quarantined at government high school, Baragram, he added.

The number of active Covid-19 cases in Himachal Pradesh now stand at 129 and 63 people have recovered so far, according to the officials.

Hamirpur has the maximum number of active cases in the state at 55 followed by 36 in Kangra, 11 in Solan, nine in Mandi, seven in Una, four in Bilaspur, three in Chamba, two in Sirmaur and one each in Kullu and Shimla. Four people have died due to Covid-19 in the state so far.

AIR PASSENGERS COMING TO HP FROM RED ZONE TO BE QUARANTINED

As India is set to resume its domestic passengers flights from Monday after a gap of two months, the Himachal Pradesh government has decided to put people coming from red zones under institutional quarantine.

It is mandatory to quarantine people coming from red zones and those with influenza like illness symptoms, hence the same rule will apply on air passengers, Kangra Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Prajapati said. Paid quarantine facilities are also available in Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) hotels in Kangra district, he added.

The deputy commissioner said air passengers will be tested for coronavirus.

A district official said only Himachal Pradesh residents having valid address proof should book flights coming to Dharamshala's Gaggal airport from Monday.

Tourists will not be allowed to enter the district, he said, adding that they will be immediately put in a quarantine facility and sent back on their own expenses.

People coming to the state on flights will have to obtain an entry pass from district magistrate concerned and show it after deboarding at Gaggal airport, the official said.

Ensure no migrant goes hungry, walks back home: Capt to DCs

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Asserting that it was Punjab Government's duty to ensure that all migrants keen to go back home return to their native states safely, Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Sunday directed the Deputy Commissioners and district Police chiefs to ensure that no migrant is forced to walk home to any other state in the country, or to remain hungry while in Punjab.

"Any migrant found walking on the road should be transported by bus by the police to the nearest place from where he can board a train or bus to his native State," the Chief Minister directed the DCs and the police officials, even as the 300th Special Shramik Train left the state carrying migrants to Uttar Pradesh. Till they leave Punjab, they should be provided food and water, he further directed the officers.

Urging the migrants not to panic, the Chief Minister assured that the State Government would make sure that every single migrant, who is keen to return home, is assisted by the State, with arrangements for their free travel and food.

Underlining the State's commitment to "look after every person in distress", Capt Amarinder described the migrants as "our fellow Indians who contribute to the State and its economy".

"Punjab is your karmabhoomi, even if it is not your janam-bhoomi," said the Chief Minister to the migrants, appealing to them not to try to undertake arduous journey by foot to their native place as the State Government is making all necessary arrangements for their travel by trains or buses.

The Chief Minister said that more than 10 lakh persons have registered on the State

portal for outbound movement from Punjab. The State Government has undertaken a massive validation exercise of all registered persons by making individual phone calls to re-ascertain whether or not they are keen to return to their native States.

"This is being done in view of the fact that, in the past three-four days, around two-thirds of the industrial units in the State have commenced operations after the easing of restrictions, following which the number of persons keen to travel out of Punjab has reduced considerably," he said, terming it a welcome sign.

However, the State Government would continue to ply trains to the concerned States till such time persons evince desire to return home, said Capt Amarinder, adding that the State Government has had already paid Rs 20 crore to Railways for free travel of migrant workers to their respective States following its decision in April-end to provide free travel and food for all the migrant workers keen to return to their respective States.

The Chief Minister shared that the 300th Special Shramik train on Sunday departed from Patiala for Uttar Pradesh at 5 pm. By Sunday night, 311 Special Shramik trains carrying more than 3.90 lakh passengers would have been sent from different districts of Punjab to various States of India, including States of southern India and the North-East.

In addition, migrant workers are also being transported free of charge from their homes to the railway stations by government buses across the State. Punjab has also sent State Transport buses to drop migrant workers to districts of western Uttar Pradesh without any charge to the migrants. "Punjab's officers, both in the State headquarters as well as in the districts, have done a commendable job in facilitating this organized movement of migrants," said the Chief Minister.

At the same time, the State Government is also facilitating Punjabis stranded in other states to return to Punjab, including providing financial assistance for travel, wherever necessary.

Capt Amarinder, however, expressed the hope that "all State Governments will abide by their responsibility of transporting our persons stranded in other States".

"I have already written to all concerned Chief Ministers in this regard. Punjab is the motherland of all Punjabis and it is our duty to bring them back to the State," said Capt Amarinder.

Allaying concerns on this count amid fears of Covid-19, Capt Amarinder said that clear protocols are in place for quarantine and testing of such travelers, to check further spread of the virus in the State.

Migrants choosing to stay back after opening of industries

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With Punjab industries gradually oiling its machinery to go full throttle amidst the Covid-19 scare, about 50 percent of the migrant labourers, who have registered at the state's web portal to return to their native towns, have decided to stay back.

Every day, the number of migrants going back to their home towns, via trains or buses, is "thinning", while still many others wanted to return to their native places.

The state has a migrant population of around 13 lakhs, of which the Government has, so far, facilitated the return of 3.95 lakh migrants through more than 300 special trains, with maximum from Bihar, and majority going to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

During his Facebook Live programme '#AskCaptain' a day before, the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh had also pointed that nearly half of those migrants who had applied for online registration had willingly decided to stay back, and had also started working in the industry.

The Chief Minister had also thanked the labourers who had chosen to stay back and contribute to Punjab's economic strength, adding that "this is your state and you are part of it".

Notably, out of the total 2.56 lakh industries in the State, 1.5 lakh have already resumed operations as of now.

Describing the trend as "the sign of normalcy returning", Mohali Deputy Commissioner Girish Dayalan said that the train, which left the Mohali Railway Station for Motihari Station in Bihar on Sunday, saw only 866 migrant workers going back to their home State.

Dayalan said that earlier the number of migrant workers making a return to home states from the district varied between1300-1600 on average but owing to the opening up of the industrial sector and allowing of the construction activities, a large of migrant population is choosing to stay back.

Supporting his argument, Dayalan said that till date, out of more than 55,000 migrants contacted, less than half, that is only 26,239, have gone back which brings out the fact that the drop off rate is on the increase.

At the same time, the Deputy Commissioner appealed that all the migrant workers who want to stay back, are most welcome to do so while those who still want to go back to their home states, would be sent at the earliest.

Meanwhile, the state Nodal Officer for facilitating migrants return Vikas Pratap said that with 300th train leaving from Patiala on Sunday evening, Punjab Government has facilitated return of more than 3.95 lakh migrant workers to their home states.

"Total 23 trains are running today taking total number to 311, making Punjab one of the top performing States in this regard. The State Government has spent Rs 21.8 crores till now in form of cost of these operations," he added.

Pratap said that out of total 311, maximum trains (204) have gone to Uttar Pradesh, with another 82 taking migrants to Bihar, followed by nine to Jharkhand, seven to Madhya Pradesh and two to Chhatisgarh and West Bengal. One train each has gone to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tamil Nadu and Uttrakhand.

7,800 migrants leave for home from Haryana on Sunday

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Sunday said that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the State Government daily runs special shramik trains from the various railway stations of the state to help migrant labourers return to their home states.

In the same series, five special shramik trains departed from Haryana on Sunday. About 3200 migrant labourers have been sent from Bhiwani to Katihar and Araria (Bihar) in two trains. Similarly, three trains departed from Yamumanagar carrying 4600 migrant labourers to Barauni, Muzaffarpur and Katihar (Bihar), the Chief Minister said.

He said that despite diversity, the people of India are united and with this sentiment and thought, Haryana Government has started sending labourers stranded in lockdown and labourers who were willing to return to their home states free of cost.

The Chief Minister said that all Indians living in any part of the country are one and it is the joint responsibility of all to alleviate their sufferings, he added.

Two shramik trains depart from Bhiwani for Katihar and Araria (Bihar)

3200 migrant labourers left for Bihar from Bhiwani. A special shramik Train left from Bhiwani for Araria at 4 pm and Katihar at 5 pm with 1600 migrant labourers each. 1360 migrant labourers from Bhiwani, 141 from Narnaul and 99 labourers from Dadri boarded the train. Similarly, for Katihar, 1300 migrant labourers boarded from Fatehabad and 300 migrant laborers from Hisar district. There were 22 children on this train as well.

Three shramik trains depart from Yamunanagar to Barauni, Muzaffarpur and Katihar (Bihar)

About 4600 migrant labourers have been sent from Yamunanagar to their home state Bihar through three shramik trains. The first shramik trains from Jagadhri-Yamunanagar railway station left for Barauni (Bihar) carrying about 1550 migrant labourers.

Haryana Education Minister, Kanwar Pal who was present on this occasion along with other dignitaries said that this train will go from here directly to Barauni (Bihar) and will not halt anywhere on the way. He appealed to the migrant labourers to remain in the shelter homes to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

He said that most of the migrant labourers who are being sent by train came here from Punjab on foot or on bicycles and the State Government provided all facilities to them in the shelter homes and now they are returning to their home states.

After this, two shramik trains departed for Muzaffarpur and Katihar (Bihar) from Yamunanagar. Migrant labourers from 10 to 12 districts of Bihar state have been sent to their home state in these trains.

A train left for Barauni (Bihar) from Yamunanagar-Jagadhri railway station at 12.15 pm while the second shramik train left for Muzaffarpur (Bihar) at 4.20 pm and the third departed for Katihar (Bihar) after 6 pm. Migrant labourers from Katihar, Barauni, Muzaffarpur, Madhepura, Champaran, Motihari, Nawada, Mahuva, Sipol, Munger, Saharsa, Bettiah and other districts in Bihar have returned to their homes on these special shramik trains.

Chandigarh Admn to follow Centre's guidelines on quarantine of passengers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Following the fresh guidelines issued by the Central Government on quarantine and isolation protocols of passengers, the Chandigarh Administration on Sunday decided to follow the Central rules.

The Union Government on Sunday, in its release on domestic travel, stated that State Governments/UTs will be able to "develop their own quarantine and isolation protocols as per their assessment".

The order came amid concerns raised by various States as the Government lifted curbs on air travel and domestic flights are scheduled to resume from May 25 at an operational capacity of 33.33 percent, after which the operations would be expanded in a phased manner.

UT Adviser Manoj Parida on Sunday said that the Administrator VP Singh Badnore has approved to implement Central Government directions on domestic fliers. Asymptomatic passengers can go home and will self monitor health for 14 days. Screening will be done, details of passengers will be kept and undertaking will be taken from them at airport, he said. The Administration will also strictly follow the Central Government's order on quarantining foreign returnees, he added.

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) on Sunday made it mandatory for stranded Indians arriving from abroad to check into an institutional quarantine for 14 days at their own expense followed by seven days of home isolation.

Specifying guidelines for the international arrivals, the Ministry said that before boarding, all the travellers would have to give an undertaking that they would stick to the above rule to ensure least chances of transmission.

Apart from this, the Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri stated that the states need not quarantine those arriving passengers (domestic) who had approval on their Aarogya Setu status and did not show any Coronavirus symptoms.

1600 MIGRANT WORKERS LEAVE FOR UP

A special shramik train accommodating 1600 migrant workers left for Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh from Chandigarh Railway Station on Sunday.

Till date, a total of 29290 passengers have been sent to their home towns from Chandigarh which included 27313 passengers through special shramik trains and 1977 passengers through buses.

On May 26, a shramik train is scheduled from Chandigarh Railway Station for Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh with stoppages at Moradabad, Bareli, Hardoi and Shahanjanpur.

PUNJAB HEALTH DEPT ISSUES ADVISORY FOR BARBER SHOPS IN VIEW OF COVID-19

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Health Department on Sunday, issuing detailed advisory for maintaining of hygiene and sanitization of barber shops or hair-cut saloons during the Covid-19 pandemic, has asked the shop owners to ensure there would be no overcrowding.

Department's spokesperson said that shop owners would have to ensure that any staff member, having symptoms of Covid-19 (like fever, dry cough, breathing difficulty, etc), is not engaged at work and stays at home on sick medical advice. Similarly, no client having such symptoms should be attended.

"All clients should be asked to avail services unaccompanied unless necessary (such as parent or guardian). It should be ensured by the owners that there is no unnecessary crowding barber shops/hair cut saloons," the spokesperson added.

Spokesperson said that the clients must use the mask to extent possible while availing services, while the owners and staff working in such shops will mandatorily use mask.

"All guidelines related to prevention of Covid-19 like frequent hand washing (with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer), maintaining a physical distance of one meter, following respiratory hygiene, keeping a watch over disease symptoms, no spitting in public etc must be complied with during the interpersonal dealing of clients and staff, the advisory stipulates," said the spokesperson.

In addition, the shop owners should encourage the customers to use the digital payment mode as much as possible. In case cash transaction is used, the shopkeeper, staff and clients shall sanitize their hands immediately before and after cash transaction.

Regarding proper cleaning at shops, indoor areas including service rooms, waiting areas, workstations etc should be cleaned preferably every two-three hours. Floors should be cleaned with one percent Sodium Hypochlorite or equivalent commercial disinfectant. Furniture and frequently touched surfaces and articles should be regularly cleaned or sanitized.

"Tools (scissors, razors, combs, styling tools) should be wiped with one percent Sodium Hypochlorite after every use. Robes, towels and related items should be clean and regularly washed robes, towels etc, and should not be reused for multiple clients," added the spokesperson.

PUNJAB DEVISES TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO PROVIDE CITIZEN-CENTRIC SERVICES DURING LOCKDOWN

Punjab Government's Department of Governance Reforms and Public Grievances (DGR&PG) has been proactively engaged in providing technology solutions to the Punjab Government amid unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department developed solutions to manage, share and analyze data as well as to provide seamless essential citizen-centric services efficaciously during the lockdown," said the state Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Governance Reforms and Public Grievances, Vini Mahajan on Sunday.

She said that that the IT team, under the supervision of e-Governance CEO Ravi Bhagat and DGR&PG director Parminder Pal Singh had been tasked to build and implement technology solutions to help the State Government in this difficult phase.

"The entire team worked relentlessly to develop these unique solutions through its dedicated and innovative approach. The teams built and launched the COVA App in March 2020 which has 23 lakh downloads till date, to track the spread of the pandemic, geo tag patients to identify clusters, geo fence quarantined individuals and provide citizen services before any other Government or organization had launch a similar solution," said Mahajan.

She said that as many as 11 States requested for access to admin logins to the COVA App and Dashboard such that they could use the features of the application to manage services in their respective States as well.

"Partnering with multiple agencies, start-ups and organizations who were willing to provide pro bono support to the Department, the IT team has implemented several dashboards for data collection and integration including for registration of migrant workers, registration of citizens willing to come back to or leave Punjab among others," she added.

This team has been consistently offering IT support to the Departments of Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education and Research, State Covid-19 Control Room as well as to the Punjab Mandi Board.

PBTI OFFERS 15% DISCOUNT ON TESTING OF AGRI-PRODUCTS TO PUNJAB-BASED EXPORTERS

To boost export of agri-products amid COVID-19 restrictions, Punjab Biotechnology Incubator (PBTI) has approved a flat 15 percent discount on all product testing facilities in PBTI facility for registered Punjab-based exporters besides introducing special packages to further support the exporter community.

Notably, PBTI is providing testing services such as Residue Analysis, Microbial Analysis, Adulterants and Food Additive analysis, which form an important part of stringent export guidelines of international locations such as European Union.

"Major exports from the State during the lockdown period are rice, honey, milk and milk products to key markets such as European Union, UK and UAE and the relief extended by the Incubator would be immensely beneficial for all agri and food exporters," said the spokesperson.

PBTI labs have also facilitated the Punjab exporters of essential goods during the lockdown to ensure uninterrupted supply of their goods due to increased demand from European countries.

Cong seeks probe into use of 'poor' ventilator

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

❍ Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera alleged the machines were donated under CSR funds by a company in which a Surat-based businessman, who donated the monogrammed suit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was worn by him during former US President Barack Obama's visit to India, has a stake

❍ The Dhaman-1 ventilator has been developed by Rajkot-based firm Jyoti CNC which "donated" 866 of them to the State Government last month in view of acute shortage of the machines, according to senior Gujarat Government official

The Congress on Sunday demanded a judicial probe into the use of a ventilator on Covid-19 patients in Gujarat that, it said, has not been approved by the DCGI. It alleged the mortality rate was highest at the hospital where these machines were installed. The party alleged that the low vulnerable quality ventilators were provided under CSR funds by the same businessman who had donated the ₹11-lakh suit worn by Modi during the visit of the then US President Barrack Obama.

The Congress also lashed out at the Gujarat Government over the State's alleged "sick healthcare system" and targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the issue.

The party said almost six weeks after Dhaman-1 ventilators were installed at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital on April 4, doctors there sought more ventilators claiming these machines did not work on patients and were not capable.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera alleged the machines were donated under CSR funds by a company in which a Surat-based businessman, who donated the monogrammed suit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was worn by him during former US President Barack Obama's visit to India, has a stake.

The Dhaman-1 ventilator has been developed by Rajkot-based firm Jyoti CNC which "donated" 866 of them to the State Government last month in view of acute shortage of the machines, according to senior Gujarat government official.

A row erupted when the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital wrote to the Government, stating that the ventilators were not up to the mark, and sought sophisticated machines.

Khera alleged the Vijay Rupani government projected the mechanised AMBU (Artificial Manual Breathing Unit) bag as ventilator, "playing with the lives of patients."

"Why was Dhaman-1 approved and installed when it had been tested on just one patient? Why was Dhaman-1 approved and installed without a licence by DCGI (Drug Controller General of India)," he asked.

"We also want to know if the PM Cares Fund was used to buy 5,000 pieces of Dhaman-1 through HLL Lifecare. All these answers can only be found through an independent judicial inquiry," Khera said.

Training his guns on Chief Minister Rupani, he asked why Gujarat had "such shocking data" on COVID-19 patients as 11 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country were in the state, but 22 per cent of the deaths related to COVID-19 in the country were from Gujarat.

"Why this high mortality? Why the high mortality in Ahmedabad in particular? Why the highest mortality is in the civil hospital, where these machines were installed," he asked.

He asked why Dhaman-1 was marketed within and outside the state as a "ventilator when it is not a ventilator." The Congress leader asked why was Dhaman-1 allowed to be sold to other states and why was HLL Lifecare, a PSU, allowed to order 5,000 pieces.

Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi said: "Today, we don't have a healthcare system (in the state); we have a sick system. The inefficiency of the Gujarat Government in handling Covid crisis shows that it is undermining, under-confident, and under-achieving."

"It is my sad duty to bring to the country"s attention the deplorable and indefensible plight of medical and health facilities in Modi"s home state and in part of Shah"s constituency (4 assembly segments of Ahmadabad fall in Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency)."

Singhvi, Rajya Sabha member, said: "We would respectfully ask the PM, HM, GOI, and Gujarat CM -- Are you even aware of what is happening in your own home state? If so, have you ever intervened, chastised or punished the Gujarat government or does the latter have Covid immunity vaccine because they belong to the BJP?"

Singhvi said if such powerful people who control the levers of power were unable to provide justice on their home ground to the poor and needy, what could the rest of India"s teeming millions expect from them.

The Congress leader referred to Gujarat High Court observations on the "lack of PPE, shortage of ventilators, ICUs and isolating wards..." and "pathetic" conditions at the Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad.

He said that even the High Court had observed that state Health Minister "does not seem to be aware of what is going on, nor appears to have ever visited the hospital".

The party also questioned why private testing of coronavirus suspected cases, even by authorised private institutions, was stopped by the Gujarat government which ordered that cornan tests can be conducted only at government hospitals.

Singhvi pointed to "proactive" role of the Bengal Governor but the "silence" of the Gujarat Governor on coronavirus situtations in their respective States.

MHA issues revised travel guidelines for intn'l arrivals, persons stranded in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

THE PASSENGERS MUST CONSENT TO BEING SUBJECTED TO THE QUARANTINE NORMS ON ARRIVAL, IT SAID ADDING THAT THE TRAVELLERS' LIST MUST BE FINALISED TWO DAYS IN ADVANCE

The Union Home Ministry on Sunday issued revised guidelines for the international arrivals and persons stranded in India for travelling to their country or having visa to a particular country. Indians having visa to a foreign country would also be allowed to travel.

