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HYSTERIA IN A TIME OF VIRUS

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The Pioneer

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MOST OF US LACK SELF LOVE: KIRTI TO VIVACITY

More lockdown but fewer curbs likely

Modi, Shah discuss CMs' views: Social distancing must but need to push up economic activities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two days before lockdown 4.0 ends, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday discussed about the views of Chief Ministers on further opening up several sectors of economy with strict social distancing norms if the lockdown were to be continued beyond May 31.

For the past three days, the Home Minister was collecting inputs and suggestions from all Chief Ministers. Highly placed officials say the Centre may give more power to the States to decide on opening up the economic activities and defining containment zones.

Many Chief Ministers have reportedly preferred the continuation of the lockdown, but there is a near consensus on opening up many sectors as well as malls and public trans-

ports, including metro services.

While all Chief Ministers urged the Home Minister to speed up economic activities and gradual return of public life, they also expressed their apprehension about being flooded with surge of patients when the country relaxes the strict lockdown norms.

As per sources, two special Covid-19 panels set up by the Centre have submitted their recommendations for the exit strategy. The panels have suggested that the Centre should do away with all lockdown curbs except keeping schools, colleges, movie halls and religious places closed till situation improves.

The panel has also recommended not to reopen inter-State travel and said that the efforts should be directed towards strengthening containment measures in the



Migrants shift to a shelter home in a village before leaving for their native places in special buses, arranged by the Rajasthan Government in Jaipur on Friday. PTI

worst-hit districts.

The worst-hit 13 districts are: Municipalities of Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi/New Delhi, Ahmadabad, Thane, Pune, Hyderabad, Kolkata/Howrah, Indore, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chengalpattu (Tamil Nadu)

and Thrivavallur (Tamil Nadu). These 13 districts are having 70 per cent of the positive

cases in India. The Centre and the States of these 13 cities have already decided a plan on the geographical definition of containment zones.

The Home Minister also apprised the Prime Minister of the outcome of the talks between the Cabinet Secretary and 13 Municipal Commissioners and District Magistrates from the sensitive cities.

The Central Government is expected to announce its decision on the lockdown within the next two days. Prime Minister may speak up on this on May 31 scheduled 'Mann Ki Baat', said officials.

At present, the current lockdown rules prohibits opening up of hotels, malls, public

transports in containment zones.

There is expected to be a dilution on this and shops inside the malls and hotels may be allowed to open with limited number of entries. Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said all religious places will be allowed to open in the State from June 1 but not more than 10 people can pray at a time.

'Temples, Gurudwaras, Mosques and all religious places in the State are closed. They will open from June 1 but not more than 10 people will be allowed at any given point of time. No assembly will be allowed in religious places', Mamata said.

Modi-US Prez didn't discuss China, India contradicts Trump

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday denied that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump recently held a telephonic talk over the issue of Ladakh and China. This assertion came hours after Trump said he had spoken to Modi and "he is not in a good mood on what is going on in China."

Contradicting the US President's claim, sources said, "There has been no recent contact between Modi and US President Trump. The last conversation between them was on 4 April, 2020, on the subject of Hydroxychloroquine."

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday held a telephonic conversation with his US counterpart Mark T Esper at the latter's request. The two Ministers briefed each other on the respective experience of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic and vowed to continue the excellent bilateral cooperation in this regard, the Defence Ministry said.

The two leaders reviewed progress on various bilateral defence cooperation arrangements and expressed their commitment to further pro-

Rajnath Singh holds telephonic conversation with his US counterpart



note defence partnership. To this end, Singh invited Esper to visit India. Singh also accepted Esper's condolence over lives lost in eastern India during Cyclone Amphan recently, and briefed him on India's relief efforts. The two Ministers also exchanged views on regional developments of shared security interest.

Trump made the remarks about talking to Modi on Thursday while reiterating his offer to mediate between India and China on what he called a "big conflict" going on between the two nations.

He was apparently referring to the tension on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh with four stand-offs now on between the armies of India and China.

Ajit Jogi no more

SUJEET KUMAR ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh's first Chief Minister Ajit Jogi succumbed to cardiac arrest in a hospital here on Friday at the age of 74, doctors and his family members said.

Jogi suffered another cardiac arrest around 1.30 pm and doctors battled for over two hours to revive him but were unsuccessful.

He breathed his last around 3.30 pm, said a medical bulletin from the Shree Narayana Hospital.

Jogi, who was admitted to the hospital on May 9 after a heart attack, had slipped into a coma the next day. Condolences poured in for the veteran politician.

India, China capable of resolving border issue, Beijing rejects Trump's help offer

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Friday rejected US President Donald Trump's offer to "mediate" between India and China to end their border standoff, saying the two countries are capable of properly resolving their differences through dialogue and did not require the help of a "third party."

Yearly GDP growth rate 11-yr low; 3.1% in Jan-Mar quarter

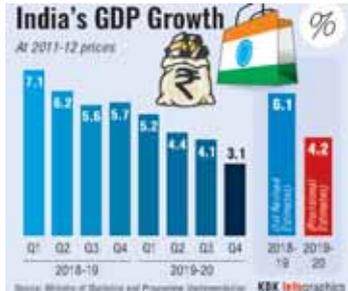
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus-led disruption of Indian economy slowed down the GDP to 3.1 per cent in January-March and to an 11-year low of 4.2 per cent for the full fiscal 2019-20 amid a drop in consumption and investment.

The slowdown is also result of overall economic deceleration even before the Government imposed a lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19 infections from March 25, 2020.

The GDP is expected to continue on the downward journey and gain speed in the next few quarters.

The GDP growth stood at 5.7 per cent in the corresponding quarter of 2018-19, according to data released by



National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday.

The Indian economy grew

at 4.2 per cent during 2019-20 as against 6.1 per cent in 2018-19.

Delhi wants lockdown 5.0 as Capital sees 82 deaths on Friday

AAP Govt suggests Centre to keep all public places shut

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As lockdown 4.0 ends on Sunday, the Delhi Government recommended to the Union Home Ministry for lockdown 5.0 as the number of Covid cases in the national Capital rose by 1,106 with total tally touching 17,387 and 82 people dying on Friday.

The Delhi Government believes that places where large gatherings take place, like cinema halls, should remain closed. "Schools and colleges should also remain closed," said Health Minister Santayender Jain.

The Delhi Government wants to speed up all economic activities and for this the Government had allowed DTC to resume operations



Medics in protective suits carry the body of a Covid-19 casualty for cremation at Nigam Badi Ghat in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

keeping social distancing, bus station hygiene, sanitisation of buses, autos and cabs in mind.

While the decision on metro is pending but the City Government wants DMRC to start its operations.

During discussion with Union Home Minister Amit

Shah, Delhi Chief Minister is reported to have requested for the resumption of Metro services.

The Delhi Government has put a request before Centre for Delhi Metro. The Central Government will take the call," a Government official said.

CAPSULE

QUAKE HITS ROHTAK, TREMORS FELT IN DELHI

New Delhi: A medium intensity earthquake of 4.5 magnitude hit Rohtak in Haryana on Friday. Tremors of which were felt in the national capital, the National Centre for Seismology said.

LOCUST SWARMS POSE THREAT, SAYS DGCA

New Delhi: Aviation Director DGCA issued guidelines for stakeholders like pilots on how to deal with locust swarms, saying they pose a threat to aircraft in the critical landing and takeoff phase of a flight.

RAIN BRINGS MERCURY DOWN IN DELHI

New Delhi: Light to moderate rain lashed the national Capital on Friday, bringing the mercury several notches below normal. Strong winds swept across the city and a few areas reported hailstorm. The Saffajung observatory recorded 3.5 mm rainfall and a maximum of 37 degrees Celsius.

India surpasses China in coronavirus cases, deaths

Delhi, Haryana, K'taka, and U'khand report biggest single-day spike, Mumbai reports highest with 2,682 new cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday overtook China in terms of coronavirus-related fatalities and raced towards 5,000 death count even as the number of fresh cases saw third straight day of spikes with Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh registering huge numbers.

India has reported a total of 1,73,140 coronavirus cases and 4,975 deaths till Friday after it reported 7,783 infections and a massive 264 death count from across the country on Friday. China which had reported the first Covid-19 case in December last year has registered over 82,995 cases and around 4,634 deaths. Data shows 10,652 people have been treated and discharged so far. The recovery rate stands at 42.89 per cent.

According to the Ministry's website, more than 70 per cent of the deaths are due to comorbidities.

On Friday, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand reported biggest single day spike as Covid-19 continued to spread viciously across the country.

Maharashtra continue to remain headache for the health authorities, as it contributed another day of big spike recording 2,682 positive cases on Friday, with Mumbai alone contributing a total of 35,458 cases to the States' tally.

Coronavirus has infected total 62,228 people in the financial capital of the country. The fatalities in the State have shot up to 2,098.

Tamil Nadu, after slipping to the third position on Thursday, again disturbingly surged ahead on Friday to acquire second slot among the worst hit States. It witnessed high number of coronavirus

cases at 874 taking the total count to 20,246 cases on Friday. At least 9 people have died due to coronavirus infection in the State taking the death toll to 157.

Delhi recorded its biggest spike in Covid-19 tally in second consecutive day at 1,106 fresh cases while the number of active coronavirus patients

stood at 17,387. It witnessed 82 deaths bringing the total fatalities to 357 in the State.

The national Capital had recorded over 1,000 cases in a day for the first time on Thursday since the outbreak.

Covid-19

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	62,228	2,098	26,997
Tamil Nadu	20,246	157	11,313
Delhi	17,387	398	7,846
Gujarat	15,944	980	8,611
Rajasthan	8,365	184	4,857
Madhya Pradesh	7,645	334	3,925
Uttar Pradesh	7,445	201	4,410
West Bengal	4,813	302	1,775
Andhra Pradesh	3,330	60	2,234
Bihar	3,275	15	1,050

TOTAL CASES: 1,73,140
DEATHS: 4,975
RECOVERED: 82,037

BENGAL MINISTER TESTS CORONA -VE

Kolkata: West Bengal Fire Services Minister Sujit Bose has tested positive for coronavirus, making it the first such case in the Mamata Banerjee-led State Cabinet, well-placed source in the Government said on Friday. Bose has been advised to undergo home quarantine after his test results came.

Bejan Daruwala dies of lung infection

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Renowned astrologer Bejan Daruwala died at a private hospital here on Friday evening, his family said. He was 90.

While speculation was rife that Daruwala was admitted to Apollo Hospital here a few

days ago after he tested positive for coronavirus, his son Nastur denied it, saying his father was being treated only from pneumonia.

According to his website, Ganeshha Speaks, he had predicted, that Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Moraji Desai, Narendra Modi will Prime Minister.

Bats die of brain haemorrhage in searing heat in UP, Bihar

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Deaths of large number bats caused by brain haemorrhage, due to excessive heat in the last few days in Delhi, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have sparked fears as bats are suspected to be linked to the origin of coronavirus in Wuhan in China.

The forest department officials said that bats are dying due to brain haemorrhage, caused by excessive heat in Gorakhpur, Belghat area early this week.



Bareilly said bats died due to brain haemorrhage, caused by excessive heat in Gorakhpur, Belghat area early this week.

not affected by any pathogen - virus or bacteria -- though they can be carriers of the virus," he said. Chief Conservator of Forest, Delhi Government, Ishwar Singh told The Pioneer that severe heatwave could be the reason behind death of bats but due to coronavirus pandemic. The carcass of these bats will be sent for postmortem to know the exact reasons of the death, he said.

The Animal Husbandry Department of the NDMC has picked up the bat remains from the Motilal Nehru Marg area in Delhi to know the exact reasons of the death.

Priest, son found dead near temple in UP's Sambhal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another sensational incident in Uttar Pradesh, a priest and his son were found dead outside a temple in Rasoolpur Sarai village under the limits of Nakhasa police station in Sambhal district on Friday.

The local residents suspected that the two were murdered, but the local police claimed that investigation pointed that both the priest and the son committed suicide due

to depression and illness. They sent the bodies for post-mortem and were waiting for report before heading further with the investigation.

Reports said that some local residents reached the Shy temple in Rasoolpur Sarai village for darshan on Friday morning when they found the priest missing.

As they went nearby to look for him, they were shocked to see both the priest and with his son both were lying dead.

Haryana records 217 fresh Covid cases, State tally rises to 1,721

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a big jump, Haryana on Friday reported its highest single-day surge yet, with 217 new Covid-19 cases, taking the State's case tally to 1,721. Of these, 762 cases were active.

So far, the total number of deaths due to the infection is 19 in the State, even as cases continued to pour in from four districts in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday expressed concern on the spread of Covid-19 in various NCR districts of the state saying the State Government is



working with complete diligence in this regard. "Necessary steps are being taken and monitoring is being done by the Health Department to safeguard the people of the State. Covid-19 testing facilities and other necessary equipments have been increased in many districts of the State," he said, adding that people can keep themselves safe by following social distancing norms besides

which wearing masks is also mandatory. A total of 59 patients have recovered from various hospitals of the State over the last 24 hours. According to the State Government's health bulletin, 217 fresh cases were reported from Gurugram, Faridabad, Sonapat, Nuh, Palwal, Panchkula, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Bhiwani, Rohtak, Narnaul, Hisar, Rewari, Charkhi Dadri, Kaithal and Kurukshetra. Of the total fresh cases, worst-hit NCR districts of Gurugram reported 115 cases, Faridabad 31 cases and Sonapat 19.

Continued on Page 2

TACKLING CORONAVIRUS

'Scale down domestic flights to contain corona'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With Punjab on Friday reporting 20 coronavirus positive cases having source of infection from other states, the state Health and Family Welfare Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu asserted that there was a need to reduce the domestic flights especially from Mumbai and Ahmedabad where higher numbers of Covid-19 cases have been reported to contain the spread of contagion in the State.

"Most of the cases reported in Punjab are having the travelling history from other States and countries. So as to prevent the community spread level, there is a need to put focus on passengers, especially from high risk states and countries," said Sidhu while presiding over the Department's review meeting.

The Minister said that he would discuss this key issue with the Chief Minister in the Cabinet Meeting to be held on Saturday.

Notably, the state reported 39 fresh cases on Friday, of which 23 have been reported from outside Punjab — 21 from other states and two from foreign countries.

Sidhu said that Punjab has registered only 2.8 percent positive cases among 72,468 samples. "It is on record that only

Other instructions

- ◆ Directed the Director Health Services (Family Welfare) Dr Prabdeep Kaur, Jhal to expedite immunization program
- ◆ Sent state level teams to the districts where immunization rate is very low
- ◆ To achieve 100% institutional deliveries, functioning of Mother and Child Healthcare and Government Hospitals to be reviewed on daily basis
- ◆ All training sessions to be organized at district level or imparted through telecommunication during current situation
- ◆ Considering transmission season of dengue and malaria, IDSP State Program Officer has been asked to ensure preparedness for testing and management of dengue, malaria and other vector borne diseases

151 positive persons (not known) in the State don't have any travel history. Of the 99.9 percent contact tracing, 1476 persons with travel history have been found positive, which is about eight percent," he said.

At the same time, the Minister issued the instructions to ensure maximum sampling of passengers to trace the affected persons.

The Minister said that the

State would conduct a thorough audit of all deaths to further control the death rate in Punjab. "So far, 40 unfortunate instances have been reported, occurring mostly in patients over 50 years. Almost all were afflicted with serious underlying illness like end-stage kidney disease and Cancer, HIV besides uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure," he said.

Sidhu instructed the Director Health Services Dr Arneet Kaur to table the file of vacant posts of Medical and paramedical staff, that would be put up in the next Cabinet meeting to overcome the shortage.

"Earlier, the people didn't have the faith in the Health Department. But, with the quality health services provided by the State Government in the health establishments, now they have full faith in state healthcare services," he said.

The Minister also asked the officers present in the meeting to further strengthen the management and control of Covid-19. He added that the Government has enhanced the penalties for violation of instructions and guidelines issued to contain the spread of corona virus.

The Civil Surgeons have been directed to strictly ensure compliance of guidelines in their jurisdiction, he added.

Spread of Covid-19 in NCR districts a matter of concern: Hrya CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday expressed concern on the spread of Covid-19 in various NCR districts of the state saying the state government is working with complete diligence in this regard.

"Necessary steps are being taken and monitoring is being done by the Health Department for the people of the state. Covid-19 testing facilities and other necessary equipments have been increased in many districts of the state," he said, adding that he kept themselves alert by following such state-tancing norms besides which wearing masks is also mandatory.

Khattar examined the working of portable Electronic Weighing Machine at Panchkula and inspected the working of the machine that weighed loaded and unloaded vehicles by weighing vehicles on this portable electronic weighing machine which will be compared with the actual data. If the machine is used properly and the statistics are correct then it will prove beneficial for the state. He said that this portable machine can be easily carried anywhere and the loaded and unloaded vehicles can be easily weighed anywhere by keeping it in the middle of the road. He said that loaded vehicles up to 200 tons can be weighed on this machine.

The Chief Minister said that the data is being collected



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Haryana Home Min bats for lockdown extension

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With a sharp increase in the number of corona virus cases in Delhi-NCR, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Friday suggested that the lockdown should continue beyond May 31 and justified the strictness at the Delhi border, saying a free movement will lead to a surge in corona virus cases in the state.