The new guidelines are basically issued for those stranded in other countries and wanted to visit India in medical emergencies or death of the family members.

The circular issued by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said that the expenses should be borne by the travellers and the travel list will be prepared by the concerned Indian missions.

The passengers must consent to being subjected to the quarantine norms on arrival, it said adding that the travellers' list must be finalized two days in advance.

"Priority will be given to compelling cases in distress, including migrant workers/ labourers who have been laid off, short term visa holders faced with expiry visas, persons with medical emergencies/pregnant women/ elderly, those required to return India due to death of family member, and students," the MHA said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) will have nodal officers to oversee the arrival of stranded persons to India.

Based on the registrations received, MEA will prepare flight/ship wise database of all such travellers and their full details. MEA's digital platform will display the details of selected persons in two days advance. "All travellers will also be required to give an undertaking that they are making the journey at their own risk. Passengers arriving through land borders will also have to undergo the same protocol and only those who are asymptomatic will be enabled to cross the border into India," said the new guidelines.

MHA said that those persons who wanted to go abroad have to get in touch with Civil Aviation Ministry's designated agency. "Only those persons shall be allowed to travel to the destination countries, who are citizens of that country or who hold visa of at least one year duration of that country or green card holder of that country or OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) card holder. In cases of medical emergency or death in the family, Indian Nationals holding six months visa can also be allowed," said the MHA's new guidelines allowing people to travel abroad.

Indian seafarers and crew working in foreign firms would also be allowed to travel.

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan visits Chaudhary Brahma Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, Delhi, which is functioning as a dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC), to oversee the preparedness to manage Covid-19 cases. He visited the various facilities and wards and witnessed first-hand the treatment being provided to Covid-19 patients, through a holistic approach as per the directions of Ministry of AYUSH Pioneer photo

Min says 4 of 14 vaccines may enter trial stage within 5 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said that at least four of the 14 candidate vaccines for novel coronavirus in the country may enter the clinical trial stage within five months. However, he cautioned that it is too early to expect any vaccine against the disease because there is a long due procedure involved in its development.

In a social media interaction with BJP leader GVL Narasimha Rao, the Minister said within five months, four of the vaccine candidates in the country may enter the clinical trial stage.

The Minister said, "The whole world is trying to develop a vaccine for COVID-19. There are over 100 candidate vaccines which are at different levels of development. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is coordinating the efforts. India is also actively contributing in it. There are 14 candidates in India also which are at different levels..." Vardhan said.

He said the Department of Biotechnology of the Ministry of Science and Technology is helping the academic world and industry in all manners such as giving regulatory clearances, grants or financial support, among other things.

"As far as I know, four of our fourteen vaccines will soon be in the clinical trial stage, within 4 to 5 months. All the 14 are right now at the pre-clinical trial stage."

It will take minimum one year for the development of any vaccine even if it is developed earliest. Therefore use social distancing, masks and follow hand and physical hygiene -- the biggest safeguard against the disease- till any vaccine or cure is found, said the Minister.

On Sunday, the Minister also visited the Dedicated Covid-19 Health Centre (DCHC) at Chaudhary Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan (CBPACS), Najafgarh , a first Ayurveda hospital in the country engaged in providing care to the Covid positive patients on the basis of principles of Ayurveda as per protocol of Ministry of AYUSH. In addition to the Ayurvedic and herbal treatments, the holistic approach also includes yoga, meditation, pranayam, etc.

Till date a total of 201 patients have been admitted in the CBPACS Centre. Of these, 37 patients have been cured and 100 patients have been advised home isolation. 19 patients have been shifted to Specialty hospitals on review of their medical condition. There has been no casualty in this Centre, said the government statement here.

Dr. RK Manchanda, Director (AYUSH) of the Delhi Government, Dr. Vidula Gujjarwar, Director-Principal, CBPACS along with senior faculty and doctors and Ministry officials were also present during the review meeting at the Ayush hospital.

Overall, the Minister said, the fatality rate in the country stands at 2.9% while recovery rate has improved to 41.2%.

Talking about the healthcare infrastructure setup across the country, he said, a total of 968 Dedicated Covid hospitals have been identified across the country with 2,50,397 beds (1,62,237 isolation beds + 20,468 ICU beds); 2,065 dedicated Covid health centres with 1,76,946 beds (1,20,596 isolation beds + 10,691 ICU beds); and, 7,063 Covid care centres with 6,46,438 beds."

He further informed that States/UTs as well as central institutions have been provided with around 109.08 lakhs N-95 masks and around 72.8 lakh Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as per the statement.

Al Qaeda ditches Pakistan on Kashmir

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After Taliban, the Al Qaeda has now ditched Pakistan on the Kashmir issue by not even mentioning the region in a document circulated to top leadership of the global terror outfit.

The document titled "The Way Forward: A Word of Advice on the Coronavirus Pandemic" and circulated by Al Qaeda Central talked about the hardships of Uyghurs and Syrian Muslims besides the community members residing under hostile regimes but has been conspicuously silent on Kashmir which was earlier on the agenda of these terror groups.

Assessments here suggest the outfit could be frustrated due to the bickering between various terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir, especially the Kashmiri groups like Hizbul Mujahideen on whose inputs a number of terror commanders have been killed by the security forces after integration of the erstwhile State into the Indian Union. Infighting between Pakistan-backed groups and their masters in the ISI and Pak army could also be a reason behind the outfit's change in stance.

This could have led to the distancing of the Al Qaeda from the issue as also a realisation of the changed realities on the ground post-abrogation of Article 370 wherein top terror commanders have been neutralised by the forces.

Sources, however, did not rule out that Pak deep state could have advised both the terror groups to disown the Kashmir issue for now so that India does not stop funding in Afghanistan for reconstruction. The cash starved groups might be eyeing to take control of such funds as Pakistan economy is in shambles.

"Before the great disaster (Covid-19) struck, obscenity and moral corruption had already become widespread in Muslim countries. In fact this phenomenon had extended its dirty tentacles to the vicinities of the purest site on the face of the earth, the Haram in Makkah ....The despots ruling over the Muslim World, specifically in the Arab World, have been guilty of committing the most unimaginable forms of torture and rights abuses against Muslim scholars and Mujahideen in secret torture cells that have become a norm across the Muslim world," it said.

It further said, "To make matters even worse, Islamic causes have been consigned to oblivion across the Muslim world, especially Syria, Iraq, Waziristan, Palestine, East Turkistan, Libya, Islamic Maghreb, and Somalia...Muslims must learn some serious lessons this calamity (Covid-19) and start taking practical steps for the liberation of prisoners for the liberation of prisoners and missing persons across the Islamic World."

"Let us not forget that Covid-19 emerged from one of the filthiest places on earth, the markets of Wuhan (China), where all known norms of decent and humane dietary practices tramples upon. From insects to rodents and reptiles, in short everything unsafe for human consumption, or the consumption of which is prohibited in all revealed religions, was sold and consumed there," it said in an indication of its disapproval of the atrocities on the Uyghurs.

"The very technological advancement and globalisation that man took immense pride in has become his undoing. Today, if someone sneezes in China, those in New York suffer from its consequences," it claimed.

Earlier, the Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen had said that "the policy of the Islamic Emirate is clear that it does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries." Considering Kashmir as an internal affair of India is the clearest hint that Kashmir is not an issue or on the agenda of Taliban which is seeking to engage with India.

Remdesivir's initial trial shows its efficacy in fighting corona

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The preliminary results of the trial of the Gilead Sciences Inc's Remdesivir, the first drug cleared for the treatment of Coronavirus, has been found to be effective on patients who need extra oxygen but are not dependent on ventilators or heart-lung bypass machines, according to a report in the New England Journal of Medicine.

It said that Remdesivir was superior to placebo in shortening the time to recovery in adults hospitalised with Covid-19 and evidence of lower respiratory tract infection.

In the experiment, patients were randomly assigned to receive either Remdesivir (200 mg loading dose on day 1, followed by 100 mg daily for up to 9 additional days) or placebo for up to 10 days.

Preliminary results of this trial suggest that a 10-day course of Remdesivir was superior to placebo in the treatment of hospitalised patients with Covid-19, as per the report.

The primary outcome was the time to recovery. In contrast to the placebo drug, Remdesivir helped Covid-19 infected patients to heal faster and allowed them to return home after about 11 days. Placebo treated coronavirus patients in 15 days.

In addition to this, there were also signs that the medicine increased the survival rate of patients on Remdesivir by 7.1 per cent.

On the other hand, 11.9 per cent of placebo-experimented patients died within two weeks, the research added.

The researchers said, "Remdesivir was superior to placebo in shortening the time to recovery in adults hospitalised with Covid-19 and evidence of lower respiratory tract infection".

In the experiment, a total of 1, 063 patients underwent randomisation. 538 were assigned to Remdesivir and 521 to placebo. Serious adverse events were reported for 114 of the 541 patients in the Remdesivir group who underwent randomisation (21.1 per cent) and 141 of the 522 patients in the placebo group who underwent randomisation (27 per cent), the researchers added.

The US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) has made Remdesivir available under an emergency use authorisation for the treatment of adults and children with severe coronavirus disease.

The trial was sponsored and primarily funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Crop-eating locusts cross Rajasthan, to reach Central India

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A swarm of crop-eating locusts has crossed the border State of Rajasthan to reach Central India with thousands of the harvest flies swooping down on vast fields of moong dal in Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's Budhni constituency. It is said to be the biggest locust attack in the region in past three decades and is threatening to destroy crops worth ₹8,000 crore. Locusts' attack has also been reported from Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh.

While an expert team from Rajasthan is to visit MP to tackle the pest attack, in Jhansi the fire brigade team has been kept in readiness to spray disinfectant in the affected area. These locusts come to India from Iran passing through Pakistan. This is the biggest locust attack in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in last 27 years and is likely to grow till monsoon season. The locusts entered through Neemuch district in the state and travelled to parts of Malwa Nimar to reach close to Bhopal.

In UP, as many as 17 districts including Agra, Jhansi, Aligarh, Mathura, Bulandshahr, Hathras, Etah, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Auraiya, Jalaun, Kanpur, Mahoba, Hamirpur and Lalitpur are affected from locusts that reached through Dausa, Rajasthan. Over the 250 tractors/ trolly have been keep in ready with chemicals.

According to officials of agriculture ministry, locust swarms have entered Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana,

and Madhya Pradesh a month in advance and pose a major threat to standing crops and vegetables. This is the fourth attack since December last year. Locust swarms enter the desert areas of India via Pakistan for breeding in the summer of June-July, but this time Locust Hoppers as well as Pink Adult Swarms had entered border districts of Rajasthan and Punjab in April itself. Officials said that India has taken up the matter with Pakistan as well as Iran, another country affected by the locust attack, and offered pesticide support to both countries.

The Ministry of Environment also warned of locust attacks in Punjab, Haryana, UP an MP in the coming weeks.

In MP, four teams of the Central Government, besides teams of state agricultural development, are fighting the locusts by using chemical sprays with the help of tractors and fire-brigade vehicles. The Locusts Warning Organisation of the agriculture ministry has issued an advisory to the farmers in villages of the affected districts to keep continuous vigil over the desert locusts. They have been asked to keep the insects at bay by using loud sounds through drums, banging of utensils and shouting.

In UP, the agriculture department has directed fire brigade to keep its vehicle ready with chemicals following a sudden movement by a swarm of locusts. As Deputy Director Agriculture Kamal Katiyar said the swarm of locusts, which is moving, is small in size.

To tackle the locusts, the ministry has ordered spraying machines from United Kingdom to tackle locust swarms and over 2500 tractors and trollies are engaged in spraying chemicals. Besides, drones are being used to keep an eye over locust swarms in Rajasthan, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The officials of agriculture departments of these States are worried a lot as summer crops sowing are going on these days and there are possibilities that if they are not controlled, they could damages to kharif crops in these States.

In its latest update, the Locusts warning section of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), said locusts' breeding was continuing in southern Iran and south-west Pakistan, where control operations are in progress against hopper groups and bands.

"As vegetation dries out, more groups and swarms will form and move from these areas to the summer breeding areas along both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border in several waves from now until at least early July. Good rains are predicted during the first half of June along the Indo-Pakistan border [and] that would allow egg-laying to occur. This should reduce the further eastward movement of swarms that have already arrived in Rajasthan, India."

Cases continue to rise in Kerala

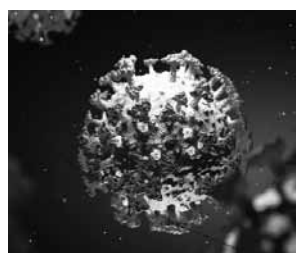
53 new cases, 322 undergoing treatment

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Number of persons tested positive for coronavirus continued to increase in Kerala in the backdrop of Ramzan festivities. On Sunday, 53 persons tested positive for the pandemic as the number of persons under treatment rose to 322, according to Kerala Minister for Health KK Shailaja.

Out of the 53 persons tested positive on Sunday, 18 were expatriates and 22 were from other States in the country. Till Sunday, 522 persons were cured of the covid-19 pandemic and sent home from hospitals.

The Minister said 188 persons were hospitalised on Sunday while the number of persons under observation rose to 95, 394. The last three days saw the number of coronavirus cases in Kerala increasing by



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According to Shailaja, the coming days would see a hike in the number of covid 19 patients. "This is because of the arrival of expatriates and people from other States to Kerala. The only option before us is to make sure that the people who come back to the State observe the guidelines of quarantine and observation. If those who come back follow the safety guidelines we can effectively control the spread of the pandemic and flatten the coronavirus curve," said the Minister.

Dr Ranjith Vijayahari, gastro surgeon, who has been focusing on covid-19 cases since the breaking out of the pandemic in the State, said the information disclosed by the Government about the number of cases is just the tip of the ice berg.

"There are more number of cases which are yet to be brought out. If only you test more and more persons you will be able to identify, isolate and quarantine the afflicted people. The situation is worrisome but I do not want to upset the people," Dr Vijayahari told *The Pioneer*.

He said the relaxation in lockdown over the last two-three days is sure to cause hike in the number of coronavirus cases in the coming days. "Any relaxation in lockdown rules will definitely cause an impact on the number of patients. But we cannot go on with lockdown indefinitely," he said.

765 new cases, 8 more deaths in TN

Total tally reaches 16,277, toll at 111

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

As on Sunday, there were 7,839 active coronavirus cases under treatment in various hospitals in Tamil Nadu, said the medical bulletin issued by the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Government of Tamil Nadu.

The bulletin said that 16, 277 persons have tested positive till Sunday. "8,324 positive patients have been discharged following treatment till Sunday. Hence 7,839 active cases are under treatment as on date," said the bulletin.

A total of 765 persons tested positive on Sunday alone, taking the total number of cases tested positive till date to 16,277 in the State. The fatalities reached 111 with eight persons succumbing to the pandemic. The day saw 833 persons getting discharged following treatment and getting well. There are 68n laboratories in the State which tested 11,441 persons on Sunday. The number of persons tested till Sunday all over Tamil Nadu reached 3.91,252.

Out of the 765 persons tested positive on Sunday, 587 were from Chennai which remained the district with maximum cases, 10,576. Chengalpattu (779), Thiruvallur (731), Cuddalore (427) were closely following the capital city.

A new disclosure made by the Government of Tamil Nadu vide the medical bulletin is the unprecedented increase in the number of coronavirus positive persons in the 13 to 60 age group. Out of the 16,277 positive cases detected in Tamil Nadu, 13,911 were in the 13 to 60 age group while 1,358 persons were in the 60 Plus age group. Children in the 0-12 age group accounted for 1003 cases.

Muted Eid celebrations in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Amid strict lockdown, Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations remained a low-key affair across Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday.

None of the famous religious shrines including Hazratbal and Jamia Masjid witnessed congregational prayers in Srinagar city. Local police authorities had strictly enforced restrictions to ensure residents stay back at home and avoid stepping out in the wake of spike in number of cases of coronavirus across Kashmir valley. Police vans were seen making public announcements since early morning appealing people to stay indoors to ensure strict compliance of lockdown guidelines.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, 52 fresh cases were detected taking the total tally of coronavirus cases to 1,621 in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. While Srinagar district reported no fresh case on Sunday, 26 patients tested positive in Kulgam district alone. In Jammu division six cases were reported from Jammu , seven from Samba, 4 from Kathua and three from Rajouri district. A police jawan, posted on duty at Lakhanpur entry point, tested positive and shifted to isolation facility.

Official sources maintained, majority of fresh positive cases had a travel history and were fresh returnees. At present, 791 cases are active positive and around fifty percent cases i.e 809 have recovered so far in Jammu & Kashmir.

According to local reports from Srinagar, worshipers offered Eid prayers at home and at few odd places in remote areas small gatherings of close family members converged at one place to offer thanksgiving prayers ending the month long period of fasting during Ramzan.

Eid was celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala on Sunday, while the rest of the country will celebrate Eid on Monday. In Jammu region too, no mass assembly was witnessed on the occasion.

Earlier, in August 2019, Eid-ul-Azha prayers could not be offered in Kashmir as authorities had imposed strict curfew in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 and division of then Jammu & Kashmir state into two Union Territories.

However, South Kashmir district of Pulwama witnessed incidents of stone pelting after a joint teams of security forces busted a terrorist hideout in the area.

A group of terrorists had carved a hideout in a shop owned by a government official of Revenue department. At least two people received injuries as clashes broke out in Mitrigam area of Pulwama after security forces launched a cordon and search operation in the area.

Security forces have recovered detonators, explosives and some logistic materials from the hideout. Some of the close family members of the government official, detained by the police for questioning, were earlier involved in terrorist activities.

Bureaucratic indifference delays clinical trial of drug for Covid-19

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Even as the country is struggling hard to contain the coronavirus pandemic which is spreading all over with vigor by the hour, indifference of bureaucrats towards the medicine developed to minimise and regulate the contagious disease is causing irreparable damage to the soul of India.

While scientists specialising in modern medicine are groping in the dark in search of a vaccine to fight the coronavirus pandemic, an Ayurvedic drug and protocol developed by a team of eminent Ayurvedic physicians in collaboration with modern medicine specialists is given a raw deal by the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Ayush. The details of the drug and treatment protocol was submitted to the Ayush Ministry on April 15 this year.

Messages to Shripad Yesso Naik, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) did not evoke any response. Dr Rajesh Kotecha, eminent Ayurvedic physician , who is also the secretary to the Ayush Ministry chose to ignore the messages sent to him requesting for details about the clinical trials.

The team of doctors that developed the ayurvedic drug prepared from the age old Indian system of knowledge was led by Dr PR Krishnakumar, South India's leading Ayurvedic scholar and included a who's who of medical researchers. Dr Rama Jayasundar of All India Institute of Medical sciences, New Delhi, a physicist turned ayurvedic researcher, Dr CV Krishnaswamy, Tamil Nadu's leading physician, Prof B M Hegde, described as the country's medical warrior are some of the members of the team that developed the drug and protocol.

Dr Krishnakumar has been honoured by the nation with Padma Sree while Prof Hegde is a Padma Bhushan with hundreds of publications in national and international journals. It was Prof Hegde who declared in his pathbreaking research work "What Doctors Don't Get To Study in Medical School" that the drug for coronavirus and influenza would come from India.

"We submitted everything as per specification to the Ayush Ministry with a request that the drug be taken up for clinical trials. Without clinical trials, it can never be administered to the patients. But till date we have not received any communication from the ministry about the fate of our application," a visibly upset Dr Krishnakumar told The Pioneer.

Dr Jayasundar too sounded sad while speaking to The Pioneer over the inordinate delay in taking up their work for clinical trials. "I don't know what is happening. You have to check it with the authorities," she said when asked about the delay. Dr Krishnaswamy said this clinical trial should have been taken up on a war footing.

"As you see, the number of coronavirus patients are shooting up on an hourly basis and our medical system should face the situation in a mission mode," said Dr Krishnaswamy.

A veteran medical doctor pointed out that the possibility of a vaccine to fight coronavirus getting ready in the near future is remote.

After confusion, Maha allows 25 flights to & from Mumbai

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After hours of confusion on whether domestic flights will fly in and out of the metropolis in the coming days, the Maharashtra Government on Sunday evening agreed to allow operation of 25 flights to and from the Mumbai Airport from Monday.