Vij said, "If you ask my personal opinion, strictness will have to be maintained. Giving more relaxations at this stage can lead to increase in cases. Because the stage at which corona virus is right now, need of the hour is that lockdown should be extended." "Already relaxations have been given like opening of 'bazaar' (markets), factories... domestic flights have restarted. I am not in favour of more relaxations because cases are going up," Vij said, adding he would convey his opinion to the chief minister.

Citing a sharp increase in corona virus cases in the Haryana districts adjoining Delhi during the past week, Vij has on Thursday issued orders for sealing borders with the national capital.

"Cases are increasing in the districts adjoining Delhi. The main reason for this is movement of people from Delhi into these adjoining districts of



HARYANA WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH BETTER ON COVID-19 FRONT HAD IT NOT BEEN IMPACTED BY DELHI. "70-80 PER CENT OF THE CASES (IN HARYANA) ARE FROM DISTRICTS ADJOINING THE NATIONAL CAPITAL"

Haryana. Barring the categories exempted by the Delhi High Court and those exempted by the Centre under lockdown 4.0, the state borders for others will remain completely sealed," the order had said. Meanwhile, traffic jams were reported on the Delhi-

Gurgaon border on Friday after the latest order made the movement of people across the borders without valid permission tougher. "I regularly monitor things and keep a close watch on the situation. Here we are trying to save each life, if we do not maintain strictness on the borders and allow free movement of people, then I can say undoubtedly, our cases would be at par with Delhi. I have to stop free movement of people," Vij asserted.

He said Haryana would have been much better on Covid-19 front had it not been impacted by Delhi. "70-80 per cent of the cases (in Haryana) are from districts adjoining the national capital," the minister noted. Vij, who is also the state health minister, also batted for extension of the corona virus-induced lockdown, saying it was the need of the hour. He said the state has accepted the guidelines of the Centre's guidelines on the pandemic.

"We are allowing those categories granted exemption as per orders of the Delhi high court. We are also allowing those exempted by the Ministry of Home Affairs like doctors, municipal staff, essential services, we are not stopping them... when the Centre has not given permission for free movement, how can I permit?" he added.

Pay ₹500 for not wearing mask or spitting in public

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Violation of Covid-19 safety norms are all set to cost the violators dear in Punjab with the State Government enhancing the penalties for violating the instructions and guidelines issued to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus.

So, the next time you step out of your house, make sure to wear a mask and abide the social distancing norms as the violators will have to shell out fine.

As per the latest order by the state Health and Family Welfare Department, the penalties, imposed by the state government vide order dated May 15, 2020, have been enhanced for better management and control of Covid-19.

According to the order, issued by the Director Health Services Arneet Kaur, a penalty of Rs 500 has been fixed for those who do not wear mask in public places or for spitting in a public place.

For violating home quarantine instructions, a fine of ₹2,000 will be imposed on the violators. A penalty of ₹2000 will also be imposed for vio-

PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING GUIDELINES IN PUNJAB

- ₹500 for spitting in public places
- ₹2,000 for not wearing mask in public places
- ₹3,000 for violating social distancing norms by bus owners
- ₹2,000 for violating social distancing norms by car owners
- ₹500 for violating social distancing norms by auto-rickshaws, two-wheeler owners

lating social distancing norms by owners of shops or commercial places, and also for violating social distancing norms by car owners.

However, for violating the social distancing norms by the owner of buses, they have to pay a fine of ₹3,000, while for the same violation in auto rickshaws or two-wheelers, the fine has been fixed at ₹500.

"The Government has enhanced the penalties in case of violation of instructions and guidelines issued to contain the spread of coronavirus to further strengthen the management and control of Covid-19," said the state Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu, in the high-powered review meeting of Health Department.

Epidemic Disease Act, 1897," said the Minister.

CHANDIGARH SET TO SLAP FINE FOR NOT WEARING MASKS

With neighboring Punjab and Haryana Governments slapping fine on citizens for not wearing masks in public spaces to stave off the spread of Covid-19, the Chandigarh Administration may too follow suit.

While it is mandatory for the residents to wear a mask or cloth to cover their faces in public places in Chandigarh by an order issued by UT Administration on April 9, violations are reported every day in the city.

Manoj Parida, Adviser to UT Administrator told The Pioneer "With several states imposing the penalty on people for not wearing mask, the UT Administration is considering the same. The final decision in this regard will be taken by the UT Administrator VP Singh Badnore," he said.

Both Punjab and Haryana Governments have issued notifications for imposing fine of ₹500 each for not wearing mask and spitting in public.

Capt welcomes SC order on migrants; Punjab to run nine more trains today

4.84L migrants from Punjab already returned home

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court's order on charging no fares from migrant workers, providing them with food and ensuring they don't travel by foot.

"I am happy that Punjab has been following these as a mandate. Let's do our best to help the needy amidst unprecedented 'Covid-19' crisis," tweeted the Chief Minister.

As of now, Punjab has facilitated the journey of more than 4.84 lakh migrant workers through 375 special trains making it amongst the 'best performing states' in this regard. "We would run nine more trains tomorrow from different locations across the State," said the nodal officer and Principal Secretary (PWD) Vikas Pratap.

Pratap said that already, the

Chief Minister has directed the State Government to do everything possible to ensure that no migrant worker faces any hardship in Punjab, especially on account of travelling back to his home state.

Sufficient trains would keep running on need-based assessment carried to ensure all those who want to return are assisted with their families in a hassle-free manner, he said.

Adding that the State Government would continue to run these trains till needed.

As many as 375 Special Shramik Trains have been run from the State since May 5 till now.

The assessment has been carried out to review the massive efforts till now and to have a fair idea about trains needed in the coming days, he added.

Out of total 375 Special Shramik Trains so far, as many as 226 trains have gone to Uttar Pradesh, with another 123 taking migrants to Bihar, followed by nine to Jharkhand, seven to Madhya Pradesh and three to Chhattisgarh and two for West Bengal.

One train each has gone to

Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

Notably owing to proactive arrangements of food and shelter provided by State, lakhs of migrants have willingly decided to stay back in Punjab during lockdown.

The State Government has already spent Rs 26 crores till now in form of cost of these train operations, which are being run by the Deputy Commissioners in collaboration with the railway authorities of Ferozepur and Ambala Division.

Ludhiana ranks first with maximum 188 trains being run from there, followed by Jalandhar (76), Amritsar (29), Patiala (24), Mohali (23) besides Ferozepur (15), Doraha (7), Sirhind (6), Bathinda (3), Gurdaspur (2), and one each from Hoshiarpur, and Patankot.

The state government has gone the extra mile to mitigate their sufferings of workers and food, water and other essentials have also been provided to all those travelling back home for their journey.

Haryana Tourism providing boarding, lodging to 'Covid warriors'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Tourism is providing free of cost boarding and lodging facilities in their tourist complexes to the doctors and Paramedical staff treating Covid patients during the global Covid-19 Pandemic, an official spokesperson said on Friday, pointing out that that Chief Minister Manohar Lal

The Government had decided that doctors treating Covid patients would be provided free of cost boarding and lodging facilities at these tourist complexes

Khattar has given ex-post-facto approval in this regard.

He stated that during the nationwide lockdown which was imposed from March 24, in view of Covid-19, the Government had decided that doctors treating Covid patients would be provided free of cost boarding and lodging facilities at these tourist complexes.

The Spokesman said that during the lockdown period, the revenue receipt of Haryana Tourism Corporation was almost nil.

There was a loss of ₹13.95 crore in the year 2017-18, which has reduced to ₹2.04 crore in the year 2018-19.

Despite this, the Corporation while showing a noble gesture is providing boarding and lodging facilities to these 'Covid Warriors'.



T. Sharma | Pioneer

78% industry reopened, 68% labour stays back in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Friday assured the industry of State Government's full commitment to ensure 100 percent operationalisation over the next few days, pointing to the huge opportunity they had to grow in view of the increasing number of companies looking to shift from China.

"The State Government is already in touch with several countries to invite them to invest and set up industrial units in Punjab," said Capt Amarinder, adding that he was confident that the State would be able to attract a lot of industry from China.

Promising to take their suggestions into account to facilitate the revival of state's economy post-Covid lockdown, the Chief Minister underscored the role being played by the industry in the development of Punjab, and their continued efforts to restore normal business in these difficult circumstances.

Interacting with industry stalwarts at a video conference on Action Plan to Revive Punjab Economy post-Covid Lockdown, the Chief Minister thanked them for taking on the difficult challenge of resuming operations in the midst of pandemic, and despite difficulties caused by various curbs in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

states to Punjab," he said.

Earlier, leading industry stalwarts suggested various short-term measures and urgent interventions to support states that are a contact of an already detected case and the last was a case of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI). The remaining seven of Jalandhar's eight new cases were contacts of already diagnosed case.

Among the Pathankot's five cases are three with contacts of an already diagnosed case, one was a case of influenza-like illness (ILI), and the last was a self-reported new case. Of Ludhiana's four cases, three had travel history and one was a case of severe acute respiratory infection (SARI). Jalandhar also reported another case later in the

39 new cases in Punjab, none in Chandigarh

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab on Friday reported 39 fresh cases of the novel coronavirus, taking the state tally to 2,197. Of the total, 23 cases have the source of infection from other states or countries.

Out of the 39, maximum 12 cases were reported from Amritsar, followed by eight from Jalandhar, five from Pathankot, four from Ludhiana, three each from Gurdaspur and SAS Nagar (Mohali), two from Moga, and one each from Patiala and Ropar.

Amritsar reported the maximum, 10, cases of people with travel history, besides Gurdaspur, Ludhiana and Mohali with three each,



Rainfall lashes Chandigarh and its surrounding areas on Friday, leading to a drop in temperatures by a few notches bringing a much-needed relief from the heat.

T. Sharma | Pioneer

With 78 percent industry

NO NEW CASE IN CHANDIGARH
No fresh case of coronavirus was reported in Chandigarh on Friday and the number of total COVID-19 cases stood at 289 in union territory, a medical bulletin said.

A total of 4,543 samples have been tested so far and of them, 4,222 are negative and reports of 31 are awaited, it said.

VVIP CHOPPER SCAM

ED attaches ₹385 cr assets of Agusta middleman Rajiv

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday issued separate Provisional Attachment Orders attaching assets worth USD 50.90 million (equivalent to ₹385.44 crore) of accused Rajiv Saxena under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Agusta Westland chopper scam and Moser Baer Bank fraud case.



The attached assets include a villa in upscale Palm Jumeirah, Dubai worth 20 million AED and balances in five Swiss bank accounts amounting to USD 45.55 million. Saxena was deported to India from UAE on January 31 last year for his involvement in the multi-crore VVIP chopper scam and was arrested under PMLA.

Investigations under PMLA were initiated by ED on the basis of separate FIRs registered by CBI in connection with the Agusta Westland Chopper Scam and Moser Baer Bank fraud cases.

The CBI had registered the Agusta Westland chopper scam under IPC Sections relating to criminal conspiracy and cheating besides relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act against former Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi and others.

The CBI had registered a separate FIR against Moser Baer India Ltd. and its Directors, unknown public servants and unknown private persons under IPC Sections relating to criminal conspiracy, forgery and cheating and provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act in a bank fraud case.

Investigation under PMLA

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Underlying ailments are already known to have expedited the Covid-19 death. However, now the researchers have found that in ten Covid-19 patients suffering with diabetes dies within 7 days of hospital admission, and one in five is intubated and mechanically ventilated.

Age, though, is the biggest determining risk factor for death among those with either form of diabetes who get Covid-19, said the researchers as they found that two-thirds (65 per cent) of Covid-19 patients with diabetes admitted to hospital are men, and the average age of all patients is 70 years.

Under-40s have a very low risk compared with those over 40, and especially compared with those over 60.

The findings hold importance for India which is known as a high-prevalence country. There are around 50 million people with diabetes in India whose number is likely to touch 87 million by 2030, because of various reasons, sedentary lifestyle being the major one.

The CBI transferred from an undisclosed entity based in Bahamas. From the analysis of digital evidences and accounts of Puri family maintained by Saxena, it was revealed that the amount of USD 16.33 million is proceeds of crime in the case of Saxena belonging to Deepak Puri and is parked in the accounts of companies of Matrix Group, the agency said. Likewise, proceeds of crime belonging to Ratal Puri, nephew of Congress leader Kamal Nath, and transferred to Rajiv Saxena from an undisclosed foreign entity have also been attached.

Major Gawani bags 'United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the year Award'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Army's Major Suman Gawani, who served as a peacekeeper with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in 2019, has been selected for the prestigious 'United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the year Award'.

She will receive the award from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres during an online ceremony organised at the UN Headquarters, New York on Friday on the occasion of International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the Army said here on Friday. She will be receiving this award along with a Brazilian Naval Officer Commander Carla Monteiro de Castro Araujo.

Major Gawani served as a military observer in UNMISS from November 2018 to December 2019 where she was the principal focal point of contact for gender issues with military observers in the mission. "The officer encouraged participation in joint military patrols to maintain gender balance, irrespective of the hardships under extreme field conditions". As far as Bihar and Odisha followed by westward movements and a return to Rajasthan on the changing winds associated with the monsoon. In its latest update, the FAO said locust swarms have moved into northern India but there are less chances of migration past to reach southern parts of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

FAO warns of several successive locusts invasions in Rajasthan

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned that several successive locusts invasions are expected until July in Rajasthan with eastward surges across northern India as far as Bihar and Odisha followed by westward movements and a return to Rajasthan on the changing winds associated with the monsoon. In its latest update, the FAO said locust swarms have moved into northern India but there are less chances of migration past to reach southern parts of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

More trouble in officing for Tablighi Jamaat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In more trouble for Tablighi Jamaat, the CBI has registered a Preliminary Enquiry against the Islamist outfit's organisers and other unknown persons on a complaint alleging that the organisation's Trust indulged in dubious cash transactions by using illegal means and non-disclosure of receipt of foreign funds to the competent authority under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. In March, the police evacuated more than 2,000 people staying at the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters here at the Nizamuddin for a religious congregation.

Scores of the Jamaat's members were tested Covid-19 positive after they had fled out of the country to avoid spreading the pandemic. In the Delhi police FIR, the outfit was accused of organising the event in violation of government orders to avoid mass gatherings in the wake of coronavirus outbreak.

On its part, the Jamaat has denied the allegations. After registering the PE, the CBI has collected all the chargesheets filed by the Delhi Police in connection with the landmark event. The copy of the report relating to the outfit's financial dealings through multiple bank accounts including cash transactions, sources added.

The study analysed 1,317 patients admitted to 53 French hospitals (public and private) between 10 and 31 March 2020. In the study, 186,650 subjects had type 2 diabetes (89 per cent) (caused by sedentary lifestyle) while only 3 per cent had type 1 diabetes (autoimmune factor), with other types of diabetes in the remaining cases. 39 of cases, which were actually diagnosed during hospitalisation for Covid-19.

The Tablighi Jamaat is also being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for alleged violations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. In March, the police evacuated more than 2,000 people staying at the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters here at the Nizamuddin for a religious congregation.

The Congress on Friday alleged that the economy is 'sinking' but the Government is consistently 'shrinking' the savings and income of the common man by reducing the savings bank deposit and fixed deposits rate of public sector banks.

The party also questioned the Supreme Court's silence over the remarks made by the Solicitor General (SG) a day earlier and alleged that the Government was autocratic in its functioning.

The impact of interest rate cut decision on March 31 amounts to loss of ₹19,000 crore income per year for the depositors," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said in a statement. "The RBI class and lower middle class is in 'economic grief'. The decision to reduce interest rates and discontinue RBI Bonds during lockdown is

Persons with IDD more likely to die from virus: Researchers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are more likely to die from Covid-19 than those without IDD, according to researchers from Syracuse University and SUNY Upstate Medical University. More so, because usually individuals with IDD have a higher prevalence of comorbid circulatory, respiratory, and endocrine diseases.

Published in the ScienceDirect's Disability and Health Journal, the study says that the disparity is likely related to a higher prevalence of comorbid diseases among those with IDD, and/or a higher percentage of people with IDD are living in congregate residential settings. IDDs are disorders that

are usually present at birth and that negatively affect the trajectory of the individual's physical, intellectual, and/or emotional development. Many of these conditions affect multiple body parts or systems.

The study, "Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Covid-19 Case-Fatality Trends: TriNetX Analysis," included 30,282 people who were identified as Covid-19 positive in the TriNetX Covid-19 Research Network Platform.

"More attention is needed to this vulnerable health population in order to ensure their safety and well-being during this pandemic, including careful attention to the impact of public policies such as PPE prioritisation and funding streams on the abili-

ty of residential service providers to guarantee quality care during this time," said researcher Scott Landes.

He is an associate professor of sociology at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and a research affiliate for the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion.

The study was conducted by Landes and three researchers from SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, N.Y.: Dr. Margaret Turk, professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation; Dr. Margaret Formica, associate professor of public health and preventative medicine and associate professor of urology; and Katherine Goss from the Disability & Health Research

Team.

Every individual in this study had Covid-19, so rates are case-fatality rates that gave the researchers an idea of the severity of the disease among both groups. Among ages 0-17, for every 100 individuals with Covid-19, 1.6 with IDD died and less than one without IDD died. Among ages 18-74, for every 100 individuals with Covid-19, 4.5 with IDD died compared to 2.7 without IDD. Rates were similar for those 75 and over - for every 100 individuals with Covid-19, 21.1 with IDD died and 20.7 without IDD died.

The researchers also found that individuals with IDD had a higher prevalence of comorbid circulatory, respiratory, and endocrine diseases across all age groups.