Hours after Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said that there should be "minimum possible domestic flights from Maharashtra from May 25th which are purely emergent in nature", Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Nawab Malik announced that beginning from Monday, the state government had allowed 25 flights to and from the Mumbai.

Quoting his telephonic conversation with State chief Secretary Ajoy Mehta, Malik said: "After discussions with all agencies, it has been decided that 25 flights will arrive and depart from Mumbai airport. The number will increase subsequently".

In a formal announcement made later, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), Mumbai, said: late in the evening: "Starting May 25, 2020, CSMIA will resume 25 commercial passenger flight movements on departure and 25 on arrival. The initiative comes after the directive issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation as well as the State Minister giving a nod to recommence domestic flight operations to and from Mumbai.

"Furthermore, CSMIA also advises passengers above 80 years as well as expectant mothers and passengers with health issues to restrict travelling. While, arriving passengers will be temperature screened by the State Govt. and expected home quarantine for 14-days," CSMIA said in a statement.

"Moreover, CSMIA has also created a separate quarantine centre for symptomatic passengers. CSMIA has deployed resources to manage the queue effectively and to maintain minimal human interaction," the CSMIA statement added.

Earlier in the afternoon, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray's office tweeted: "CM Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray spoke to Civil Aviation Minister of State (Independent) @HardeepSPuri ji regarding domestic flights in Maharashtra".

"He communicated his views that till the time MIAL plans and fine tunes airport operations, they should initiate minimum possible domestic flights from Maharashtra from May 25th which are purely emergent in nature like for international transfer passengers, medical emergencies, students, and cases on compassionate grounds," the CMO tweeted.

That the announcement made by Aviation Minister Hardeep Sigh Puri's about the resumption of domestic flights from May 25 without consulting the Maharashtra Government has not gone well with the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) could be evidenced from a strong tweet put out by State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in the early hours of Sunday.

"Its extremely ill-advised to reopen airports in red zone. Mere thermal scanning of passengers inadequate w/o swabs. Impossible to have autos/cabs/buses ply in current circumstances. Adding positive passenger will add Covid stress to red zone," Deshmukh had tweeted. Malik also hit out at the Narendra Modi for taking decisions without consulting the State Government, by saying: "The Government at the Centre makes announcement after announcement without discussing issues with the State Government".

K'taka tally at 2,056 with 97 new cases

IANS ■ BENGALURU

With 97 new cases, Karnataka's Covid-19 tally crossed the 2,000-mark, while 26 were discharged from hospitals taking the number of cured persons to 634, said an official, here on Sunday.

"The total number of Covid-19 cases across the state is 2,056, with 97 more testing positive during the past 18 hours," said a state health official.The number of active cases in the state is 1,378 and Covid-19 deaths 42, including 2 for non-Covid reasons.

Of the 26 discharged, 18 are in Davanagere, 4 in Chitradurga, 3 in Bagalkote and one in Haveri across the southern state.Of the new cases, 41 are women and 19 children below 20 years.

"68 of the 97 new cases are returnees from Maharashtra, the worst affected Covid-hit state in the country with 47,190 cases till Saturday," said the official.

Of the 30 Karnataka districts, Chikkaballapura recorded the highest cases at 24, followed by Udupi (18), Hassan (15) and Kalaburagi, Yadigiri and Mandya (6 each).

Subdued Eid in coastal K'taka amid lockdown

IANS ■ MANGALURU

At the end of month-long Ramadan fasting, Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated in coastal districts of Karnataka on a subdued note at homes due to ban on mass gathering in mosques amid lockdown across the southern state to contain the coronavirus spread, an official said on Sunday.

"As decided by Markazi Ruet-e-Hilal committee member Maulana Maqsood Imran Rashidi sahib on Saturday after Maghrib, Eid is being celebrated in the state's coastal region today (Sunday) and on Monday in other parts of the state though the moon could not be sighted on Saturday night," said Maulana Sagheer Ahmed Rashadi in a statement here.

The port city of Mangaluru is about 360km southwest of Bengaluru.

The state's coastal region comprises Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu and Chikkamagalur districts off the Arabian Sea.

"All the devout Muslims offered Eid prayers (namaz) at their home and greeted each other from a distance to maintain physical distancing. Attired in new clothes, all of us partook the festival dishes, including biryani and kheer," Urdu teacher Habibur Rahman told IANS on phone.

As the state government decided to enforce a strict lockdown on Sunday the people completed shopping for new dresses and groceries for the feast by Saturday evening.

"This is the first time in our life we are celebrating Eid at home as we are unable go to mosque for prayers or greet others due to the extended lockdown, which also made us observe fast during the month-long Ramadan at home," recalled Rahman.

The first day of Shawwal (1441 Azli Fazli) will be on Monday.

In a video message, Jamia masjid Imam Maulana Abdul Aleem of Bhatkal in the northern coastal district urged the people to maintain peace and harmony and bear the inconvenience due to the lockdown with fortitude.

"May this special day bring peace, blessings and happiness to all. Pray Allah to accept our prayers on the Eid," the Maulana said on the occasion.

Bhatkal is about 460km northwest of Bengaluru in the southern state.

The Imam also hoped (Inshallah), COVID menace would soon end so that all could get back to normal life and meet relatives and friends again.

Shopping complexes to open, malls to remain shut in Lucknow

Lucknow: Shopping complexes in the state capital, outside the containment zones, will be allowed to reopen from May 26.

However, shopping malls and multiplexes will still remain closed.

According to the order of the Lucknow district magistrate Abhisheka Prakash, only one-third of shops in a complex will operate daily on rotational basis from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The centralized air-conditioning of the complex will remain shut, though individual shops can keep their air-conditioners on.

A maximum of three customers at a time will be allowed inside the store. All customers will have to wear masks and thermal screening of customers will be done at the entrance of the complex. Shopkeepers will have to report to health authorities immediately if they find any customer with COVID-19 symptoms.

Shop owners will have to make sanitizers available to the customer before and after transaction as well as keep record of every visitor. Shops will have to be sanitized with bleaching powder and sodium hypochlorite several times in a day.

Amarnath Mishra, senior general secretary, Lucknow Vyapar Mandal, said that the decision will help major stores of garment, electrical and electronic items and jewellery that are located in shopping complexes.

"With this decision, almost 70 per cent of the market will now remain open according to conditions laid down by the district administration," he said. ***IANS***

Migrant dozes off, falls from bike and dies

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh):A migrant worker riding pillion on a two-wheeler from Gurugram in Haryana to his home in Bihar, died when he dozed off on the motorbike and fell off.

His nephew Satish also lost balance and fell down.

Both received serious head injuries and Ratiram, 36, died on the spot while Satish is in hospital with critical injuries.The incident took place on the Yashoda Nagar highway on Saturday.

According to reports, Ratiram and his nephew Satish, residents of the Supaul district of Bihar, used to work in a factory in Gurugram.

After the lockdown, they lost their jobs and finally decided to return to their home.

They left on their motorcycle from Gurugram on Saturday after they failed to get another other means of transport. Naubasta inspector Ashish Shukla said that their families have been informed and are on their way to Kanpur. "The body has been shifted to the mortuary and the autopsy will be conducted only after his family members arrive from Bihar," the inspector\ said. ***IANS***

Sikkim reports 1st corona case

IANS ■ GANGTOK

The Himalayan state of Sikkim reported its first coronavirus case when a 25-year-old student who returned from Delhi tested positive, a senior official said on Sunday.

Sikkim Health Secretary Pempa T. Bhutia said that the swab sample of the student was sent to North Bengal Medical College and Hospital in Siliguri (in West Bengal) for testing. The positive report came on Saturday.

The student from Rabangla in South Sikkim district is admitted at Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial Hospital in Gangtok. Hospital sources said his health condition was stable.

The student was living in Delhi to prepare for UPSC examinations but returned to the state by bus along with a few others last week.

Till Saturday night, 1,707 people were tested in Sikkim.

The first corona case was reported a day after the Sikkim government announced that teaching for students from Class 9 to university levels would resume from June 15.

The tiny Himalayan state was one of the first states to close inter-state and international borders and ban entry of both domestic and foreign tourists, besides migrant labourers.

Maha CM hits out at BJP for politicising crisis, says lockdown to be lifted gradually

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hitting out at the Opposition BJP for its efforts to indulge in politics over the coronavirus crisis, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said here on Sunday that his Government would lift the lockdown gradually as it did not want crowds in public places which would compel the Government to re-impose lockdown in the State.

Two days after the BJP staged "Save Maharashtra" agitation against the "inept" handling of coronavirus crisis by his Government, Uddhav said: "I sincerely feel that this is a time of crisis, and hence, no one should play politics. You may do it, but we will not as we are vested with a responsibility and above all, the people of Maharashtra trust us".

Addressing the people across the state through social media, theChief Minister said: "As much it is improper to impose lockdown all of a sudden, it is also improper to lift the lockdown at one go. We are treading cautiously to ensure restoration of normalcy. While l8ifting the lockdown, we will have to take measures against crowds at public places. Every citizen will have to precaution of not indulging in undisciplined behaviour, a behaviour that will force us to re-impose lockdown".

"I want to thank people of all religions, social organizations and political parties for their co-operation," he said.

In a series of tweets put out after his interaction with the people across the state, Uddhav said: "A couple of days ago, I was part of a VC with Congress President Sonia Gandhi ji and other leaders. I said the real picture about our country will be clear in the coming fortnight due to the migration and the likely transmission of the virus due to the movement of people".

"This intra-state movement from one district to another has been allowed to an extent. But, this can be permitted on a large scale only after following precautions. We have allowed shops and offices to open in some areas."

"We are also considering if the theatre, film and television industries can be allowed to resume shooting and post-production activities like dubbing and editing. They have asked us if they can shoot in the Green zone before the monsoons with due precautions," he said.

"We are also considering allowing outdoor games. The cabinet held a meeting to prepare for the Kharif season. We are launching a new project to make seeds and fertilisers available to farmers in their fields," he said.

"Since day one, we never stopped any agriculture activities or transport of produce. We are taking care of farmers. We have purchased 75 to 80% cotton in areas like Vidarbha, Marathwada and North Maharashtra, and this is still underway," he said.

Total lockdown turns Karnataka into ghost State

IANS ■ BENGALURU

A total lockdown on Sunday turned Karnataka into a ghost State, with an eerie silence and uneasy calm prevailing across its cities and towns, even as hundreds of policemen kept a close vigil.

"A total lockdown is in force across the state since Saturday evening (7pm) to Monday morning (7am). A ban under Section 144 of the CrPC has also been imposed to prevent movement of people and vehicles," a police official told IANS here.

As decided by the state government to contain the coronavirus spread, the Sunday lockdown comes after a partial relaxation of restrictions on weekdays since May 19 to revive economic activity and restore near-normalcy.

"We have seized about 100 vehicles across the city (Bengaluru) since morning when some people, mostly youths, ventured out on two-wheelers to roam around in residential areas in violation of the lockdown norm," the official said.

The police also sealed inter-state borders to prevent movement of people and vehicles from neighbouring states, as bus services and transportation of goods remain suspended till Monday morning.

"Only ambulances and vehicles on essential duty are allowed to ply during the curfew period. Shops selling medicines, groceries, vegetables, fruits and poultry and meat products have been allowed to open but ensure customers maintain physical distancing and stand in queues.

"Barring retail outlets for essential supplies like milk, vegetables, fruits, and medicines, everything has been shut down since 7pm on Saturday to 7am on Monday," the official added.

State-run buses, taxis and autos have also not been allowed to operate across the state.

Though the central government further extended the lockdown to May 31 from May 18 with greater relaxation in the norms to restore near-normalcy across the country, the state has decided to enforce it (lockdown) only on Sundays till month-end, that is on May 24 and May 31.

All main roads, flyovers and enter/exit points on the city outskirts have been barricaded to prevent vehicular movement.

In an appeal to all citizens across the state on Saturday, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa urged the people to abide by the lockdown on this (May 24) and next Sunday (May 31) to contain the Covid-19 spread.

"We have reached a crucial stage in the war against Covid-19. Follow guidelines in the interest and welfare of all to fight the pandemic. Stay at home to be safe," said Yediyurappa.

The state government, however, allowed weddings prefixed on Sunday amid the lockdown with a slew of riders to ensure health and social distancing.

CHANDIGARH | MONDAY | MAY 25, 2020

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PAPER WITH PASSION

RBI move means little

The Central bank wants to lend more but there are few borrowers and banks are wary of piling up NPAs

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may have done another repo cut, hoping banks will lend more, but the cold truth is that nobody is borrowing. Certainly not in these stressed times, when there is no stability about the future and businesses are struggling to keep their noses above water. Clearly, they wouldn't want to pile up bad loans or part with whatever they have given such criticality. So though RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das announced a 3.35 per cent reverse repo rate in the belief that banks will no longer park their surpluses with the Central bank, which is what is happening now, but get aggressive about lending, banks may not be too enthused and are expected to simply drop interest rates on deposits. Even before the pandemic, loan growth was about 6.5 per cent consistently. Besides, banks would also want to be sure of the credibility of the loanee and not take undue risks. This risk aversion is typical of banks even when they have liquidity. So, even now, mostly the bigger companies will likely get the loans instead of struggling MSMEs, most of which may still go under and increase a bank's NPAs burden. As it is, banks are still bearing the burden of corporate loans that went bad. Besides, the moratoriums for another three months may offer temporary relief to borrowers but for the banks, this would mean a disruption in credit culture as monthly instalments and accumulated interest charges can only be recovered late or not at all should the business concerned is not able to survive at all. Many MSMEs are having a tough time since the grace period does not mean a waiver, as banks will still charge interest for the unpaid amount. So NPAs are expected to shoot up from the current level of around ₹10 lakh crore. Available data suggests that nearly 25-30 per cent of bank loans have come under moratorium so far with micro-finance borrowers facing extreme stress, followed by automobile finance, MSMEs, corporates and retail. While the bigger banks may still survive, it is the smaller banks, especially those into micro-credit, that are in danger of keeling over. Therefore, a one-time restructuring of loans as a relief measure, as suggested by many experts, would have been a better option in a bleak scenario. In fact, Das himself sounded a warning saying the GDP growth in 2020-21 is likely to be in the "negative territory."

In the end, the RBI can only do so much and the Government's fiscal stimulus so far has been credit-based than about fund infusion. No matter how many loans we give, without upping demand and liquidity, the economy will grunt to a freeze. So far the incentives announced have a long-term gestation and are particularly aimed at the rural poor. But the sizeable urban economy is where demand needs to pick up to get the train moving. British economist John Maynard Keynes, who had studied the Great Depression of 1929, was of the view that Governments should become spenders of the last resort. He had even suggested that Governments should give people money to dig holes and fill them up. The money thus earned and spent would help revive the economy. This certainly isn't the guiding principle of our stimulus package. For all the grandiloquence, the actual fiscal outgo is just a bit over one per cent of the GDP, which is hardly enough to battle an unprecedented crisis such as this, when the economy is expected to contract to 12.5 per cent. Our structural reforms are there in place but can only be actualised in the long term. The pandemic is the perfect opportunity for the Government to go for big bang reforms and bold initiatives without being hemmed in and timing is of the essence. Seemingly done for the poorest, the Government just rescues them temporarily without providing long-term comfort as growth is projected to dip in key sectors. Right now, the focus seems to be on attracting investment but boosting demand means innovative responses and financial interventions to declog the economy as a whole. Cheaper rates may not encourage thousands of businesses to start borrowing but the Government doling out money to millions of Indians and boosting their spending power might get things going.

Wonder girl

Desperation drove 15-year-old Jyoti Kumari to pedal 1,200 km to Bihar with her father. She is now up for cycling trials

If the pandemic has shown our ugly side, with a rampant class divide apparent in decisions taken by the Government vis-à-vis the lesser privileged, namely migrants, it has also revealed the true grit of survivors. People are walking thousands of kilometres in their long march home, helping and supporting each other along the way. One among them is a young girl, Jyoti Kumari, who set out on a 1,200-km journey back to Bihar on her second-hand bicycle with a single mission: Bring her injured, out-of-work migrant father home. With no money and little food and thanks to generous Samaritans along the way, she pedalled on with her father on the pillion. For eight days, the father-daughter duo moved down long roads under a scathing sun and some undesirable comments by passersby. Yet undeterred, she reached her home in Bihar and has now quarantined herself. With the media hailing her as the "lionhearted" girl, the reports did not fail to draw the attention of the Cycling Federation of India. Having noticing her immense talent, it has invited her to New Delhi for a tryout with the national team. There's much more. Her amazing journey has also grabbed the attention of Ivanka Trump, US President Donald Trump's daughter, who took to the social media to salute what she called a "beautiful feat of endurance." But Jyoti must not make the same mistake as Srinivas Gowda, the "kambala jockey" or Karnataka's Usain Bolt, who, too, was invited by the Sports Authority of India to take part in a track and field trial after his record-setting performance in a traditional foot race but failed to seize the moment. Nor should she be like Rameshwar Gurjar, a farmer from Madhya Pradesh, whose fame was short-lived because he failed to prove his mettle on the ground. If passion and desperation drove her, she must keep that hunger alive for a sportswoman's career if she indeed wants one badly enough.

She must possess the same zeal as that of sprinter Dutee Chand, boxer Mary Kom and archer Deepika Kumari among others, who, coming from tribal and marginalised backgrounds, were less magnificent than they are today. Standalone feats like that of Jyoti's from the hinterland are also proof of talent, stamina and determination that we are somehow not able to tap into and develop as Olympic medallists. We need to put in place quality and effective grassroots rural sports development programmes uniformly across States and ensure sports nurseries are set up at the school level along with nutrition packages for the young. Imagine what Jyoti could do with a little bit of encouragement and support.

More than a health crisis

Experience shows that we cannot bring the economy on track if our working classes are unhappy. It is the Government's greater responsibility to make them feel at home

KK **PAUL**

A pandemic invariably leads to a health crisis, which has an economic fallout, too. This has been the trend in almost all countries that are reeling under the impact of Coronavirus. The additional crisis posed by the mass exodus of the migrant labourers is more or less specific to our country and is bound to have some far-reaching consequences.

For a long time to come, heart-rending images of the migratory efflux will be the defining moment of the Corona-inspired lockdown. Having lost their livelihood, without any savings and no hope for the future, lakhs of workers left for their hometowns and villages. In the absence of any transportation during the first month-and-a-half, out of sheer desperation, they set out with meagre belongings on roads and highways. Some even covered more than a thousand kilometres on foot. Though their decision must have been voluntary, the fact is the prevailing circumstances left them with little option.

The present crisis is a multi-dimensional one but for now, the focus has shifted almost entirely to the economy and less on health. In the long run, this may also emerge as a major social issue. The migratory process, its effects and the growth of slums in urban areas have been studied comprehensively but the instant case is that of reverse migration. Earlier, this phenomenon was attributable to individual behaviour and decisions but in the present context, it has assumed the shape of a mass efflux. Individuals and families, who are suffering, having been uprooted physically for no fault of theirs, are not only bound to be unhappy but also bitter. Given the present situation, this bitterness does not appear to be disappearing anytime soon. The reason as to why these people were forced to leave their villages in the first place might, perhaps, confront them in a more aggravated form now as they get back to their home States.

Under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, the Government had ordered on March 24 that all employees — be it industry, shops or commercial establishments — will have to pay wages to their employees even when they are not in operation during the lockdown. Landlords, too, were asked not to charge rent or get the premises vacated from their worker-tenants. Pursuant to a judgment from the Supreme Court, this order was withdrawn on May 18, without any alternative arrangement, thus leaving the migrants high and dry. The Supreme Court ruled that the Ministry of Home Affairs' order was violative of Article 19 (1)(g) of the Constitution with respect to the rights of private firms. It's another matter that prior to its withdrawal, the order was being observed more in violation. Perhaps the case for the migrant workers could have been presented more effectively.

More glaring is the non-implementation of the Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1979. Known as ISMW, rules under the said Act were framed and notified in 1980. The implementing authorities for this Act are the respective chief labour commissioners. Perhaps they could not foresee the enormity of the situation and, thus, could not react in time. Also, the efflux of the workers was only initially prevented.