Pandemic hits Indian pvt healthcare sector hard

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In just two months since the lockdown was imposed to contain the Covid-19 infection, the Indian private healthcare sector is facing an existential threat, a survey said on Friday adding that the healthcare facilities in the country have witnessed at least 80 per cent fall in average revenue.

The survey was conducted by healthcare industry body NATHEALTH in 251 healthcare facilities across 9 states and 69 cities to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the domestic healthcare industry especially among small and medium-sized hospitals, which are now facing

existential challenges post the lockdown from March 4, 2020.

The findings showed that 90 per cent of the surveyed healthcare facilities are facing financial challenges with 21 per cent facilities facing an existential threat.

According to the survey, hospitals in tier 1 and tier 2 cities are experiencing a 78 per cent reduction in OPD footfalls, and a drop of 79 per cent in inpatient admissions.

The study found that 90 per cent of organisations require some form of financial assistance.

The findings indicated that even after the lockdown lift, the situation will remain difficult for the hospitals and nursing homes

as patients will hesitate from visiting hospitals.

Dr Sudarshan Ballal, President NATHEALTH, said there is a need to address the ongoing challenges faced by the Indian Healthcare industry. "Low financial performance, shutdown of OPDs, prohibition on elective surgeries, and ban on international travel have led to low footfalls from national and international patients in the last three months," he said.

Besides this, Covid-19 outbreak has significantly impacted cash flow in all organizations. There is a need for a stimulus package to revive the Indian healthcare industry. These measures will be crucial to implement to provide much needed

relief to the healthcare sector which is the frontline defense in this fight against Covid, suggested Ballal.

The survey findings indicate that even after the lockdown lift, the situation will remain difficult for the hospitals and nursing homes as patients will hesitate from visiting hospitals. Hospitals are working towards adapting to modern healthcare techniques and are providing consultation through telemedicine, but the problem related to OPD footfall will remain for some time. "The other challenge is increase in cost of operations is also a major concern given more stringent hygiene and containment requirements post Covid," said the NATHEALTH President.

Microvascular complications (eye, kidney and nerves) were found in 47 per cent of the subjects in the study, while macrovascular complications (arteries of the heart, brain, legs) were present in 41 per cent. Across all patients, by day 7 one in five (20.3 per cent) had been intubated and placed on a ventilator, and one in 10 (10.3 per cent) had died. A further 18 per cent

had been discharged home at this point.

The presence of microvascular complications at 186,650 applications each more than doubled the risk of death at day seven. Advanced age also substantially increased the risk of death, with the group of patients aged 75 years and above being 12 times more likely to die than younger patients aged under 55 years, while

patients 65-74 years old were three times more likely to die than those under 55 years.

The study also found that respiratory condition obstructive sleep apnoea almost tripled the risk of death at 7 days, as did the presence of dyspnoea symptoms (shortness of breath).

The study also confirmed that insulin, and indeed all treatments for modifying

blood sugar, are not a risk factor for severe forms of Covid-19 and should be continued in patients with diabetes.

Encouragingly, there were no deaths in patients under 65 years old with type 1 diabetes, but the authors highlight there were only 39 patients with type 1 diabetes in this study and more research is ongoing to establish the effect of Covid-19 in this specific population.

Govt is consistently shrinking savings, income of common man: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday alleged that the economy is 'sinking' but the Government is consistently 'shrinking' the savings and income of the common man by reducing the savings bank deposit and fixed deposits rate of public sector banks.

The party also questioned the Supreme Court's silence over the remarks made by the Solicitor General (SG) a day earlier and alleged that the Government was autocratic in its functioning.

The impact of interest rate cut decision on March 31 amounts to loss of ₹19,000 crore income per year for the depositors," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said in a statement. "The RBI class and lower middle class is in 'economic grief'. The decision to reduce interest rates and discontinue RBI Bonds during lockdown is

"brainless, heartless and shameful," he said adding due to the already existing economic crisis, the impact of Covid-19 on the income of the people is down.

The interest rate cuts in PPF, KVP, NSC and other saving instruments further hit the already shrinking savings of approximately 30 crore depositors, who have deposited Rs 14 lakh crore in various saving schemes, he said.

The latest blow for middle class, farmers, pensioners and 7.75 per cent RBI bonds and further reduction of interest rates by SBI, said Surjewala.

In the last two months, the total combined reduction in income of 30 crore depositors in saving schemes (PPF, NSC, KVP etc.) and 44.1 crore account holders of State Bank of India (SBI) is about Rs 44,670 crore annually (from reduction in interest rates on savings scheme and reduction in SBI savings, fixed deposit

interest rates), he claimed.

₹44,670 crore is 24 per cent of actual fiscal stimulus measure announced (₹186,650 crore) by the government. So around one-fourth of whatever is announced is already taken back by the government by reduction in interest rates. If we include other Public Sector Banks this figure will increase by at least 3 times," he said.

The Congress demanded that interest rates on all small saving schemes, fixed deposits (FD) and savings bank deposits must be restored immediately to pre-March 12 level, he said.

On the matter of 5G Tushar Mehta, who on Thursday stated in the Supreme Court that there were a handful of people - "prophets of doom" who were always sceptical about everything, Surjewala, said, "Modi Govt's 'New Definitions' in SC - 1)'Some High Courts are running a parallel Govt' 2).

BJP to hold Physical Press Conferences in all States to mark first anniv of second run of Modi Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an indication of gradual opening of lockdown on political activities which had turned 'digital' over a period, BJP would conduct Physical Press Conferences in all State units while observing the article 370 and splitting of Jammu and Kashmir in union territories and passing of parliamentary legislation making triple talaq an illegal and a criminal offence, as the party would try to impress upon its 'success' in containing Coronavirus pandemic in the country through medical measures and the economic packages and concessions announced since the

lockdown on March 25.

One of the main programmes which is to kick-off the series of party activities would be BJP president J P Nadda's address to the party workers through Facebook Live on Saturday.

Nadda would detail 'services' rendered by the BJP in last three months in fighting the pandemic in different states and may also counter opposition charges over alleged mishandling of stranded migrant workers.

BJP National Spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member PVL Narsimha Rao said the party would be organising physical press conferences in all state units from Sunday onwards. Actual face-to-face conferences will be held away from the BJP by the middle of the February after pandemic began to take threatening shape in the country.

DGCA warns pilots of locusts, issues operation circular

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A aviation regulator DGCA on Friday issued guidelines for stakeholders like pilots and engineers on how to deal with locust swarms, saying they pose a threat to aircraft in the critical landing and takeoff phase of a flight.

India is battling the worst desert locust invasion in more than 21 years. The crop-destroying swarms first attacked Rajasthan and have now spread to Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

new spread to Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

"Generally, locusts are found at lower levels and therefore pose a threat to aircraft in the critical landing and takeoff phase of a flight. Almost all air intake ports of the aircraft will be prone to ingestion in large numbers, if the aircraft flies through a swarm (areas like engine inlet, air-conditioning pack inlet etc.)," the regulator said in its

operation circular.

Pilot and static sources can also get partially or fully blocked while flying through locust swarms, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said.

"Blocked pilot and static sources lead to erroneous instrument indications, especially unreliable air speed and altimeter indications," it said. A pitot tube in airplanes is used to measure the flow speed of the wind.

airborne are advised to share the information with all arriving and departing flights. Being a day-time phenomena, a pilot is also required to share information of locust swarms.

It is strongly advised that flight should be avoided through any known locust swarm, it said.

According to Ministry of Agriculture, the Rajasthan government has deployed 778 tractors and 50 fire brigade vehicles, Madhya Pradesh-72 tractors and 38 fire brigade vehicles, Uttar Pradesh deployed 6 tractors and Punjab deployed 50 tractors and 6 fire brigade vehicles for locust control. "The Centre is in close touch with all the affected states of Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra and an advisory has been issued," it said.

successive locusts invasions in Raj

TN crosses 20K mark, 874 more afflicted

62 test +ve in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With 874 persons testing positive on Friday, the total number of persons afflicted with coronavirus in Tamil Nadu reached 20,246. The only consolation for the authorities is the number of patients discharged from various hospitals in the state Friday saw 765 persons getting cured and discharged from hospitals and this made the total number of active cases in the State as 8,776.

Nine persons were declared dead on Friday and the fatalities reached 154 all over the State. The efforts by the Government to contain the pandemic continued without

any hold back as 71 laboratories were working round the clock to test the samples. According to the medical bulletin issued by the Tamil Nadu Government, 11, 334 persons were tested on Friday which took the total number of persons tested till date to 4,66,550. Chennai continued to be the epicenter of covid-19 in Tamil Nadu with 13,662 persons testing positive till date. There are 6,533 active cases in the district which is closely followed by Chengalpattu (545). There are districts like Namakkal, Nilgiris and Perambalur which do not have even a single coronavirus patient. Dharmapuri, which succeeded in containing the pandemic reported three cases on Friday. 62 persons tested positive

for coronavirus in Kerala on Friday, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Speaking to reporters at Thiruvananthapuram, the chief minister said that the hike in coronavirus cases was mainly due to expatriates and pilgrims from other States who returned to Kerala. "Out of the 62 tested positive today, 33 were from foreign countries, and 29 from other States. Number of hotspots in the State increased to 101," said the Chief Minister. But he had some news of comfort to the people of the State. "The instances of virus in every 100 tests done in Kerala is 1.7 per cent and this is the best in the country," claimed Vijayan. He also ruled out the possibility of community/social transmission in the State.

Uncertainty over Amarnath yatra as cases rise in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

While the Jammu & Kashmir Government is still contemplating whether to allow pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine for a shorter duration in the second week of July this year, the total number of coronavirus cases are spiraling up without showing any signs of coming down, especially in Kashmir valley.

The Government, which is tied up with containment efforts to check the further spread of deadly virus, is already under pressure from the pilgrims to allow annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine for a limited period of at least two weeks.

The final decision in this regard is expected to be taken during next week by the State Government. The Amarnath Shrine Board after holding threeday discussions with members of the board and taking in account the fea-

128 new cases in State, 36 from Jammu and 92 from Kashmir

back from the Union Home Ministry.

Earlier, Shri Amarnath Shrine board authorities had decided to suspend the yatra this year but later recalled their decision claiming the final decision would be taken after taking a fresh review of the prevailing circumstances.

Due to heightened security concerns, the authorities in Jammu & Kashmir cannot take a unilateral decision as it has to ensure safety and security of the pilgrims during the yatra period.

Secondly, till the time lockdown guidelines are relaxed and smooth movement of pilgrims is permitted the pil-

grimage cannot take place even for a limited period of time. A senior government functionary said, "we are waiting for the centre to take a final call on the issue of holding annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine".

"Once we receive a green signal, our yatra logistics, clearing yatra track, setting up temporary shelter points, arranging refreshment, registration of pilgrims as per the guidelines can be initiated".

On the other hand, another famous shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi is also awaiting final nod from the union govt to restart yatra for local pilgrims. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi yatra was suspended on March 18, 2020 ahead of the nation wide lockdown from March 23.

Meanwhile, on Friday, one more patient died due to Covid-19 in Srinagar while 128 new cases were detected in

Jammu and Kashmir, taking the total tally to 2164 cases. Out of these, the total number of active cases are 1261, 332 in Jammu division and 932 in Kashmir division.

According to the media bulletin, out of 128 new positive cases, 36 were reported from Jammu division and 92 from Kashmir division.

All the 36 cases from Jammu were returnees. Highest number of 14 cases were reported from the border district of Poonch while seven cases were reported from Jammu, and six each from Kathua and Baramulla districts.

In Kashmir valley, the highest number of 27 cases were reported from Srinagar, followed by 19 cases from Kulgam, and 18 from Kupwara. According to media bulletin, 76 percent active cases in the valley are localised in the four districts of Srinagar, Kulgam, Anantnag and Kupwara.

Meanwhile, on Friday, one more patient died due to Covid-19 in Srinagar while 128 new cases were detected in

No respite from domestic returnees in Karnataka

IANS ■ BENGALURU

There is no respite from domestic returnees with respect to Covid-19 in Karnataka. As many as 92 per cent of the 178 cases in the past 19 hours were returnees, mostly from Maharashtra, raising the State's tally to 2,711, an official said on Friday.

"New cases reported from 13 different districts in the past 19 hours, 178," said a health official. Among the 164 domestic returnees, 156 or 95 per cent returned from Maharashtra, India's largest COVID suffering state.

Presently, Karnataka saw a major spike in cases in Udipi, Yadgir, Bengaluru Urban, Kalaburagi and Raichur.

Raichur suffered 62 infections and Yadgir, 60, both constituting 69 per cent of the cases in the past 19 hours. A 35-year-old man from Bengaluru is suffering from Influenza Like Illness (ILI).

A 68-year-old woman from Davangere is also suffering from the same condition.

The more patient, a 32-year-old man from Chikkaballapura, is also suffering from ILI.

A 68-year-old man from the same place is suffering from Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI).

Meanwhile, 35 patients were discharged in the past 19 hours, 30 from Hassan, three from Uttara Kannada and one each from Chikkamagaluru and Mandya.

Of the total cases, 1,793 are active, 869 discharges and 47 deaths.

Religious places, offices to open from June 1 in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amid eyebrows raising in the medical fraternity and the opposition circles, the Bengal Government has decided to safeguard "Jan" and operationalise "Jahan" even as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday declared that the State will be fully functional from the first week of June with the opening of both religious places and public offices.

"While temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras will open from June 1, the public and private sectors will become fully functional from June 8," she said adding not more than

10 persons will be allowed entry in religious places.

Public and private sector offices too will begin work with full staff strength, while allowing public transport to ferry passengers to their full capacity. Buses which were allowed to carry only 20 people earlier will now be able to ferry passengers to its full sitting strength, she said reminding, "no standing person will be allowed".

Tea gardens and jute mills too will start functioning with full capacity from June 8, she said. When asked if sudden opening of the system will neutralize the good effects of the 68-day lockdown a fuming

Chief Minister said if the Railways could send in "Corona Expresses" (read trains bringing infected migrant workers) packed with people then where was there a harm in opening the State. "We have reports that the Railways is sending trains, heaving with migrant workers. In one seat, three-four persons are travelling," she said. "I thought then what is the harm in opening up religious places. From June 1, religious sites and places can open up in Bengal."

She however said that "no mass congregation or no big festival would be allowed to be organized" in the State till further orders.

"Already Bengal has received 5-6 lakh migrant workers many of who already bring infected migrant workers packed with people thousand of them in trains... many of these people are carrying corona infection... so much so that the people have started running away when a train is entering the Howrah station," she said.

She said that but for the irresponsible attitude of the Railways which too have a "social responsibility towards the citizens of the country."

Bengal Government had been successfully controlled the proliferation of the virus.

"We were successful in controlling the spread of corona virus in the last two months, but now it is increasing as a lot of people are coming from outside. The Railways is sending migrants in crowded compartments. In the name of Shramik Special trains they are running 'corona express' trains," she said.

Bengal Government had been successfully controlled the proliferation of the virus.

entire good effects of the lockdown would be compromised if we open up now."

Another senior virologist predicted "a massive increase in the number of cases in the coming weeks and Bengal will find it difficult to bury its dead people if the decision is not changed right away," CPI(M)'s Md Salim said, "it seems now its sudden lifting will finish with the Modi Government in haphazard implementation of plans. While on one hand the sudden imposition of the lockdown brought great miseries to the poor people of the country now its sudden lifting will finish the advantages of the lockdown."

He also asked "how the people will be transported to their offices and back at a time when the cases are increasing. And if the local trains are started where is a guarantee of social distancing?"

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh attacked Banerjee for taking knee-jerk decisions even as he asked "for reasons did we implement the lockdown in the past two months. Was it because we will sacrifice its good effects? Will the Chief Minister be able to control the rising cases if they start to multiply in the coming weeks?" "Who will take the responsibility of the families that will suffer now?"

Masood relative involved in foiled Pulwama like attack

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Investigating teams of Jammu & Kashmir police on Friday have identified owner of the Santro car which was likely to be used by the suicide bomber to target a security convoy or any other vital installation in Kashmir valley.

The car was believed to have been fabricated by a local expert, identified as Mohd Ismail alias Fauji Bhai of Jaishe-e-Mohammad yatra outfit. He is believed to be a close relative of Jaishe-e-Mohammad Chief, Maulana Masood Azhar. His name had also figured during investigations in the Pulwama terror attack. Police is currently working on the vital leads to track down the footprints of active Over Ground workers who may have provided logistics support to the IED borne Fauji Bhai while fabricating the vehicle borne IED.

Though, no formal statement was issued by the Jammu and Kashmir police but officers privy to ongoing investigations revealed the owner of the explosives-laden car which was intercepted in Rajpora area of Pulwama on Thursday, has been identified as Hidayatullah Malik.

JMB terrorist Abdul arrested in Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Special Task Force of Kolkata Police had a major success on Friday when it arrested Jambhaji Mohibul Islam alias Boro Karim. He was hiding near Suti town of Murshidabad district bordering Bangladesh, the STF which carried out a joint operation with Murshidabad Police said.

Karim was allegedly involved in a 2018 blast at Bodh Gaya in Bihar sources said without ruling out his involvement in the Khargagah blast killing two JMB militants had occurred on October 2, 2014.

The Bodh Gaya blast had taken place near the Mahabodi Temple on January 19, 2018, hours after Buddhist spiritual leader Dala Lama had left the area.