In fact, some action was taken against erring officers, who tried to facilitate their movement but after some time, the decision was reversed, leading to confusion in making arrangements for their safe transportation. The registration for workers wanting to migrate has begun only now and that, too, at selective places. The ISMW has specific provisions for such registrations in the normal course of working of the labour department, which, perhaps, was being neglected.

It is true that in its original form, the Act applied to migrants of only certain classes. With a small amendment, it could have been extended to all categories. Complete neglect on the part of the ISMW appears to be one of the factors that may have widened the difference between the workers, labour, migrants and the administration.

Ever since the liberalisation of the economy and pro-labour legislations coming into force, unrest among the wagers had become a thing of past. The well-known trickle-down effect came into full play and a record number of people could move away from poverty. Some of these pro-labour legislations are now in the process of being abandoned with States like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan undertaking major changes in them to woo investment. In fact, the higher judiciary has already taken cognisance of this and has asked some pertinent questions on behalf of the workers and their rights.

Experience shows that bringing the economy back on the rails cannot be achieved if our working classes are unhappy. The role of the trade unions will have to be considered afresh in the changed circumstances. Unions have more or less remained dormant during the last two decades and are now coming back with a cause, which may not augur well for the industry as a whole.

An extremely important question that has not been debated so far is: What next? For how long will the migrant workers stay on and whether this efflux is for good. Whatever be the status of a worker in society, he/she did have access to a certain level of facility in urban areas. All of them became used to their lives and would certainly miss them badly back home. So does this mean that this efflux is a temporary phenomenon and that things will normalise in due course?

Considering the alienation that they have undergone, it does not appear that the workers would be coming back too soon unless some confidence-building measures are taken. This should entail a review of some of the regressive laws that work against the interests of the labourers. Alienation of the workforce has several manifestations but one of the worst forms is estrangement of man from man. It would have pained them where it hurts the most to see a complete lack of empathy among sections of society who could have helped them tide the crisis. Only a handful of NGOs stepped in to help. Generally, Government agencies were a big letdown. This may have further aggravated the situation.

The Government's decision to increase the allocation for MGNREGA up to ₹40,000 crore is a step in the right direction. Though in a limited manner, this can certainly help the migrants tide over the immediate crisis when they reach their home States. Our MPs and MLAs, who could have undertaken immediate relief measures, are handicapped in the absence of funds that have been already diverted.

Additionally, existing resources of the State Governments have come under severe stress. Their borrowing capacity needs to be enhanced further. In the event where a bulk of the migrants would not want to go back to their original workplaces, focus will have to be on the creation of appropriate levels of employment opportunities in the vicinity. Obviously, investment in the area of rural development and employment would have to be increased in affected districts where there has been a sudden influx of population. The Providing Urban Facilities in Rural Areas (PURA) model, as suggested by former President Abdul Kalam, can also be taken into consideration.

Today, a much greater responsibility lies with the State Governments, who have to not only provide the arriving migrant force with medical care but also treat them with empathy and help absorb them in the existing social milieu, physically, psychologically and economically.

(The writer is a former Governor and a Senior Advisor at the Pranab Mukherjee Foundation)

SOUNDBITE

Only *naam ka satya not kaam ka*. He (Satya Pal Malik) never tires of lying. He lied to the people of J&K before August 5 and is lying even now.

NC leader
—Omar Abdullah

Violence can be sexual, mental, physical and it bothered me. It frightens me that there are people stuck in those situations. I can't fathom the pain and fear.

Actor
—Sandhya Mridul

COVID-19 pandemic is moving the world toward increased technological innovation and online collaboration but cybercrime is also on the rise, too.

UN disarmament chief
—Izumi Nakamitsu

Every country has brought in a basket of things, some fiscal, some monetary... They have also gone into liquidity being infused. We are not different from them.

Union Minister
—Nirmala Sitharaman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Modify rules

Sir — Central Government employees, posted outside their home towns, are facing a huge problem because of great risks involved while living in hotels or guest houses because of the spread of the Corona pandemic. Even finding a rented accommodation is extremely difficult in these times.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) should revise its advisory. Those desiring to be posted in their hometowns must be allowed to move to their native places. The revised system should be applicable for Government employees in each cadre and services like administrative service, police service or international service as far as practicable. The Corona era is a time when living with the family has become a necessity for all practical reasons. It's difficult for many to maintain mental health during long periods of self-isolation? If citizens have to learn to live with the virus, the Government must amend the rules, too.

Madhu Agrawal
Delhi

A pandemic and a cyclone

This refers to the editorial, "Bengal battered" (May 23). People of West Bengal and Odisha have had to face the double disaster of a raging pandemic and a devastating cyclone, the strongest ever recorded in the Bay of Bengal. Tapping their reserves of inner strength and resilience, they are sure to get over the twin calamities — the bio-threat and the natural calamity. It was a great relief that the emergency evacuation was in place, which saved the lives of thousands of people, mostly from vulnerable areas. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) must be commended for having taken several steps to modernise and upgrade the cyclone early warning systems. This is the reason why it could act in time and prevent large-scale loss of life.

Nevertheless, both States have a huge task ahead to provide relief and rehabilitation to those affected and at the same time prevent overcrowding to contain the spread of COVID-19. It was encouraging though that the Central and State Governments are making joint efforts to mitigate the situation, thus reviving hopes of "cooperative federalism" in the process. However, it should be more than just "seeming cooperation." The Prime Minister's announcement of a ₹1,000 crore for disaster relief should be followed up with more financial support without delay. This to help the affected people rebuild their lives. If "central assessment" is "mandatory", it must be done without procrastination. Meanwhile, scientists are studying if cyclone Amphan and its destructive power are linked to climate change — a major existential challenge for the world to address for self-preservation.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Eid reflections

Sir — The month of Ramzan is considered to be auspicious for Muslims all across the world. They fast from dawn to dusk for a month to remind themselves of the suffering of the less fortunate and to bring the followers closer to god.

The sighting of the crescent moon marks the end of the holy month of Ramzan and the arrival of Eid. The festival is all about sharing happiness and joy. This year, however, celebrations have been stifled due to the pandemic, which has forced us to inculcate changes in life. We must be more humane and empathetic. And social distancing doesn't mean emotional distancing.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

The other problem

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Finally, the takeoff" (May 22). The Union Government's decision to partially resume air travel is welcome. But it would have been much appreciated if the Civil Aviation Ministry could have taken steps to refund fares for flyers, who had made domestic and international travel bookings during the lockdown period.

Although the Aviation Ministry had asked airlines to issue a full refund to customers, it was an ambiguous directive as the cancellations did not apply to tickets booked before the lockdown for the travel period between the lockdown or after it. Surely the aviation industry is going through its worse time since 9/11 and grounded flights mean no money made. Still, holding money of passengers is both morally and legally wrong. The Government must come to the rescue of hapless people.

Abhinav
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRSTCOLUMN

Impenetrable barriers

Borders around the country remain closed, no matter what the compulsion of those trying to cross them

VINAYSHIL **GAUTAM**

Any territory around the world, right from a street to a State to a city or a region, has its characteristics. The word "territory" has one of its most common usages in the field of sports and athletics where identities compete from a defined piece of land without having a sovereign status. Thus, it is that Scotland, as a territory, can field a team without having a sovereign status. However, this cannot be the place to resolve these concerns or indeed debate them. The use of the word "territory" in the first sentence of this column is in terms of identity. COVID-19 has changed many things in our world. How many of them will remain altered and how many will relapse to their original form once the virus leaves us is anybody's guess. However, if one can survive the stress of the possibility of being a Coronavirus suspect and being put in quarantine, then there are some very interesting processes at play.

A former civil servant, who for some reason had to travel by car from Almora to Delhi, thus traversing through the three States of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, expressed genuine anxiety at being stopped, grilled and monitored for the virus at the numerous checkpoints he was bound to pass during his journey. He was quite worried about the possibility of being put into quarantine as reasoning usually does not work in such cases. He was convinced that given the state of mind prevailing around the country regarding the pandemic, even his status as an ex-Secretary of the Government of India would not change anything and he would be put in isolation. And given the horror stories coming out of quarantine centres, one can quite understand his reluctance to be put in one. But that's another story for another day.

More to the point, for the first time ever, in modern Indian history, State boundaries have acquired the status of a phenomenon. Consider the birth of the concept of the National Capital Region (NCR). The city of NOIDA came up in the late 60s in select sectors, as a retreat for the rich and famous, especially the ruling class in Delhi. Freelancing educational entrepreneurs and others, particularly the three forces, also penetrated NOIDA. It became a "hub" of sorts.

Subsequently, when commercial spaces in Connaught Place, Khan Market, Nehru Place and others started running short, the done thing was to move to Gurgaon, now known as Gurugram. Corporate offices moved to places such as Cyber City, which coincidently had no special "cyber" identity save being a fanciful noun. Many multinational corporations moved their offices there and those who couldn't get into the cyber bubble, lined up National Highway 8. The Big 4 consulting companies, PriceWaterhouse Coopers, Ernst & Young, Deloitte, and KPMG, were not far behind. Pioneering zeal and everything else in between led the way. The Metro followed and a modest four-lane link between Mehrauli and Gurgaon was created. The price of real estate skyrocketed, with many of the rich and powerful boasting of substantial properties in Gurugram. It became a centre of high living, much spending and social standing. A new "territory" was born. Some people lived in Gurugram and worked in Delhi because "the gram" gave the veneer of country living. Others lived in Delhi and worked in Gurugram because Delhi had the advantage of being a social hub where the movers and shakers of society did the rounds of the Delhi Gymkhana, the Delhi Golf Club, the Delhi Race Course, the India International Centre, the India Habitat Centre and much else. In these havens, life pulsated and social elitism flourished. Art and culture were not far behind.

In fact, this intermingling and frequent commuting between the two territories reached such a crescendo that even toll plazas had to be abolished. Straight roads were converted into multiple U-turns. Few if any, complained. And then suddenly, COVID-19 struck the world and walls went up across the country almost overnight.

Haryana discovered its boundaries and passing the non-existent toll plaza became next to impossible. The Delhi-Gurugram border was so heavily monitored that even swanky cars were chased away by the humble stick of the nondescript policeman. The usually unconcerned and cooperative police had finally begun policing to keep Gurugram and (Haryana by implication) safe from the Coronavirus. Unfortunately, the writer of these lines still had his medical care anchored in an institution in Delhi. It didn't matter that his regular monthly dosage of medicines would run out and his symptoms could not be attended to by random doctors who had, in any case, shut their clinics, because as one doctor pointed out: "Even the potential Corona patient doesn't tell the truth about foreign travel as there is a serious possibility of being put into quarantine." Somebody high up in the Haryana administration was spoken to. He gave a very diplomatic reply: "Sir, we will arrange for your medical care in Gurugram. But you know how it is. We make one exception for you and people will push that aperture to their advantage." So, the borders remain closed, no matter what the compulsion of those trying to cross them. At least, the country has been secured from the Coronavirus. To give everyone his due, the sceptic will ask: "Has it really?"

(*The writer is a well-known management consultant*)

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

WE THE SONS OF JAMAL KHASHOGGI PARDON THOSE WHO KILLED OUR FATHER DURING THIS HOLY MONTH OF RAMZAN.
—JAMAL KHASHOGGI'S SON
SALAH KHASHOGGI

HIS AMBUSH AND HEINOUS MURDER DOES NOT HAVE A STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS AND NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO PARDON HIS (JAMAL'S) KILLERS.
—JAMAL KHASHOGGI'S FIANCÉE
HATICE CENGIZ

Working class uprising

The new labour laws being enacted by the Centre and various State Governments might create another lockdown even as the economy limps back to normalcy after having all but collapsed

AMIT **SENGUPTA**

In what is perceived as possibly the last phase of the lockdown, with States being given the powers to implement relaxations by the Centre and economic activity once again being started across urban and rural India, a wave of resentment is brewing among the organised sector of the working class and trade unions in the country.

Indeed, images of tens of thousands of migrant workers in dire straits, walking without food and water in this scorching heat on highways and streets to unknown destinations, especially in the Hindi heartland, have shocked the national conscience, even while death and highway accidents of the workers seem to have become routine.

It is in this context that the new labour laws being enacted by the Centre and various State Governments might create another lockdown, even as the economy limps back to normalcy after having all but collapsed, especially in the urban sector, with the agricultural economy on the threshold of a disaster despite a very good harvest. Indeed, the almost 77 million tonnes of foodgrains lying in the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns, and the huge output post-harvest season, especially in States like Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Maharashtra, are bound to lead to another crisis, especially when the monsoon season sets in.

With the BJP-led Central Government refusing to release the overflowing foodgrain for the jobless and homeless migrant workers, or the poor, even while rejecting the proposals of several top economists like Amartya Sen, Raghuram Rajan and Abhijit Banerjee, the rural economy will yet again find itself in a Catch-22 situation. Already, the crisis of the past has not been resolved: For instance sugarcane farmers in Western UP have largely not been paid the minimum support price while their payment from the mills is still pending. A similar situation might erupt in Maharashtra with onion farmers among others.

The migrant workers, who have gone back to their hometowns and villages, are not returning anytime soon despite the booster announced by the Union Finance Minister, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman. Sources say that the financial "bonanza" announced by the Centre might just prove to be yet another "*jumla*" while largely benefitting certain industrialists close to the Delhi regime. The real estate and construction industry has not recovered and even the cream of the industry, Information Technology has faced retrenchment of employees.

Almost 10,000 workers of a successful and cheap brand of biscuits like Parle G had to be sacked just because there was no purchasing power in small towns and rural India to buy these glucose biscuits. Hundreds of employees have been sacked in media organisations in recent times with not even a whimper of protest.

With coal mines and airports being privatised, among other public sector units (PSUs), a collapsing economy, faced with a gigantic unemployment problem among the organised and unorganised workers, including among the educated and white-collar professionals, the country can slip into a major crisis yet again. Almost 40 million workers are slated to lose their jobs. Indeed, post-demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST), the small and medium-scale industry had virtually shut down, affecting tens of thousands of daily wagers and small and medium entrepreneurs.

> THIS KIND OF A NATIONAL TRAUMA ON SUCH A MASSIVE SCALE AND AS A DAILY AND RELENTLESS PUBLIC SPECTACLE FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD DURING THE PANDEMIC, NOT EVEN IN THE SUB-CONTINENT, IN AFRICA OR THE MIDDLE-EAST. MAY 22 MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CHAPTER IN THE WORKING CLASS' STRUGGLE IN INDIA, EVEN AS THE TRAGIC NARRATIVE OF MASS MIGRATION OF THE UNORGANISED WORKERS CONTINUES RELENTLESSLY. WILL IT MARK A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE CURRENT SCENARIO? ONLY TIME WILL TELL. BUT FOR NOW THE WORKERS ARE NOT GIVING UP

Even flourishing industrial zones like Surat in Gujarat had risen in revolt before the last Lok Sabha elections. It took major maneuvering and persuasion by Home Minister Amit Shah to get the pro-BJP traders to the polling booths. Indeed, sociologists had earlier predicted that the mass protests against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) all over the country were also triggered by mass joblessness and a state of perpetual anxiety about a stable future.

Besides, after the shocking and horrifying images of the poor and starving migrant workers, men, women and children, have hit social media, and the Western media, the international image of the country has taken a big beating. This kind of a national trauma on such a massive scale and as a daily and relentless public spectacle for almost two months has not been seen in any part of the world during the pandemic, not even in the sub-continent, in Africa or the Middle-East. Surely, India is on a sticky wicket not only in terms of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or growth rate and per capita income. Its moral and ethical core has been disrupted and proved crudely transparent in front of the whole world.

It is in this pessimistic context that the one-day hunger strike by the leaders of 10 Central Trade Unions on May 22 against the new labour laws rattled the Central Government, which is still to find its economic scaffolding.

The demands of the unions included restoration of labour laws that have been changed or their implementation put on hold in about 10 States consisting of both BJP and non-BJP ruled ones. In a joint petition to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the union leaders sought immediate relief to stranded workers and arrangements for safe return to their homes. They also demanded immediate halt to indiscriminate privatisation of PSUs. Even as the trade unions approached the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Government refused to engage in a dialogue with the leaders and they were detained for violating the restrictions of the lockdown. However, the trade unions have said that this protest was just the beginning and their struggle would continue.

Amid all this chaos, experts have declared that the latest Government booster for the small and medium enterprises is just not enough. It should be noted that the majority of the working class in India do not even fall under the organised or formal sector. They constitute almost 93 per cent of the workforce, have no trade union cover or other rights such as work guarantee, fixed-wage hours or wages, maternity leave, provident fund, pension and so on. They are just "free labour" out to be exploited by all concerned. Half of them are women, Dalits, extremely backward castes, landless labourers and the poorest of the poor. Understandably, the labour laws have been declared draconian by the unions, whereby the lockdown has been used to bulldoze them.

Some of them are outrageous, like increasing the work hours per day from eight to 12 hours, something the labour movement had gained after the famous May uprising in the Hay Market in Chicago in the 1830s, celebrated all over the world as May Day. The suspension of a large number of labour laws for three years by UP and the Madhya Pradesh Government's decision to allow companies to "hire and fire" workers coincided with Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra increasing the daily working hours. Significantly, the BJP trade union, BMS, did not join the protest while the Congress trade union, INTUC did, though the Congress State Governments, too, are tagging along on the new labour laws.

Among the "draconian measures", the Yogi Adityanath Government in UP has made 38 laws meaningless for almost three years, including the Industrial Disputes Act, Trade Union Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Act on Occupational Safety and Health, Interstate Migrant Labour Act and the Contract Labour Act.

The BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh Government has ushered in serious changes in the Factories Act, Contract Act and Industrial Dispute Act. Hire and fire seems to be the new pandemic doctrine, with most workers' rights being taken away, including regarding wages, safety and compensation, and contractors and industry running without any regulations. May 22 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the working class' struggle in India, even as the tragic narrative of mass migration of the unorganised workers continues relentlessly. Will it mark a paradigm shift in the current scenario? Only time will tell. But for now the workers are not giving up.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Pandemic as a threat to national security

Thankfully, all the casualties that the world has been witnessing have not permeated the defence community in a major way so far. But, what if the defence community is targetted by an enemy country? Or if the virus falls into the hands of terrorists?

GAUTAM KUMAR **JHA**

A pandemic like COVID-19 can be a threat to the national security of a country which is not prepared to tackle such a disaster. The impact of the pandemic can be even more severe if such a virus is not natural but biologically altered by a country for its personal gains. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 is a result of the increasing conspicuous consumption in society. The ever-increasing need in almost every field of human consumption has given birth to a situation where the definition of a new-normal never stops.

The greed of individuals is reflected in the proliferation of new products to be marketed with great conviction that inadvertently control the behavioural pattern of the majority of the consumers of the globe. One principal reason for this are the global commodity chains that have fostered greater movement of goods and people across continents. The impact of the contagion on the world economy is huge because the global North often seeks to subsidise its commodity consumption by outsourcing it to countries with weak labour laws and economies of scale with low manufacturing costs. Hence, China's crisis became the world's crisis even before the disease hit Europe and America. The present pandemic has proved that every human effort is defeated when it is a question of how to balance between natural and artificial ecosystems, given the increasing fluctuations in the climatic disorder.

One of the possible answers can be reducing the ever-increasing need, consumerism and production and the establishment of sustainable infrastructure where humans and nature can complement each other. For the last four decades the whole world was on the path of globalisation, where every country understood the needs of the other and a symbiotic trade system was established. This resulted in alleviation of poverty, betterment of healthcare facilities and better lifestyles globally, to a certain degree. However, these developmental indices have been realised at the expense of natural resources. The increasing demand for foodgrain invited abundant use of pesticides that finally permeated into the human body, causing fatal diseases.

Similarly, the demands for security and defence-related products have further harmed nature, impacting the air, water and soil. However, the massive production lines in China have not only impacted the global community but the country itself has faced the negative impact of global greed and consumerism. A World Bank and Scottish Environment Protection Agency report says that around 7,60,000 people die prematurely each year in China because of air and water pollution.