"He had provided shelter to JMB leaders from Bangladesh, who were directly involved in the Bodh Gaya blast. He was arrested this morning from Suti police station area of Murshidabad district," a senior officer said adding a number of documents and other things have been recovered from him.

"He is among the top three JMB operatives wanted in India. We have been looking for him for quite some time. He will be produced before a local court today and we will seek his police custody," an official said adding, the terrorist had earlier given the cops a slip but this time they could manage to arrest him.

NC rejects J&K delimitation commission, won't take part

JAMMU

A day after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had nominated the Associate Members of Delimitation Commission for Jammu & Kashmir, one of the leading mainstream political party in Kashmir valley, National Conference on Friday rejected the entire process saying that the party's three members of Parliament will not participate in it.

MoS PMSO, Dr Jitendra Singh and members of Parliament, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Mohammad Akbar Lone, Hasnain Masoodi and Jugal Kishore Sharma were nominated as associate members of Thursday by the Lok Sabha.

In a statement, the NC, spokesman said: "With reference to the recently announced Delimitation Commission announced by the Government of India, Jammu & Kashmir National Conference today rejects this process and its three members of Parliament will not participate in the commission."

The party added: "This delimitation commission is a product of the J&K Re-organisation Act 2019, which the JKNC is challenging in and outside the Supreme Court. Participating

in this delimitation Commission will be tantamount to accepting the events of 5th August 2019, which the NC is unwilling to do."

According to the Constitution of J&K, the constituencies of J&K were to be delimited in 2026 with the rest of the country. The constituencies in the State were last delimited in the '90s. Thereafter, an amendment was made in the constitution of J&K unanimously passed in the State Assembly in which all the regional parties, Congress and BJP voted for this amendment to go with the delimitation with rest of the country in 2026. Therefore, the Constitution of the delimitation commission is unwarranted," the statement added.

The commission has been constituted to delimit the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019.

According to section 60 of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019, the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be increased from 107 to 114. PNS

Land acquisition to be made easier in UP

Lucknow: Continuing his efforts to promote industrialisation in the state, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has now issued directions to amend the revenue code which will make it easier to acquire land in the state.

The amended code will make it possible to lease agricultural land for industrial units and industrial parks. The Land Acquisition Act of 2013 will also be amended to simplify the procedure for acquiring land within a distance of 1 km on either side of an express way. This will also provide for additional means of revenue generation for the industrial development authorities. According to a government spokesperson, the state government will also develop an electronic city near the Jewar International Airport for which a large land parcel will be acquired.

"At a meeting between the Chief Minister and senior officials, it was decided to auction the lands of closed public sector units. A legal verification of the land will have to be carried out for the purpose," he said. If a revenue village comes under an industrial development authority, it has been decided that the public land in these gram sabhas will be vested with the respective authority.

Under the Industrial Development Zone Act, allotment of a plot will be called off if a unit is not set up there after stipulated period of time.

Meanwhile, it has also been decided that land of closed units under the Industrial Development Department and plots allotted to closed units of other departments, such as sugar mills and Central government undertakings, will be acquired for the land bank. IANS

Veerendrakumar, RS member & Mathrubhumi MD passes away

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

MP Veerendrakumar, member of Rajya Sabha and leader of Lok Tantrik Janata Dal breathed his last late Thursday night. The 87-year-old politician who never compromised on his stance against the Sangh Parivar and the kind of politics practiced by the BJP, was given a State funeral at the sprawling Pullyyamala Estate compound, his ancestral home in Wynadu district.

Veeran, as he was known, was 84 and is survived by his wife and four children. He was also the chairman of a managing committee of Mathrubhumi, a popular Malayalam daily and owned the satellite news channel by the same time.

The Rajya Sabha member, though shared power in the State in company of the Congress and the CPI(M), stood for socialism, secularism and liberalism in synch with the kind of education he received from abroad. Son of a planner by name Padmaprabha Gowder, Veeran is described as Raja by the people of Wynadu district. He was twice member of the Lok Sabha and was a minister of state for company affairs in the government headed by Deve Gowda.

FAMOUS PALKHI TRADITION Maha Govt to fly Or take palkhis by bus to Pandharpur

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having cancelled the traditional annual Palkhis (palanquin) processions from Alandi and Dehu in Pune district to Pandharpur owing to the Covid-19, the Maharashtra Government in Friday decided to take the holy 'Padukas' (foot prints) notably of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram from Warkari sect directly to the temple town in Solapur district in western Maharashtra.

At a meeting held between Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and the organising committee in Pune on Friday, it was decided that there would be palanquin processions from Alandi and Dehu Pune district to the Vithoba-Rukhmani temple in Pandharpur in view of the continued spread of coronavirus in many parts of the state.

In the past, palanquin processions would begin from Alandi and Dehu and go through Pune, Sangli, Satara & Solapur districts. The whole pilgrimage would take 21 days. Numerous palkhis join the main Tukaram and Dnyaneshwar palkhis along the way.

Devotees from from all over Maharashtra and nearby areas would set out for Pandharpur, wearing holi beads and sing the glories of Vithoba and songs like "Gyanba

Tukaram", commemorating the saints. Upon reaching Pandharpur on the auspicious Ashadi Ekadashi day, devotees would take a holy dip in the sacred Chandrabhaga river of Bihma river before offering prayers at the Vithoba-Rukhomi Temple.

In consultations with the deputy Chief Minister, the organisers decided to discontinue the "Palkhis" (palanquin processions) which would in the past see more than at least four lakh Warkaris, the people who would under annual pilgrimage (war) from Alandi and Dehu to the temple town of Pandharpur in Solapur district.

During the meeting, Pawar assured the organisers that the State Government would ensure the "palkhis" would be taken to Pandharpur on the day of Dhami either by Helicopter or via State-run MSRTC buses.

This is for the first time in the nearly 800-year-old tradition of Palkhis, palanquin processions will not be taken by foot from the twin temple towns of Alandi and Dehu to Pandharpur.

As part of the decision taken by the State Government, palkhis of Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Tukaram, Sant Nirvnutan, Sant Sopankas, Sant Muktabai and Sant Namdeo will be taken directly by either road or air on the dashmi day.

Maha sees record 116 deaths, 2,682 more cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra, which is the worst coronavirus-affected State in the country, notched another dubious feat on Friday, as a record 116 people died of pandemic and 2,682 others tested positive, taking the total number of deaths to 2,098 and infected cases jumped to 62,228 in the State.

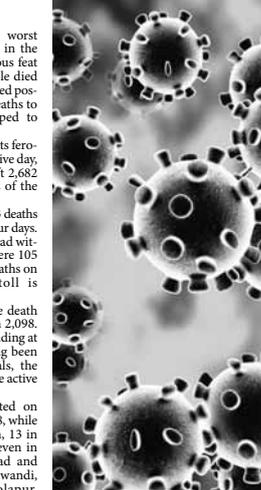
The coronavirus displayed its ferocious face on the fourth consecutive day, as it claimed 116 deaths and led 2,682 others infected in various parts of the State.

There have been a total of 403 deaths in Maharashtra during the last four days. On May 26 (Tuesday) the state had witnessed 97 deaths, while there were 105 deaths on Wednesday and 85 deaths on Thursday. Friday's death toll is 116.

With the latest fatalities, the death toll crossed 2,000 mark in the State. With the total infected cases standing at 62,228 and 8,381 patients having been discharged from various hospitals, the state health authorities pegged the active cases at 33,124.

Of the total deaths reported on Friday, Mumbai accounted for 38, while there were 17 deaths in Jalgaon, 13 in Pune, nine in Navi Mumbai, seven in Dhule, five each in Aurangabad and Malegaon, three each in Bhiwandi, Mira-Bhayandar, Nashik, Solapur, Kolhapur, two each in Raigad and Amravati.

Of the dead, 77 were men while 39 were women. Forty eight of them were aged over 60 years, 55 were from the age group 40 to 59 years and 13 were aged



below 40 years.

"Seventy five out of 116 patients (65%) had high-risk co-morbidities such as diabetes hypertension, heart disease, etc," a State health bulletin said.

Out of the total deaths reported today, 46 deaths occurred in the last two days. Currently, 53,467 people are in home quarantine and 35,967 people are in institutional quarantine.

With new fatalities and infections, the total number of deaths increased to 1173 and infected cases rose to 36932 in Mumbai.

Out of 4,33,557 laboratory samples tested, 62,228 were positive for Covid-19 until Friday.

There are 2941 active containment zones in the State currently. Total 17,600 surveillance squads worked across the state on Friday and surveillance of 67.68 lakh people.

Considering the key observations made in the report on Friday, patient doubling time for the state is now 15.7 days from 11 days in the last week. The recovery rate in the state is 43.38 per cent.

The mortality rate in the state is 3.37 per cent. Currently, 53,467 people are in home quarantine and 35,967 people are in institutional quarantine.

Meanwhile, considering that the monsoon is around the corner, prevalence of other epidemic diseases other than Covid-19 will also possibly increase. On this background, the health department has started its preparation.

For Malaria, insecticide spraying has been planned in sensitive districts and swachata surveillance is going on in the state for water quality.

Considering the increasing number of Covid-19 patients, the bed capacity is being increased as per the requirement in the three-tier system of Covid-19 health facilities.

Balancing act

India was quick to brush off US mediation on Ladakh. Besides, we can't afford to rub China the wrong way in the pandemic era



India finds itself in a peculiar situation, caught between the US and China over border tensions in Ladakh. While its strategic proximity to the first is a source of deep discontent for a hegemonic Asian power, the maverick support from US President Donald Trump, who offered to mediate in the crisis, has meant double trouble. Trump has made many mediation efforts on India's behalf at international fora before but the timing of this one in a post-pandemic world is different. More than India, it is a message to China. The US, which has made no bones about China fudging the scale and

potency of the Wuhan contagion and is in a punishing mood, threatening to boycott it economically, is building an international coalition of opinion against the Middle Kingdom. It is, therefore, drawing India to be a part of this anti-China narrative, knowing full well that we could end up being among the top worst-hit nations and would have much to be suspicious about our eastern neighbour. In that sense, the US is feeding off India's weakened position, courtesy its plunging economy and a soaring public health crisis, as much as China is. The heightened tension at Ladakh is China's way of reminding India that it could light up the Himalayan border easily if we fell into the US trap of building a global campaign against it or block trade and investment here. In fact, given that we cannot end our import dependence on China overnight considering its manufacturing edge over ours, particularly when the pandemic has paralysed our economy, we just have to engage with China one on one. India, therefore, has rightly distanced itself, maintaining that it would solve issues with its neighbours through dialogue and diplomatic mechanisms rather than external intervention. China, too, which is used to speaking in a forked tongue, has already indicated diplomacy as a way around the impasse. India is well familiar with this blow-hot-blow-cold intimidatory tactic though the escalation this time is in sync with Chinese deprecations in the region against neighbours. Clearly, Xi Jinping wants to justify the need for his muscular leadership by positing the world as an enemy out to finish China as he faces a fall in GDP about 25 per cent unemployment, a plunging economy and the suppressed rage of a people, who will never know the damage the virus has done to them.

So what should India do? As Doklam has taught us, standing down is not always the way. Indian troops are now favourably placed in many positions and border infrastructure has been fairly ramped up over the last decade. Improved road corridors mean that we can now service requirements and replenish supplies even better. This is what has been exasperating the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which realises that its edge in the region is gradually being blunted and thinks that India might have ambitions in the Aksai Chin. So India should remain firm on legitimate positions. At the same time, it must step up diplomacy and keep it at rather than diverting itself to scaled up military conflicts as China is still a powerful neighbour. In fact, diplomacy, though requiring high-level intervention, may just work as the tussle this time is over areas that are not really disputed since 1962 and quite distant from the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Of course, this doesn't mean that China won't attempt transgressions and territorial intimidation to amass us during crises. At the same time, if China rakes up the long Himalayan boundaries, we should pose a counter-weight by tying up with Southeast Asian nations and build pressure against Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea. We should discuss shared threats in the Indian Ocean region with Vietnam, Philippines, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. Diplomatically, we could circle China by galvanising the threat perception from it in the region and strengthening a security alliance. One can do this with increased diplomatic engagement without appearing too aggressive and risking a Chinese hitback. In fact, we must be prepared for more hostilities as India builds self-sufficiencies. India has stalled it from ambushing our economy by amending its foreign direct investment (FDI) rules to mandate Government approval for all investments from "border" countries and prevent hostile takeovers. We have already cancelled orders for Chinese test kits as they were faulty and have switched to South Korea and other nations. We are supporting a global impartial probe into the Wuhan contagion and though "vocal for local" may not have any scale now, China will not sit easy with the discomfort over 5G trials and a future shrinkage of its market in India.

Hell before healing

The dismal conditions at quarantine centres across the country are more killing than the disease itself



The word "quarantine centre" has become the colonial equivalent of "kaala paani" or confinement in the dreaded prison on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where our freedom fighters were condemned to die in pitiable conditions. Now we are condemning COVID-19 patients as untouchables and leaving them to their fate if the horror stories of conditions at isolation zones are anything to go by. According to the Government's guidelines, each quarantine centre must have rooms/dormitories separated from one another with water, food, telephone, laundry and sanitation services. But the reality is so different that the Allahabad High Court actually took suo motu cognisance of the unhygienic and inhuman conditions at various quarantine centres in Uttar Pradesh after an engineer succumbed to the infection at one but not before apprising his wife of his plight. More lives could have been saved had the conditions enabled recovery than worsening the health of patients. This is not an isolated case. There are reports coming in from across the country of unhygienic conditions, soiled sheets, a few dirty toilets for scores of people, no social distancing, no privacy, shortage of food leading to people fighting over it, flies, mosquitoes, snakes, staff behaving in a rude manner, treating people like untouchables and throwing food packets at them, lack of medicines for those who have diseases like diabetes and heart ailments and disinterested doctors ignoring their duty. No wonder then that there have been reports of people trying to flee quarantine centres, not reporting their conditions and committing suicide. Even doctors have been up in arms about the sorry state of affairs. With the Government exiting the lockdown in a graded manner and the country seeing a surge in cases coupled with increasing testing, the pressure on these centres is bound to increase. How then will it deal with the situation?

The Government should increasingly consider home quarantining people as the public healthcare infrastructure is obviously overwhelmed. Plus, it can also think of roping in the private sector healthcare providers or hotels, which can be turned into quarantine centres for those who can afford to pay. There can be different budgets to suit different pockets. This will free up Government facilities and money for the millions who cannot afford to pay. Desperate times call for desperate measures and it is time we began looking for out-of-the-box solutions to deal with this unprecedented situation. Corporates can be asked to foot the bills of the centres and make the expense part of their CSR. The Government should have created the infrastructure during the lockdown period. The fact that it could not reflects poorly on it.

Hysteria in a time of virus

The Corona pandemic has been killing far fewer people compared to road accidents and other causes. It has indeed brought out the best and the worst in humanity



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Watching the public's and the Union and State Governments' response to the COVID-19 pandemic in India, I was reminded of the cyclone Amphan. I was reminded of Charles Dickens' famous sentence in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so wondrously mixed up, that the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."

There are parts of the sentence that are generally relevant to the times we live in India but not to the specific context we are talking about. Some parts do apply. For example, it is "the best of times" in terms of the courage, compassion and generosity shown by a number of people to help migrant workers, rendered unemployed by the lockdown. One of them is Pappan Singh Gehlot, a mushroom farmer in Delhi's Tigar village, who has bought air tickets worth ₹68,000 to enable his migrant workers to return to their village in Bihar. He has also given each of them a cash advance of ₹3,000 so that they do not face any hardship on return, besides getting their medical certificates. According to Gehlot's reports, Gehlot, who has been taking care of their food and accommodation since the lockdown began on March 25, did not want them to walk home given the risks, including those of accidents, involved. Interestingly, one of the reports has quoted him as saying that he had made several attempts to send them back to their home States by a Shramik Special train but could not manage to do so.

Another shining example is that of Akshay Kothawale, a 30-year-old auto driver in Pune, who is spending the ₹200,000 he had saved, to help and assist to feed migrant workers and those in distress in the streets. With the help of his friends who have chipped in, he is feeding 400 people every day besides ferrying senior citizens and pregnant women to clinics.

Another example is that of the alumni association of the Bengaluru-based National Law School raising funds to charter an Air Asia Boeing A-320 aircraft to send 169 migrant workers and five children home from Mumbai to Ranchi in Jharkhand. According to Sheyl Trehan, one of those involved in the



venture, it was carried out in cooperation with Priya Sharma of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of IIT, Mumbai.

There are many other examples of individuals and NGOs going out of their way to help migrant labourers and urban poor. They, however, constitute a small slice of the population. The overwhelming majority could not care less or are hostile. The indifference is manifest even in the case of the havoc wrought by the super-cyclone Amphan, which has devastated huge tracts in West Bengal and parts of Odisha. West Bengal bore the brunt of it. There were not more than 86 deaths thanks to the State Government's excellent work in evacuating people. The physical damage has been crippling. The Sunderbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and a wildlife sanctuary, has virtually been destroyed. Hundreds and thousands of people have been rendered homeless. Crops over thousands of square kilometres have been lost. According to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, over 5,000 trees have been uprooted in the city—the figure may have been as high as 10,000 if the adjacent areas are included. Hundreds of lamp posts have been destroyed. Yet, having satisfied their voyeuristic instincts

in front of television sets, the overwhelming majority outside West Bengal and Odisha is now obsessed with COVID-19 and the threat the pandemic poses to them. And this despite the fact that COVID-19, the first case of which was reported in India on January 30, 2020, has been killing far fewer people compared to road accidents and other causes. Thus, according to the latest figures, there have been over 166,000 cases, 71,196 cures and 4,706 deaths. This means, on a rough average, over 36 deaths per day since January 30. In sharp contrast, there are on an average 1,214 traffic accidents and 377 deaths from such mishaps, every day. There were 5.45 crore cases of, and 28 lakh cases of deaths from cardiovascular diseases in India in 2016.

It is this hysteria worked up over the COVID-19 pandemic which is one of the main reasons making this "the worst of times" in terms of the cruelty arising therefrom, and also the hypocrisy laid bare by the mismatch between official expressions of concern for migrant workers and their inhuman treatment on the ground. It is not just the fiasco of the efforts to take them home by special trains earmarked exclusively for them. It is also the widely

manifest attitude of not being sympathetic to the terrible suffering of migrant workers on highways, roads, airports, railway stations and inter-State borders—and regarding them as untouchables to be consigned to the peripheries of their villages or neighbourhood by locals fearing them spreading infection. And this despite wide dissemination through media of the fact that COVID-19 infects one only through close personal contact and home quarantine is good enough. Even single women and children are not spared!

The basic reason is fear and, in its fundamental sub-statum, that of death. This is understandable. There is neither cure nor as yet a vaccine for COVID-19. Exaggerated fear, in the teeth of the availability of information, which shows its lack of basis, is however, irrational and unwarranted. Like all fears, it should have been contained by an application of will. This has not happened. Instead, the majority of people in this country has been enveloped by a wild terror that has led to the better of their humane instincts and rationality.

This leads to two other segments of Dickens' observation, "It was the age of foolishness," and "it was the spring of hope, it was the

SOUNDBITE

The Government's silence about the border situation with China is fuelling massive speculation and uncertainty at a time of crisis. It must come clean and tell India exactly what's happening.

Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi

This pandemic has reminded us that not everyone has the luxury to stay at home, and we have to be mindful and try helping in whatever way possible.

Actor
—Huma S Qureshi

Have a big conflict... India and China. Two countries with 1.4 billion people (each) and very powerful militaries. India is not happy and probably China is not happy.

US President
—Donald Trump

At this stage, we cannot say that there is community spread of COVID-19 in Kerala. But, we are on the brink of community spread as cases have gone up.

Kerala CM
—Pinarayi Vijayan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reforms in PDS

Sir—This refers to the article, "Pandemic and PDS" (May 28) by Santosh Biswal and Utam Chakraborty. It needs to be clarified that the exercise of State-wise coverage within the overall national coverage of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) was done by the Planning Commission using 68th round of NSSO Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (2011-12). The estimation took into account the monthly per capita expenditure of States and the inter-State price differentials to arrive at the consumption cut-offs for rural and urban areas for each State/UT. This was thereafter used to arrive at the percentage of persons falling below that cut-off level of expenditure separately for rural and urban areas. These percentages were then applied on the 2011 population Census to arrive at the number of persons in each State/UT both in rural and urban areas. This yielded the eligible population in the rural and urban areas in each State/UT.

The Planning Commission methodology is such that the coverage under NFSA is higher for those States/UTs, where the size of the population below the cut-off level of expenditure is relatively large in proportion to their total population vis-à-vis those States where the proportion was smaller. Thus, while the all-India coverage is up to 75 per cent of the rural and up to 50 per cent of the urban population, this percentage is much higher for the less developed States/UTs. For instance, in Assam 84.17 per cent of the rural population and 60.35 per cent of the urban population is covered under

Private hospitals must share the burden

This refers to the editorial, "The cost of care" (May 29). The Supreme Court has rightly questioned private hospitals for not giving free COVID treatment to affected patients. It is a fact that the growing number of cases has crippled Government hospitals. There is a need for private hospitals to coordinate with the Government to tide over the crisis. The Bench, headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde, has asked the Government to identify and list of hospitals where COVID patients can be treated free of cost. At least the private hospitals can waive consultation, laboratory and ward charges for patients. The cost of medicines can be borne by them, too. In Government hospitals, too, at least 25 per cent of the cost of treatment and medicines should be borne by the patients. Then people will be careful enough to stay away from infected people. Since the Government has been bearing the treatment cost, some people are not following



the guidelines. In many places, COVID warriors have also been attacked. Also, it is unfair to expect private hospitals to attend only to COVID patients. Those suffering from other diseases should not be neglected. As things stand now, other patients have been mainly neglected with some fatalities as well.

KV Seetharamiah
Hassan

"One nation, one ration card" is already enabled in 17 States/UTs. So far, 146 LMT foodgrains have been delivered to NFSA beneficiaries during April and May 2020 under regular NFSA and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY). Further, distribution is also under progress. Also, the Atma Nirbar Bharat Abhiyan is being implemented to reach out to all such people who may not have NFSA or State ration cards, including migrants/stranded migrants but are in need for temporary ration.

A proper review of the above initiatives on a factual basis should have been done before naming some States as "doubly disadvantaged." This is a lack of proper understanding of facts and ongoing reforms, which often leads to unsubstantiated criticism of the PDS of having an imaginary in-built inequity. The Government always welcomes further improvement in the system and is open to any constructive criticism as it helps in improvement of the system for the benefit of the poor.

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Build cyber resilience

As cyber attacks soar, a data recovery plan must be fully integrated within the business and align with its cloud strategy



RIPU BAJWA

During these extraordinary times, when the world is fighting against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, other threats like the danger of catastrophic cyber attacks have fast mushroomed alongside. As business leaders come face to face with rising cases across the world and in India, the need to be prepared with better data security solutions arises. The World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report, 2020* ranks cyber attacks as the second risk of greatest concern to businesses in the coming decade. As the tools of the Darknet become more sophisticated and accessible, cyber attacks are becoming increasingly borderless — taking advantage of jurisdictional constraints of regional authorities.

According to an industry research by Frost & Sullivan, 46 per cent of Indian organisations that are in the process of digital transformation have encountered a security incident in 2019. In fact, as per another industry report released recently, India witnessed a two to three-fold increase in the number of cyber attack incidents during the ongoing lockdown that began on March 25.

As it is, cybercrime constitutes a serious problem for India even outside of crisis periods. India was among the top five most targeted countries in the world by cyber criminals in recent years, reflecting the significant amount of work still outstanding in strengthening the nation's cyber defences. Though it is a positive development that more than 550 million Indians have connected to the Internet in recent years, fuelled by rural growth, this comes with its own set of problems. The rapid proliferation of Internet users and of the Internet of Things (IoT) has also left the country's public and private sectors vulnerable. We are seeing more and more large-scale data loss and the rise of ransomware attacks — so business resilience planning is key to survival.

Why medium-sized businesses must act now: Reacting in real time to a cyber attack is already too late. Managing the risk requires agility, meticulous alignment across the business and testing to maintain awareness. It is all about being proactive rather than reactive. Cyber resilience is more important than ever as medium-sized businesses assess their risk of being attacked, whether at the hands of criminals or as collateral damage in cyber warfare. Any data loss can put the nails in the coffin for unprepared businesses. While today's business leaders may hope to evade the hit-list, it is a matter of "when" not "if" an attack happens.

Defending against catastrophic data loss: Defending a medium-sized business from the worst-case scenario and mission-critical data loss requires cyber security expertise and a holistic approach to resilience. Awareness needs to be built across the business — this is not just a technical problem. Synergy between technology and business processes is where true resilience is attained. Learning on cyber experts when it comes to planning and implementation will help businesses identify key applications, recovery times and objectives.

Every arm of the business needs to understand where its most sensitive data and services are parked and the level of risk around them. To understand the level of risk, an agile approach is needed because risk changes along with the business landscape. For this reason, regular scans and analysis of the internal landscape are essential to understand these changes and the impact.

Protecting a huge portfolio of assets is not easy, especially as it expands. But every business must understand what its DNA is — that's the critical 10-15 per cent of data that must be protected at all costs. This is the lifeblood of an organisation and, in the event of a cyber-attack, is the difference between its life and death. It is business-critical and must be decided upon with a holistic view. For some organisations, this can often lead to analysis paralysis — the desire to save it all. In the same way that we would only carry our most essential belongings from a burning home, businesses must decide upon their most prized data so that it can be protected and used to recover the business in the aftermath.

There is a cure: The good news is this process can be simplified by data protection and cyber-security services that enable organisations to establish policy-driven automated workflows to move business-critical data into an isolated environment and lock it down in less than five steps. This is called a cyber-vault, the ultimate protection for a business' DNA.

In the event of an attack, this data will help businesses to recover. When responding to cyber incidents and working to bring critical systems and data back online, accuracy and simplicity matter. A cyber recovery plan must be fully integrated within the business and align with its cloud strategy.

Businesses are increasingly aware of the dangers of a cyber attack but they need to truly invest in cyber resilience in order to shore up the gaps in the ever-changing work environment. And cyber security expertise is vital. The clock is ticking, it's not a matter of "if" but "when" and businesses need to be prepared.

(The writer is Director and General Manager, Data Protection Solutions, Dell Technologies)

WE CAN'T ALLOW SOME PLATFORMS TO HAND-PICK THE SPEECH THAT AMERICANS MAY ACCESS. THIS WILL BE A BIG DAY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA AND FAIRNESS.

—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



THE PRESIDENT IS TRAMPLING THE FIRST AMENDMENT BY THREATENING THE FUNDAMENTAL FREE SPEECH RIGHTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

—PRESIDENT OF NETCHOICE STEVE DELBIANCO

The perfect blend

Blended finance combines public sector and philanthropic monies as catalytic capital to raise multiples of private sector monies, which help scale up the flow of funding to sustainable projects



SOURAJIT AIYER SANDEEP BHATTACHARYA

As sustainability becomes mainstream, it is becoming a well-acknowledged fact that the planet just does not possess the resources required for us to maintain our current consumption patterns and emulate the aspirational lifestyles of the future. The estimated growth in global population to 10 billion in the not too distant future is an added headwind. This situation has meant that driving efficiencies in resource usage is fast coming into public discourse to reduce the carbon footprint. This is translating into necessary assets that would need funding. Such examples abound, like fuel-efficient cars, migration of public transport to e-vehicles, high-speed rail in place of airlines, urban Mass Rapid Transit trains substituting fuel-run vehicles, micro grids for far-flung communities instead of diesel generators and so on.

While these assets, which are typically part of large-scale transformational projects, are funded either by the Government or by concessional loans from development financial institutions, public capital is not going to fulfil the need for the trillions of dollars of investment the planet requires to scale up projects that would usher in the desired sustainability goals.

However, the biggest challenge to bringing private sector capital to the fact that most projects do not offer commercially-viable returns, owing to high upfront costs, long payback, remote location of some projects, nascent technologies and in certain cases, political uncertainties, weak institutional frameworks and so on.

This is where blended finance has come up as a solution in this context. It combines public sector and philanthropic monies as catalytic capital to raise multiples of private sector monies, which help scale up the flow of funding to sustainable projects, while yielding substantial economic benefits to all stakeholders.

The blended finance structure addresses the project's perceived risks, thereby helping increase the size and number of funding opportunities. It comprises funding, which may or may not be concessional, supported with one or more elements like guarantees, political risk insurance, performance insurance, outcome-based funding, interest subvention, concessional or off-market local currency hedging, project preparation grants and so on.

This combination can make the projects' terms viable for private sector capital and for the project developer, who otherwise may not have met the criteria without the assistance these supporting mechanisms bring in.

Among the emerging markets, India is leading the way by developing successful blended finance models. These are worth emulating in other markets that have a similar development profile as India in order to bring blended finance to a global scale.

In India, the Government's Viability Gap Funding (VGF) model is one such success story. Launched in 2004, it supports projects under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mechanism. VGF grants were made essentially for infrastructure projects where private sector sponsors were selected via competitive bidding. The grant was disbursed at the construction stage after the private sector developer made an equity contribution towards the project. This grant is typically 20 per cent of the project's capital cost and is allocated from the Government's budget.

The Government then went a step ahead by defining the norms of how VGF would apply to utility-scale renewable energy projects, specifying

“ IN THE END, COMPULSIONS LIKE CLIMATE CHANGE, GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, SUBSTITUTING THE IMPORT COST OF FOSSIL FUELS AND DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH 'GREEN SECTORS' WILL NECESSITATE AN URGENT SCALE-UP IN SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS. TO ACHIEVE THIS, INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS TO RAISE DEDICATED GREEN CAPITAL WILL HOLD THE KEY, ESPECIALLY AS INDIAN BANKS CANNOT ALWAYS FUND THE LONG MATURITIES THAT SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS ENTAIL. WHILE BLENDED FINANCE CANNOT SOLVE ALL THE ISSUES, IT CAN CERTAINLY ADDRESS SOME OF THE BARRIERS



the role of the Solar Energy Corporation of India in terms of evaluation, disbursement and monitoring.

Another example is that of CKERS Finance and Rockefeller Foundation. In 2018, their partnership involves an investment by Rockefeller in the Delhi-based sustainable energy Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) to build a \$50 million asset financing portfolio for scaling up India's decentralised renewable energy segment (DRE). The Rockefeller investment would help CKERS provide funding access at reasonable rates and terms to build the sustainable energy portfolio about 10 per cent of which would be in mini-grids. While the national grid has reached almost all places in India, the quality of supply remains erratic and thus DRE solutions like micro and mini-grid hold value.

Then there is the US-India Clean Energy Finance (USICEF) programme, which supports distributed solar power projects through grants specifically for early-stage project preparation support. Managed by the Climate Policy Initiative, it is a partnership between India's renewable energy ministry, the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and others. Developers apply to theUSICEF, which maintains an empanelled list of service providers (legal and professional services consultancies and so on) and engages them with the grant.

The project preparation support makes these developers investment-ready to raise funding from OPIC and other like-minded firms. The average grant is only about \$0.1 million or so but this is a significant challenge for the developers given the small scales and the limitations they face in resources and talent acquisition.

This programme, with a total \$3.5 million grant committed so far, has supported several rooftop solar, small ground-mounted and solar home system projects across more than a dozen Indian States. Last is the "pay for success" outcome funder model. Gramen Impact Investment, a Mumbai-based impact NBFC, launched social impact bonds addressing women's livelihood and

empowerment, youths' skill-development and clean energy. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending by organisations in India has risen exponentially in recent years, mostly towards health and education. However, India's Human Development Index score, which includes mostly health and education indicators, has hardly improved.

While CSR is only one component of India's social sector spending, this does give some indication that actual achievement of outcomes is perhaps found wanting at times. The outcome funder model attempts to close this gap. The predefined outcome metrics are independently verified by third-party evaluators for on-ground achievement, only upon which the outcome funder (a philanthropy or CSR fund) would meet the enterprise's interest and/or principle obligations — thus "pay for success".

This ensures that the philanthropic resources are leveraged in a manner that will help achieve outcomes far more than what direct spending could possibly do. Other blended models abound globally, each of which can potentially be replicated in India. The US-India Catalytic Solar Finance Facility used catalytic, first-loss capital to create risk-mitigation facilities. The Grid Solar Fund, which funds off-grid solar companies, raised \$10 million in political risk insurance from OPIC to attract investments from the private sector.

Climate Investor One Fund raised blended capital at about 1.7 times multiple with a tiered-structure, which bifurcates capital into first-loss, subordinated equity and debt with credit guarantee. Long enough to get the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere back down to a safe level, certainly, which would be at least a matter of decades. But even without knowing the answers to these questions, we clearly need to speed up research and testing of the various potential techniques for geo-engineering now.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work')

blended capital only at about 0.8 times multiple.

Models apart, another merit of blended finance is that it can cover areas traditionally unserved by conventional funding like US' Prime Coalition, which invests in early-stage clean energy technologies, the Africa Clean Energy Facility, which focuses on project preparation and expects to raise a multiple of about 20 times its grants and IFC-GEF's China Utility Energy Efficiency Programme, which helped local banks lend for energy efficiency.

Blended finance can also mobilise commercial bank participation as seen in Dutch bank FMO's Guarantoo that grants partial credit guarantees to local banks, Indonesia's Sarulla geothermal project that used a political risk guarantee from Japan's JICA and a guarantee letter from the Indonesian Government to bring in commercial bank funding, German KfW and ResponsAbility's Global Climate Partnership Fund that refinances green lending schemes of local banks, and Africa Development Bank's Facility for Energy Inclusion that combines commercial capital for small-scale energy access projects.

In the end, compulsions like climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, substituting the import cost of fossil fuels and driving economic growth through "green sectors" will necessitate an urgent scale-up in sustainability projects. To achieve this, innovative mechanisms to raise dedicated green capital will hold the key, especially as Indian banks cannot always fund the long maturities that sustainability projects entail. While blended finance cannot solve all the issues, it can certainly address some of the barriers. The models discussed in this article have already shown demonstrable value which makes them worth emulating. Most of them can be potentially replicated and scaled up further to fund India's multitude sustainability challenges. Emerging markets with similar challenges to India should also take note.