This increasing imbalance in nature has been reflected in such catastrophes and the possibility of their recurrence cannot be denied if the global community does not wake up. No one can deny the fact that the COVID-19 virus originated from Wuhan province of China and the Wuhan Institute of Virology does research on most dangerous pathogens. There is a huge wet market for animals and seafood located in Wuhan. The bush meat, which may be termed as a cultural preference, may be detrimental for humans and is often a source of such pandemics.

No one can also deny that China hid the initial outbreak and failed to warn the world community of the severity of the virus, despite the fact that it knew how contagious it was and Wuhan is well-connected with the capitals of many countries around the globe.

As a result, the pandemic has affected 53,32,323 people and there have been 3,40,590 casualties till now, globally. However big this count may be, the economic and emotional implications of the outbreak are unfathomable. There is a global lockdown amid chaos and fear and there is a threat to the current world order. At times like this, the question of national security becomes very important.

Thankfully, all the casualties that the world has been witnessing have not permeated the defence community in a major way so far. But, what if the defence community is targetted by an enemy country? Or if the virus falls into the hands of terrorists? The 9/11 attack on US soil 20 years ago redefined the security infrastructure of the global community and so far, more or less every country's security design has been impacted by terrorism.

The spread of the Coronavirus has raised a big question on global security and now every nation has to redefine its security. The search for biological weapons by the US in Iraq in 2002 and further consequences were based upon the programme of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction from 1962 to 1991, aimed at attacking Iran, the Kurds and other purposes. There has been biological espionage between the West and the Soviet Union and so on.

In this manner, as confronted by the outcomes of the Coronavirus on most of the world networks, there is a need to again restore an elective power which might resemble the NAM, reboot the United Nations Organisation and reclassify worldwide security.

(*The writer is Assistant Professor, JNU*)

Virus pushing US ties to brink of 'Cold War': China

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Sunday accused the US of pushing the bilateral ties to the brink of a "new Cold War" by spreading "lies" about the coronavirus and said it was open to international efforts to identify the source of the virus that has killed over 3,00,000 people globally.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi also said the lawsuits filed against China in the US demanding compensation for Covid-19 is an attempt to blackmail a victim with fabricated evidence.

Under constant attack from US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over the origin of the coronavirus and failure to provide timely information, Wang launched a broadside against Washington in his annual Press conference. He accused American politicians of spreading "political virus" to smear China.

"It is the most regrettable that while the coronavirus is still out there, a 'political virus' is also spreading in the US and jumping at any opportunity to attack and slander China," he said in a video media conference on the sidelines of China's annual session of the National People's Conference (NPC).

"Some political forces in the US are taking China-US relations hostage and pushing our two countries to the brink of a new Cold War," Wang said.

Some politicians ignored the basic facts and made up countless lies and conspiracy theories concerning China.

"The longer the list, the more it says about how low the rumour-mongers are willing to go and the more stains they will leave in history," Wang, who is also the State Councillor, said.

He was scathingly critical of especially the lawsuits against China. A lawsuit was filed by Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt against the Chinese government, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), and other Chinese officials and institutions in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

It alleges that during the critical weeks of the initial coronavirus outbreak, the Chinese authorities deceived the public, suppressed crucial information, arrested whistleblowers, destroyed critical medical research and permitted millions of people to be exposed to the virus, causing a global pandemic that was unnecessary and preventable.

Observers say the Missouri lawsuit could pose a problem to China given the US courts' claim of universal jurisdiction.

Asked whether Beijing is concerned that China's overseas assets could be seized, Wang said "some people are clamouring for so-called accountability and compensation from a victim of Covid-19.

"They are fabricating so-called evidence for frivolous lawsuits. These people are tramping on international rule of law and betraying human conscience," he said.

"If anybody thought they could use some ludicrous lawsuits to undermine China's sovereignty and dignity to deprive the Chinese people their hard-won gains they will be daydreaming and bring disgrace to themselves," he said.

He also struck a reconciliatory note saying that both the US and China should work together.

The Covid-19 pandemic is the common enemy of China and the US and it is the shared wish of the people of the two nations to support and help each other.

China and the US should share the experience of the epidemic fight and learn from each other to boost their respective responses, Wang said.

He said China is open to joint efforts by the international science community to identify the source of the virus, which originated from the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December. He said the process must be professional, impartial and constructive.

By being "professional," it means that the process should be based on science, led by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and conducted on a global scale by scientists and medical experts.

Coronavirus unleashed by China: Trump's aide

Washington: The deadly coronavirus was unleashed by China to the rest of the world and there has been a massive cover up by Beijing, US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said on Sunday.

President Donald Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have repeatedly said they suspect the novel coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan was somehow released from a laboratory in China.

"This was a virus that was unleashed by China. There was a coverup that someday they're going to do an HBO show like they did with Chernobyl on this virus," O'Brien told 'Face the Nation' Sunday talk show of the *CBS News*.

When asked whether he was accusing the Chinese government as a whole or local officials of a coverup, O'Brien said, "We don't know, because they kicked out all reporters and they wouldn't let investigators come in and they're still stonewalling investigators." ***PTI***

Around the Globe

- *The New York Times* has devoted its entire front page to the names of 1,000 of the Covid-19 victims as the US approaches nearly 1,00,000 virus deaths, the current highest in the world. The Sunday edition's front page comprises a simple list of names and personal details taken from obituaries around the US, the BBC reported. The headline is "US deaths near 1,00,000, an incalculable loss", with a sub-heading that reads: "They were not simply names on a list. They were us."
- China has reported 39 new coronavirus cases, including 36 asymptomatic patients — majority of them from Covid-19 epicentre Hubei province and its capital Wuhan, health officials said on Sunday. Of the three confirmed coronavirus patients, one is locally transmitted infection and two are imported cases, China's National Health Commission (NHC) said. The domestically transmitted case was reported in Jilin Province, it said.
- Six million Australians have downloaded a mobile phone app that helps health authorities trace coronavirus infections, officials said Sunday. Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said the COVIDSafe app is playing a strong role in Australia's response to the pandemic and several countries have expressed interest in learning from its positive impacts. If a user is diagnosed, the app works to identify other users who have been in close proximity for 15 minutes or more in the previous three weeks.
- South Korea has reported 25 additional cases of the coronavirus over a 24-hour period, amid a continuation of small-scale outbreaks in the country. The Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention says the additional figures released Sunday took the country's total to 11,190 with 266 deaths. The agency says 10,213 of them have recovered and been released from quarantine.
- Pakistan recorded 32 coronavirus-related deaths during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of fatalities in the country to 1,133, the health ministry said on Sunday. The total number of patients also jumped to 54,601.
- There is currently insufficient scientific evidence to show that vitamin D can be beneficial in preventing or treating Covid-19, scientists say, warning against health risk due to high doses of supplementation. Following unverified reports that high doses of vitamin D could reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19, scientists, including those from the University of Manchester in the UK, assessed current scientific evidence base on the vitamin's use in treating infections.

Eid celebrated amid curfews, virus fears

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Muslims around the world on Sunday began celebrating Eid al-Fitr, a normally festive holiday marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, with millions under strict stay-at-home orders and many fearing renewed coronavirus outbreaks.

The three-day holiday is usually a time of travel, family get-togethers and lavish daytime feasts after weeks of dawn-to-dusk fasting. But this year many of the world's 1.8 billion Muslims will have to pray at home and make due with video calls. Some countries, including Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, have imposed round-the-clock holiday curfews. But even where many restrictions have been lifted, celebrations will be subdued because of fears of the pandemic and its economic fallout.

Saudi Arabia, home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, is under a complete lockdown, with residents only permitted to leave their homes to purchase food and medicine.

In Jerusalem, Israeli police said they broke up an "illegal demonstration" and arrested two people outside the Al-Aqsa mosque, which Muslim authorities have closed for prayers since mid-March and will not reopen until after the holiday. Worshippers who tried to enter the compound scuffled with the police.

Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam and would ordinarily welcome tens of thousands of worshippers during the Eid. The hilltop compound is also the holiest site for Jews, who know it as the Temple Mount. The site has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Iran, which is battling the deadliest outbreak in the Middle East, allowed communal prayers at some mosques but cancelled the annual mass Eid prayers in Tehran led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran has reported over 130,000 cases and more than 7,000 deaths.

The virus causes mild to moderate flu-like symptoms in most patients, who recover within two to three weeks. But it is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death, particularly in older patients or those with underlying health conditions.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, has reported nearly 22,000 infections and 1,350 fatalities, the most in Southeast Asia. Lockdown orders intended to contain the pandemic mean there will be no congregational prayers at mosques or even open fields, no family reunions, no relatives bearing gifts for children.

"This outbreak is not just dampening spirits of Eid, but also has made the tradition entirely different," said Andieka Rabbani, a university student in Jakarta. This year, like many Indonesians, he will only see family and friends through video calls.

In neighboring Muslim-majority Malaysia, businesses have mostly reopened after weeks of lockdown. But mass gatherings are still banned and people are not allowed to travel back to their hometowns for the holiday. Police have turned away more than 5,000 cars and have warned of strict penalties for those who try to sneak home. Malaysians are only allowed to visit relatives who live nearby, and only on Sunday, with gatherings limited to 20 people. Mosques have reopened but are limited to small congregations of up to 30. Malaysia has reported 7,185 infections and 115 deaths.

Rohaizam Zainuddin said he felt blessed he could celebrate Eid with his elderly parents living nearby, but his sister in another state could not return home.

"We are frustrated that celebration this year is not the same," he said. "But there is no point getting angry. We just have to accept it, life goes on."

He and his family members are still wearing new clothes and preparing traditional dishes. Plates of cookies are set out for any visitors, alongside a thermometer and hand sanitizer.

In Pakistan, Eid is being celebrated in the shadow of the coronavirus and in the wake of a passenger plane crash near Karachi on Friday that killed 97 people.

For the first time, Pakistan is celebrating Eid countrywide on the same day, ending an annual controversy between rival committees over the moon sighting that signals the start of the holiday.

Pakistan has taken measures to control the spread of the coronavirus since mid-March, but Prime Minister Imran Khan refused to close mosques during Ramadan despite pleas from doctors and a rising number of infections. Pakistan has reported more than 52,000 cases and more than 1,100 deaths.

More than 1,000 worshippers gathered and prayed shoulder-to-shoulder in an open field in Karachi on Sunday, with only a few of them wearing masks.

In neighboring Afghanistan, the government and Taliban insurgents announced a three-day ceasefire in honor of the holiday.

Some 2,000 Muslims gathered for Eid al-Fitr prayers Sunday at a sports complex in the Paris suburb of Levallois-Perret, carefully spaced apart and wearing masks, according to France-Info radio. Traditional embraces were not allowed.

France is allowing religious services to resume for the first time since March, but France's leading Muslim organization, CFCM, advised mosques to stay closed Sunday. The CFCM said the government decree didn't give mosques enough time to procure masks and hand gel to ensure that gatherings don't turn into super-spreading events.

COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES	TOTAL DEATHS
USA	1,675,880	99,003
Brazil	3,52,523	22,288
Russia	3,44,481	3,541
Spain	2,82,370	28,678
UK	2,59,559	36,793
Italy	2,29,858	32,785
France	1,82,469	28,332
Germany	1,80,153	8,371

NUMBER OF CASES ON DECLINE IN US: TRUMP

Washington: The number of COVID-19 cases and related fatalities in the US is coming down, US President Donald Trump said on Sunday, even as the country inched closer to the grim milestone of 1,00,000 deaths from the deadly coronavirus. The President's tweet comes days after White House coronavirus response coordinator Dr Deborah Birx said that there has been over a 50 per cent decline in new hospitalisations. ***PTI***

Study: Age, male sex, underlying illness validated as risk factors for death due to Covid

London: Age, male sex, and underlying illnesses like diabetes have emerged as risk factors for death due to novel coronavirus infection, according to a large cohort study which can help health professionals learn more about how the Covid-19 illness progresses. According to the study, published in the BMJ, the risk of death increases in people above the age of 50, as does being being male, obese, or having underlying heart, lung, liver and kidney disease.

In this largest prospective observational study reported to date, the scientists, including those from the University of Liverpool in the UK, noted the characteristics of patients hospitalised in the UK with Covid-19, and their outcomes.

At the time of publishing the study, the scientists said the study had recruited over 43,000 patients. While earlier studies had reported the risk factors associated with severe Covid-19 based on reports from China, the researchers said an understanding of features of patients in other parts of the world are lacking.

To address this knowledge gap, the scientists said they analysed data from 20,133 patients with COVID-19 admitted to 208 acute care hospitals in England, Wales, and Scotland between 6 February and 19 April 2020. ***PTI***

Wuhan lab had 3 live bat coronaviruses, none matched Covid: Report

AFP ■ BEIJING

The Chinese virology institute in the city where Covid-19 first emerged has three live strains of bat coronavirus on-site, but none match the new contagion wreaking chaos across the world, its director has said.

Scientists think Covid-19 — which first emerged in Wuhan and has killed some 3,40,000 people worldwide — originated in bats and could have been transmitted to people via another mammal.

But the director of the Wuhan Institute of Virology told state broadcaster CGTN that claims made by US President Donald Trump and others that the virus could have leaked from the facility were "pure fabrication".

In the interview filmed on May 13 but broadcast on Saturday night, Wang Yanyi said the centre has "isolated and obtained some coronaviruses from bats."

"Now we have three strains of live viruses... But their highest similarity to SARS-CoV-2 only reaches 79.8 percent," she said, referring to the coronavirus strain that causes Covid-19.

One of their research teams, led by Professor Shi Zhengli, has been researching bat coronaviruses since 2004 and focused on the "source tracing of SARS", the strain behind another virus outbreak nearly two decades ago.

"We know that the whole genome of SARS-CoV-2 is only 80 percent similar to that of SARS. It's an obvious difference," she said.

"So, in Professor Shi's past research, they didn't pay attention to such viruses which are less similar to the SARS virus."

Conspiracy rumours that the biosafety lab was involved in the outbreak swirled online for months before Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo brought the theory into the mainstream by claiming that there is evidence the pathogen came from the institute.

The lab has said it received samples of the then-unknown virus on December 30, determined the viral genome sequence on January 2 and submitted information on the pathogen to the WHO on January 11.

Wang said in the interview that before it received samples in December, their team had never "encountered, researched or kept the virus."

PAK PLANE CRASH

Pilot, air traffic team's role under probe: Reports

Karachi: A preliminary report on the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash, in which 97 people were killed, has raised serious questions about the pilot's handling of the aircraft and what prevented the crew in the cockpit from informing the air traffic controllers about the troubles.

Pakistani investigators are trying to find out if the crash of the national flag carrier's flight PK-8303 is attributable to a pilot error or a technical glitch, with new leads raising fresh questions over the circumstances of the incident, Geo News reported. ***PTI***

Kim holds meet to discuss bolstering nuke forces

Seoul: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un convened a key military meeting to discuss bolstering its nuclear arsenal and putting the country's strategic armed forces on a high alert, state media reported, in his first known public appearance in about 20 days. In early May, Kim quelled intense rumours about his health by attending a ceremony marking the completion of a fertiliser factory in his first public activities in 20 days. But he hadn't again made any follow-up public appearance in about another 20 days until the state news agency said he led a meeting of Central Military Commission of ruling Workers' Party. ***AP***

Hong Kong police fire teargas, water cannon at protesters

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong police fired tear gas and a water cannon at protesters in a popular shopping district Sunday, as thousands took to the streets to march against China's move to impose national security legislation on the city.

Pro-democracy supporters have sharply criticized a proposal, set to be approved by China's rubber-stamp parliament this week, that would ban secessionist and subversive activity, as well as foreign interference, in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The pro-democracy camp says the proposal goes against the "one country, two systems" framework that promises Hong Kong freedoms not found in mainland China. Crowds of demonstrators dressed in black gathered in the Causeway Bay district on Sunday, chanting slogans such as "Stand with Hong Kong," "Liberate Hong Kong" and "Revolution of our times."

The protest was a continuation of a monthslong pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong that began last year and has at times descended into violence between police and protesters. Police raised blue flags, warning protesters to disperse, before firing multiple rounds of tear gas. They later fired a water cannon at the demonstrators.

At least 180 people were arrested, mostly on charges of unlawful assembly, police said.

They also said that some of the protesters threw bricks and splashed unidentified liquid at officers, injuring at least four members of the police media liaison team. They warned that such behavior is against the law and that police would pursue the matter.

Trump's pitch to voters: Trust me, economy will soar in 2021

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has a new pitch to voters for this fall: Trust me.

As the economy faces a once-in-a-century recession, with more than 38 million people out of work, Trump is increasingly talking up a future recovery that probably won't materialize until after the November election. He's asking voters to look past the pain being felt across the nation and give him another four-year term on the promise of an economic comeback in 2021.

"It's a transition to greatness," Trump says over and over, predicting a burgeoning economy come the fall. "You're going to see some great numbers in the fourth quarter, and you're going to end up doing a great year next year."

His chief economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, echoes the wait-until-next-year sentiment, holding out hope for a "big bang 2021." It's a delayed-reward tactic Trump was using long before the global pandemic gut-punched the country. He has turned to it with new urgency as the coronavirus has robbed him of the booming economy that was to be the core of his reelection message.

Trump had already pledged to finally release a Republican health care plan after the polls closed — despite having served more than three years in office — along with a postelection tax cut and a "Phase 2" trade deal with China. Now, Trump is making the case to voters that if he helped bolster the economy once, he can do it again.

"We built the greatest economy in the world," Trump says frequently. "I'll do it a second time."

NETANYAHU LASHES OUT AT 'LUDICROUS' GRAFT CHARGES AMID TRIAL

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived at a Jerusalem court for the start of his long-delayed corruption trial, rejecting the "ludicrous" charges against him and declaring he was facing the hearing "with my head held high."

The veteran premier, who has just forged a unity government after over a year of political turmoil, now faces the next challenge — being the country's first premier to face criminal charges while in office.

Flanked by ministers and bodyguards, PM Netanyahu addressed reporters before entering the Jerusalem District Court where he was to face charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. ***AFP***

1ST IRANIAN SHIP REACHES VENEZUELA WITH NO SIGN OF US THREAT

Caracas: The first of five tankers loaded with gasoline sent from Iran reached Venezuelan waters on late Saturday, expected to temporarily ease the South American nation's fuel crunch while defying Trump administration sanctions targeting the two US foes. The oil tanker Fortune encountered no immediate signs of US interference as it eased through Caribbean waters toward the Venezuelan coast and Venezuelan officials celebrated the arrival. ***AP***

Biden wins Hawaii presidential primary delayed by virus

Honolulu: Joe Biden won the Democratic Party of Hawaii's party-run presidential primary on Saturday, which was delayed by more than a month because of the coronavirus.

Biden defeated Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders 63 per cent to 37 per cent.

Biden won 16 of Hawaii's delegates and Sanders will take eight. Biden has a total of 1,566 delegates to the party's national convention, according to the count by the *Associated Press*. He needs 1,991 delegates to win the nomination, a threshold he is projected to reach in June.

A total of 35,044 voters cast ballots in the party-run primary. All ballots were cast by mail.

The party had initially planned to hold the primary on April 4 and had expected most party members would vote by mail and some would cast ballots at about 20 in-person polling sites around the state. ***AP***

Af, Taliban announce 3-day Eid ceasefire

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban announced a three-day ceasefire during the Eid al-Fitr holiday starting Sunday in a surprise move following months of bloody fighting with Afghan forces after the group signed a landmark agreement with the United States.

President Ashraf Ghani swiftly welcomed the insurgents' offer and ordered his forces to also comply, while the US envoy to Afghanistan hailed the deal as a "momentous opportunity."

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement posted on social media that the group's "leadership instructs all the mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate to take special measures for security of the countrymen, and conduct no offensive operation against the enemy anywhere."

SpaceX's 1st astronaut launch breaking new ground for style

AP ■ CAPE CANAVERAL

The first astronauts launched by SpaceX are breaking new ground for style with hip spacesuits, gull-wing Teslas and a sleek rocketship — all of it white with black trim.

The color coordinating is thanks to Elon Musk, the driving force behind both SpaceX and Tesla, and a big fan of flash and science fiction.

NASA astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken like the fresh new look.

They'll catch a ride to the launch pad in a Tesla Model X electric car.

"It is really neat, and I think the biggest testament to that is my 10-year-old son telling me how cool I am now," Hurley told The Associated Press.