(Aiyer is Consultant, South Asia Fast Track Sustainability Communications and Bhattacharya is India Projects Manager, Climate Bonds Initiative)

Climate change lessons from the Corona crisis

We clearly need to speed up research and testing of the various potential techniques for geo-engineering now



GWYNNE DYER

Human beings respond well to a familiar crisis, especially if it is also imminent. They don't do nearly as well when the threat is unfamiliar and still apparently quite distant. Consider our response to the current Coronavirus threat. Countries in East Asia with recent experience of similar viruses like SARS and so on immediately responded with "test, track and isolate" drills, plus instant lockdowns if the virus had already

gained a foothold in the population. Other countries, just as rich and well-educated, had the same information but they waited several months before taking emergency measures that upset the comfortable routine of their lives. So the US, UK and France all ended up with death rates per million more than 50 times higher than China, Korea and Japan.

The same applies to global heating, except that in this case we are all Americans. None of us has prior experience of a genuine climate crisis and although we have known enough about what's going to happen to justify urgent action for 30 years now, we have done nothing decisive about it. We have lots of "clean" technology but total demand for energy has grown so fast that we are still getting a steady 80 per cent of our energy from fossil fuels. Realistically, this is not going to change much. We are who we are,

shaped by millions of years of evolution and our ancestors didn't do long-term planning; they had to concentrate on acute short-term problems. A truly serious response to the climate threat will, therefore, come only when it is starting to hurt. Unfortunately, by then it will probably be too late.

The Earth system — the biosphere, atmosphere, the oceans, the rocks, all the components that govern the climate — plays by its own rules. It will absorb new inputs like warming for a long time while changing as little as possible. It is a "homeostatic" system. We are still benefiting from this feature now: A full degree Celsius of warming already and not much to show for it except hotter summers, shorter winters and bigger storms. But when the pressure on the climate system gets too great — reaches a tipping point — it is liable to charge off in

unpredictable directions at high speed. "Non-linear change," they call it and we won't like it a bit. Hundreds of millions, maybe billions, will start to die. Then we will be ready to make great changes to save ourselves but it will be too late. Human systems will be collapsing under the impact of famines, wars and endless waves of refugees. And besides, once the climate hits non-linear change, it is almost impossible to bring it back. We're stuck with whatever it ends up, whether that new state will support a large human civilisation or not.

How far ahead is this calamity? We probably have at least a decade or two. Will we end all our greenhouse gas emissions in that time? Probably not. Cutting our emissions isn't enough. We have to stop all of our emissions before we push the climate system over the edge and we don't even know precisely where the edge

is. Every bit of emissions we can cut now gives us a little more time before we reach the edge, but the global population will still be going up and people in the poorer countries will still be increasing their energy use. (It's their turn and you can't deny them that.) So, the crisis almost certainly will arrive and then we will finally be willing to make radical changes. What we will desperately need at that point is more time. That's why we will need geo-engineering. This is not a cure; it is a way of temporarily counteracting the warming caused by our emissions of greenhouse gases by reflecting a small part of the incoming sunlight in one way or another. In fact, you could say that it is "positive" geo-engineering, as opposed to the large-scale "negative" geo-engineering we have been doing for the last two centuries by dumping huge amounts of warming gases into the atmosphere.

When we are finally ready to act decisively on global warming, we will need a window of time to make the changes that are required to preserve this global civilisation and the biosphere it now dominates. Only geo-engineering can create that window. We don't need to start geo-engineering now. It would be wonderful if we never have to do it but that would take a miracle. We cannot know how long we would have to go on doing it, either. Long enough to get the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere back down to a safe level, certainly, which would be at least a matter of decades. But even without knowing the answers to these questions, we clearly need to speed up research and testing of the various potential techniques for geo-engineering now.



FOREIGN EYE



LOW SPIRITS ON THE HIGH STREET
Shops shutting, jobs lost, massive commercial landlords wiped out. The future of our community hubs looks bleak. Building a replacement will require more public intervention and tax breaks for firms which employ and procure supplies locally. It won't be easy but it is an opportunity. *(The Guardian editorial)*

WESTERN COUNTRIES WARNED

Hong Kong internal matter, don't interfere: China

Beijing: China has lodged diplomatic protests with the US, the UK, Canada and Australia for 'interfering' in its internal matters by criticising its new security law for Hong Kong...

work, the four allies said in the statement, referring to the arrangement under which Hong Kong, a former British colony, was handed back to China in 1997.

impose sanctions on Hong Kong, Zhao reminded Washington about its extensive trade and commercial interest in the city and said China would retaliate with counter-measures.

Protest in Hong Kong

Hong Kong: Dozens of people protested in a mall in Hong Kong on Friday following a vote by China's ceremonial parliament to approve legislation that could severely restrict opposition political activity and civil society in the Asian financial center.

China says it will prohibit separatist activities and actions that might threaten the Communist Party's monopoly on political power in mainland China.

UK to extend visa rights for HK unless China 'steps back'

London: The UK government has said that it is open to extending the visa rights of British National Overseas (BNO) passport holders in Hong Kong to offer them a path to the country's citizenship unless China 'steps back' from a new security law in the former British territory.

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Asia, and speak out for those who we know so well back in the region. We should also build partnerships that can defend the rule of law worldwide," he said.

Trump calls Minneapolis protesters 'thugs', vows action

Washington: President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to take action to bring the city of Minneapolis "under control," calling violent protesters outraged by the death of a black man in police custody "thugs" and saying that "when the rioting starts, the shooting starts."



A protester carries a US flag upside, a sign of distress, next to a burning building in Minneapolis on Thursday

order challenging the site's liability protections. Trump, who has often remained silent in the aftermath of police-involved killings and has a long history of defending police, has been uncharacteristically vocal this time, saying earlier Thursday that he felt "very, very badly" about Floyd's death and calling video capturing his struggle "a very shocking sight."

aggressive as violence boiled over in Minneapolis on Thursday night. "These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen," he wrote shortly before 1 am.

Minneapolis police station torched

AP ■ MINNEAPOLIS Cheering protesters torched a Minneapolis police station that the department abandoned as three days of violent protests spread to nearby St Paul and angry demonstrations flared across the US over the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man who pleaded for air as a white police officer knelt on his neck.

7 shot at Louisville protest over fatal police shooting

Louisville (US): At least seven people were shot in Louisville as protesters turned out to demand justice for Breonna Taylor, a black woman fatally shot by police in her home in March.

Malaysia's Mahathir ousted from party amid power struggle

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has been ousted from his ethnic Malay political party in the latest twist of a power struggle with his successor, but he has vowed to challenge the move.

been accused of massive corruption. Mahathir, a two-time prime minister, resigned in protest. Mahathir has said he will have the majority support of lawmakers and has called for a no-confidence vote against Muhyiddin.

Party letters sent to the five said their membership had ceased. Mahathir said he had the opposition block during a half-day Parliament sitting on May 18.

Twitter again flags Trump's tweet, says it violated rules about 'glorifying violence'

Washington: A defiant Twitter on Friday flagged a fresh tweet from Donald Trump in which he said he "violated the Twitter Rules about glorifying violence."

looting starts, the shooting starts" in reference to the ongoing unrest in Minneapolis following the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed African American man who pleaded for air as a white police officer knelt on his neck.

Trump feeling 'absolutely great' after taking HCCQ: WH

PTI ■ WASHINGTON US President Donald Trump on Friday said he was feeling "absolutely great" after taking a two-week dose of antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine and will take it again if he thinks he is exposed to the coronavirus, a top White House official has said.

Minorities in Pak's KPK allowed to worship at religious places

Peshawar: Minority communities like Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province were allowed on Friday to hold prayers and worship at their religious sites by following social distancing and other measures enforced to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

UN urges \$2.4 billion to help Yemen cope with war and virus

United Nations: The U.N. Humanitarian chief urgently appealed for \$2.4 billion to help millions of people in Yemen cope with the conflict and COVID-19, saying programs are already being cut and the situation is "alarming."

France reports highest single-day rise in virus cases

Paris: France has reported more than 5,000 new daily coronavirus infections in its biggest such one-day rise in more than three weeks - and the first major increase since France started gradually reopening May 11.

Debate over \$600 in jobless aid to intensify as claims rise

Washington: A debate in Congress over whether to extend \$600 a week in federal jobless benefits to the unemployed looks sure to intensify with the number of people receiving the aid now topping 30 million - one in five workers.

Around the Globe

Kathmandu: Nepal on Friday registered its highest single-day surge in coronavirus cases with 170 new infections, taking the COVID-19 tally in the country to over 1,200, the health ministry said.

South Africa has virus testing backlog of nearly 100,000

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG "We understand this tragedy will certainly test you," the ministry said in a message to her colleagues, adding that the government is committed to providing proper protective gear.

South Africa has conducted more tests for the virus than any other country in Africa - more than 655,000 - and has the most confirmed cases with 27,493.

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Markets march higher for third day

POST WEEKLY GAINS

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks finished in the green for the third session on the trot on Friday as investors scooped up FMCG, finance and banking stocks despite negative overseas cues and rising COVID-19 cases. Investors were cautious on India further relaxing lockdown norms next week, though they were also cautious ahead of release of Q4 GDP data, analysts said.

After a gap-down opening, the 30-share BSE Sensex picked up pace in late-afternoon trading to finish at 32,424.10, up 223.51 points or 0.69 per cent.

On similar lines, the NSE Nifty advanced 90.20 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 9,580.30. During the holiday-shortened week, the Sensex rallied 1,751.51 points or 5.71 per cent, while the Nifty surged 541.05 points or 5.98 per cent.

ONGC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack on Friday, jumping 5.32 per cent, followed by Bajaj Auto, ITC, Sun Pharma, Nestle India, L&T, Hero MotoCorp and Maruti. On the other hand, Infosys, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS and Titan were among the laggards, shedding up to 2.25 per cent.

Besides stock-specific action, heavy foreign fund inflows led buying confidence to domestic investors, analysts said. On a net basis, foreign portfolio investors bought equities worth ₹2,33,38,14,42 crore on Thursday, provisional exchange data showed.

₹ settles 14 paise higher at 75.62 against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 14 paise to provisionally close at 75.62 against the US dollar on Friday as foreign fund inflows and weak American currency boosted investor confidence.

Forex traders said investors are awaiting the country's gross domestic product data for the January-March period, due later in the day, for further cues.

The rupee opened at 75.71 at the interbank forex market, gained further ground, and finally settled at 75.62, up 14 paise over its last close.

It had settled at 75.76 against the US dollar on Thursday.

LABOUR MINISTRY DATA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for industrial workers eased to 5.45 per cent in April 2020 from 8.33 per cent in the same month a year ago, mainly due to lower prices of certain food items and petrol, officials said.

"Year-on-year inflation based on all items stood at 5.45 per cent for April 2020 as compared to 5.50 per cent for the previous month and 8.33 per cent during the corresponding month of the previous year," a Labour Ministry statement said. Food inflation stood at 6.56 per cent in April 2020 against 6.67 per cent of the previous month (March 2020) and 4.92 per cent during the corresponding month (April 2019) a year ago, it said.

Lauding the efforts of the Labour Bureau which collects and analyses Consumer Price Index-Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said the cost

of living index' data collection and release by the bureau in these difficult times during the lockdown is commendable and would go a long way to help in policy making in the country.

The CPI-IW is used to work out hike in dearness allowance and dearness relief for over 1 crore central Government employees and pensioners.

The All-India CPI-IW for April 2020 increased by 3

points and stood at 329. On 1-month percentage change, it increased by (+) 0.92 per cent, compared to (+) 0.97 per cent rise between corresponding months of previous year.

The maximum upward pressure on current index came from food group contributing (+) 2.43 percentage points to the total change.

At item level, rice, wheat, wheat atta, arhar dal, moong dal, mustard oil, fish, fresh, goat

meat, poultry (chicken), brinjal, cabbage, cauliflower, french bean, green coriander leaves, lady's finger, palak, potato, radish, tomato, banana, lemon, mango (ripe), sugar, cooking gas, etc are responsible for the increase in index. However, it said that this increase was checked by garlic, onion, parwal, petrol, flowers/lower garlands, etc, putting downward pressure on the index.

At centre level, Doodh, Doodh Tinsukia recorded the

maximum increase of 14 points followed by Salem (12 points) and Surat (10 points). On the contrary, Chhindwara, Vadodra, Bhilai, Yamanagar and Jamshedpur recorded a decrease of 1 point each. Rest of 12 centres' indices remained stationary. The indices of 23 centres are above all India index and 44 centres' indices are below national average. The index of Rourkela centre remained at par with all-India index.

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8 core sector output drops by record 38.1 pc in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The output of eight core infrastructure industries plunged by a record 38.1 per cent in April as the nationwide lockdown to contain coronavirus pandemic caused a substantial loss of production across sectors.

The production of coal, natural gas, refinery products, steel, cement and electricity contracted in double digits in the month, according to official data released on Friday. The eight core sectors had expanded by 5.2 per cent in April 2019 while in March 2020 the sectors had contracted by 9 per cent.

"In view of nationwide lockdown during April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, various industries - coal, cement, steel, natural gas, refinery, crude oil etc experienced substantial loss of production," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement.

Production of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity contracted by 15.5

per cent, 6.4 per cent, 19.9 per cent, 24.2 per cent, 15.5 per cent, 83.9 per cent, 86 per cent, 22.8 per cent, respectively. During 2019-20, core industries recorded 0.6 per cent growth against 4.4 per cent in 2018-19.

The record contraction in the growth rate of eight core sectors contributed to a broad-based contraction across eight core sectors, it had a differential impact on the extent to which activity was curtailed in the various constituents.

While data on automobile production has not been explicitly released for April 2020, the output is likely to have been close to zero as most plants were shut for a large part of the month during the lockdown," Nayyar said. Based on the available trends, he anticipates a contraction of 75-80 per cent in industrial output in April 2020.

GST Council to meet next month

Fin Min not for raising rates on non-essential items

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry is not in favour of increasing goods and services tax rates on non-essential items in the next month's meeting of the GST Council, despite depressed revenue collections due to the nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19.

If goods and services tax rates are increased on non-essential items, sources said it will further bring down demand and impede the overall economic recovery. Post the lockdown, demand has been induced and economic activity has to improve on all fronts.

UK plans new 5G club of 10 democracies, including India: Report

PTI ■ LONDON

The British Government has approached the US with the prospect of creating a 5G club of 10 democracies, including India, amid growing security concerns related to Chinese telecom giant Huawei, according to a UK news report.

A so-called "D10" club of democratic partners, including G7 countries - UK, US, Italy, Germany, France, Japan and Canada - plus Australia, South Korea and India will aim to create alternative suppliers of 5G equipment and other technologies to avoid relying on China, 'The Times' reported.

The move to speed up such a club comes as the UK launched an inquiry into Huawei's involvement in the country's mobile network upgrade in the wake of US sanctions against the company.

EPCEs Sudden sealing of State borders making difficult to operate in Capital

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking a stable policy for operations of units amid COVID-19, a representative body of special economic zones on Friday flagged that sudden sealing of borders in the National Capital Region is making it difficult for businesses to operate factories.

"We request that either a nationwide stable policy may be issued, applicable in all the states for the running of businesses or don't put any operative guidelines and compliances for trade and industry and not to pressurise payment of salaries to workers without any business," Export Promotion Council for Special Economic Zones and Export Oriented Units (EPCEs) said.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi

TENDER NOTICE Date: 30.05.2020

Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for following job from all bidders

Sl. No.	Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Due Date	Date & Time of Opening
01C/R20-211	Road Restoration works in Mehrauli Area Nagar, New Delhi	14,00,00,00	28/05/20	19.05.2020
SVI/RAN/059	Disinfection of Road (under PWID, SMC & Flood Control)	2,80,00,00	15/05/20	16/00 HRS

For details of Bidding Documents, Terms and Conditions, purchase/bidder information visit the website: www.bsesdelhi.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Through this publication it is notified to all general public that, my clients Sh. Harshada Bherwal S/o Late Sh. Ramnath Bherwal and Smt. Narayani Daud W/o Sh. Harshada Bherwal R/o 03/24-B, Harsh Niwas, Laxmi Park, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110032 anant, withdraw and annul their previous public notice circulated in Vardhika News Paper on 02nd Oct on 2012 regarding discharging/obscuring their son, Sh. Sonu Bherwal, all movable or immovable properties and now their son has equal rights like his brother in all their properties movable or immovable and other assets with immediate effect.

KAMAL SAXENA (Advocate)
Ch. No. 42/2 Western Wing, T-1 Hazratganj, Delhi-110064

FIN MIN OFFICIAL No decision taken on setting up bad bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Friday said there is no decision taken on the proposal of setting up a Government sponsored bad bank to help ease pressure on lenders with regard to non-performing assets which are likely to witness a surge due to the COVID-19 crisis. Even the Finance Ministry 2017 had proposed this idea, suggesting the creation of a bad bank called Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency to help tide over the problem of stressed assets.

Appeal from Ministry of Railways to Passengers

New Delhi: Indian Railways has been running Shramik special Trains on a daily basis throughout the country to ensure that migrants can travel back to their homes.

It has been observed that some people who are availing this service have pre-existing medical conditions which aggravates the risk they face during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A few unfortunate cases of deaths related to pre-existing medical conditions while travelling have happened.