"SpaceX has gone all out" on the capsule's appearance, he said. "And they've worked equally as hard to make the innards and the displays and everything else in the vehicle work to perfection."

The true test comes Wednesday when Hurley and Behnken climb aboard a SpaceX Dragon capsule atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and, equipment and weather permitting, shoot into space. It will be the first astronaut launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center since the last shuttle flight in 2011.

It will also mark the first attempt by a private company to send astronauts into orbit. Only Governments — Russia, the US and China — have done that.

FLOOR PRICE

Telcos approach Trai seeking early decision on issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom players have urged regulator Trai to move forward quickly on the issue of fixing floor price for tariffs, saying the matter is imperative to ensure that the sector is sustainable and in a position to bear the deferred spectrum and AGR dues.

Notwithstanding the nudge from the industry, a latest report by ICICI Securities has said that any huge tariff hike is unlikely for at least a quarter or two. "Tariff hike is unlikely before recommendation on floor price, as any suo moto tariff hike may work against telecom operators for policy intervention. We do not see any huge tariff hike for at least a quarter or two," ICICI Securities said in a report on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) — whose members include Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Jio — has written to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) seeking an open house discussion on the issue "at the earliest".

"Given the financial pressure on the sector and the fact that ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) and tariffs of the Indian telecom sector are the lowest in the world, floor pricing is imperative to ensure that the sector is sustainable, and is in a position to bear the deferred spectrum and AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) dues, while continuing to invest in world class networks and services," COAI said in its letter to Trai Chairman R S Sharma.

The association said the industry looks forward to an early decision by the authority on having floor tariffs for data services.

"While, we acknowledge that the recent situation on account of COVID-19 might have caused some constraints, however the Authority has started conducting the OHD (open house discussion) through online process on various other topics. Accordingly, we request the Authority to kindly hold an OHD on this issue at the earliest," COAI said.

The industry is looking forward to an early conclusion on this important matter with great interest, COAI said, urging Trai for an early decision on the same.

Notably, the regulator had earlier this month, resumed its customary open house discussion (OHD) on pending matters through video-conference but Trai sources had made it clear that the issue of floor price of tariffs is unlikely to be taken up via online mode for now, till the ongoing situation arising from COVID-19 pandemic stabilises.Given the coronavirus pandemic and the difficulties faced by people, Trai may wait for the situation to stabilise before it proceeds to the OHD stage on floor price issue, a source had said.

Recently, Bharti Airtel CEO, India and South Asia, Gopal Vittal in an earnings call drew attention to the pending floor price issue, saying while the telecom industry has seen some bit of repair, tariffs continue to be "unsustainably low". He exhorted the sector regulator to address the floor price issue "sooner than later".

"We believe that an ARPU of ₹154 is inadequate to turn a reasonable return on capital as a company and remain hopeful that ARPUs will get to ₹ 200 in the short term and eventually to ₹300 which is where it should be for a business like ours.

"Of course, even at this level of ARPU we believe we will be very well placed to serve all the lower-end customers who may have the capacity to pay ₹100 or less," Vittal had said. Airtel said the full impact of the tariff hike undertaken in December 2019 came through in its entirety with no downtrading.

India's retail trade lost business worth ₹9 lakh cr in last 60 days, says CAIT

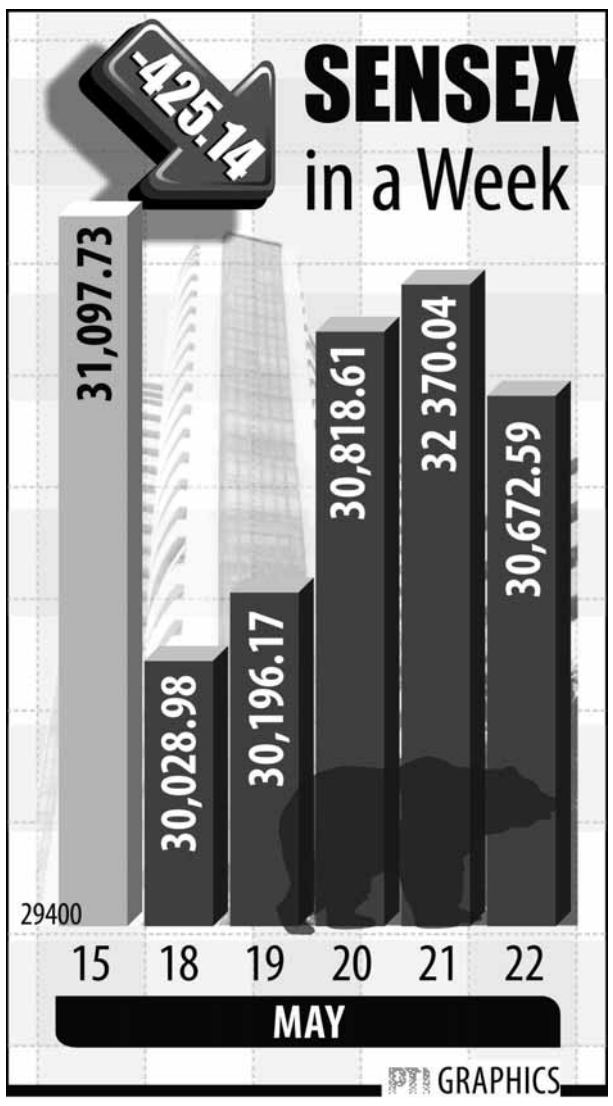
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's retail trade lost business worth ₹9 lakh crore in the last 60 days, mainly due to the nationwide lockdown to contain coronavirus pandemic, trader's body CAIT said on Sunday.

Confederation of All India Traders said domestic trade is facing its worst period as shops and commercial markets across the country since last Monday could register only about 5 per cent of business, and only 8 per cent of workforce could resume their duties in shops after migration of about 80 per cent employees to their native places.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said during the span of 60 days of national lockdown, domestic trade has lost a business to the tune of about ₹9 lakh cr, causing a revenue loss of about ₹1.5 lakh cr to both the central and State Govts on account of GST.

The traders are facing acute financial crunch, and in absence of any policy support from the Government, they are worried about future of their business, he said.



CII asks companies to comply with competition law amid Covid crisis

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

As businesses and enterprises face a severe crisis amid the coronavirus pandemic, industry body CII has cautioned that although tough times may prompt companies to collaborate with their competitors, they must take decisions and operate as per the anti-trust law and the Competition Act of 2002.

In its competition law compliance manual for corporates in the wake of novel coronavirus, CII noted that the Competition Commission of India (CCI) would keep a close watch for any potential competition law infringement during this period.

"The current COVID-19 crisis has created unprecedented challenges in India and across the world. This impact of COVID-19 on the functioning of the economy may prompt companies to collaborate with their competitors to tackle the uncertainty and hardship faced. However, companies must note that antitrust laws continue to apply and all business decisions undertaken by companies must not fall foul of the provisions of Competition Act, 2002," said the industry manual.

It said that companies must carefully evaluate their business operations during the COVID-19 period, especially if their business operations might require close collaboration with competitors.

"The concrete antitrust risks surrounding any such collaboration remain difficult to assess. Given the absence of any guidance from the CCI, companies should tread with caution and consult their antitrust lawyers as and when required or while exploring any collaboration," the CII manual said.

It said that companies should reach out to their external counsel to assess these risks and must avoid information exchanges through trade associations or any other platforms.

It said that while entering into any form of collaboration, companies should take care that the collaborative efforts must be limited to products or services directly affected by the pandemic or the exigency measures.

Construction industry seeks immediate release of pending dues from Govt agencies

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As the ongoing lockdown has severely impacted infrastructure activities across the country, liquidity starved engineering and construction industry is seeking immediate release of long pending dues from the central and State Government agencies.

According to industry players, release of these dues, most of which are stuck in arbitration and run into thousands of crores of rupees, would bring in immediate liquidity in the current COVID crisis scenario, rather than the ₹20 lakh crore economic stimulus package announced recently.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently announced a stimulus package of ₹20 lakh crore, or 10 per cent of the GDP, in five tranches to give a boost to the economy which will be in the negative territory for the current fiscal.

"Funding of construction projects will be instrumental in helping revive the economy as infrastructure investment has the highest GDP multiplier factor, almost 2.0x, and our industry is among the largest employment generators impacting seven crore households. Risk aversion by financial institutions to infrastructure was prevalent pre-COVID, and has now worsened," HCC Director and Group CEO Arjun Dhawan told PTI.

He further said that contract enforcement and timely dispute resolution is the bedrock of free enterprise and while we all hope for swifter conciliation or court proceedings, an immediate solution is the unqualified payment of arbitration dues without repeated challenge in courts or the onerous requirement of bank guarantees.

"This immediate liquidity will repay lenders, unlock supply chains, protect thousands of MSMEs including migrant labour while restarting the profit cycle that will trigger our economic revival," he added. National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) alone has at least 180 cases in arbitration involving a sum of about ₹ 80,000 crore.

The agency has been holding dialogues (with contractors and industry players) to find resolution to disputes through reconciliation.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India has also slashed the repo rate by 40 basis points in eighth straight cut and also allowed lenders to extend an ongoing moratorium on loan repayment, which was due to end on May 31, by another three months till August 31, a move intended at easing liquidity pressure.

"These initiatives will boost liquidity subsequently as the clients or customers can avail credit, but eventually it would be spent on project execution. The policy announced relaxation in time limits for infra projects, but is silent on who would bear the cost implications of lockdown. Once lockdown ends, we expect more clarity and that would put to rest this debate," Tata Projects Chief Strategy Officer Himanshu Chaturvedi said.

Echoing similar views, global professional services firm Alvarez & Marsal Managing Director Venkataraman Renganathan opined that the stimulus package is a step in the right direction and is intended to infuse liquidity into the system, however, it is a credit line.

"In a way, the stimulus package will get in the liquidity for projects which have been stranded for money.

Need to convert development into mass movement: Niti Aayog's Rajiv Kumar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There is a need to convert development into mass movement, and India should aspire to become second or third largest economy in the world by 2047, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Sunday.

Addressing a webinar organised by Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, Kumar pointed out that private sector investment is necessary for the economic growth of India.

"Today we need to convert development into Jan Andolan (mass movement)... India should aspire to become second or third largest economy by 2047," Niti Aayog Vice Chairman said. Presently, India is the fifth largest economy in the world. Kumar also said if India generates enough employment opportunities then economic growth will happen.

He pointed out that COVID-19 pandemic has shown weaknesses of Indian society.

"80 per cent of our workers are below the radar, we don't have data about them.

Gold imports dip for fifth consecutive month in April

Fall by almost 100%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's gold imports contracted for the fifth consecutive month in a row, falling by about 100 per cent to USD 2.83 million in April due to the lockdowns imposed globally on account of coronavrius outbreak.

The import of the yellow metal stood at USD 3.97 billion in April 2019, according to the commerce ministry's data.

The decline in gold imports has helped in narrowing the country's trade deficit to USD 6.8 billion during the last month as against USD 15.33 billion a year ago.

Gold imports have been recording negative growth since December last year.

India is the largest importer of gold, which mainly caters to the demand of jewellery industry.In volume terms, the country imports 800-900 tonnes of gold annually. Gems and jewellery exports declined 98.74 per cent to USD 36 million in April.

AWS driving Netflix, Fortnite, Zoom entertain and empower millions at home

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

As you stream your favourite movies or TV series on Netflix, Disney Plus or Hulu, or connect with your team via video meet app Zoom, leading Cloud service provider Amazon Web Services (AWS) in the backdrop is ensuring seamless, scalable and secure connectivity to help people at home and organisations function while they can't operate normally at work.

According to AWS CEO Andy Jassy, a lot of things that are allowing humanity to deal with the global health crisis run on top of AWS which is Amazon's Cloud arm and topped $10 billion in quarterly revenue for the first time in the January-March period.

"We're just trying to help our customers in various areas. If you look at Netflix, it runs completely on top of AWS. So does Disney Plus. Hulu runs on AWS. Prime Video runs on AWS. All those entertainment pieces have kind of made time go by," Jassy said during a fireside chat at AWS Online Summit recently.

"Fortnite runs on top of AWS, and so does Sony PlayStation. A lot of other popular games too," he infomed.The popular Battle Royale game Fortnite has gained 350 million registered players, who in April collectively spent over 3.2 billion hours in the game.According to Jassy, AWS has its own video-conferencing service in Chime.

"But a lot of people use Zoom, and the vast majority of Zoom's cloud infrastructure runs on AWS and will for the foreseeable future," he said.

Amazon Chime Voice Connector is a service that enables enterprises to migrate their telephony workloads to AWS.

If you have kids at home, you also realise they're all doing e-learning at the moment. "If you just look at companies like Blackboard and Instructure's Canvas, which run on top of AWS.

THAKUR TO INDIA INC

Take advantage of Govt initiatives and step up investment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur has exhorted India Inc to take advantage of the recent Government initiatives and step up investments to make the country ''Atmanirbhar Bharat". In these difficult times, local industries should become the flag-bearers in showcasing that India is an attractive investment destination, he told PTI in an interview.

As part of ₹20.97 lakh crore Atmanirbhar Bharat package, Thakur said Govt has announced a slew of long-pending structural reforms concerning industry, especially land, labour and laws, in a bid to improve investment climate and ease of doing business.

Besides, the Minister said other bold reforms announced, including easing of limits on foreign direct investment in defence manufacturing, privatisation of six more airports, and allowing private sector in commercial coal mining, provide newer avenues for investment.

To take care of liquidity needs, various schemes have been unveiled to provide cash to industries to kickstart their business, he said.

"I personally believe that we need more investment from local industries, Indian industries to showcase to others that India is an attractive destination. We need both investment from the domestic industries, and also from other countries," he said.

Talking about new avenues for investment, the Minister said, "Agriculture, agro exports, manufacturing of defence equipment within the country and making it a hub for exports. Also, the area of space where you (private players) can get more investment and mining of coal and other mineral sectors could be looked at. So, there could be many sectors."

Wholesale vegetable prices fall sharply by up to 60% during lockdown

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale prices of tomato, onion and other key seasonal vegetables have declined sharply by up to 60 per cent across the country, mainly due to higher production, compression of demand and market disruption amid COVID-19 crisis.

However, the retail prices of most vegetables remain firm. According to data maintained by AGMARKNET under the Union Agriculture Ministry, the wholesale tomato prices were ruling below ₹5 per kg in some states on May 24, while that of onion to ₹ 6 per kg in the key producing state of Maharashtra. However, potato prices were stable at 12-13 per kg.

Tomato, onion and potato are three key largely consuming vegetables in the country. The falling price trend was also seen in other vegetables such as ladies finger, capsicum, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, chillies and coriander leaves, among others.

"It is a matter of concern that farmers are forced to sell at such low prices," Government think-tank Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand told PTI.

He said the fall in rates is due to an increase in arrival due to better crop production besides mandi disruption in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Chand, however, ruled out the impact of lack of demand from bulk users like hotels and restaurants.

Since mandis come under the purview of states, the Niti Aayog member

said they should step up efforts to ensure smooth functioning of wholesale markets. If they are not able to operate due to social distancing and COVID-19 reasons, other arrangements should be made to ensure farmers do not suffer.

"Mandis are not working as usual. Maybe traders are not coming to markets. For instance Azadpur mandi in Delhi was closed for a few days due to COVID-19 reasons. There is impact on prices due to such disruptions," he said.

Chand said he had suggested states in the beginning of COVID-19 crisis to suspend mandis for six months which not many states have done yet. Farmers should have been allowed to sell directly.

Stating that demand for vegetables has compressed in this crisis period, agri-economist Ashok Gulati said the demand from bulk users like hotels and restaurants is missing. Even households are not buying in huge quantities because of fear of infection.

"After reports of traders in some mandis had got infected with the virus, there is fear among household consumers about the quality of vegetables. They find cleaning it everytime is a big hassle and therefore shifting to pulses, whose prices have shot up sharply due to rise in demand," he explained.

Gulati said it is sad to see the government's TOP scheme under Operation Green has not been of much help to farmers in this situation. The Government has spent only ₹3 crore out of₹ 500 crore since its launch two years ago under the plan, whose objective is to help tomato, onion and potato (TOP) farmers in times of surplus output.

71% prefer domestic travel, only 1.4% wish to go abroad

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

A survey by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has shown that around 71 per cent people in the country would prefer domestic travel in the coming months, while only 1.4 per cent people wanted to travel abroad.

However, the report showed that 27.6 per cent respondents in the survey would like to travel both in India and abroad.

Around 33.3 per cent respondents said that they would like to travel within one month of the lockdown restrictions being lifted. Another 30.5 per cent said that they would travel within 3 months.

As per the survey which was conducted in north India, around 29 per cent people would like to travel within six months of the curbs being eased and just 7.1 per cent would venture out more than 1 year after the lockdown.

Further, business travel and outing with family are the two biggest reasons for travel. The two reasons account for over two-thirds of responses.

Star-rated hotels are the most preferred place of stay for respondents, as 45.2 per cent preferring them. Around 21 per cent have shown preference for staying in resorts.Use of protective gear comes across as the most important precaution that tourists would like to take during travel with Aarogya Setu app being the preferred choice of around one-fifth of respondents.Stressing on the impact of the lockdown on the tourism sector and the need for government support, Nikhil Sawhney, Chairman, CII Northern Region, said: "Given the nature of the tourism sector, it is first to be impacted and last to recover.

The sector generates mass employment, even in remote areas, and it is critical that the Govt looks at the package to cover the tourism and hospitality sector under various policies announced".

Agro-Advisory to jute farmers in post-Amphan scenario by ICAR-CRIJAF

NEW DELHI

Jute is the important cash crop in eastern India, particularly in West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Assam and about 5 million people are directly or indirectly depends on jute crop for their livelihood.

Amidst COVID-19 crisis, jute was successfully grown in about 7.5 million ha in this season of 2020 pre-kharifsuccessfully. Even in some states 10-15% more crop area was reported by field functionaries. But the recent 'very severe cyclone' "Amphan" with wind speeds of 155 kmph and 200 to 230 mm rainfall have devastated the jute crop in some parts of North 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Nadia, Murshidabad, East Midnapur and Howrah districts of West Bengal which are main jute growing belt of West Bengal. The cyclone severely affected the standing jute crop by lodging,specially that attains a height of 0.5 to 1.5 mt.

Permission required to enter Chittaranjan Locomotive Works

Chittaranjan: As per notification of Govt. of West Bengal in the year 1971, No. 871-P dtd 06-02-1971 and of the Public Order dtd.06.02 .1971under the provisions of sections 2 (31), (2) 32,3, 144,146, and further to Railway Act , Chittaranjan township had been declared as Protected places and for entry and exit into the township prior permission of the concerned Security Officer will be required .This procedure are being followed since then. More over, in view of the current serious situation of COVID-19 pandemic , CLW administration is following strictly the recent guidelines of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt.of India and of Govt. of West Bengal by proper vigil and by deploying security personnel at various gates of this township to stop un authorise entry . Our efforts has lead to positive results and because of these strict measures, CLW township has so far, till the current Lockdown 4.0, not reported a single Corona positive case.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala - 147001,
Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in
E-Tender Enquiry No. 272/P-3/EMP-W 11703 dt. 19.05.2020 & Tender ID: 2020_POWER_47758_1
Scope of Work: Work of loading of material from transporter's godown /Railway Station, Loading/unloading, Checking, Counting and stacking of material at O&M stores, Shifting and Restacking of scrap material, preservation of material during storage, transfer of material from one Store Keeper to another Store Keeper and all other activities associated with handling of storage of material at GGSSTP, Rupnagar.
Time period: One year **EMD:** Rs. 50,000/- fixed
Date & time up to which tender shall be received 22.06.2020 & 11:00 AM
Date & time of opening of tender 25.06.2020 & 11:30 AM
Tender specification can only be downloaded from PSPCL website https://eproc.punjab.gov.in & no hard copy of the same will be issued by this office.
Note:
1) In case any difficulty regarding uploading of the tender the prospective bidders are requested to get clarification from this office and or e-procurement system Government of Punjab. Contact No.+91- (172)-2970263/284. It is also requested to get their digital signature well in time so as to submit tenders through e-tendering only.
2) It is informed that in case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on website. eproc.puniab.gov.in
RTP 22/2020
Dy. CE Monitoring,
GGSSTP, Rupnagar
Energy Saved is Energy Generated
Pay Electricity bill online 24x7on
PSPCL website: www.pspcl.in

Trend Blazer

'Definition of a heroine has evolved'

Actor **BHUMI PEDNEKAR** feels the definition of a heroine has changed, with the audience open to stories that they can relate to.