ORIENTAL NAGPUR BETUL HIGHWAY LIMITED

Regd. Off.: G-81 Commercial Block, Axis 5th Floor, Hospitality, District, (G. Aligarh, New Delhi-110031)

Tel: 91-11-41484611/314101 Fax: 91-11-41484611/314102

CIN: U45400DL2016PLC230648

(AUDITED HALF YEARLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST MARCH 2020)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Half Year Ended 31.03.2020 (Audited)	Half Year Ended 31.03.2019 (Audited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	31.03.2019 (Audited)
1	Total Income from operations (net)	19,878.69	19,847.71	31,059.94	29,739.90
2	Less: Provision for the period (Income Tax and Exceptional Items)	12,828.58	12,847.71	31,059.94	29,739.90
3	Net Profit/loss for the period after tax (after Exceptional Items)	6,950.11	6,999.99	7,999.99	9,999.99
4	Net Profit/loss for the period before tax (after Exceptional Items)	1,813.45	1,813.45	1,813.45	1,813.45
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Including Profit/loss for the period before tax and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	11,763.56	10,813.44	10,813.44	10,813.44
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	50,192.50	100,000.00	50,192.50	100,000.00
7	Reserves (Including Revaluation Reserve)	41,035.22	9,982.60	41,035.22	9,982.55
8	Net Worth	91,227.72	109,982.60	91,227.72	109,982.55
9	Debt Equity Ratio	2.36:1	2.43:1	2.36:1	2.43:1
10	Equities per Share (₹) (FV 10/- each)	56.18	57.46	123.54	100.00
11	Dividend	50.96	52.46	123.54	100.00
12	Dividend Retention Reserve	50,192.50	63,192.50	50,192.50	63,192.50
13	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	1.30:1	1.41:1	1.44:1	1.42:1
14	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	1.97:1	1.11:1	2.21:1	2.09:1

Notes:
a) The above is an extract of the audited financial statements filed with the Stock Exchange of India (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full form of the audited financial statements are available on the websites of the Stock Exchanges and the listed entity (URL of the website).
b) The above financial results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at their meeting on May 20, 2020.
c) Ratios have been computed as follows:
(i) Debt Equity Ratio = Total Debt/Equity, where:
(i) Equity represents issued, subscribed and paid up share capital and other equity
(ii) Total Debt = Total Current liabilities and long term borrowings excluding deferred payment liabilities and finance lease obligations
(iii) Interest Service Coverage Ratio = Earnings before interest costs, tax and depreciation/finance costs
(iv) Debt Service Coverage Ratio = Earnings before finance costs, tax and depreciation/finance costs + net principal repayment of paid up debt capital during the period/year
(v) Net worth represents:
(i) Paid up equity capital: issued, subscribed and paid up share capital.
(ii) For the items referred to in clauses (a), (b), (c) and (d) of the Regulations (2015) of the Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the permitted disclosures have been made to the Stock Exchange and can be accessed on the URL (specify URL).
For and on behalf of Board of Directors of Oriental Nagpur Betul Highway Limited
Nitin Jain, Director
Date: 29.05.2020

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED WOMAN

General public is hereby informed that this woman namely Raj Shri W/o Amit Kumar R/o H.No. B-13-A, Amar Colony, Nangloi, Delhi Age: 22 years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'2", Face: Round, wearing green colour suit-salwar and lady chappie in feet, has been missing/kidnapped since 28.01.2020 from the area of P.S. Nangloi, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 57-A dated 28.01.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Nangloi, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing/kidnapped woman may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail: clc@cbi.gov.in
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Fax: 24368639
Tel: 24368638/24368641

SHO: P.S. Nangloi, Delhi
Ph: 011-25947225
25949470

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unknown male, name and address unknown. Age: about 32 years, Height: 5'7", Complexion: wheatish, Face: long, Build: medium wearing white and black shirt blue colour jeans and bare footed was found unconscious condition at in front of House No. 1165 Churiwalan, Jama Masjid Delhi on 23.05.2020.

In this regard a DD No. 04A, dt. 23.05.2020 U/s 174 CrPc has been lodged at PS Jama Masjid, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this deceased may kindly inform to the following. S.H.O., P.S. Jama Masjid, Delhi. Ph: 011-23269777, 23261625

DP/128/CO/2020

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one lady namely Bilma Devi W/o Desh Ratan R/o H.No. 223, Gali No.3, A Block Oppost PNB Bank Mukundpur Part-I, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 19.05.2020 at about 12:00 PM from his house she is mentally ill. In this regard a case vide DD No. 26-A dated 20.05.2020 has been registered at P.S. Bhalaswa Dairy, Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped lady is as under:-

Name: Bilma Devi, Husband's Name: Desh Ratan, Age: 56 yrs., Height: 5'5". Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Build: Fat, Wearing: Blue Suit and Blue Pajama on foot Red Slipper. ID Mark: Walk Slowly because Fracture in right leg knee. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform to the undersigned.

SHO P.S., Bhalaswa Dairy, Delhi Ph: 011-27811933 27811934

DP/238/ON/2020

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sl. No. & Date: 30-05-2020/19-10-2020

Electrical work in connection with renovation of 1st floor including provision of space for conference hall, dining area, Xerox area, waiting area and other misc. work at Rai Bhawan.

Approx cost of the work in ₹. 20.02 lacs

Address of the office: Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi

Earnest Money: ₹.40,00,00

Date & time of submission of tender: 26.06.2020, 15:00 Hrs.

Opening of tender: 26.06.2020, 15:00 Hrs.

Website & notice board: www.repe.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi

Serving Customers With A Smile 12/02/2020

WESTERN RAILWAY VARIOUS ELECTRICAL COACHING WORKS

S. No. & Date	Work and Location	Approx. Cost of Work (₹)	EMD (₹)
1. EL 501/1407/CHMWA/12 dtd. 29/05/2020	Repair, Rewinding & Resynchronization of 25KW Brushless Alternator Field in S&G Coaches of BCT Division	22,76,569.20	45,500.00
2. EL 501/2023/CHMWA/13 dtd. 29/05/2020	Repair, Rewinding, Resynchronization & Phase Alignment of 150 VDC Motor of Power Cars	42,54,608.00	85,100.00
3. EL 521/371/CHMWA/14 dtd. 29/05/2020	Design, Fabrication, Supply Installation & Commissioning of Exhaust Outlet Pipes of Diesel Engines of Power Cars	46,72,800.00	93,500.00

Sl. No. 1 to 3: Date and Time of Submission: Not Later than 15.00 hrs. of 29/05/2020 and Opening at 15.30 hrs. on the same day. For more details like cost of tender document, completion period, dates and our website, visit www.wrepe.gov.in and also to download the tender document, visit www.wrepe.gov.in

Use us on: Facebook.com/WesternRailway Follow us on: Twitter.com/WesternRailway

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Gauri D/o Late Sh. Ram Chandra, R/o H.No. 14-A, Gali No. 12, Vijay Colony, Bawana, Delhi, Age: 15 yrs., Height: 5 ft., Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Build: Medium, ID Mark: Mole on Left Eyelid, Wearing: Blue Colour Kurta-Pajama and Sky-Blue Colour Sandal in Feet, has been missing / kidnapped since 19.04.2020 from the area of P.S. Bawana. In this regard a case FIR No. 259/2020 dated 21.04.2020 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Bawana, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local Police to trace out the missing / kidnapped girl but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone having any information about this missing / kidnapped girl please inform undersigned. Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: clc@cbi.gov.in, Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641, Fax: 011-24368639

SHO Bawana, Delhi Ph: 011-27752534, 7065036321

DP/235/ON/2020.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male Age: About 65-70 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Build: Thin, was wearing White Shirt & White Pant, was found near BDO Block Alipur, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 25-A, dated 24.05.2020, has been lodged at P.S. Alipur, Distt. Outer North, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Alipur, Delhi Ph: 011-27202290, 27202265

DP/241/ON/2020

SHORT CIRCUITS



HRITHIK ROSHAN

So proud of you Pashmina. You are a special soul and an extraordinary talent. Your brightness and warmth lights up every room you walk into. Sometimes I wonder where you get that magic, but most times I thank god for you. We are lucky to have you and I'm sure the world is going to feel the same way very soon.



PANKAJ TRIPATHI

I am an actor. Our main aim is to help cinema and our performance reach out to maximum. Of course, the experience on big screen is different, people watch it together, in a community. On a small screen, you watch it alone. It's not like that theatres won't open. We have seen big things before and (theatres) have come out of it too.



KIRTI KULHARI

I am not really a birthday person. This lockdown has given me time to introspect and understand a lot of things and one thing that I have been contemplating on since quite sometime is self love and the lack of it in most of us. I hope this time makes some change in the way we look at ourselves and the way we love ourselves.



ADAH SHARMA

I hope we all come out of this as more grateful, kinder people who are conscious about the environment. Once we begin shooting, all of us will be responsible and take the necessary precautions ensuring safety of oneself and the people around us. From reading watermelons to slicing scripts, this lockdown has been quite productive.

WILL SMITH

Playing Genie in *Aladdin* was terrifying. Robin Williams did absolutely brilliant, memorable and nostalgic job in his film. So when I am looking at a role and especially something that has historic and nostalgic value, I ask myself, 'is there any meat left on the bone?'



IMMERSIVE 45 MINUTES

'I AM A BIT EXTRA'

Girl meets boy. The two fall in love...rewind. Girl meets boy and they set animals free at a pet market. The unusual, the quirky, the socially awkward and the ones who don't fit in were some of the characters that MEGHA RAMASWAMY found missing in the Indian film landscape. With *What Are The Odds?*, the director tried to plug in the gap and the audience responded wholeheartedly. Within a week of its debut on Netflix, it climbed to number 5 and then number 2 while spawning fan clubs across the country. In conversation with the director, who earlier made documentaries like *Newborns*, *Bunny* and *The Last Music Shop*, it is evident that she takes up projects that she completely identifies with. While discussing the film with SAIMI SATTAR, she pauses frequently, searching for the right word and wants to understand a nuance better before answering a question. Excerpts:

Q The film is trending on Netflix. Did you believe something like this was possible? Not at all. The response has been amazing and the film has its own fan clubs and all that now. (Laughs, which even over the phone line sounds overwhelmed). But I don't belong to this world, so it is very new and exciting for me.

Q Were you planning an OTT release or a theatrical one and shifted because of the pandemic? I am the writer and director and the producer had not masked the fact from me that it would not be the most comfortable theatrical release. I was told that I would have to make peace with big theatre release in Taipei, China, Taiwan, Los Angeles film festivals. It was important to get a worldwide release and Netflix has an outreach of 180-190 countries.

Q OTT has given a platform for different kinds of stories being told... Of course, a culture of serious audience has come about because of these platforms. For example, a series like *Wire* or *Mad Men* happened because these platforms were available. It really nurtures your tastes as an audience. It makes them creative (pauses) and opinionated. The reaction is immediate, personal and relies on word of mouth. It isn't a rehearsed audience which says "see this" or "do that". It is very passionate and creates its own bright guys. That's the relevance of OTT, as of now. Earlier, we had to rely on the review of a critic and wonder if we should buy a ticket? But now it is as simple as turning on the TV.

Q Are we making an impact globally through films as we see younger directors finding the rounds of international festivals now? Of course, there are younger directors like Rima Das. There is this burst of creativity. We aren't making films just with a Third World narrative based in villages to get to the festivals. There is Rhythm Jahnuve, Kabir Mehta and Kabir Singh Choudhury who are just killing it with their originality. They are ground breakers. I love their edgy content. It is no longer that only Satyajit Ray can go to Venice.

Q Moreover, while earlier we heavily relied on bigger festivals but now smaller ones are also picking up in terms of audience. Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) is such great festival where the programmers are championing South Asian and Indian cinema.



Q So what you are saying is that we've broken stereotypes... There are no stereotypes that are working. It is a rude term. We do not have the smugness or the right to call anything stereotype. All types of writing is based on people's experiences and as a culture we should be respectful towards that. It might be a stereotype for us but may be not for them. We need to be harsh on these terms in this changing world. This is a 90s terms but it doesn't matter any more.

Q Most coming of age films about adolescents talk about falling in love but this film is different. The protagonist has this great sense of discomfort and, at the same time, compensating confidence. And it is possible to be both at the same time. Here, I had to make sure my house is clean and everything is in its original place. Ravi (Dubey) and I were the art directors and the lightmen for each other. We were the ones styling ourselves, doing hair and makeup. Everything was upto us. We were figuring out what content to shoot, how to go about it, what would look nice. And if we were to do it the usual way, there would be a unit of 75 to 100 people managing everything for us. Here, we were down to three people — Ravi, my friend, who was helping us with the camera and I.

Q What appealed you the most about your role in the song? Frankly, when I heard the song, I instantly fell in love with it. I thought it was one of a kind. It's dark and simultaneously

Q people can wear a yellow coat and strut about like she does as she wants to be noticed. The kids watching this film are relating to this. This narrative is allowing the character to have a gamut of emotions.

Q Did the idea of the film come from your own growing up years? I did. I felt very alienated as a kid. I didn't know how to behave in a certain way. I am a single child and I am socially awkward. I try to overcompensate by saying something... (gives a nervous laugh) absolutely stupid. This made me bit extra. I always wondered why there were no films about children like us. In films, 14-15-year-olds were falling in love and having romances. Romance *kuch nahi hota* when you are

Q the time he also becomes like her in the film. He does a very non head boy thing even though he comes across as an uptight guy. But the duo get each other. It is their little rebellion. It is strangely predictive of the times too. (Chuckles) They are freeing animals in the pet market. And if you remember, the virus began with a wet market.

Q Did children being stuck at home during the lockdown power its success? That's a very ruthlessly exploitative thing to say about a ruthless theme in the

Q How did Abhay Deol come on board? We were introduced by a friend as he was looking to produce something. And we had this character, Val. The more we interacted with him, the more we thought he should be our Val. When he agreed to produce it, we asked if he would also act in the film. He said, "That's not necessary. Cast who you want." And we chimed, "We want to cast you." It is so gracious of him as he's there for 15 minutes. The ensemble cast also had geniuses like Sulbha Arya, a legend, who gave us so much love, understanding and blessings.

Q Your banner is called Missfit films... It is M-I-S-S-F-I-T. Miss fit. It is to honour young women who feel misplaced and we would like to hold space for them as they navigate through films. And we love to deal with narratives around younger people in particular. We hear all of them. Straight, queer, gay — everyone.

Q OTT changed the way films are being viewed... It has domesticated entertainment. It no longer entails a trip to multiplex. There are theatrical films and OTT films and there is room for both. A cinema watching culture needs to thrive with both. *Roma* was released directly on Netflix by one of the greatest directors in the world. Some of the best directors are doing shows for OTT. It is not the smaller platform any more.

Q What were your learning experiences from your past films, *Newborns*, *Bunny* and *The Last Music Store*? I was living in a very small world where I was very content but the gates have opened to write and direct series with the success of *What Are The Odds?* It gives me the privilege of affording enough support to other people in this system. So now I can run my company and hire young writers. Being independent means doing everything yourself.

Q The absence of censorship on OTT has been criticised due to explicit content. Do you agree? There shouldn't be censorship. All kinds of content make a culture. For example, films by Carlos Reygadas have a lot of nudity but what would arthouse cinema be without his contribution? Censoring anything shows that there is something which is not right in country.

Q What is Cause Effect? It is a little outfit under Missfit. We try and do pro bono, campaign driven work with NGOs and raise funds. It is a community driven initiative where we ask people for money. I've done a campaign with Dr. Kailash Satyarthi for it too.

Q Future plans? Up next is *Reshma Aur Shera*, few series and a book adaptation. I am working with Jeetu Mohandas about which I am very excited.

CONVERSATION 30 MINUTES

In the name of love

Actor SARGUN MEHTA tells AYUSHI SHARMA that there are a zillion reasons for people to feel there's not enough fondness in a relationship but if you both want to be together, you will find a way



Q How different was it to shoot the song, *Toxic*, at home during the lockdown as compared to the usual outdoor shoots? Of course, it was really different to shoot at home. Usually during shoots, people are doing everything for you, you just have to focus on one thing that is acting. Here, I had to make sure my house is clean and everything is in its original place. Ravi (Dubey) and I were the art directors and the lightmen for each other. We were the ones styling ourselves, doing hair and makeup. Everything was upto us. We were figuring out what content to shoot, how to go about it, what would look nice. And if we were to do it the usual way, there would be a unit of 75 to 100 people managing everything for us. Here, we were down to three people — Ravi, my friend, who was helping us with the camera and I.

Q What appealed you the most about your role in the song? Frankly, when I heard the song, I instantly fell in love with it. I thought it was one of a kind. It's dark and simultaneously

Q It deals with the downfalls of a relationship and its upheavals. Did you relate to it? I did relate to the song but not from the perspective of the relationship that Ravi and I share. This is not exactly what we are as a couple, which is why we were undecided initially. We wanted to discuss if we want to show this side of our relationship or not. At times dur-

Q ing the shoot, Ravi got angry that this is not us. We tried to cut away from it emotionally as much as possible because we didn't want to get too absorbed in the story. But every relationship goes through this. It can go bad, you get possessive or there can be more distance or proximity between two people.



Q There are zillion reasons that people can feel there is not enough love in a relationship. But if both of you want to fix the problem and want to be together, you will find a way.

Q How was it shooting with your partner with whom your journey has been smooth? I don't know if it was challenging. I remember there was a time when I had an offer to move to another medium but I felt that I wasn't ready for it. When I saw my first Punjabi film, I decided that this is what I wanted to do. Like this is home and I would be able to make my place here. It just felt

Q Yes, the journey has been very smooth. I think this was the first time I didn't see Ravi only as an actor or as a co-actor. I saw him as a director too. On the first day, I had my take on everything or tried to figure out what we wanted to do. But later, I realised that too many people spoil the broth. So he took charge. Everything was in his head, he directed all of it. I didn't want to mess with it so I completely surrendered to him as an actor. I thought this is the right way to do it. I saw him as a director for the very first time and I absolutely loved him. I have always said that he's a great actor but I didn't know he was such a great director too.