"All the films I have been a part of or the roles I have played are all so different from each other. They may have few overlapping similarities like for example my characters tell the stories of women in the heartlands," Bhumi said.

"I am proud of the cinema that I have done so far. It has helped me connect to my audience. In today's time the definition of a heroine has undergone change and evolved," she added.

'*Candle* showcases a glimpse of my journey so far, which has been full of surprises, struggles, celebrations and soul-searching. One thing that ties this journey together is love and hope that everything happens for the right reasons. I hope it motivates my fans burn brightly no matter what obstacles they face.'
—Madhuri Dixit

Actor **VARUN SHARMA,** popular as Choocha in the *Fukrey* films, is trying to expand his linguistic skills. He is learning Spanish during the lockdown.

"It is difficult to keep yourself busy all the time, so I thought why not use this time to explore a new skill. Hence, I am learning a new language. I always wanted to learn a new language and finally I got some time," Varun said.

He has also been learning painting with tips from his mother.

On the work front, Varun will be sharing screen space with Rajkummar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor in *Roohi Afzana*.

'I was anxious about giving birth'

Actor **AMERICA FERRERA** has admitted that she was very nervous and anxious about giving birth during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier this month, Ferrera, popular for her role in the show *Ugly Betty,* welcomed her second child, a daughter Lucia Marisol.

In an episode of *Katie's Crib* podcast, she confessed that she had to cut down on news intake during pregnancy in order to not panic.

"I just know I have to put up my filter because I don't have the emotional capacity to let that in," said she.

LIFE GOES ON

With the gradual opening up of offices amid lockdown 4.0, there are a number of precautions that we need to take to remain physically and psychologically healthy, says AYUSHI SHARMA

Undoubtedly, all of us have been going through a lot of stress these days. People tend to feel miserable because there are a host of uncertainties this pandemic holds. Someone might have lost a job or fears that they would, some are struggling to put together money to pay bills, a few of them are worried about their health and safety or that of their loved ones. The continuous onslaught of worry, fear and insecurity is certainly increasing mental health issues day by day. But how much more can you stop the world from moving? The economic damage from staying home could be worse than the impact of the disease, believe many global leaders. Yes, we are talking about learning to live with the virus.

Now, since the Centre has announced the opening of offices and industrial units amid lockdown 4.0, the major question here is — how can people psychologically and behaviourally rewire themselves while rejoining office? Experts share that it is very important that the guidelines are adopted in the community as a behavioural change.

The risk of returning to normal, as we knew it, is in no way possible. However, MBBS, MD, Psychiatrist, Dr Anuneet Sabharwal says, "The risk cannot be calculated. It is hard to get back into the routine of things when you first return to work but you can start by planning the day in advance and making a list of things that needs to done. Strategising your work and focussing on doing one task at a time might help you to feel in control. Once you start doing it, your natural work rhythm will fall back into place. And you can start to feel productive again."

According to the recent data, a significant and sustained increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression have been reported. People with pre-existing health conditions and aged adults have all reported higher rates of anxiety and fear, shares Ariba Abbasi, Senior Counseling Psychologist, Msc, BA. The pandemic has brought huge changes in our lifestyle. Niharika Mehta, Psychologist at Hiranandani Hopsital Vashi, a Fortis Network, tells us that new habits have to be adopted and conscious precautions have to be taken. Just as a new normal of different trends (such as diets, workout routines, fashion) are accepted, a new normal of work culture should be accepted as well. Being aware and accepting of change is the very first step towards adjusting to it, she feels.

Every other expert believe that psychologically people need to accept this as a new reality and take precautions on how to safe guard themselves. Ekta Soni, Chief Clinical Psychologist, suggests that we should focus on the things that are in our control — hand washing, using mask, sanitising and social distancing. "If we were to live constantly with insecurity and give fuel to our negative thoughts, then we would paralyse ourselves and not do anything. Eventually, things will snowball into a big mountain. Over a period of time, we will all develop our own safety measures and these would become habitual. The fear has led to the rise of catastrophising (view or present a situation as considerably worse than it actually is) and hypochondriacal (obsession with the idea of having a serious but undiagnosed medical condition) traits," she says.

As per official derivatives, provisions for thermal scanning and sanitisation are being done. But what precautions can be taken individually? Dr Anuneet shares some of these simple measures that can be taken in order to prevent contracting the virus: Understand the signs and symptoms: The symptoms can include cough, fever, cold or shortness of breath. Most people may only experience mild symptoms but some can become very sick with additional health issues. If you think you may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 and have symptoms, then get in touch with the emergency room immediately and inform them about your travel history as well. The best way to protect yourself is to practise good hygiene. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol based hand sanitiser. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose with unwashed hands. Maintain social distancing when you step out of home. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and places. It is highly recommended that people wear masks whenever stepping out of their homes, especially in situations where maintaining social distancing is difficult. You can use a tissue or a toothpick while touching the lift buttons. Make sure there is enough distance between you and your colleagues's seat. At lunchtime, eat at a distance from others.

The threat of disease can lead us to become harsher judges of the people within our social group. The social attitude of people have become more conservative. This may reflect much deeper psychological shifts. So what can be done? Dr Ekta feels that it is true that people may become more conservative but the mindset has to change from avoiding people to taking the above mentioned precautions ourselves. "People must realise that the fight is against the virus and not with each other. It is possible to win only if we all work together. It is important that people take responsibility for educating people in their social circles or extended families. Make sure to circulate right and verified information only," explains Dr Ariba.

These times are difficult for every single individual. Everyone is taking time to process the change and take care of their well-being. Compassion, empathy, and support will make it easier, believes Dr Niharika. She says, "If someone is taking time off from social media to disconnect or not responding to calls and messages, instead of dealing with it negatively, try to understand that the person needs time to focus on self. It has nothing to do with your relationship. This strengthens the bond and creates a sense of social security and support. It's extremely important, especially in the current situation," says she.

Certainly, the pandemic will still be there but life has to go on...

Hope, comfort and love

New parents should feel positive about having a child irrespective of the environment around. Experts suggest and share some tips to deal positively with the threat perception related to the new born. By TEAM VIVA

The thought of bringing the child into the world is filled with phases of happiness, fear and anxiety. It is difficult to imagine what new parents are going through in the post-COVID world.

It has affected the plans of new parents and expectant couples. Parenthood is a blessing and it is a priceless feeling when you welcome your baby for the first time into this world. Nothing can ever come close to this emotion.

But during this these times of crisis, when there is a threat perception related to the new born, the realities of parenthood have changed and this makes it important to ensure that positivity engulfs the new parents even more today.

The ad world too is taking note. Recently, Pampers India released a film #WelcomeToTheWorld for the newborn babies with reference to the current context. At a time when a new mother is experiencing emotional upheaval, it captures her strength and positive outlook for her baby and portrays the true essence of the new world that will unfold for her newborn with each step and each milestone.

Dr Archana Dhawan Bajaj, Gynecologists and Obstetrician and IVF Expert, Nurture IVF Centre says that the expectant couples need to understand that everyone who's in the hospital or is going through a checkup is not COVID positive. And even if you contract an infection, there are chances that it would be a mild infection and not something related to Corona."

This is a lot of threat perception related to the newborns. Dhanvarsha Dadhich from Jodhpur is expecting her second child. She says: "I am just so scared of carrying this baby. Not just delivery but taking care of the child has become a scary task. I fear stepping out of my room as my area is a Corona hotspot."

Dr Archana says that this is a new disease and there are very few studies related to it. So it would be difficult for anyone to comment on what would be the chances of a new born. "We just need to keep in mind the three portals of infection for the baby. First is the mother herself. So she needs to ensure that she maintains distance, use masks and take necessary relevant precautions. The other point of contact is the hospital where you deliver. Anybody who's about to deliver should choose their hospital very wisely. You should only deliver in a hospital which COVID tests all its pregnant women. Any good maternity will test the mother before taking her into the labour room. Try and avoid multi-speciality hospital where people from all kinds of ailments are likely to come. The general public has a higher chance of getting infected as compared to a pregnant woman because she is home bound and takes better care. The third place where the baby can get infected is when you are visiting a paediatrician. So ensure that you go only when it's really necessary. Consult through video conferences and for things like immunization, go only when your paediatrics tell you that it is urgent." Though are various drawbacks of video conferencing as there is never a replacement for seeing a doctor. Doctors cannot judge many diseases unless they physically see the patient. But then, any good doctor will tell you to come to them if they are not getting adequate information through video conferencing.

It is also very important to understand that this fear of Corona will only make you feel anxious. "It is going to stay for at least two years. Women, their families and extended families need to get out of this phobia. Pregnant women are entering hospitals like Eskimos. They are covered from head to toe. This heat will smother them. So this fear has to go," says Dr Archana.

Pointing towards the silver lining, she says that a lot of male partners will get the chance to look after their wives and babies which they wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. That's a plus. "Also, having a baby around this time gives you the opportunity to interact with him/her as you are homebound. If you are not stepping out and maintaining your quarantine, then your baby is not going to contract infections. In this scenario, other diseases that are specific to summer and would have occurred otherwise will also not happen," says she.

The new parents should follow all the necessary precautions — stay indoors, avoid meeting people or seeing vendors, don't get domestic helps who come daily, prefer the ones who stays within the house, eat well to increase your vitality, drink a lot water, keep exercising so that your lung capacity remains high, breathe fresh air, walk on your terrace or balcony. These are some of the little things one needs to take care of.

"Other than that being a new parent you have to condition yourself being positive irrespective of the environment around," says Dr Archana.

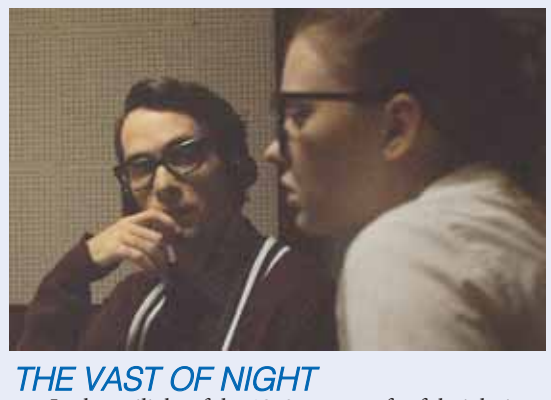
WEBBED

I'M NO LONGER HERE

A terrible misunderstanding with a local gang sends 17-year-old Ulises, leader of a group hooked on cumbia music, across the border to save his life. Starring Juan Daniel García, Angelina Chen and Jonathan Espinoza, the film releases on May 27 on Netflix.

SPACE FORCE

A four-star general begrudgingly teams up with an eccentric scientist to get the US military's newest agency — Space Force — ready for lift-off. Created by Steve Carell and Greg Daniels, season 1 releases on May 29 on Netflix.



THE VAST OF NIGHT

In the twilight of the 1950s, on one fateful night in New Mexico, a young switch board operator Fay and charismatic radio DJ Everett discover a strange audio frequency that could change their small town and the future forever. Directed by Andrew Patterson, the film releases on May 29 on Amazon Prime Video.

BLEND OF SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

Research during the last few decades has confirmed that yoga contributes to health and happiness of people. Filmmaker, art historian and photographer BENOY K BEHL explored the idea while shooting his latest film, *Yoga for Health & Global Harmony*

In the recent past, science and technology had been separated from spirituality. However, a lot of scientific research done in the last four decades has confirmed the far-reaching benefits of yoga and Ayurveda. The world is reaching out to integrate this ancient wisdom with the modern developments in medicine and psychology. While shooting my latest film, *Yoga for Health & Global Harmony,* Sujata Chatterji and I travelled across four continents and many countries to witness the marvellous blend of modern thinking and yoga which is taking place today. The deep connection between physical body, mind, emotions and spirit within us is being rediscovered around the globe.

Scientific research done in the last 30 to 40 years has confirmed the benefits of yoga. It has been found that it contributes to health and happiness of people in all walks of life. Further research needs to be done and yoga needs to be introduced in all branches of education, medicine and even in the workplace.

Yoga goes far beyond the medical system. It not only prevents disease but it covers all aspects of life. Integration of yoga and modern medicine would help the world to shift from disease management to health promotion.

In an interview in the film, Dr Ananda Balayogi from Puducherry, who is a yoga expert as well as a doctor shares, "Yoga has come a long way from the time when it was confined to the ashrams in the forests or the caves of the high Himalayas. It is now found in modern hospitals."

He says, "Genetic potentialities may be preventable from becoming actualities. Our genes are like a loaded gun but the choice of whether the trigger is pulled or not lies with us. Yoga enables us to make the right choice."

In next interview, Dr Andreas Michalsen from Charite University Hospital, Berlin, shares, "Step-by-step in the last few years, we see more acceptance of yoga in mainstream medicine. It means that it is now almost an established part of standard medical care in Germany."

Another Ayurveda and yoga expert, Ramesh Vangal from Bengaluru, India, explains that yoga's entire essence is a concept called samatvam, which means balance. "It's very logical, when you are balanced, your body heals daily. So balance is what restores and heals you in a way that no medicine does. Most allopathic medicines basically treat the symptoms. They provide symptomatic relief, they can never cure," says he.

For instance, Vangal tells us, "If I had diabetes and I am taking an allopathic medicine, what does it do? It cuts the symptoms but the moment I stop taking it, I get diabetes back again. However, if I am balanced, I am able to fight the imbalance and restore health." Anu Ramaswamy, Teachers Training Course Student, Sivananda Yoga Farm, Grass Valley CA, says in the next interview, "I have restless leg syndrome, it's also known as Willis-Ekbom Disease. It's a nerve neuromuscular pain in the leg and I have had it for about 15 to 20 years. Since it is a neuromuscular condition, the medicines are invasive and affect the nervous system. Meditation and pranayama actually helps me to keep the pain either in control or pretty much not experience it all. Also, I used to take the highest dose of sulfonylurea for diabetes till about six months ago, now I don't take it at all."

Yoga researcher and expert, Dr Sat Bir Khalsa, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, USA, says, "Modern medicine tends to be divided between psychiatry on the one hand and physical medicine on the other. The two really don't talk to each other, yet obviously the mind and body are inexplicably linked. So yoga addresses that link between mind and body."

SHE, THE FORCE

Women constables serving in Corona hotspots take huge risks to survive in difficult situations with courage and pride, says SHALU AGARWAL

Working at the Corona hotspots from morning till evening, women police constables have been walking on the line of fire since the beginning of the nation-wide lockdown. Their contribution must be recognised not just as public servants but as women who are taking care of the nation along with their children and families.

Standing under the sun in Harnaamdas area — one of the hotspots of Meerut, constable Latesh sanitises her hands and then brings her mask down to wipe the sweat dripping down her forehead. "I have two children. The schools are shut so I am a little relaxed about their safety. I reach home around nine at night, take a bath, cook dinner, help them in their studies, make preparations for the next day and then go to bed past midnight. To ensure that all the household chores are complete before I leave for my duty, I have to wake up at five," shared Latesh who, despite being worried about her health, puts duty first. The only thing she complains of is the lack of sanitation facilities. "Risk of contamination is higher in hotspot areas. In such a situation, where are we expected to relieve ourselves? There is no police station nearby where we could use the washroom. In its absence, we have to request people to allow us to enter their houses which increases our chances of exposure. We take huge risks to survive," she added.

Constable Meenu, who is also posted in a hotspot in Meerut shares the challenges posed by the 12-hour long duty. "After reaching home, I bathe and keep my uniform outside the house in a separate box. In this 12-hour duty, I do not get time to wash and iron my uniform every day and have to use the same uniform for two days," says she as she has to complete other household chores before and after the duty.

She believes that people are safe inside their houses and she puts in extra efforts to ensure that lockdown guidelines are being followed strictly in the areas assigned to her. "We eat while standing outside the gates of the affected colony so that people are safe," says she.

In another hotspot area of Meerut City, a woman constable Anita is seen scolding people for roaming unnecessarily on the streets. And then, the very next moment, she is video calling her toddler daughter and calming her down. She is serving the public for the last nine years. "We have to be strict as people do not understand the threat. We are standing here in a contaminated area risking our lives and people want to roam outside — I do not understand this," rues Anita, hinting towards the irresponsible behaviour of people who, despite having the privilege of staying inside their houses, were breaking the rules of the lockdown. "I am concerned about my children as they are quite young. I have to leave them with my mother-in-law as my husband serves in the Indian Army and is posted outside Meerut."

These women posted in high-risk areas consider this 'special-duty' as an opportunity to serve the people of the country. In the interviews, they admit that they are not afraid of Corona and will keep the honour of the uniform by serving till their last breath. "While talking to my parents, I wanted to tell them how much I missed them but then I remembered why I joined the police services," shares Sonam whose parents live in Saharanpur while she has been serving as a constable for the last 10 years in Meerut.

Although, these women constables are fearless, but they have their weak moments too. Sharing one such incident, constable Bobby says, "On the very first day of my posting in the hotspot area, I was scared. As part of our daily routine, my parents called me during noon and I wanted to ask my mother to pray for my health but I had to hold back my nervousness so that they don't get tensed."

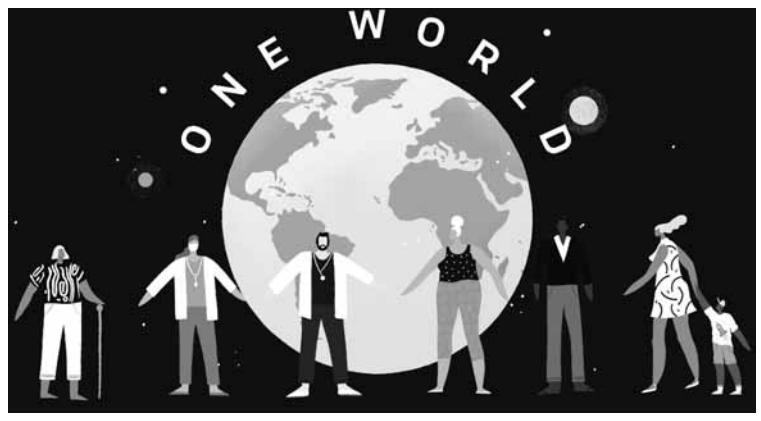
Be it the police, health or sanitation department, every person serving in the high-risk environment is equally vulnerable and can easily be exposed to COVID-19 but it is about time that the dual roles of women are acknowledged. They carry various responsibilities — devote 12 hours in the hotspot regions, eight hours to household chores and get hardly four hours for themselves. On ground, they are more exposed to sanitation and hygiene challenges than men, yet stand in the line of duty with equal courage, fighting Corona effectively. Salute!

—(Charkha Features)

Share hope and compassion

It is only our good karma which will help us tide over crisis rather than our status or wealth, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Most of us would agree that COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. Everything — how we live, interact with each other, the way we work, communicate and of course, the way we travel — has been impacted. However, inspite of these negative effects, there are many positive ones too, which many of us would have observed while staying under lockdown. It is so wonderful to see that during such disasters, suddenly we all forget our caste, creed, religion, status and come together to focus solely on survival, sharing hope and compassion. We simply do this because we cannot bear to see the misery and suffering of our fellow beings. Hence, their pain becomes ours. Just imagine not being able to be a part of last rites of a loved one or feeling helpless at not getting a hospital bed for him/her. Under such circumstances, when a person who is not even known to us helps us out of the blue, it makes our belief in humanity and spirituality stronger.



It is so ironical that Armed forces across the globe are not fighting each other, but are distributing food, water and medicines to their citizens. From where does this loving humanity arise so spontaneously at a time like this? Today, we have a renewed sense of trust, in every human being and the government, as we continue to part with our wealth and services, hoping that they will reach the needy.

The pandemic as well as other natural disasters that we are witnessing today are, in a way, a reflection of our inner world — mirroring the tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes that continually break out in our mind. The ruthless energy of anger, violence and greed has taken a toll on mankind and mother earth. As we keep exploiting earth's mineral resources, hack its forests, pollute its water, deplete the soil, we rob it of all its energy. Thus this is nature's way of telling us that 'enough is enough'. Since most of us do not realise that mother earth has a heart and she, too, has feelings, we keep on hurting her without any kind of remorse. Just like we express our love and affection towards our mother, we should do the same with mother earth.

Majority of us thank anyone who gives us something or helps us in someway. But do we do the same with mother earth? How many of us have thanked her for the fresh-air, water, food, sun and many more things that she gives us since the time we were born. How many of us have apologised for inflicting so much pain on her? Many would counter question, how do we do this? Or how do we communicate with nature ? Well, the simplest and easiest way to do this is by praying or meditating with positive thoughts which most of us can do. You never know the impact of your pure thoughts. One must not forget that there is a deep connection that we all share with mother earth — a feeling, a knowledge that during times of need, she would certainly come and defend us. Hence, we must realise that natural disasters in particular are a wakeup call as to where we are investing all our energies. Are we too busy giving value to accumulating, hoarding, storing, stockpiling material wealth and possessions, and not giving enough time to the upliftment of the soul. It is quite unfortunate that we need such disasters to bring the world together as one big family. Isn't it time to be wise and not commit the same mistakes that we have been committing till now? If only our vision would remain the same for all the time — a vision of oneness, embracing all, being non-judgmental, creating harmony in a relationships, so that we can be there for each other no matter what, as a family would be.

So let us all come together as one to support every member of the global human family and start respecting mother nature who is a life-giver. Remember that no status or wealth would ever matter during disasters. The only thing that would matter would be our good karma, which would help us tide over bad situations and carry us forward.

"There are no great things, only small things with great love. Happy are those."
—Mother Teresa

HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE UPS DEATH RISK

A significant observational study led by Professor Mandeep R Mehra, executive director of the Brigham and Women's Hospital Center for Advanced Heart Disease in Boston, has claimed that treatment with antimalarial drug chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine (taken with or without antibiotics azithromycin or clarithromycin) offers no benefit for patients with Covid-19.

The study, published in the journal The Lancet, comes after US President Donald Trump said he is taking hydroxychloroquine to ward off Coronavirus, even though health officials have warned it may be unsafe. "This is the first large scale study to find statistically robust evidence that treatment with chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine does not benefit patients with COVID-19," said Mehra.

"Instead, our findings suggest it may be associated with an increased risk of serious heart problems and increased risk of death," he warned.

RESEARCHERS DEVELOP EFFICIENT N95 FILTER

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there's been a worldwide shortage of face masks — particularly, the N95 ones, now researchers have developed a membrane that can be attached to a regular N95 mask and replaced when needed.

The filter has a smaller pore size than normal N95 masks, potentially blocking more virus particles, the researcher from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia, said. According to the study, published in the journal ACS Nano, N95 masks filter about 85 per cent of particles smaller than 300 nm.

SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) is in the size range of 65-125 nm, so some virus particles could slip through these coverings. Also, because of shortages, many workers had to wear the same N95 mask, even though its intended for single use. To help with this, the researchers wanted to develop a membrane that more efficiently filters particles the size of SARS-CoV-2.

PLACENTA INJURY SIGN OF COVID

The placentas from 16 women who tested positive for Covid-19 while pregnant showed evidence of injury, the organ that acts as the gut, kidneys, liver and lungs for a fetus during pregnancy, say researchers.

According to the study, published in the American Journal of Clinical Pathology, pathological exams completed directly following birth found evidence of insufficient blood flow from the mother to the fetus and blood clots in the placenta. The injury seen in the placentas shows abnormal blood flow between the mothers and their babies in utero. The findings could help inform how pregnant women should be clinically monitored during the pandemic.

"Most of these babies were delivered full-term after otherwise normal pregnancies, so you wouldn't expect to find anything wrong with the placentas, but this virus appears to be inducing some injury in the placenta," said study senior author Dr Jeffrey Goldstein, assistant professor of pathology from US.

SOCIAL ISOLATION MAY UP HEART ATTACK RISK

Researchers have revealed that people who are socially isolated are over 40 per cent more likely to have a cardiovascular event, such as a heart attack or stroke, than those who were socially integrated.

The study also found that those who are socially isolated are almost 50 per cent more likely to die from any cause.

"We have known for some time that feeling lonely or lacking contact with close friends and family can have an impact on your physical health," said study researcher Dr Janine Gronewold from University Hospital in Essen, Germany.

"What this study tells us is that having strong social relationships is of high importance for your heart health and similar to the role of classical protective factors such as having a healthy blood pressure, acceptable cholesterol levels, and normal weight," Gronewold added.

PHONE MEASURES HB WITHOUT DRAWING BLOOD

Researchers have developed a way to use smartphone images of a person's eyelids to assess blood hemoglobin levels — a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen.

The ability to perform one of the most common clinical lab tests without a blood draw could help reduce the need for in-person clinic visits, make it easier to monitor patients who are in critical condition, the study, published in the Optica journal said.

"Our new mobile health approach paves the way for bedside or remote testing of blood hemoglobin levels for detecting anemia, acute kidney injury and haemorrhages, or for assessing blood disorders such as sickle cell anemia," said study researcher Young Kim from Purdue University in the US.

SALIVA BAN ONLY AN INTERIM MEASURE

It will be back to normal once Covid situation under control, says ICC cricket committee chairman Kumble

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ICC cricket committee chairman Anil Kumble says the recommendation to ban saliva for shining the ball is only an interim measure and "things will go back to normal" once the Covid-19 pandemic is brought under control.

The Kumble-led panel recommended a ban on saliva to minimise the risk of infection. On Friday, the ICC, in its guidelines for resumption of the game, also suggested a bar on the practice.

"...This is only an interim measure and as long as we have hopefully control over Covid-19 in a few months or a year's time then I think things will go back to as normal as it can be," Kumble told *Star Sports* show *Cricket Connected*.

"If things get back to normal within three-four months and we are able to stage matches like we used to do in February and March, then these rules won't apply.

"As long as the medical advisory doesn't change, the rule will stay," he added. The legendary former spinner, however, acknowledged the bowler's dependence on saliva.

"Of course we all know saliva has been a part and parcel of cricket for so many years. "As bowlers, we used to apply saliva on ball, sometimes for grip also, we applied saliva. But with this disease, it can also be asymptomatic, that is why we deiced to ban it," he explained.

There have also been discussions on whether the ICC would allow usage of external substances like wax to shine the ball. Kumble said there were discussions on usage of external substances but .

"Using wax is not allowed, we have never used external substances. We can use sweat. Everyone is talking about (how) it will affect the pacers, grass should be left. Why not leave it dry and play two spinners?" he quipped.

"...If you look back at the history of the game, I mean we have been very critical and we have been very focused on eliminating any external substances coming into the game," Kumble added addressing the speculation.

He cited the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, which led to bans on Australian cricketers Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft.

"Whether you are literally legalising, if you are looking to do that now which obviously has had a great impact over the last couple of years," he said.

"ICC took a decision but then cricket Australia took, even a more tougher stance on what happened during that series between South Africa and Australia, so we did consider that," he said.

ICC must ensure bowling-friendly pitches in Tests: Pathan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India pacer Irfan Pathan reckons that the ban on using saliva for shining the ball is a significant blow to bowlers and authorities should ensure preparation of bowling-friendly Test wickets to prevent complete domination of the game by the batsmen.

"You will to have make sure that pitches are more suitable to the bowlers than batsmen to negate the advantage (of not being able use saliva). If you are not able to shine the ball properly, you will not be able to cut the air because of scientific reasons.

"And if you are not able to swing it, the batsman will have it easy because nobody fears just pace, it is the combination of pace and swing that troubles them," Pathan, one of the best exponents of swing bowling in Indian cricket said.

"It (ban) will affect bowlers a lot in Test matches. It won't be an issue in white-ball cricket as the bowlers anyway don't shine the ball after the first few overs, they want to make it soft (to make strokeplay tougher for the batsman).

"But in red-ball cricket, whether you are a fast bowler or spinner, you need to shine the ball. Spinner relies on shine to drift the ball. That will be a big advantage for batsman. The game will become even more batsmen friendly," said the first Indian pacer to take a Test hat-trick.

BLESSING IN DISGUISE

PTI ■ LONDON

England captain Joe Root feels the ban on using saliva might improve the skills of the bowlers, who will have to work harder to get something out of the pitch.

"It could work in our favour and up skill levels."

"Not having the assistance that you might normally have means your accuracy has to improve," he was quoted as saying by *metro.Co.Uk*.

"Guys will have to find another way to get something out of the surface, whether that's a bit more effort, changing angles on the crease, using the wobble seam they might not have in their locker.

"It could develop our bowlers in a four or five-week period."

Rohit Sharma & Manish Pandey watch other players train during nets BCCI

Rohit to clear fitness test before resuming training

MUMBAI: India's limited-overs vice captain Rohit Sharma says he has fully recovered from the calf injury that forced him to leave the tour of New Zealand midway earlier this year but the fitness test has been continuously delayed because of the Covid-19 lockdown.

"Before the lockdown happened, I was almost ready to play. That whole week was going to be my fitness test but that's when the lockdown happened and I had to push back everything now," Rohit told *LaLiga's Facebook Live* session on Saturday night.

"Once everything opens up, I have to first go to the centre (NCA) and give my fitness test and once I pass the fitness test, I will be allowed to go and resume my duties with the team."

The Indian limited overs deputy said he is missing hanging out with his teammates and is looking forward to training with them when things get back to normal.

"Yes, I miss my teammates, hanging around with them and having a banter with them. Although as friends we are trying to stay in touch through the video calls to see what's one been up to, things like that and we manage that pretty well," he said.

"When you are playing together, almost from 365 days, we are together for 300 days, we are playing, travelling together, so it's like a family. So the first thing I want to do is to catch up with all these guys and try hit some balls as soon as I can."

Mumbai is one of the worst affected by the contagious disease and Rohit said it might take more time for him to resume training.

"I am assuming that those (other) places might open up lot earlier than Mumbai, the city where I stay and which is the most infected. I feel the other guys will send me videos of catching up with each other a lot earlier than I do," he said. ***PTI***

Taylor urges ICC to decide WT20 fate this week

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia captain Mark Taylor does not foresee the T20 World Cup scheduled in October-November going ahead and wants the ICC to take a decision during its Board meeting this week.

Taylor also feels that if IPL takes place during the window the T20 World Cup was to be held, the Australian players are likely to be cleared by their Board to take part in the cash-rich league in India.

The ICC Board meets on May 28 to discuss a host of issues, including a revamped schedule and the fate of the men's T20 World Cup in Australia.

"My feeling is the World T20 won't go ahead in Australia in October as planned. Is it going to be viable to have a world tournament in October or November? The answer to that is probably No," Taylor, also a former Cricket Australia director, was quoted as saying by *Nine Network*.

"It would probably be good (if a decision is made this week). Because then everyone can start planning and we can stop sitting here and saying 'well ifs, buts or maybes'."

Taylor also said the CA wants to keep BCCI happy so the Australia players are likely to be cleared for the IPL if it happens in October.

Pat Cummins, who was bought for a record amount of ₹15.50 crore in last year's IPL auction, is among the Australians keen to take part in this year's competition.

"The Cricket Australia board will want to keep India happy. So they may want to let the players go to India if the IPL goes ahead," Taylor said.

"Because they want India to come here this summer and play, which will be our biggest summer in terms of dollars. That's the sort of discussion going on. No doubt."

Don't postpone T20 WC in haste: Misbah

KARACHI: The authorities must not postpone the T20 World Cup in haste since the showpiece event is the best product to highlight cricket once activities resume, Pakistan head coach and chief selector, Misbah-ul-Haq has said.

Misbah said though logistics is a huge challenge due to the prevailing circumstances, the authorities must deliberate enough before arriving at a decision.

"The logistics of hosting 16 teams is not easy but the authorities should give it time and wait for a month or more before taking any decision," Misbah said in an interview to *Youtube* channel.

"Everyone wants to see the T20 World Cup. It would be the best product to highlight cricket once activities resume," he said.

Misbah also said that their upcoming tour to England will not be easy for either the players, coaches or anyone as circumstances are not ideal for cricket.

Pakistan & England Boards have discussed a tour by the *Green Shirts* from July to play three Tests and three T20 matches.

"The idea is to first have one to one training then increase the number of players to groups. We need to get together and train to be prepared for a comeback to cricket. "It is not going to be easy also getting used to new rules like not applying saliva sweat to shine the ball. I am hoping a three-week camp in Pakistan and then more practice in quarantine in England should get the players prepared."

The Pakistan coach had no doubt the players will face difficulties adjusting to the new laws and bio-security environment. "We will be taking a group of 25 to 27 players to England because we can't ask for replacements and we all have to be together from start to end so that no one catches the virus." ***PTI***

Bicycle girl Jyoti wants to appear for trials but studies first priority, says father

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bihar school girl Jyoti Kumari, who cycled 1200 km with her injured father from New Delhi to Darbhanga, will appear for Cycling Federation of India trials once the lockdown ends even though finishing matriculation is her primary aim.

"We will surely send for the trials after the lockdown is lifted. She was enrolled into class nine yesterday (Saturday). At the moment, we want her to complete her matriculation," her father Mohan Paswan said from Sirhulli near Darbhanga.

Rendered jobless and penniless because of the extended Covid-19 lockdown, the 15-year-old was forced to ferry her father who was unable to walk properly after a surgery to his left knee following an accident.

As the story went viral, the CFI duly took note of Jyoti's incredible feat of cycling more than 1200-kilometres spanning over a week.

"Yes we received the call from New Delhi (Cycling Federation of India). We said she needs rest now may be after two-three months we will see," Paswan, who fractured his leg in an accident while driving his auto-rickshaw in January, said.

In her village Jyoti had earlier regulary cycled 5 kms to reach to her school.

It's Timo time

AFP ■ BERLIN

Timo Werner bagged a hat-trick as RB Leipzig routed Mainz 5-0 behind closed doors on Sunday to climb to third in the German league table as the striker moved to within three goals of the Bundesliga's top-scorer Robert Lewandowski.

It was the 24-year-old's third Bundesliga hat-trick having also netted three times when Leipzig romped to an 8-0 home win against Mainz last November.

Werner's treble leaves him on 24 goals, while Bayern Munich striker Lewandowski claimed his 27th Bundesliga goal this season in the league leader's 5-2 win over Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday.

Leipzig's victory was the tenth win for the visiting team in 17 matches since the Bundesliga restarted last weekend.

Werner opened the scoring in Mainz after 11 minutes when he converted a low cross.

Yussuf Poulsen then marked his 250th appearance for Leipzig by heading home a Marcel Sabitzer cross on 23 minutes.

The pair reversed roles for the third when Poulsen laid a pass off to Sabitzer who showed great finishing to make it 3-0 at the break.

Werner grabbed his second goal three minutes into the second-half when Kevin Kampl played him into the area.

The visitors were attacking at will when Kampl had a goal ruled out for offside soon after.

With 15 minutes left, Poulsen's floated free-kick was met by Werner who volleyed past Mainz goalkeeper Florian Mueller to wrap up his hat-trick.

The win leaves Leipzig third and seven points behind leaders Bayern.

Augsburg also enjoyed an away win with a 3-0 romp at Schalke.

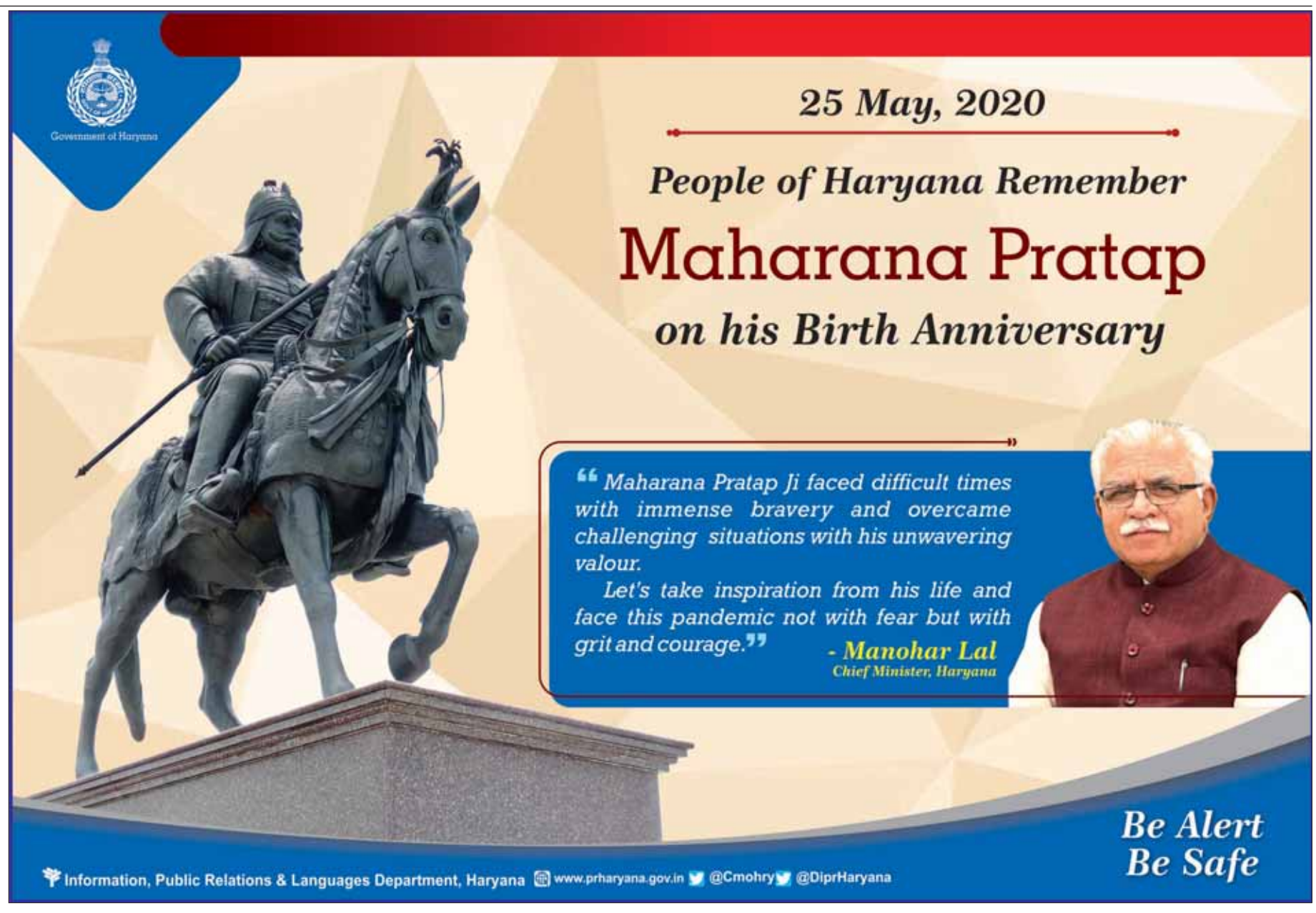
Zidane changed my idea about football: Ancelotti

IANS ■ LONDON

Carlo Ancelotti said that French great Zinedine Zidane gave him the chance to move beyond the 4-4-2 formation. Ancelotti managed Zidane when he led Juventus from 1999 to 2001.

"With Zidane, I tried to change my idea about the system. Zidane is the first player who gave me the possibility to change the system and play in a different way," Ancelotti, who currently manages Everton in the Premier League, told former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher on *Sky Sports*.

"So when I had Zidane, in the first year at Juventus, I played with a system of 3-4-1-2, having (Alessandro) Del Piero and (Filippo) Inzaghi up front and Zidane a little bit behind. The second year, I played with a back four but keeping two strikers in front and one No 10 like Zidane.

"Zidane changed my idea about football, I was so focused before Juventus on 4-4-2 and after with Zidane, I changed, I wanted to put him in the best position for him to let him be more comfortable on the pitch," he added.

Ancelotti would later go on to work with Zidane when he coached Real Madrid and the latter was his assistant manager. Zidane took over from Ancelotti and led Real to three consecutive Champions League titles.