Q From small screen to Punjabi films and now album songs, how challenging was this switch? I don't know if it was challenging. I remember there was a time when I had an offer to move to another medium but I felt that I wasn't ready for it. When I saw my first Punjabi film, I decided that this is what I wanted to do. Like this is home and I would be able to make my place here. It just felt

Q like it was a calling. When you just sit down and think about what you really want in life, mysteriously the universe really works to get that for you. Whatever I demanded — the kind of projects I wanted to do, how I wanted to make my debut or with which actor — everything just fell into place. I don't think that I literally lifted a finger for all this to come together. I have seen a number of rejections as well. There were so many people telling me that I won't be able to make it. But I had faith in myself and the universe.

Q Do you think the Punjabi film industry competes with other new age regional cinema? It definitely does. Not only does it compete, I think in a lot of places it's even better. We are an evolving industry and when you are growing, you try to make a space for yourself. You try to make really good content and you are okay with doing a lot of experiments. That's where Punjabi cinema is, it's experimenting with content. I really think we are making some great films.

CAUSE 45 MINUTES

CANVAS OF A LOCKDOWN

Documentary filmmaker BHARAT BALA tells SAIMI SATTAR that the reason behind making *Uthenge Hum* was to ensure that posterity does not forget what the nation and its people went through during the lockdown

SCENE 1: CONNAUGHT PLACE, NEW DELHI

The iconic Delhi locale is a bloc with shoppers, diners and people who come in to savour the beauty of its colonnaded colonial architecture. On any given day *chaat-walas*, handicraft vendors and ice-cream carts jostle for space. But a sweep of the camera and we witness the silence of the centre of India's capital.

SCENE 2: PANDIT DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA JUNCTION, UTTAR PRADESH

The station, a gateway to East India, contains the largest railway marshalling yard in Asia. However, we see one of the busiest stations in the country without a soul in sight.

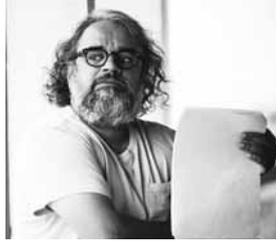
SCENE 3: GATEWAY OF INDIA, MUMBAI

On any given day, the most famous monument of the commercial capital is a place where neither the photographer nor the tourist gets a moment to enjoy the view in peace. But now, it stands silent just like the docks around it.

When the lockdown was announced on March 24, documentary filmmaker Bharat Bala realised that it was an important time in the history of the country and felt that it was his responsibility to capture it. "I knew that it is the most unprecedented thing unfolding in front of our eyes. It is in one way historical and in another, disturbing." People in the West, both America and Europe have filmed the time extensively. Bala says, "In the next five years, we would be flush with interesting documentaries from those places while India would have nothing."

He felt that the content from TV news was transitory in nature and there was "nothing emotional, deep or like a canvas which tells the story of what a lockdown is like. Where are these 1.3 million people?" he asks. So the creator of some of the really iconic works like AR Rahman's *Vande Mataram* got down to work. Over a period of 55 days, a team of 117 people filmed extensively for 100 hours across 16 states to preserve the time for posterity.

Even under normal circumstances when permissions are hard to come by, during lockdown this must have been some feat. Anticipating the question, Bala himself pipes up and says, "How did we do it? It was a



nightmare, almost impossible." Getting permissions from the Police was difficult but essential as filming on the streets is not allowed without it. "Somehow when the intent is there, things do happen and they did happen," chimes in Bala, upbeat at the thought of what he has accomplished.

A central core team sat in Mumbai while crews spread across the country. Footage started pouring in from early morning to late in the night as the core team was sitting at a studio in Mumbai and giving directions to the crews in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Kashmir, Assam and more. "It was a mammoth exercise. A cameraperson in Assam would send a WhatsApp video and then I would set the frame and check the lens. Doing it remotely was bizarre. Sometimes they would send footage and I would say, 'This is great but what about this?' And they would go there and shoot again."

Bala credits his robust research team which knew exactly what was required for the film. "They were constantly updating what we were getting and, at the same time, specifying what we wanted from each place. In that sense we had to be instinctive in planning. It was crazy," says the filmmaker over the phone.



Bala wanted to get a large picture from a variety of places. So the teams went out to places like the Mumbai's CST Station, which is like the Grand Central of New York, and could not even spot pigeons. Some of the busiest airports were stark, with not a soul in sight. "Highways, airports, schools, colleges, streets and bazaars everything has been docu-

mented for posterity so that we should not forget this time. We also saw the Ganges clean and pristine in Haridwar and Rishikesh which was captured in a cinematic way," he says. Bala believes that it would be a record for all of us of what the nation and its people went through. "Otherwise you just look down your window and see *apna gali mohalla*

khali hai (our streets and locality are empty) but then you see the entire country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and realise that everything has stopped. Even Tsunamis, cyclones or other disasters couldn't do that. Not even wars, as only the border areas were severely affected. Given the size of our country, with our federal structure, it was not easy

to bring everything to a standstill." The idea behind the four-minute film, called *Uthenge Hum*, is to convey that no matter what happens we will rebound. "That is the resilience of the poorest mother of India. She might have lost her husband at night but the next day she would get up and feed her children," says he about the film which he feels is an honest effort.

The voice over by actor and the-atre person, Seema Biswas, in the film represents the migrant woman. "When she says *Uthenge Hum* it seems like a mother, who has her feet on the ground, is saying the words." And we all hope so too... that we bounce back resilient, more compassionate and better versions of ourselves from these difficult times.

CELEB TALK 30 MINUTES

As the pandemic unfolds, people around the world have found themselves in isolation to help contain the outbreak. While women continue to hold up more than half of the sky, the increase in workload and the surge in domestic violence has made women more vulnerable even inside their homes. It is high time we break the stigma around reporting abuse.

Against this background, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and the South Asia Foundation (Madanjeet Singh Foundation) have joined hands to support director and actor Nandita Das in the production and launch of a short film — *Listen to Her*.

The film focuses on two important issues that many women are grappling with — an unprecedented increase in their workload and at times, being locked down with their abusers. It aims to inspire women to speak up and for us to add our voice to end the silence around these issues. The film also creates public awareness of helpline numbers so survivors can seek immediate assistance. In India, the National Commission for Women has recorded more than a two-fold increase in the number of cases of gender-based violence during the lockdown period. But we find ways to help the migrant population, daily wagers, health workers on the frontline, we also need to find ways to support women who are battling within their homes. Society simply cannot thrive if half the population lives in fear of being abused, physically as well as mentally.

"The film was a spontaneous response to the irony of 'stay home, stay safe' for millions of women in India and around the world. This pandemic has taught us that our lives are so deeply intertwined, and so it is imperative we respond to the issues around it. I wanted to tell a simple story of a woman overburdened and a woman abused, both,

The battle within homes

Actor, director and social advocate NANDITA DAS's short film *Listen to Her* aims to inspire women to speak up around issues like domestic violence, which has surged during the lockdown



impacting each other. The film is adding its voice to encourage women to speak and for us to listen. Creatively speaking, it was a challenge to shoot during the lockdown. But was worth the experiment," says Nandita. "There will be a before and after COVID-19, and

this should apply to gender equality too. There must be a redefinition of masculinities, where men share responsibilities with women in dignity, respect and non-violence. UNESCO, together with its sister UN Agencies, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN Women, felt it was impor-



tant to support Nandita in making this film possible," shares Eric Falt, director and representative, UNESCO, New Delhi.

Argentina Matavel, representative, UNFPA India says, "COVID-19 has forced us to re-visit some very important conversations about gender, be it violence, equal participation at home or simply pre-defined roles for men and women. Today it is the pandemic, tomorrow it may be something else. Gender equality is no longer a contested matter, it is both complex and simple. It is a societal transformation that will be a reality when each individual looks at the other with fresh eyes, as if looking into a mirror, and then, treats them with dignity and respect, recognising that their own humanity is only complete with the full existence of the other."

The film poignantly depicts the ironic realities of what it means for women to 'stay home, stay safe' amid the pandemic. "On one hand, women and girls are compelled to heavy lift the increased caregiving responsibilities, juggling with many different pieces of life and work. On the

other, many of them encounter a surge in domestic violence reported not only in India but across the world. The complex interplay of gender within the larger socio-economic impact of the crisis must be factored into the response and recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic," says Dr Yasmin Ali Haque, representative, UNICEF India.

Nishtha Satyam, deputy representative, UN Women India, shares, "The pandemic has challenged all we knew about the dynamics of economics and power, both inside the home and outside. While many of us have had the privilege of home, a safe space, many women have long dreaded the four walls of home, a private chamber that reminds them of the horror and terror of physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Across the world, the dread now lies exposed along with the inescapability of it. The pandemic has upended several assumptions about contemporary world order and equality. UN Women is proud to support this initiative which contributes to bring to light on the importance of ending violence against women and girls."

Daringly different

Actor JYOTHIKA says that there are several layers to her character in her recently released film, *PonMagal Vandhal*, which deals with a pertinent social message

◆Tell us something about your next film *PonMagal Vandhal*. It is a thriller with a difference. You can also call it a contemporary courtroom drama. I am very close to the subject which has been tackled in the film by director, J J Frederick, who has also written it. The film has a very pertinent social message with which each one of us can relate to instantly. It is a film which will make every woman proud.

◆You have shared screen with five different actors who are also directors. How was the experience? I have been lucky that I got an opportunity to work with five actors who are also good directors, including K Parthiyeppan, Thiagarajan, Pandiarajan, Pratap Pothan and K Bhagyaraj. It was Frederick's vision and idea to cast five different actors who are also directors. It is a learning experience for me, I learnt how they prepared their dialogues and delivered them clearly with precision and clarity.

◆You play a lawyer in the film. To put it in a context, at home, are you a lawyer or a judge? At home, I am never a lawyer because I am always a judge. If you compare me with my earlier films, you will realise that I have really come out of my shell. I am now under the blue sky. Today, I can do any kind of role. I am blessed that I am being approached by many directors with subjects that are daringly different.

◆How difficult was it to act with directors like Parthiyeppan and K Bhagyaraj? It was a big challenge to deliver my dialogues in front of Parthiyeppan because they were lengthy and the film is basically a courtroom drama. But thankfully, I was prepared as I was given the script three months ago. It is to the credit of director Frederick that he filmed four single shots each of five minutes. You would not believe that he, who is in his 20s, has not only written the subject well but also made his debut with this film. In the first narration itself, I was hooked to the subject and said yes to it. It has



a lot of layers, thrills, twists and a smashing climax.

◆What are the factors that influence your decision while choosing a role? I always see what the screenplay of a film offers and want characters that are not only intelligent but also dignified to the core. I want to play real life characters, which the audience can easily identify with. I will agree to do a film only if I am sure that people will talk about my role and the film even after 20 years. If you play a cop's role, you can easily pad up your scene with action but when you set out to play a lawyer, you cannot resort to action and have to deliver your lines with perfection. Considering the fact that I have never gone to a court till date, I should thank the director for having done all his home work with perfection.

◆The film is being released on an OTT platform, Amazon Prime Video. What do you think are the pros and cons of this platform? I'd say, there are only pros and no cons. Especially, in the last few months after the Coronavirus scare, the number of people watching films and series on OTT platform has shot up considerably. Though, all said and done, I will not deny that

had the situation been different, it would have been a joy to see its release in theatres and the reaction of the audience. OTT release is a big celebration as filmmakers will be able to reach as many as 200 countries. However, it is not a permanent solution, it will only help for the time being. If we wait to release *PonMagal Vandhal* in theatres, there is a long queue. It will take at least a year for the hero-oriented films to release, the heroine-oriented ones will get their chance only after two years.

◆Why do you prefer to work only in your home productions? After 36 *Vayathinile*, I have mostly acted in my home productions because it allows me to be in my comfort zone. It is important now as I have to strike a balance between my career, home and kids. Also, when you do not know how the audience is going to respond to your film, it is better to invest in your own film.

◆You seem to opt to act under new directors... Working with newcomers is good as they do not follow the typical pattern. They belong to a new genre and their working process is very different from mine. If I work only with the same directors, I may end up becoming stagnant as an actor. The character of Venba that I play in *PonMagal Vandhal* is the most challenging that I have ever played in my career, perhaps because of the direction.

◆Are you open to act in web series in the near future? I am not sure. Nothing in my life, including acting in films, had been planned till today. I feel good cinema should live. If I don't get good offers in films, who knows, I may take up acting in web series too.

◆How keen are you on entering politics? Like my sister Nagma, I don't want to take up politics because I believe that you can do far greater work for the masses even if you are not in politics. Every actor has a social responsibility and should not just depend on the government.

India series venue depend on circumstances: CA



Adelaide Oval will host India vs Australia's Day-Night Test during 2020-2021 Border-Gavaskar trophy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricketer Australia has not ruled out the possibility of the Covid-19 pandemic forcing a change in the schedule for India's tour of the country with the board still keeping the door open for hosting four Tests in "as little as one venue".

Cricket Australia (CA) on Thursday announced that India will play the Tests at Brisbane (December 3-7), Adelaide (December 11-15), Melbourne (December 26-30) and Sydney (January 3-7) respectively.

However, CA chief executive Kevin Roberts said the schedule could change depending on the travel restrictions due to the health crisis.

'Very high risk' of T20 WC being postponed

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Friday conceded that there is "very high risk" of this year's T20 World Cup being postponed and the body is bracing up for huge revenue loss because of that.

Speaking to reporters, CA chief executive Kevin Roberts admitted that the fate of T20 World Cup, to be hosted by Australia in October-November this year, is uncertain because of the global travel restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The likelihood of significant crowds is very slim — ordinarily that would deliver well over AS 50m revenue to CA."

"The T20 World Cup is a big question and that's a factor of perhaps AS 20m."

"If Perth received the India Test (this year) it would mean that Perth would have hosted two England Tests (for Ashes) and two India Tests over the eight-year cycle for a total of four... Whereas Brisbane would have only hosted two, so that would have created an imbalance over the cycle of the Future Tours Programme," he said.

Serie A resumes on June 20

AFP ■ ROME

Italy's Serie A was given the green light on Thursday to resume on June 20 after a three-month absence as one of the countries hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic begins to ease restrictions.

Italy has started to return to normal life again, it is only right that football should do the same," said Spadafora.

Legia Serie A will now need to examine the different calendar hypotheses for the remaining Serie A and Italian Cup matches, amounting to 127 in total.



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo trains during team's training session Juve/Twitter

Italian football now faces a scheduling nightmare, for matches which will take place behind closed doors.

"I'm happy and satisfied," said Gravina.

Most teams have 12 league games left to play, but there were four postponed fixtures.

Spadafora suggested that the Italian Cup could be concluded the week before the return to Serie A action. The semi-final return leg matches between Inter Milan and Napoli and AC Milan and Juventus, could be played on June 13-14 with the final on June 17.

Laxman lauds Rohit's ability to handle pressure



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian batting great VVS Laxman says the ability to remain calm under pressure is the reason behind Rohit Sharma's success as a captain in the Indian Premier League.

When he came in the first year, he was a youngster who just played the T20 World Cup, made his international debut for India," Laxman told Star Sports show Cricket Connected.



Kompany turns down offer to assist Pep

AFP ■ BRUSSELS

Vincenzo Kompany has turned down an offer from Manchester City to become Pep Guardiola's assistant coach, according to various Belgian media reports on Friday.

Police want Liverpool title clincher at neutral venue

AFP ■ LONDON

British Police want at least six Premier League matches and any Liverpool title clincher to be played at neutral venues when the season resumes in a bid to avoid supporters gathering outside stadiums.



"Our discussions with the Premier League throughout this process have been positive, with a shared focus on the priority of public health," said Deputy Chief Constable Mark Roberts of South Yorkshire Police.

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Eng name 55-man training group

LONDON: World Cup-winning skipper Eoin Morgan, and the pace duo of James Anderson and Jofra Archer are among 55 England players who have been asked to resume outdoor training to prepare for cricket behind closed doors.



players have been asked to return to training, "as England Men prepare for the prospect of behind-closed-doors cricket, subject to UK Government clearance."

specific formats will be announced in due course. "The pool of players will be selected strong options when it comes to selecting squads across formats further down the line, as we move closer to our aim of playing international cricket this summer," ECB Performance Director Mo Bobat said in a statement.

UEFA considers 'all options' for CL format

AFP ■ NYON

UEFA is studying "all the options" for the format of this season's interrupted Champions League, amid reports on Friday that European football's governing body is considering moving the final from its scheduled venue in Istanbul.

and the format of the competition in the working group involving the clubs, leagues and national associations," a UEFA spokesman said.

taken yet but there should be at the Executive Committee meeting on June 17."

La Liga 2020-21 to begin from Sept 12

AFP ■ MADRID

La Liga president Javier Tebas said on Friday that the league is hoping the 2020/21 season can start on September 12.

The current campaign is still suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic, although La Liga is targeting a return on June 11 with the Seville derby between Real Betis and Sevilla.

Barcelona led Real Madrid by two points at the top of the table when La Liga was halted in March.

TENDER NOTICE table with columns: Sl. No., Name of Board/Corp./Auth, Name of Work/Notice Tender, Opening Date, Closing Date, Amount / (Approx.) in Rupees, Website of the Board/Corp./Auth, and Nodal Officer/Contact Details/Email.

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